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UNANTICIPATED LONGEVITY IN WOMEN'S WORK:
THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF AIRLINE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

by

ROBERTA LESSOR

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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of the

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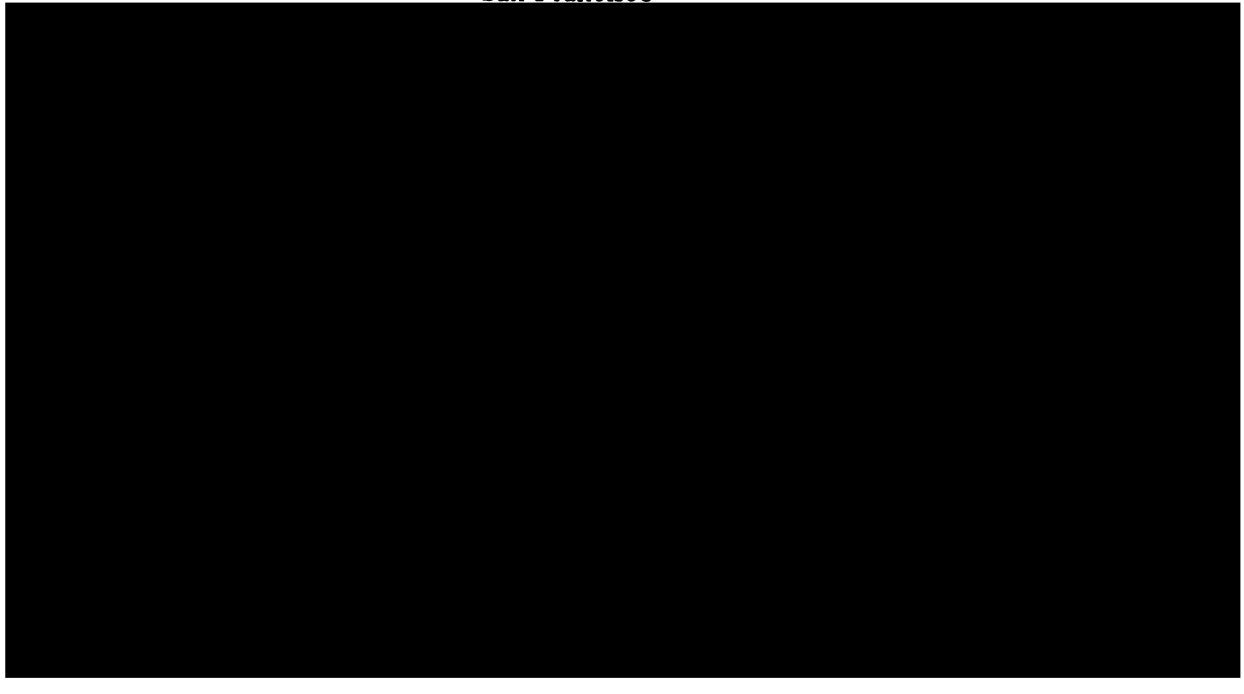

ABSTRACT

Unanticipated Longevity in Women's Work:

The Career Development of Airline Flight Attendants

by

Roberta Lessor

Qualitative fieldwork research with women flight attendants reveals the way in which macro structural conditions and participants' redefinition of personal and occupational circumstances have interacted to convert short-term employment into a long-term career. Extensive interviews were conducted with 45 flight attendants (38 women and 7 men), while additional interviews were conducted in the course of participant observation in labor union offices, flight attendant quarters in major East and West coast airports, and on board airlines varying from commuter to international; a number of national flight service union officials were also interviewed. Seniority of the flight attendants interviewed ranged from two to thirty-five years with the significant majority clustered around twelve years. The unanticipated career of women flight attendants which began in the 1960s is analyzed in respect to (1) the women's own view of their work lives; (2) four major social movements—civil rights, feminism, occupational health, and the labor movement; and (3) the context of technological innovation and socioeconomic change in the commercial aviation industry. Using this analytic framework and a symbolic interactionist/emergent approach to the study of careers, the salient occupational issues are examined. The first of these is the problem of personal identity maintenance in the context of public image demands. The second issue is the management of an increasingly rationalized set of work tasks in relation to the

social psychological, structural and ideological dimensions of work. The third is occupational health as it has evolved as a major focus of concern among participants under their unique conditions of work. The fourth is the structure, timing, and location of this sex-segregated women's occupation in respect to consequences for the division of labor in the home, particularly in respect to childcare and fathering. Finally, the structure of work (block-time vs. nine-to-five time) and its consequences for the ways in which participants develop leisure-time activities, second careers, and plan for life-long engagement in the work force is analyzed. A major finding of the study is that cohort formation beginning in the 1960s, that is, the development of an age-related reference group in which the participants experience increasing longevity together, has enabled women to redefine their work participation and establish legitimacy as long-term workers.

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INTRODUCTION

UNANTICIPATED LONGEVITY IN WOMEN'S WORK: THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF AIRLINE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

In the sociological literature concerning the subject of careers, it may be said that the most immediately discernible and salient property to be found is that of "time." Indeed, the notion of career itself embodies time, and the terminology used to describe it is replete with time-denoting words such as "cycles," "phases," and "calendars" (Hughes, 1971:124-131); "stages" (Hall, 1948); "career flow" and "timing" (Strauss and Becker, 1971); "continuous vs. interrupted" (Cummings, 1977); and "passage and reference points" (Roth, 1963). The "emergent" or "processual" approach to the study of work, occupations and careers beginning with the leading work of Everett Hughes (1937; 1958) treats the "contingencies," that is, the participants' social psychological dilemmas (Becker, 1952) as well as the organizational digressions to be encountered en route along the career time-line (Dalton, 1951) (1). In so doing it accounts for the conscious and active part of the participants and the variation, differentiation and even conflict that occurs in the forging of their work biographies (cf., Bucher and Strauss, 1961). This is in contrast to the assumption of a more structural functional and static model of role-occupancy in rational organizations (cf., Miller and Form, 1964; Hall, 1975). There is, however, yet another area in which the emergent approach can be fruitfully applied. That it has not been perhaps reflects the holding of certain assumptions that cause the approach to overlook an important phenomenological process.

A key assumption of the career literature (emergent symbolic

interactional and structural functional) is that the participants have at the outset a sense of a career trajectory stretching out ahead, an anticipation of engagement in the chosen field that will consume a major portion of their adult years, and an awareness that they are dealing in occupational "futures" (cf., Hughes, 1971:465). While it is acknowledged by the interactionists that the direction and timing of careers will take any number of unforeseen twists along the adult life pathway, it is less acknowledged that even the idea of having a career at all may gradually emerge over time. As Acker has observed in regard to a number of areas of sociological theorizing, the existing sociological approaches to career formation may not always account for the experience of women (Acker, 1973; 1978). Looking more specifically at the processes by which women construct the time-line of their careers may contribute yet another dimension to the career perspective, a dimension that is lacking in much of the career literature until recently. Becker's comment made in a study of occupational identification, that females "were not interviewed to avoid the complications introduced by (their) variant career patterns," is illustrative (Becker and Carper, 1956).

Most certainly it is acknowledged in the research and writing on work and occupations that women's careers have varied from those of men, however this has usually been conceptualized in terms of the "conflict" between domestic roles and work force roles (Coser and Rokoff, 1971; Epstein, 1970; Lewin and Damrell, 1978), and women's attrition in the work place is the frequently assumed resolution to the conflict (Coser and Rokoff, 1971:551). In fact, Coser and Rokoff make the case that "women's occupations"—nursing, elementary school teaching, social work, clerical work—are so geared to attrition that

they are in fact institutionalized around the "replaceability" of the role participants (Coser and Rokoff, 1971:546). Yet in the past decade in at least one women's occupation, that of airline flight attendant, the attrition rate has decreased dramatically, and there are indications that this may be true to some extent in other women's occupations as well (Feinstein, 1979). Such a shift is likely to be due to a combination of structural (principally socioeconomic) factors (Inglehart, 1979), as well as social psychological factors associated with new ways of thinking about paid work (Howe, 1975). The fact of the matter is that not only are there more women in the paid work force, but that even in the stereotypically female jobs, women are staying on the job longer (U.S. Department of Labor, 1975) and beginning to conceptualize it in new ways (Lessor Rosen, 1980). The conditions under which "unanticipated careers" evolve, the way in which they evolve, and the consequences of such a development are therefore problems of sociological interest.

Airline flight attendants present a striking example of such an evolving women's occupation. In the last two decades the occupation of the airline flight attendant has undergone a rapid transformation (see also Botteri, 1979; Stuckey, 1977). Perhaps more significantly, the 60,000-strong U.S. flight attendant population itself has undergone a transformation (Quindlen, 1978). The most notable change of all in this group of workers is the increase in their longevity on the job (Lessor Rosen and Egeth, 1977; San Francisco Chronicle, 1978). The average age of flight attendants has risen from the early twenties in 1968 to close to thirty in the latter part of the seventies. Moreover, the "career time for a flight attendant during the 1970s jumped from 18 months to nine years" (San Francisco Chronicle, 1978). Women who

fly (and women still constitute almost 90 percent of the flight attendant population--the number of men has only recently increased) are for a variety of reasons remaining on the job longer.

Career development. In several respects the case of airline flight attendants presents a unique and important arena for the study of women at work. First of all, there is the question of how women's careers evolve in the face of unanticipated longevity. This is not to maintain that all women's careers evolve in this way. Common sense as well as empirical studies (cf., Epstein, 1970) indicate that women entering the professions have a view of a prospective career trajectory of some length, albeit an interrupted, "dual" or problematic one (cf., Patterson and Engelberg, 1978). Careers that were never anticipated but rather emerge in process, subject to construction, definition and definition may be more typical of the "semi-professions" (Etzioni, 1969) and the sex-segregated white collar fields in which most women work.

I was first sensitized to women's career emergence while collecting data in 1977 for a study of the occupational health of flight attendants. One piece of data came out spontaneously in every single interview: Every woman said, "I never expected to be in this job now," or "I never expected to be a flight attendant this long," or "I never expected this to become my life's career." And quite clearly neither did the airline companies nor perhaps even a slightly surprised public expect to see the "older woman" as a stewardess either (Quindlin, 1978). In many ways the flight attendants represent a prototype for this process because they have developed a career in an occupation which was a short-term job in the extreme. Yet many women in nursing, teaching, secretarial and other "women's fields" have also had this experience. The question then, is how are careers constructed from

"within" by participants who never began with a conception of "career," of longevity, of "making something of this job."

The logic of the career perspective (Hughes, 1958) would also suggest that no matter how the notion of career comes into being for the participants, its development is always processual. In any case, it does appear that the process is more varied and complex than simply, "waking up one day and realizing that the job you've held for years was really your career" (Hennig and Jardim, 1976). The interactionist literature points out that there are critical stages, turning points, and climactic periods which are crucial to the molding of careers and the forging of personal identities (Strauss and Becker, 1971); study of flight attendants' careers suggest that this may be the case here as well, but that the "turning points" and "climactic periods" may be somewhat different than in previously described case studies of careers. The emergence of a consciousness of career, as an inner process gradually developed rather than set in motion by a significant commencement does indeed have its own particular shape.

Not only are women's careers constructed from "within," but the "within" may be decidedly influenced by the surrounding context of social movements. In the case of flight attendants, direct connections between developments in the occupation and activities in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the holistic health movement can be identified. Not only was activity within the flight attendant occupational group spurred by larger societal-level movements, but just as significantly, it can be shown that as the women's consciousness was raised, they began to discover significant social problems within their own work world, and to develop from their particular vantage point their own rhetoric with which to communicate it. So it was that an

organization such as "Stewardesses for Women's Rights" could emerge, some of its symbols borrowed from the larger women's movement, and for its part contributing a few new ones of its own. The development of unanticipated careers has to be seen not only in the light of individual and organizational development, but also in the context of social movements. That is, timing is important not only individually, but historically as well.

Deviant careers. At the same time that the flight attendants represent a prototype of women's work, they also may represent something of a unique or deviant case in that theirs is an occupation enveloped by a certain mystique (cf., San Francisco Chronicle, 1978). As Botteri has commented in her Canadian study of the occupational status of flight attendants, "...flight attendants still symbolize in the eyes of most people, a larger world that goes beyond the role they fulfill inside the airplane....Their lifestyle is independent, uncommon and unroutine" (Botteri, 1979:4). However, she finds this image "contradictory" in the face of much of the reality of the job, and likens the job to most positions in bureaucratic organizations in which work becomes more standardized and rationalized, actually the antithesis of "independent" and "uncommon." Citing an earlier Canadian index of occupational prestige, she argues that it reflects this contradiction in that the general public accords the occupation "a higher prestige than it is due objectively" as a "low-grade, white collar occupational group" (Botteri, 1979:96-99). The data in this study and others (Moles and Friedman, 1973) also indicates that flight attendants themselves are quite aware of such contradictions as when they refer to "this so-called glamorous job." However, the point which Botteri does not quite convey, is not that this is "in reality" a dirty job that has

been misrepresented as glamorous [all work, as Everett Hughes (1971) has pointed out, has its loathsome underbelly], but that it is in fact both. Whatever its "dirty work" aspect, there seems to be sufficient evidence to maintain that the job is seen not only by outsiders but by the participants themselves as somehow different, special, unusual and perhaps even a bit "glamorous" [see Elizabeth Rich's chapter entitled, "I Buy All My Shoes in Paris," 1970]. This status may in fact be changing, but the hitherto existing definitions are of importance to the career flow of women who were recruited into the occupation in an earlier time, and who continue to assign meaning to their experience. In this regard the interactionist perspective on deviance (Lemert, 1951; Hawkins and Tiedman, 1975) and more particularly recent formulations on the construction of "positive deviance" (Norland, et al, 1976) may be usefully investigated. The important aspect of "non-conforming" activity of any sort is that it becomes socially deviant when relationships with others get organized around that difference. That is, when the quality of the differentness is defined as "morally extraordinary" it can structure subsequent interaction (Lemert, 1972). For instance flight attendants have recounted experiences they have had of sudden switching in the quality of interaction when interactants became aware of their occupation. In examining the evolution of the flight attendants' career it is useful to employ a perspective that accounts for the flight attendants' occupational identity as at least somewhat marginal to (although not completely "outside") the mainstream of women's work.

The foregoing suggests the conditions under which career development takes place. Equally significant are the consequences of such career development. And certainly there are numerous

consequences: for the job itself and its social organization and politics, for identity, for personal life and lateral career development, and for physical and mental health.

Physical and mental health. Not only does increased longevity on the job increase the probability of workers developing greater numbers of health problems, but in addition, they describe their awareness of health problems and hazards as having increased as well. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that consciousness of health problems seemed also to be related to consciousness of "permanence" on the job. Those who thought of themselves as permanent workers were more apt to be aware of health problems as currently discussed in their occupational world, to define many of their own problematic situations along health/illness dimensions, and in some cases to be taking either individual or collective (union) actions which they defined as in the interests of their health.

The evolution of the flight attendants' awareness of occupational health problems must necessarily be seen in the context of the evolution of the job itself, and as has been previously noted, in the context of larger social movements. The purpose is not to dispute the allegations by flight attendants that they do suffer genuine occupational health problems (2), but rather, in recognizing the socially constructed nature of all medical definitions, even those made in the most "legitimate" medical settings (cf., Freidson, 1970), to examine the evolution of occupational problems through various definitional spheres--legal, medical or whatever. For example, it was only three years ago that women flight attendants on the major national airlines successfully negotiated the right to single hotel rooms on overnight trips. Until that time, male crew members which included

not only pilots and navigators but male flight attendants as well were the only ones to receive single rooms. All women had to share rooms. This particular issue had been disputed for years within the framework of "equity," with no gain for the flight attendants. Clearly, once the same demand was moved into the arena of health--"if you get a good night's sleep you feel rested and can do a better job"—it was successfully negotiated. Thus, the preliminary study and analysis seemed to indicate that the problems on the job are not only socially but historically defined. "Breaking through" on one level gives rise to new levels of definition. In a more thoroughgoing analysis of the health activism of the flight attendants it is apparent that even not breaking through is sometimes equally sensitizing. The breakdown of individual health maintenance strategies for instance has often led to the formulation of collective strategies, to a new synthesis.

The transitions in the job and the concerns of the workers can be traced in historical (and dialectical) terms: flight attendants litigated in the context of the civil rights movement to force elimination of age restrictions, as these then "older women" flew longer, the women's movement provided a name for the sexism they experienced and at the same time increased their resolve to stay on the job, and finally, as these women have remained on the job for ten years or more their health problems and awareness of them have increased not unrelated to the general and occupational health movements of the seventies (cf., Hricko, 1976; Society for Occupational and Environmental Health, 1977). Thus, it appeared that in addition to a substantive medical problem, health on the job is to many flight attendants a "symbolic" issue, symbolic of their relatively disadvantaged and less powerful position in the industry and the work force. There has been

until 1980 comparatively little bio-medical research done on the health hazards of the job to flight attendants as compared to the amount done on pilots. The fact that research has begun to appear (cf., Aviation Safety Institute, 1980; Alter and Mohler, 1980; Pontell, et al, 1981) is largely the result of 10 years of activism on the part of flight attendants themselves.

Identity. In respect to consequences for occupational "identity," even if one takes issue with North and Hatt's contention that "the job makes the man" (or in this case, "the woman"), it may at least be acknowledged that, "central to any account of adult identity is the relation of change in identity to change in social position.... Likewise, change ("development") is shaped by those patterned transactions which accompany career movement" (Strauss and Becker, 1956:263). Strauss and Becker are more principally concerned with the negotiated changes in visible status which an individual makes in his career movement through an organization, while for our part in a study of careers in a woman's occupation characterized by blocked upward and even lateral mobility (3), we must necessarily focus instead on changes in occupational consciousness and other perhaps less visible benchmarks by which participants indicate to themselves and to others their processual movement along a career line. How women indicate such procession to themselves seems a question worth asking not only in terms of flight attendants, but in terms of other "women's work" too, in that closed mobility jobs are not just characteristic of flight attendants.

In addition, as in any other occupational group (cf., Bucher and Strauss, 1961), flight attendants are not necessarily a homogeneous group in respect to their conceptions of occupational identity, and even with limited data it seems possible to identify at least two

separate, even contradictory directions. They might be dubbed "proletarianization" vs. "professionalization." On the one hand, some authors such as Botteri, who is herself a veteran flight attendant as well as a sociologist, identifies a "degradation" of the work characterized by lowered qualifications, less training, and greater fragmentation and rationalization (Botteri, 1979; see also Braverman, 1974, for a very clear and useful description of this conception of the evolution of the labor process under bureaucratic capitalist organizations). On the other hand, there are those such as Wofford, a flight attendant and health activist, who describes the work as demanding ever greater responsibility, knowledge and commitment (Wofford, 1977) as does Koreltz (1980) writing for an air safety periodical on "Flight Attendants—The New Professionals." This research not only bears out that both conceptualizations—greater routinization and greater responsibility—exist, but that they are even sometimes held by the same person. That is, an individual may identify to a great extent with "labor" interests and favor strong traditional union representation while at the same time favor increased "professionalization" in the form of formal licensure or certification of flight attendants.

Yet another variable (or "perspective") in the occupational identity controversy is the "official" identity which is promoted by the airlines. Probably more than any other industry, the airlines have promoted their business interests in direct relation to the image constructed of their most visible employees, the flight attendants (Lett and Silverman, 1980). Maintaining identity in the context of image demands is no small task. Women who fly have always been promoted by the airline industry on the basis of a marketable image. However, until

the women who were hired in the sixties became the first to remain on the job, not quitting after a year or two, the whole issue of reconciling aging and image had simply not surfaced. The social psychological dilemmas and contradictions are immense and without doubt present one of the greatest obstacles to be surmounted in achieving a sense of worth and a sense of appropriateness in a lifetime career as a flight attendant. Advertising, the transitions in required and allowed clothing, changes in official designations and naming (stewardess, flight attendant, hostess, etc.), all enter into the consequences for identity.

In addition, the issue of men in a women's occupation and other divergent identities--minorities for one, the very senior 30-year women for another--cannot be overlooked. The experiences of those with visibly variant identities and the way in which they deal with "status-forcing" not only reveals their own unique experience but also sheds light upon the pressures for image conformity placed upon all.

The shape and character of work and its organization. There is yet another consequence of longevity, and that is the implication for the job itself and its social and political organization. As Lett and Silverman have pointed out, flight attendants who have not only grown a bit older but who have weathered the legal battles (relating to age, equal pay, weight regulations, etc.) and union upheavals of the past decade have become an increasingly sophisticated group capable of having an impact on airline management and on the public representations of their work (cf., Hall, 1980). This increasingly mature group of workers appears to be promoting a view of the work that is necessarily different from the "sex objects in the sky" mentality which many felt has long been the stance of the airline industry

management (cf., Kane and Chandler, 1974; Gray, 1975). The emphasis in representations of the work is on "competence" rather than service and glamour as the following quotes portray: "Someone who can open the door of a 747 upside-down underwater" (SFWR News, November/December, 1974); "We are not flying waitresses," "We're there because the F.A.A. requires trained personnel on all flights to man the exits in case of a crash" (Hall, 1980).

Whether airline management truly appreciates that their flight attendant work force and its sense of its raison d'etre is changing is debatable. One airline executive, while his own comments indicate awareness, indicates that this is not the case in all quarters; he says, "What our management still doesn't understand is that we're no longer dealing with girls in their twenties but with women in their thirties, forties and fifties--mature women with husbands, grown children in many cases, mortgages to pay....To line them up like Playboy bunnies at a hutch inspection can be a very degrading experience..." (Lett and Silverman, 1980:11). In the face of such industry images and public views, what is significant is how change in the definition of the work from sex object to safety agent has occurred within the flight attendant group itself. The process of interaction with management, with "the public," and with other coalition groups has undoubtedly played a role in the processual development of the work definition. However, the interaction within the network of flight attendants themselves has probably been most important in formulating changing views, this in spite of the fact that the stereotypical notion of "stewardesses" has been one of an isolated and therefore unchanging in-group (cf., Coser, 1975). The length of time on the job has a bearing on the development of effective communication networks among flight attendants. The social

world of flight attendants is a tremendously widely dispersed one in which the potential for effective interaction would be greatly reduced were it not for the seniority system which keeps people who share mutual understandings from being isolated from one another.

It is important in the study of the flight attendant's work, just as it would be important in the study of any circumscribed occupation, to separate the collective representations of the work from the work tasks themselves. Work is best understood both in terms of the ideology that is built up around it, and from its actual structure. A third dimension, the social psychological rounds out the picture (Berger, 1964). To understand the flight attendant's work is to understand a task structure of service and an ideological stance on safety that must be articulated within the social psychological dilemmas presented by changing images and identities.

Personal life and other careers. Organization of personal life and the management of lateral roles and parallel careers has become increasingly complex in the face of career longevity. As noted earlier, much of the research on women's work is concerned with women's presumed need to account for both the personal and the professional spheres of life in any aspect of long-term career management (Wilensky, 1968). This account, in examining the personal life considerations of women flight attendants, focuses somewhat less on such "balancing" problems and rather more on some unique aspects of the structural arrangements of work as they impact on personal life. Desegregating the domestic world, for instance, appears to be every bit as noteworthy as desegregating the work world. Not only is the short-term job now a career, not only is marriage and family possible, but a job that demands the not easily reversible physical absence of mother from the home and

places fathers in the primary parenting position is something worth investigating.

The job has also become for many the means to a whole new end—establishing oneself in one's second career. It is in the use of non-work time that notable reformulations of career and occupation have taken place. Spans of non-work time have opened up new areas of creative "work" and are frequently defined, together with the primary occupation, as the sum total of the individual's "occupation."

The development of the flight attendant's occupation is of interest in its own right. But further, it is clear that in at least three realms the experiences of these people over the past two decades have implications beyond the specific occupational borders; to wit, for understanding emergent career development as it affects women, for revealing the structural relations necessary in the domestic world to compliment equality in the work world, and to indicate new patterns of non-work time usage and therefore new directions for the study of work and leisure in the coming years.

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

1. The emergent or process approach to the study of occupations and professions first developed by Everett C. Hughes finds its original roots in the symbolic interaction position in social psychology developed by George Herbert Mead (1934).
2. For example, back and joint problems from heavy work in confined spaces, "ozone sickness," menstrual irregularities, sleep disturbances and chronic fatigue related to frequent time zone changes, and related to these, drug and alcohol abuse (Wofford, 1977; Preston, et al, 1973; Wolf, 1972; Tobias, 1972; Carley, 1977).
3. Flight attendants who move to other airlines are given no credit for experience and start at the bottom again.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, THE OCCUPATIONAL ARENA AND CHANGES IN CAREER CONSCIOUSNESS

The sociology of work and occupations is concerned with the social environment in which work is performed. When conceptualizing this social environment one is apt to think first of the immediate work setting, the place in which the work tasks are performed and in which day-to-day interactions take place. For airline flight attendants the work setting—aboard a jet airliner traveling over 500 miles an hour at 37,000 feet—presents a unique environment which constrains social relations in a variety of ways. This physical environment, the task structure, relations with passengers and co-workers and the character of the participants constitute the setting where emergent reality is forged and meanings and definitions of the situation are worked out. There is, however, a larger environment in which work is performed. The work environment also consists of macro social environments as they emerge, exist and change over time, namely, a societal context shaped by social movements. This larger social environment is drawn into social settings and into personal biographies and it too plays its part in shaping consciousness of occupational identity. The connections between the macro and micro levels will become apparent as the recent social history of airline flight attendants is analyzed in this and subsequent chapters. In examining certain key social movements, this chapter will set out the historical context in which occupational change may be understood.

Women flight attendants present an excellent case study for examining the meaning of patterns of change in women's labor force

participation in the last 20 years. Recent U.S. Department of Labor statistics indicate that 43 percent of American women are in the paid labor force, more than ever before, and further, they are now staying at work longer and more continuously. Certainly more women are working because of financial need; on the one hand, the numbers of divorced, never married, and widowed female heads of household have increased, and on the other, among married couples, inflation and other economic changes have necessitated two-income families (United States Department of Labor, 1975; 1980). However, it would be analytically one-dimensional to think of the change in women's work patterns as motivated solely by financial necessity. Striking changes in the definition of women's work situations have also occurred. To understand something about the meanings that women have constructed to explain these changes in their career patterns and in themselves, it is necessary to move beyond labor force statistics and learn what people make of this. How did short-term jobs become careers, and how did the participants come to see it that way?

Most notable is that much of women's increasing work force participation was unanticipated. Unlike male experience, notions of career have been developed <u>in process</u>. Few women who graduated from high school and even college during the sixties expected to be working 10 years later. Most anticipated that they would stop paid work to marry and raise children. Flight attendants were certainly no exception. In fact, they constitute a Weberian ideal type, a prototype, of women who clearly did not expect to remain employed. The initial reason for this was that they were not allowed to remain. In the 1960s almost all airlines prohibited women from working past age 32 or at most past age 35 (King, 1966). They were also to quit if they married,

and each year over a third of all stewardesses stopped flying for that reason (Appel, 1965).

Seniority lists show that taken by five-year periods the largest group of flight attendants was employed from 1970 to 1975, the second largest group from 1965 to 1970. It became apparent in the course of the study that this second large group, which will be referred to as the "sixties' women," is pivotal in the re-routing of the occupational trajectory. Most began working before the implementation in the airlines of the Civil Rights Act in late 1968. Employers were able to hire stewardesses using restrictive rules; under these conditions the women knew that they were entering an occupation that was by definition short term (1).

But even after the age and marital limits were struck down, the old definitions of the job as short-term employment hung on. This is illustrated by the fact that the women hired after 1968 and into the early seventies did not anticipate longevity either. Their overwhelming characterization of their career development is the same as the sixties' women. "I never expected to still be here" was the response in interviews conducted in 1977 and 1980-81, and includes women who had from five to 19 years seniority, ranged in age from 25 to 40, were black, white and Asian. Yet in spite of the fact that they did not anticipate or plan for it, the striking fact is that they did continue to fly. In 1968 the average tenure on the job was 18 months and by 1978 it was nine years, an indication that the majority of the women flying were the same people who thought they were taking a short-term job.

The fact that even after 1968 women recruits continued to enter thinking in less than career terms is explained by several factors.

Pamela Roby has commented on women's early socialization in which as girls they are allowed or encouraged to believe that they will not need to work, and finds in her research on blue collar women that women "do not realize until their late twenties or early thirties that they will have to work most of their lives" (Roby, 1975:224-225). In a study of school counselors' career images of women, Ahrons found that counselors hold a view of female roles that incorporates the notion of home-career conflict, and therefore tend to reinforce notions of short-term work in counseling high school women (Ahrons, 1976). Nursing students interviewed by Davis and Olesen (1965) evidenced such socialization when they ranked "devotion to family" well above "dedication to work and career." Flight attendants in the sixties and early seventies viewed their future in much the same way. As one woman says, "Of course you wouldn't work after you had a family....That's what we grew up thinking."

Such a view was further reinforced by the airline training schools. Since many of the tasks to be mastered involved an extension of women's roles in the home—serving food, providing emotional support, care-taking—it was naturally seen as good preparation for a future role as homemaker. In a similar way, in nursing school during the 1960s students were often reminded that even if they didn't work very long in the hospital, nursing was an excellent background for being a wife and mother. In a 1965 newspaper article concerning the short-lived tenure of airline stewardesses who "trade their silver wings for gold wedding bands," the head of Eastern Airlines' stewardess school said, "The girls seem to pay most attention to the courses involving the correct ways to serve food and wine, and anything else they can use in their personal lives." A stewardess interviewed for the article

expressed a similar option: "It's a perfect course for being a perfect hostess at home" (Appel, 1965). When equivalences exist in the task structure of home and work, it can be alleged that the short-term paid work is somehow a training ground for marriage, women's "true and only, or at least major, vocation" (Laws, 1976:38).

Thus, the stewardess' work itself supported the notion of restricted temporality. This is the case for most of those occupations into which women have been historically shunted. Familiar is the rationalization that women are better suited for nurturing tasks and therefore they are better candidates for the jobs. But the other side of this is shifting them out of the work force.

In an essay on work aspirations of women, Judith Long Laws takes issue with what she terms the "common misconception" that, "...young women do not plan for their occupational future but rather, like the devout Navaho weaver, leave the design of their identity unfinished until knitted together by their future life partner." Laws reads the literature on career aspirations (cf., Rand and Miller, 1972; Davis, 1964) notably written in respect to young women in the decade of the 1960s, and concludes that "young women are in fact planning for adult lives that will be more complex than those of their male peers." Investigations of women's future preferences, says Laws, have at their worst blamed the victim for her lack of career aspirations, and at the least, continued to neglect the obstacles to women's occupational actualization (Laws, 1976).

Her important essay raises some issues that should be addressed. It is perhaps a reminder that structural conditions do in fact also constrain and mold consciousness, while the findings of this study as will be reported emphasize rather the reverse, i.e., that people

transcend and actively change reality.

First of all, young women in the sixties may have planned for "complex adult lives," but for most women this meant marriage and children, preceded by a period of paid work. Many women such as the university nursing students interviewed by Olesen and Whittaker (1968) planned to return to paid work after time out for childrearing. For the flight attendant return to her work was highly unlikely. It was not until 1971 or 1972 in most airlines that working mothers ceased to be barred, but more importantly, social support for the idea of an absent mother and the possible worthiness of fathering had certainly not come about. So while flight attendants too may have had germinal notions about future paid work later in adult life, it could not include a vision of being a flight attendant, and therefore could not be a vision of an uninterrupted continuous career. Besides the restrictive work rules, there were additional obstacles to thinking in terms of a career. There was the lack of economic equity, another feature shared by all sex-segregated women's occupations (Powelson and Strong, 1981). Getting paid less than the men who clean the airplane between flights is a further reason to be doubtful about one's future possibilities.

Yet the point made at the outset of this discussion was that even as structural conditions began to change in the late sixties and early seventies, the general estimation of the job was still that it was a short-term one. In addition to the above reasons for this that particularly characterize the experience of women and of women flight attendants, the seeming lag is further explained by the conditions under which power differentials are secured and maintained in society (cf., Colfax and Roach, 1971). Because pressure is exerted by those in power to maintain the status quo, and because the production of "knowledge"

is generated by the most dominant strata of society, ideological explanations frequently lag behind changes in social structure (Berger, 1964). Thus, although the trend toward working wives had in actuality begun in the late fifties (Baxandall, et al, 1976), the "Father Knows Best" version of father as bread winner/mother at home continued to prevail in the popular cultural imagery.

Within ideological lag though is the key to social change. The diachrony between ideological explanations and social structure is a source of social psychological conflict, spurring human consciousness and activity and therefore social change (Berger, 1964). Social movements are an important vehicle for that change.

For women flight attendants, the dramatic leap in length of uninterrupted work participation has now spanned two decades and been spurred by several far-reaching social movements (2). The civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the various health movements of the seventies as well as the ongoing U.S. labor movement have played a major part in closing the consciousness gap between ideology and structure and in helping to shape the long-term career that is now defined by flight attendants.

The Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement of the 1960s influenced the course of the career of women flight attendants both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, the struggles of black Americans "raised to prominence the idea that all Americans were guaranteed equal opportunity and that equality was denied to some" (Mandle, 1979:165). In raising consciousness of a whole era in respect to civil rights, the movement created awareness in related areas (age, sex, marital status, national

origin), some of which would subsequently carry on to the women's movement.

Not surprisingly, in the early sixties the views of both black and white stewardesses regarding the future of their jobs were very much the same. The first black stewardesses were hired in 1963 and 1964. The black women interviewed in this study were hired in 1966 through 1968, and still frequently felt like ground-breakers, often aware that they were among the first blacks to desegregate the ranks of flight attendants. Although it was been alleged that black women are generally more realistic than whites about planning for life-long work (U.S. Congress, 1977:11), this was not true of black stewardesses hired in the sixties. Their statements regarding their life plans at that time were identical to white stewardesses. They were going to find a man, quit, and get married. Some interviewees were quite explicit in their belief that being a stewardess with so much mobility might in fact improve their chances to do precisely that. But whether stewardesses married or not, among both blacks and whites such notions later began to change. Civil rights ideology merely set a stage.

More direct in its impact was the civil rights legislation enacted during the sixties: specifically, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sex (or race, color or national origin); the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and the executive orders (Number 11141 and Number 11246) which prohibit federal contractors or businesses engaged in interstate commerce from discriminating among employees. These acts provided legal structures under which the old work rules of the airlines could be challenged.

But first someone has to become aware of the need to make a

challenge. The experience of stewardesses in their civil rights struggle illustrates the manner in which social movements influence consciousness development. First of all, the civil rights movement provided a general background, an awareness of the legitimacy of protest over violations of constitutional and legal rights. However, civil rights issues never would have been made specific in this particular occupational world if it had not been for a small group of people who were sensitized by their own personal experience of civil rights violation. This was mainly the small number of women who were being fired at age 32, rather than those being fired because they married. This latter group tended to think more in terms of marriage as a second career of its own and a legitimate reason for retiring. They had something to go on to. The 32-year-old women did not (3). As this tiny group, sensitized by the thwarting of their possibilities for realizing themselves in their work, and informed by the civil rights movement, agitated on behalf of stewardesses as a class, the beginnings of awareness dawned. A general movement became specific in one occupation.

Most challenges of the existing airline rules regarding age, marital status, and later parental status were brought by female cabin attendants on the basis of sex discrimination under Title VII (4). At that time, many of the airlines, particularly those that flew any overseas routes, employed male cabin attendants as pursers. Unlike the women, however, these men were not prohibited from marrying nor were they fired at age 32. Stewardesses charged that the airlines' policy of one standard for men and another for women violated their rights under the law, while the companies argued that sex was a "bona-fide occupational qualification" and therefore permitted by law (Sprogis

v. United Air Lines, 1971:1194, 1197). The courts found, however, that contrary to the airlines' assertions, "any passenger preference for single (and presumably young) airline stewardesses did not provide valid reason for invoking...exception in Title VII as a bonafide occupational qualification" (Sprogis, 1971:1195) (5). Such class action decisions under Title VII were significant for all stewardesses, and various courts later cited a hearing before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in which the Commission found that, "Even if (the company) did not employ male flight cabin attendants, our decision (that females were discriminated against) would still be the same" (Neal v. American Airlines, 1968:A.19).

As courts found in favor of the petitioning stewardesses and as job actions and threats of job action occurred over discrimination, by 1968 many union contracts reflected the ending of the "no marriage" and "age limitation" rules (cf., United Air Lines v. Evans, 1977:576). The effective date of Title VII was July 2, 1965, but EEOC hearings were overburdened and legal challenges took time, and thus it was two or three more years before terminated flight attendants—those women terminated since July of 1965—were reinstated on the job and passing 32 meant no more than another birthday. Compared to the thousands of women then employed in bases throughout the nation, the number of women over 32 was not that large. In one national airline employing several thousand flight attendants at that time, 100 women returned in 1968. But interviews indicate that their presence was highly symbolic and had a great deal of meaning for the younger women. What these women report is illustrative of the coming together of structural conditions, emergent ideology, and personal biography. The women most affected were those who already had some history on the job (6).

One interview subject, Melanie, had worked five years by 1968. She was already a seasoned hand, what would have been called a gold winger in some airlines, and known in others by the decidedly pejorative, albeit highly descriptive term of gold star mother. She was at a crisis point in deciding what to do with herself. She had already passed the normative two years; she had even gotten to the senior status of five-year stewardess. Incorporation of the normative standards told her that it was time to reconsider her job, her life, her future. She even went through a period of anxiety and fear of flying which she attributes to this crossroads. Because of this she took a summer off the line to work as an instructor in the base retraining program. She describes her changing awareness:

> It was a very exciting time because things were really changing. It was civil rights. People were coming back to the job and they came into these training programs. I was getting more senior. Whereas I had always seen becoming more senior as a kind of a bummer, now I was seeing it different and saying, 'Hey, this is neat.' It was then that I realized that I really liked what I was doing. I wanted to go back on the line. I didn't want to quit.

Melanie identified with the returning flight attendants and their right to determine if and when they were ready to leave the job. Other women report similar experiences and identifications. If, by the turn of the decade, most of the women were still not thinking in terms of lifelong work and retirement, their definitions of self and legitimacy in staying on longer were at least beginning to be affirmed (7).

The Women's Movement

As women flight attendants related their own situation to the civil rights movement in its many forms, they developed a consciousness of their civil right to a job regardless of age, or marital or parental

status (8). As they stayed longer at work it opened up a second important interplay between group dynamics and societal dynamics, the effect of the women's liberation movement and consciousness of the symbols developed by the movement. In this phenomenon we have an empirical illustration of the dialectical nature of social change. That is, the new consciousness (developed in connection with civil rights) in turn led to praxis (the challenging of the age rules); once these constraints had been broken, a whole new dimension emerged, affecting the participants' ability to develop new kinds of consciousness.

The effect of the women's movement was twofold. First of all, with its early promises that self-fulfillment was to be found in the world of paid work, it had a tremendous impact on the legitimacy of work and of working. It underscored the worth, economic necessity, and importance of women in the labor force. Secondly, it raised awareness of sexism in the work place in all its manifestations, from pay inequities to sexual harrassment. In both cases, the experiences of stewardesses corresponded with the emerging ideology. Many had begun to fly longer, and had increased financial and family obligations dependent upon their work. And of course, sexism was all but institutionalized in the job.

In the world of stewardesses, as they were still called (9), there was much to protest. The pervasion of airline advertising with sexist slogans like "We really move our tails for you," and "I'm Cheryl, fly me," have been well documented (Kane, 1974; Stuckey, 1977; Lett and Silverman, 1980). Yet in spite of being the victims of perhaps more blatant sexism than women in many other areas, in some ways women flight attendants feared rejection by the women's movement because of being

in a job that was marketed by their employers on the basis of male-determined standards of beauty and femininity and feminine "servitude." One flight attendant says, after her contact with someone she describes as "a woman from NOW," "They aren't interested in us—they say, 'how can you do that job'" (10). Comments another woman, referring to the public at large, "They laughed at us when we tried to start Stewardesses for Women's Rights." Both comments are indicative of sensitivity to societal reaction to women placed in the contradictory position of asserting that their identity is not what others claim it to be. These same women who had had to compete so fiercely for this beauty queen's job in a sense felt a mixture of emotions over the women's movement. They indeed felt the sting of sexism in their work, yet on the other hand they wondered if the women's movement could embrace them, the women who had seemingly bought the whole feminized image. It seemed as though nobody was out to help the beauty queens.

One of the goals of any social movement is to establish the legitimacy of its complaints with the rest of the society and to gain a sympathetic ear (Gusfield, 1970:8). This case illustrates an additional phenomena wherein a collective group is not only trying to create empathy, but also trying to establish its credibility with the rest of the movement. Thus, on the part of women flight attendants, there was a great deal of effort to separate themselves from "the image" promulgated in advertising (much of their activities protested advertising and attempted to show that the "real" stewardess was not like that). Secondly, there was a great deal of concentration on issues that promoted the image of a responsible professional (e.g., "A stewardess is someone who can open the door of a 747 upside down underwater"). The organization, Stewardesses for Women's Rights,

developed "counter-commercials" to tell their version of why stewardesses are on board an aircraft (SFRW News, 1974a:8). These messages, published in national media (Newsweek, 1974:100), attacked both the "sex object" and "servant" depictions and emphasized professionalism as agents of safety (11). For feminist stewardesses, there was not only a concerted effort to be taken seriously by the public, but also by the rest of the women's movement.

Yet in spite of their fears over legitimacy, stewardesses had a place, as many diverse groups did, in the women's movement. In any social movement, people enter in to the limits of the social world or worlds of which they are a part. And with the exception of very transient forms (such as crowd behavior, for instance) people usually play out their membership in a social movement in terms of their own social world (12). Likewise, entering a social world at a particular juncture in its involvement with a movement may determine one's participation. For example, women who already had some experience as stewardesses had a different perspective than those who entered in 1974 at the height of the feminist stewardess protests. Sampson in his discussion of social movements has categorized participants in three different roles: as leaders, followers, and sympathetic observers (Sampson, 1971). It appears that the timing of entry into a social world in which the movement is occurring is one dimension relevant to role selection. People who had just landed the job tended much more to be among the sympathetic observers, while the leadership came almost entirely from sixties' women (cf., Kane and Chandler, 1974; SFWR News, November/December, 1974). Another dimension that characterizes the play of a social movement in a social world is the makeup of the world, the rate at which people are entering and exiting from it. A very loose

configuration, with constant turnover may be less involved in the transmission of movement information. By the early seventies the rate of turnover had slowed a great deal for flight attendants, allowing a more stable corp of people to become involved with the issues. Finally, similar to Blumer's distinction between general and specific social movements (1951), the activity in the specific social world is related to the whole of the general movement. Mandle and others have noted that the women's movement was marked by tremendous diversity, proliferation of subgroups and manifestation in many different areas (Mandle, 1979:166). Thus, the world of flight attendants constituted but one collectivity among many comprising the women's movement. The overall definitions and ideology of the movement had its impact on the flight attendant world, and the particular social world of flight attendants, like others, played back upon the larger movement. So it was that books, leaders and ideological contributions which added to the larger feminist movement emerged from the ranks of flight attendants.

A feminist analysis helps us to understand why the role of flight attendant was a job worth keeping. Women were quite obviously developing a feminist perspective on certain work issues at that time even though many of them did not label it as such. Certainly the message that paid work force participation was valuable and necessary was one that reached women everywhere. But women weren't simply staying on longer because the women's movement was telling them to. Why was this job, seemingly cloaked in a misleading personal service image, saturated with sexist propaganda, and consisting of long hours of hard, decidedly unglamorous work something worth making into a career? Certainly money and benefits were improving steadily with union

representation, but our findings are consistent with those of Cahn (1977); although of high priority, women did not list pay as the primary reason for job satisfaction. No, the movement issues also sensitized women to other significant and previously neglected features of their work. Of the 45 women interviewed, the majority spontaneously referred to the freedom inherent in the work. Analytically, that freedom embraces three concepts: freedom to play an instrumental role, freedom in performing the work tasks and freedom in personal time.

First of all, the assertion that flight attendants play an instrumental role may sound exceedingly contradictory in light of the job that they do and especially in terms of its submissive sexist imagery. Parsons, in differentiating between goal-directed, instrumental actions and expressive actions, which are related to maintaining motivational equilibrium, argues that society equates the former with male behavior and the latter with female behavior. The expressive role is that which includes "explaining, reassuring, understanding, supporting, and accepting" behaviors (Parsons and Bales, 1955:47). Admittedly, there is a pronounced expressive element to the flight attendant's role—she (or he) soothes anxious passengers, sees that they are fed and watered and so forth. But the job embodies certain instrumental or goal-directed functions as well, particularly as the flight attendant acts as the agent of social control in the aircraft cabin. (It is, for example, almost unheard of nowadays for flight attendants to send for the captain or other cockpit crew to settle even the most out-of-hand passengers.) But the most profound manifestation of the instrumental role exists in the conception of the job vis-a-vis the home environment or the domain of usual patriarchal authority. The flight attendant may go off to do "expressive" work,

but the key is in the "going off to do it." Disguised in all this is a significant contradiction: "going off" is in itself indicative of instrumentalism, of acting in the world in a goal-directed manner. Vis-a-vis others at home, the flight attendant is the one to leave home, to travel alone, to be accountable only to herself for her free time, to be unavailable for family and domestic and social responsibilities, and so forth. This state of affairs is doubly underscored by the experiences of the married flight attendants with children whose husbands assume parenting responsibilities alone in their absence. Although women flight attendants may not articulate it in sociological jargon, instrumentalism is heady stuff; once experienced, it is difficult to give up (13).

Secondly, there is freedom in the work environment--at least relative to many other work environments. The flight attendant may not, on the one hand, be an independent professional, but on the other, works in an almost totally unsupervised way. The work at hand is dictated by the structure of tasks to be accomplished in a given amount of time; it is not dictated by another person. In describing how they get the job done, flight attendants refer constantly to their "flying partners," a highly democratic notion of the division of labor. Such division harks back to more elementary, historical and communal forms of work, which Jesse Bernard pointed out has particularly characterized women's work and which provided, in its non-hierarchical sociability, intrinsic satisfaction (Bernard, 1981:38-73). Again, such forms of work may provide a counter to the lack of upward mobility in the job. Lewin and Olesen, in analyzing nurses' perceptions of success, have demonstrated that success in work is much more varied and complex than upward mobility alone; success may include satisfaction in working

autonomously and pride in being able to control a situation on one's own (Lewin and Olesen, 1977)—certainly the case for the flight attendants.

Finally, the scheduling of work provides release from the nine to five regime. Grouping work periods over several days structures an intense period of work and then conversely affords extended periods away from prescribed responsibilities. Such freedom allows flexibility for the pursuit of second careers, educational programs, or more intimacy in parent-child relationships.

The women's movement legitimized women's increased time on the job and added impetus to the development of future occupational commitment by redefining values. Phrases like "a working mother is a good mother" began to appear in popular women's magazines, and as will be seen in later chapters, flight attendants agreed. Moreover, the movement promoted the view that women had a right to demand job satisfaction and were as justified as males in demanding beneficial working conditions. The narrative of women flight attendants who found themselves working and changing through this time, whether they considered themselves feminists or not, is expressive of women's movement ideology.

The Occupational Health Movement

The ongoing historical links between social movements is again apparent in examining occupational health as a significant collective movement relevant to flight attendants. Developing as a career group in the context of civil rights and feminism set up the necessary preconditions for flight attendant involvement with occupational health issues. Again, there are dialectical links: as conditions changed

to allow increased tenure, health problems increased. Political links also emerged from one of the central unifying features of the women's movement—the issue of women's health (Ruzek, 1978). Thus, for example, activists in Stewardesses for Women's Rights launched their attack on two fronts, on health issues and sexism. The work done by stewardesses to eliminate radioactive cargo is a good case in point (cf., Newsweek, 1974:100). Not only was this an issue on which to build support of rank and file, but it was also an issue with which to build public support for a movement.

Some sources date the occupational health movement to the passage of the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970, an act with little regulatory punch but a source of "consciousness raising" nonetheless (Kotelchuck, 1981:7-17). For flight attendants the act was a stimulus to health awareness because as part of an industry under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration, OSHA did not cover them (14). Flight attendant union leaders and health and safety representatives are particularly explicit on this point when interviewed.

Undoubtedly all the various health movements of the seventies—women's health, self-help/self-care, holistic health, etc.—provided new knowledge to flight attendants who participated in varying degrees as many Americans did. What is then of interest is how the new awareness and the developing strategies were transmitted among flight attendants, made occupationally specific, and raised to a level of collective interest. Interviews reveal that consciousness of health is related to increased time on the job, and moreover, to perception of permanence on the job. Visible health problems of flight attendants include repeated bladder and upper respiratory infections (related to

working in zero humidity), back and foot strains, sleep disturbances and depression related to time zone changes. An added source of worry however is the whole genre of "unknown" problems that from current evidence, flight attendants infer may develop. They question, for example, whether their rate of cancer, possibly from increased radiation exposure, is on the rise or whether women flight attendants are not already experiencing a higher than normal rate of gynecologic disorders related to their work environment. These and many other health problems have been exposed in recent years (cf., Wofford, 1977; Hunt, 1977; Cahn, 1977:16; Alter and Mohler, 1980; Aviation Safety Institute, 1980).

Given that the career may presumably cause health problems, the sociological question must now be asked: how does health concern one's career? If "health" is a social movement, what is <u>its</u> effect on career?

To a certain extent an individual's having these occupational problems reaffirms old-hand status. It bespeaks seasoned professionalism or at least that one is a dedicated worker. As one flight attendant jokingly puts it, "I've got the battle scars—the corns on my feet, the aching back, the wrinkles in my face...oh, not to mention the tough hide from dealing with the New York passengers!" Focusing collectively on the battle scars as on any mutual issue reaffirms group membership.

But more importantly, occupational health provides a time frame for career, even if that time frame is an ambiguous and highly disputed one. Rather than being bound by social definitions of what constitutes appropriate time in the work world for young women as in the fifties and sixties, the career is now bound by socially constructed definitions of health, health threat, tolerance, and acceptance outcome levels.

Such a state of affairs is not unlike a whole category of workers—firemen, professional athletes, stuntmen and others—who know or may fear that the physical demands of the career will necessitate a shorter working life and thus dictate preparation for future work. As in these other occupations, physical health is one consideration prompting flight attendants to either plan for or concurrently move into second careers (15).

The dimension of time and the participants' constructions of it are crucial to any sociological analysis of this occupation and its health aspects. With increasing tenure on the job, flight attendants have heightened awareness of the time that has passed since they've been in the work, speculations about what future time at work will bring, and also a sense of accelerated time; flight attendants have a saying that one ages two years flying for every one year on the ground (16). In addition, there is an emerging awareness of the meaning of time under varying sets of conditions. For example, there are people who have worked as long as 35 years as cabin attendants; yet only half their careers, if that, was spent working in jets which cover vast distances at considerably increased speeds. Other flight attendants, some of whom have already worked 16 or 17 years, have spent their entire careers in jets. Under the accelerated conditions, they express doubt that they will be as healthy when they reach 30 years. Whatever the outcome, the point is that now a new conception of career length, constructed around health, will enter into the awareness of individuals and also collective activities. It will become a negotiated issue around which both the flight attendants and the airlines will develop certain imagery according to their respective interests. Thus, the occupational health movement, like others before it, has had its impact

on career development.

Social movements constitute a collective demand for change in some aspect of the social order (Gusfield, 1970) and as such define certain aspects of the existing social order as social problems (Toch, 1965:3-27). In examining the dialectical interplay between social movements and consciousness of career, it is not simply that each of these movements delineated a set of problems which, once solved, made way for the next. Far from it, the ageist and sexist discrimination, which civil rights litigation converted to legal problems, and the political/ economic isolation a sex-segregated occupation knows so well are far from "solved" problems. Moreover, in delineating the importance of three or four different movements, there is a risk of missing the fact that all the issues raised are women's issues. For example, the civil rights violations the stewardesses experienced were problems because they were women. Age 32 was not an arbitrary number selected by industry; rather it was a cutoff point below which "young and attractive" prevailed. Similarly, feminist activists were protesting the use of women's bodies as commodities to invest in the sales effort of the company. Similarly, many health problems in a woman-oriented occupation are female health problems; this fact raises old biases similar to those that inspired protective legislation for women and have the net effect of keeping them out of the work force. Yet whether the problems these movements highlighted have been resolved or not, the fact remains that the influence of the movements has been deep.

The Labor Movement

During the 30 years that flight attendants have been organized in unions the labor movement has not enjoyed any particular resurgence.

Yet even in a period of relative quiescence the longest running social movement in the U.S. figures importantly in the career development of women flight attendants. It was the wage and benefit issues that labor organizations address that, among others, affected flight attendants' estimations of their work and their plans for future participation.

Flight attendants are an example of the growing participation of women in unions. As white collar women workers, however, they may well be on the cutting edge of female union participation. The overall rate of union membership in America has not grown as fast as the labor force (Finn, 1979), but the proportion of women union members has increased since the mid-fifties (LeGrande, 1978) (17). Although it is greater than that of men, women's membership is not growing as fast as their labor force entry rate (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980) (18). Further, the continuing underrepresentation of women in the white collar areas, or what Lowe has termed the "female job ghettos" where most women work (Lowe, 1981), and the lack of women's visibility in leadership positions on any level relative to their numbers (Koziara and Pierson, 1981) are primary issues of concern to unionists and subjects for social researchers. The experience of flight attendants is of interest because of their long-standing history of organization compared to other working women, particularly other white collar women. Their organizational path, while far from smooth, has definitely been instructive (19).

Flight attendants first organized in 1945 because of their location in an industry, transportation, with a tradition of unionization. The early years of unionization, if indeed the Airline Stewards and Stewardesses Association could be characterized that strongly as a collective bargaining unit, were spent under the aegis of the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA). During the sixties flight attendant groups

in many airlines dissaffiliated with ALPA and became part of the Transport Workers Union of America (TWU) in the Air Transport Division, a vast blue collar, male-dominated union. The stewardesses' affiliation with the association, ALPA, occurred in what might be called the glamour days of flying history (cf., Solberg, 1979), while the shift to the TWU, and in some airlines, to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters came about as flying itself became more proletarianized. Yet in all the airlines, whether the flight attendants were organized under the TWU or kept their ties to ALPA, until into the early seventies union consciousness was weak. The reason for this was twofold: few stayed long enough to become knowledgeable and involved with the complexities of union activities (Watkins, 1976), and in both ALPA and the TWU until the tenure barriers were down, flight attendants were lone female newcomers in vast male-dominated organizations with long-standing membership. Flight attendants were not viewed as part of the primary work force by their male counterparts since their work history played into the traditional industrial union notion that female wage earners are not the main breadwinners and thus deserving of a "family wage" (Coote, 1980). Senior flight attendants recall their perception of "not being taken seriously." One current flight attendant union president characterized these unions as "paper tigers" as far as the flight attendants were concerned," for in spite of their size and power they limited the scope of their activities on behalf of their women members. For example, although the unions began to attend to certain bread and butter issues after 1968, they were less than sympathetic to the women's childlike treatment by the companies nor the fact that women were fired for being four pounds overweight.

In spite of the dissatisfactions that flight attendants felt in

the male-dominated unions, however, these organizations provided a sensitizing training group. Activity within them also provided concrete gains. Like other social movements, labor union activism made a further contribution to job longevity, namely in respect to wages and benefits. Once women had broken the age and marital status limitations and as they were gaining a new rhetoric of assertiveness, they moved rapidly to improve their wages and working conditions. In 1976 the Los Angeles Times reported that flight attendants were now "less ornamental" and "more militant," and that, "The rebelliousness has led to four strikes since 1969 by attendants, resulting in the grounding of airlines a total of 173 days....Such action was almost unheard of before 1970" (Watkins, 1976). The gains made in wages and time off through negotiations and job actions during this period were significant and contributed greatly to reconsideration of careers.

Another feature influencing the union history of flight attendants is that from 1965 to 1975 the size of their work force doubled, while the rate of employment for the airline industry overall rose only 19 percent (Watkins, 1976). The surge in hiring from 1972 to 1975 is explained by the widespread use of jumbo jets requiring larger cabin crews. By 1975 flight attendants outnumbered pilots by 60 percent and almost equaled the number of mechanics (Watkins, 1976). This new strength in numbers in the face of their mounting discontent over the TWU's unwillingness to address flight attendant issues prompted the drive to form independent unions.

In a curious way, professionalization became a hard line union issue and an argument for breaking away. Flight attendants wanted to press for government certification for licenses that would represent their qualifications to the public. The Air Transport Division had

hardly been willing to take action on behalf of a group that not only represented less than a sixth of their membership, but with whom they also had difficulty identifying. Activist flight attendants pushing for the breakaway were lobbying the membership on precisely those differences; a 1976 memo to independent union organizers instructs the speaker to read a portion of the U.S. Census Report to the assembled flight attendants and explain that,

> If you're out of work this is what the unemployment office uses to determine what jobs you as a flight attendant would be qualified to fill. Notice we are not covered under the Protective Service Worker Section even though you are qualified to evacuate an airplane and save people's lives! Why? Because we are not certified by the government and the TWU has not until this year decided to even attempt to gain licensing of flight attendants. Why? Because, this means you would be considered a skilled, blue collar worker and this would mean more pay for your qualifications!

The memo reflects some of the ambivalence of the group itself: they didn't identify with blue collar males in baggage and fleet service, yet at the same time the inequities in pay between themselves and this group whose jobs they saw as less responsible (not "protective service workers" like themselves) were clearly apparent. The women were rapidly redefining their position in the work force from secondary to primary workers while males in their union affiliates were not.

Many flight attendants characterized the break from the TWU (not from ALPA) as a move to increase status and restore some of the lost professional image. Opponents took this position a step further and termed it "elitist" (20). In the move to independent organization undoubtedly there was an element of identification with the time when air travel was a class act performed in the company of ladies and gentlemen who behaved properly and wore their Sunday best (cf., Morgan,

1982). Perhaps it was a nostalgic attempt to recapture what was good about the past, a time when luggage x-rays were unheard of and there wasn't a policeman in sight. The professionalization process always involves handling of the dirty work (Hughes, 1971:306-309), perhaps it also means trying to escape the dirtiness. The flight attendants may well have been trying to do that as they separated from baggage handlers and ground crews in their attempt at status passage. Interviewing flight attendants at the time, I found that in some quarters the break from the international did not appear to be consciously related to a feminist ideology or even to a desire to separate from historically oppressive male unionism (cf., Stellman, 1977:38-39). What they did express was their desire to elevate the status of their occupation which they perceived as rapidly becoming "low status women's work" (21).

The history of women in the labor movement has often been marked by periods of temporary or permanent disaffiliation with men's unions (cf., LeGrande, 1978) or the formation of separate associations or even locals to solidify organization and address women's issues that would not be raised in any other way (cf., Baxandall, et al, 1976) (22). Such a movement characterized this period in flight attendant history in that five major independent unions were voted in by the membership (23).

When union presidents and other officials were interviewed in 1980-81 they had mixed predictions regarding potential merger into an international. Some thought that was a logical next step in flight attendant organization, others felt that the problems in different airlines precluded all flight attendants organizing together. In any case the problems of the independents have been numerous, and some are

still gender related. Lack of union history and experience, relative to other airline employees' unions, has hindered them, and the specter of dealing with powerful all-male corporate management has influenced them to elect a disproportionate number of male leaders on the national as well as regional and sectional levels.

In many ways the current economic depression in the U.S. and job survival issues are forcing the unions to grapple with issues they thought settled 15 years ago. They are weathering cutbacks in their work force forcing furloughing of the most junior people and company demands to increase production (Dallos, 1981). The major issue that faces flight attendants now is the creation of non-union subsidiary airlines and the threat they present to the economic security of the work force. After deregulation of the airline industry in 1978 many of the major companies began to form "alter-ego" airlines (Air Line Pilots Association Newsletter, 1981). For example, Texas International created New York Airlines, a shuttle that is in direct competition with Eastern for the New York to Boston business. The subsidiaries compete with lower fares not only because they are non-union but also because they employ part-time workers, contract ground handling services, and don't offer the ticketing facilities of the trunk lines. At the end of 1981, when all the major trunk carriers were reporting overall losses for the year and a seven percent decline in domestic passenger traffic, the new airlines were up well past 20 percent (Yoshihara, 1981). The existence of significant numbers of non-union airline flight attendants weakens union organization and ability to press for industry-wide improvements (such as a limit on flight duty time which presently does not exist). The potential re-emergence of a temporary work force also threatens gains that have

been made in work rules, pensions and retirement, medical and other benefits—all longevity related issues. Since the subsidiary development affects a great many airline employees, new coalitions and collective strategies will have to emerge for the protection of all.

The commitment to work on the part of women flight attendants who now average 10 years' seniority is indisputable. Working continuously sets this particular women's work force apart from others in respect to occupational consciousness. In this regard, Miller has recently demonstrated that, "Length of initial employment does influence lifetime labor force attachment....Older women who worked longer in their first employment period...now prefer full-time employment more than those women who worked a shorter initial period" (Miller, 1981:35-36). Uninterrupted work does make a difference, and flight attendants characterize such women with strong attachment to work.

In conclusion it may be said that the examination of an occupation in the light of major social movements explains much of the activity within the occupation. On the other side, analyzing an occupational world in this regard provides yet another perspective on the social movement per se. That is, most accounts of social movements are linear, following an historical time line of the rise, the career and the demise of the movement—a necessary procedure if one is to appreciate the entirety of the movement. An occupational analysis such as this conveys the intersections of the movement, the way in which it interacts with a specific segment of society, with a particular social world.

The issues generated by civil rights, feminism, the occupational health movement and the ongoing labor movement itself as they were played out in the flight attendants' occupational world generated new kinds of consciousness in respect to uninterrupted work. Only when

women began to define their work participation in terms of a career model did they begin to force others—co-workers, employers, the public, even their own families—to see them as serious workers too. But this is the macro-sociological view. To further illuminate the connections between historical change and consciousness, it is necessary to go back to the experiences of the women who made their careers throughout this time period. Thus, in Chapter II the sixties' women and the formation of the first cohort will be analyzed.

CHAPTER I

NOTES

1. The term "sixties' women" will be used throughout this report to designate those women hired during that decade and to the end of 1971. A few of the women interviewed were hired before 1964, the bulk were hired after 1964; this also reflects the distribution in the work force. Hiring slowed greatly in 1971 when the industry experienced economic slowdown.
2. The impact of social movements has been heightened in recent years in that in the sixties the media brought the public at large closer to collective behavior and social protest than ever before (Sampson, 1971:357-412). This was equally true in the seventies.
3. Contrary to the cheerful pictures of the Kiwi ceremonies (named for the Australian Kiwi bird that cannot fly) shown in nostalgic books on stewardess life (see Engeman, 1960) or in airline recruitment publications (see Morton, 1980) being grounded was devastating. One interviewee of 19 years' seniority told of her personal acquaintance with two 32-year-old women who committed suicide.
4. Numerous court opinions have held that it was the intention of Title VII that its power be broadly read and applied so as to terminate all forms of discriminatory practices in employment; for example, Title VII has been invoked for age or pregnancy in addition to strict sex discrimination (Modjeska, 1980). Although the statutory power to redress such discrimination exists under Title VII, civil rights attorney Mary C. Dunlap asserts that it has been little used because of deeply entrenched sexism in the courts. She states,

"class relief has been hard-won under Title VII and is not frequent" (Dunlap, 1977:61-74).

5. Of interest also is the case of Diaz v. Pan American Airways, in which Celio Diaz charged that Pan American's refusal to hire him as a cabin attendant (not purser) because he was a male violated his rights under Title VII. The lower court found in favor of Pan American, holding that passenger preference for females and the alleged ability of females to soothe anxious passengers constituted bonafide occupational qualifications. The U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the decision in its reading of Title VII and the facts of the case (Diaz v. Pan American Airways, 1971).
6. Other women, who were just coming into the job in 1968, tended to be less affected at the time, and report that the breaking of age barriers had meaning "in retrospect."
7. Attorney and law librarian Eleanor Delashmitt provided assistance in locating and interpreting cases brought by airline flight attendants under Title VII. Attorney Donald Rosen also provided analytic assistance with "Diaz v. Pan American."
8. In the period at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, a number of court challenges took place in respect not only to age and marital status but to the legality of terminating or barring those female flight attendants who had children. The issue of the "returning mothers" is a complex one even now and not resolved in all airlines.
9. "The members of the occupation were referred to as 'stewardess' until 1975 when the title was revised to flight attendant to eliminate sex reference" (Stuckey, 1977).
10. There is documented support of flight attendants by the National

Organization for Women (San Francisco Examiner, July 8, 1973; Zane, 1974). In fact, some of the founders of NOW were keynote speakers at the first annual convention of the organization, Stewardesses for Women's Rights (SFWR News, 1974b). What is significant here, however, is the flight attendant's perception of a question of legitimacy in her grievances as long as she is engaged in work requiring sexually stereotyped behavior.

11. Such an effort was an uphill battle. Not only were feminist stewardesses attempting to counter deeply entrenched sexism, but by trying to establish their role as agents of safety, they were asking the public to face up to a fearful situation, the possibility of crashes, a reality the flying public would sooner repress. The airlines apparently know this collective defense mechanism well, and except for some short-lived humorous commercials emphasizing "sweaty palms," enacted by a prominent comedian in the sixties, such fears, and even safety, are almost never mentioned.

12. Personal communication with Anselm Strauss. See also "Social Worlds," by Anselm Strauss, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, 1976.

13. The very fact of this instrumentalism vis-a-vis the home may in part account for the denigrating side of the stewardess image, as a loose woman. It may in fact represent a societal reaction to the lack of control of its young women. Short of being able to physically keep them within bounds of supervision, society will control them with negative attributions. Much the same used to be the case with young nurses who migrated from the midwest to California or Hawaii: "nurses are hot dates; they've seen it all."

14. The Federal Aviation Administration is the federal regulatory agency

that covers the airline industry; yet here too flight attendants have little protection. According to leaders in several flight attendant unions, under the FAA there is not a single provision addressing the health protection of flight attendants.

15. Irving Kenneth Zola has suggested that perhaps being a flight attendant <u>is</u> a time-bound job in spite of legal suits that have established the right to work and suggested analytic comparisons with other "time-bound" occupations. I am indebted to him for discussion that led to the aforementioned formulation regarding health and career.

16. There is fascinating recent material regarding the relationship between spending periods of time in a state of acceleration (as in flying) and aging (cited in Hulse, 1981).

17. In an article examining U.S. "tuxedo unionism," Edward Finn states:

> The U.S. union movement is the only one in the industrialized West which is in decline. Barely 20 percent of the total U.S. labor force is unionized, compared with 53 percent in Britain (Finn, 1979:760).

The decline in U.S. union membership has been blamed on a number of factors, the most notable being the anti-union measures of the post-World War II Taft-Hartley Act and a quarter century of less than activist leadership under George Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO. Meany and his executive board took a laissez-faire attitude toward organizing, stating, "Why should we worry about organizing groups of people who do not appear to want to be organized?" In addition, throughout that period the AFL-CIO took a political stand that was often to the right of the State Department on international issues (cf., Finn, 1979), at best did little to promote the civil rights of blacks and other minorities

in the work force (Allen, 1975), and while apparently willing to collect their union dues turned a blind eye to the growing numbers of women in the work force, particularly in regard to increasing their union leadership positions (LeGrande, 1978:13).

18. Women's participation has grown, from 18 percent of the overall total of union membership in 1960 to 24 percent in 1978 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980), but women are clearly underrepresented. Women account for 40 percent of the labor force, and 51 percent of the U.S. adult female population is in the labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 1975).

19. Lowe has done an extensive review of the literature on women's union membership and has categorized the explanations for the under-representation of women into three categories: the female traits explanation (i.e., family responsibilities conflict with participation, women's situation as secondary wage earners causes them to be viewed as temporary; the attitude among both sexes that "union activity is strictly a man's job"); the union discrimination explanation (i.e., sex stereotypes serve as a rationale for exclusionary practices: women's low pay, lack of skill and temporary tenure are seen as proof of their disinterest rather than conditions brought about by sex-based and class-based cultural ideology); the structure of employment explanation (i.e., there is no evidence to indicate that women are less pro-union than men, but they are generally shunted into fields of employment in industries that have successfully resisted unionization). Lowe concludes that gender makes a difference to the extent that the labor market is segmented along sex lines, but it would appear in the case of flight attendants that all three explanations have some

relevance: (1) Women did initially see themselves as temporary, (2) They were in a second class position in the union (and for both these reasons lacked assertiveness), and (3) Even though they were in a unionized occupation the fact of its sex segregation enabled employers to relate to them on a different basis than to the other unions (Lowe, 1981).

20. When bemoaning, as all unionists do, the lack of participation of the rank and file, flight attendant unionists have indicated that "flight attendants are very middle class" and "tend not to come from families with union backgrounds where they learned to identify with the union." That may be true, but I would still argue that the structural barriers as stated above are more relevant. It is doubtful that any greater percentage of pilots came from families with union backgrounds and yet APLA has managed to develop into seemingly one of the most effective and strongest unions in U.S. history.

21. In Chapter V the ideological position of flight attendants in regard to their safety agent role will be discussed in detail. This position emerged in the press for professionalization.

22. See for example: Lillian Matthews, "Women in the Trade Unions in San Francisco," 1913:172-173; Alice Henry, "The Woman Organizer," 1915:170-171; Annemarie Troger, "The Coalition of Labor Union Women," 1975:390-399 (all cited in Baxandall, et al, 1976).

23. The five major independent unions are as follows:

    1) The Independent Union of Flight Attendants (IUFA), representing Pan American and National (now merged into Pan American).

    2) The Independent Federation of Flight Attendants (IFFA) which

represents TWA.

3) The Association of Professional Flight Attendants which represents American Airlines.

4) The Union of Flight Attendants which represents Continental.

5) The Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) which was formerly associated with ALPA, is the largest union and represents in addition to several large carriers (United, Western, Braniff, Texas International) also a number of smaller carriers (Air New England, Alaska Aloha, Hawaiian, Hughes Airwest, Ozark, Piedmont, Republic, Transamerica and USAir).

The Transport Workers Union, AFL-CIO, continues to represent flight attendants with Air California, Eastern, National and Southwest. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents Capitol, Flying Tiger, Northwest Orient, Wien Air Alaska, and World Airways. The California based airline, Pacific Southwest Airlines is represented by an association, the Southwest Independent Flight Attendants Association, not a union. Delta Airlines, one of the largest carriers and employing 6,000 flight attendants has resisted unionization throughout its long history by giving its employees the benefits negotiated in other carriers.

CHAPTER II

"I NEVER THOUGHT..."

TWO YEARS BECOMES TWELVE

> If anyone would have told me 12 years ago I'd still be a flight attendant now I'd have told them they were crazy. When I started, the rules had just changed and you could work beyond age 32, but mainly, you just didn't! And here I am. But now my reasons for being here are different than they were then.
>
> Marlene, 12 years

> Some girls, myself included, coming in at the age of 21, 15 years ago, thought it was all just fantastic. 'Tell me to do anything and I'll do it, go anywhere and I'll go.' Now there's a difference. You can see it. The new people coming in are a lot different, but we've changed too. Have we ever. We do what I would call finer service, but we won't do degrading things.
>
> Virginia, 15 years

> After I had worked awhile my life started to take a different shape. I could see myself changing. It was a giant step....I'm still changing....That's why I think this study is good. I read Passages and I enjoyed it, but I couldn't really identify with re-entry women.... I want to know about women who have been in it all this time and have gone through all the changes. That's not just flight attendants; that's a lot of women.
>
> Melanie, 17 years

The first chapter examined the macro social context and the importance of social movements in guiding the progress of the participants. This chapter is about personal change. Two themes are explored: why did a group of young women who entered a short-term job lasting a year or two continue beyond that time limit; and how is it that these women changed. The latter explains how the first is

possible. We now look closely into the structural changes that resulted from social change, into personal biography, and how those involved explain their development.

The women hired in the sixties were the first group hired that remained employed beyond the arbitrary time limit. Lifting age limitations had its effects not only on those over age 32, but on those further down the chronological ladder. Women of two or three years' seniority ceased to think in terms of resigning. These women were the ones who began to see through the system and to reconstruct their roles in relation to a new social reality (cf., Lopata, 1973). The sixties' women stayed together and they moved through time together; they were the first cohort. Over and above a reference group, the cohort provided a stable set of age-related interactants; and because of this common feature, as they worked longer and grew older, the group as a whole provided validation, legitimacy, to the members' identities.

Comprehensive dictionaries define "cohort" as "accomplices." If one thinks of accomplices in terms of fellow adventurers in breaking new ground, new identities, new definitions of the situation, then indeed that is an adequate definition of what cohort has meant for this occupational group.

As the flight attendants related their stories and as I listened to them talk together, a picture emerged of the individual actors who play their parts in the occupational saga. If the social movement sets the stage and structural conditions provide direction, it is the lives and histories of individuals which make the story understandable. Can one agree with North and Hatt that "the job makes the man?" or in this case, the woman? Yes, but no more than it is that the women make the job, or themselves. The "Sixties' Women" began with one type of self-

estimation and set of expectations, and now, years later, find themselves in the same occupation, but with a different estimate of self and a new set of expectations. Occupational identity has unexpectedly remained the same ("I'm still a flight attendant"), yet at the same time it has not ("we're different now"). The conditions and the emergent meanings which made this evolution possible will be analyzed.

In talking about changes in working women, the woman quoted above observes, "It's not just flight attendants (who have changed), it's a lot of women." This may be true; it may simply be that the change in identity is more observable in flight attendants. For flight attendants, the job becomes a yardstick against which to measure personal change. The job itself has not escaped transformation, and people have a lot to say about how different working is now from when they first started. However, the differences more specifically concern the conditions under which the work is done rather than the work itself (1).

The women working now who became flight attendants in the decade of the sixties in many ways exemplify the experience of women who have worked steadily and uninterruptedly for a similar period of time. They simply did not expect to do so, much less expect that they would <u>want</u> to still be doing paid work, and particularly this same job. As was pointed out in Chapter I, the sixties' women are unique in that they started working under a set of structural conditions that explicitly precluded working very long. In addition, their tenure has spanned a time during which many significant changes in thinking about women's roles and women at work has taken place; this is documented by the voluminous literature on women and work during that period (cf., Gordon,

1968; Rossi, 1970; Chafe, 1972; Oakley, 1974; Daniels, 1975; Stromberg and Harkness, 1975; Blaxall and Reagan, 1976; Miller, 1981).

The limiting work rules, however, were merely a reflection of the normative structure--the accepted, taken-for-granted truths in society (i.e., women weren't supposed to be doing paid work). Even if the rules hadn't existed when they were hired, most women indicate that they would not have expected to stay more than a year or two on the job. Title VII implementation did not effect an abrupt change; in fact, there had always been some exceptions to the mandatory age 32 retirement and to the no-marriage rule in certain airlines. And even when the age and marriage limitations were struck down, for a period of time the social definition of the job remained much the same: it was seen as a short-term job, something a woman did for those few years in the work world preceding marriage and family. Certainly the women's movement had not yet begun to have a widespread impact on the definition of work, and more concretely, although the numbers of women in the general labor force had swelled, they still did not reflect increased continuity of women at work; that would not be until another decade had passed (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980; Miller, 1981). To a limited extent such societal definition of who and what is an appropriate flight attendant still lags--if we define "societal definition" as the notions of the flying public. Flight attendants as a group have come to have a different definition of appropriateness than do outsiders forming opinions about flight attendants. It's not that passengers haven't noticed that flight attendants are getting older; most people recognize that the work force appears more experienced. But noticing some change is one thing, accepting it as legitimate and without question is another. Married flight attendants all report that the most frequent

question from passengers once they spot a wedding ring is, "You can work and be married?" or "What does your husband think of your working?" Such questions reflect the persisting nature of older views of the requirements of women's work and the presumed conflict between marriage and work (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976).

The greatest support for the idea of flight attendants' continuing to work as they grow older, or while married or a parent, comes from within their own ranks. There are now a great many who have "grown up" together on the job. Over half are over thirty and have worked ten years or more. Even by 1976, 51 percent were married (Detroit Free Press, August 30, 1976), and 15 percent had children (Rattner, 1976). There are numbers behind the consensus that it is "o.k." to be other than single, 22, and planning to quit next year. Because the legitimacy of the changing statistics has been questioned by the public and therefore must be defended by flight attendants, this particular group has been forced to give a good deal of thought to the appropriateness of being in this job this length of time, and to develop new ideological positions. The women who have been on the frontiers of definitional change have stayed at work continuously for the past ten, twelve, fifteen or eighteen years, some single, married, divorced, some with children, some without. Not all have stayed because they love the job—some love it and some hate it—most simply find more redemptive features than not, more to like than dislike. The majority of the 45 flight attendants interviewed for this study were women of this group; they are the "new seniors"—women with ten to seventeen years' seniority.

The women frequently remark that they are not the same "girls" they were when they were hired. Over and over again people explore

changes in definition of self, both collective and individual. Some of this reflection is undoubtedly prompted by the subject matter of the study; during interviews a history of occupational identity is pieced together. But it is also clear that nostalgia is an everyday process in the life of flight attendants. People told me, "We talk about this all the time"--"this" being "who we are" and "who we used to be." That people are conscious of personal change and can specify it is especially interesting in light of the fact that the job has had a great deal of constancy and that the work cohort has remained stable. Nostalgic remembrance is a process woven into daily work life. This is very unlike the high school or college reunion wherein the cohort members who had gone their separate ways for years reunite to reflect on old times. In the flight attendant group there is a continual reflection on old times. The interaction of past and present is rather less dramatic, but on the other hand serves a normalizing function. In providing for continuity of identity, nostalgic reflection mutes the negative connotations of the past at the same time that it offers retreat from the more abrasive features of the present (Davis, 1979). The stewardess remembers herself 12 years ago not as servile sex object, but as pretty young girl who hadn't yet learned to question authority; reflections on the simplicity and gentility of service tasks as they were formerly done affirms the legitimacy of her low opinion of the current mass production approach to flight service and her expected part in it. Such interaction in the cohort is central to identity.

An Environment Conducive to Personal Change

There appears to be a quality or essence to the geographically vast work environment itself that contributes to changing consciousness

of self. Both social research and philosophical observations on the existential human condition argue for such a relationship.

In an important paper, "Stay Home Little Sheba: On Placement, Displacement, and Social Change," Rose Laub Coser explores the relationship between geographic displacement and social change particularly as it affects women and their struggle for power and equality in the public sphere of life (1975). She notes that displacements are considered antisocial by policy makers when they are not patterned or controlled to maintain existing status relations. In other words, if women leave home to work, if children are cared for outside the home, if the social placement function of the family is weakened, then social change is promoted. The stage is set for new definitions of roles and relationships. Her argument is well taken and applies here as well. In fact, one needn't be a sociologist to recognize that distance acts more rapidly than time to change one's outlook and sense of self. Recall Thomas Mann's description of the experience of his simple unassuming protagonist in The Magic Mountain. As his train journey takes him from station to station up into the Alps, the young man becomes aware of personal transformation. Writes Mann:

> Space, rolling and revolving between him and his native health, possessed and wielded the powers we generally ascribe to time. From hour to hour it worked changes in him, like to those wrought by time, yet in a way even more striking. Space, like time, engenders forgetfulness; but it does so by setting us bodily free from our surroundings and giving us back our primitive, unattached state. Yes, it can even in the twinkling of an eye, make something like a vagabond of the pedant and Philistine. Time, we say, is Lethe; but change of air is a similar draught, and if it works less thoroughly, does so more quickly (Mann, 1927).

To physically move in space is to change one's vantage point in many ways.

Coser recognizes and describes the power of geographic displacement to promote social change, and therefore the significance of women leaving home to work. Yet paradoxically she cites the case of stewardesses as an exception. She contends that being in contact primarily with one's occupational colleagues, with others who share the same role, exerts a role maintenance function counteracting social change (Coser, 1975:474-475).

She also posits that there is a second type of geographic displacement or relocation that is similarly not disruptive to existing status relationships; this non-disruptive displacement is traveling which has a ceremonial quality, e.g., travel as a rite de passage such as a graduation trip or a honeymoon. This is "orderly" and time-bound travel as opposed to open-ended travel that is unpredictable in regard to its outcome, e.g., adolescents hitch-hiking around Europe with the vague purpose of "finding themselves" (Coser, 1975:475).

In spite of Coser's contention about stewardesses not changing, her analysis may inadvertently shed some light on why they have. The argument could be made that in earlier years when job tenure was 18 months, the travel did have a ceremonial quality. To take such a job at nineteen or twenty marked one's change in status from school girl to young woman, and leaving the job after a year or two equally marked one's passage into "marriageable" woman, ready to cast aside one's youthful freedom and settle down. But as women stayed on the job, it could no longer be considered a youthful ceremonial; it was now open-ended, "unpredictable," "uncontrolled;" it violated the

normative arrangements, forcing new definitions and new role relationships both in the family and in the work world. Thus, on the one hand we needn't go beyond the functionalist view of role and social structure to explain change that has been wrought in an occupational group, which, according to functionalist logic, should not have experienced much change. Yet on the other hand, to examine the empirical world with only this paradigm is limiting and ignores much of the activity of the participants. In other words, the structural functionalist analysis is informative as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Status passage and redefinition of type of travel aside, what Coser's analysis does not take into account is the subjective side of the actor, the ability of the person to process and interpret experience and even redefine experience in consultation with and as an observer of others and of self, thus actively promoting social change through change in consciousness. Observation and participation may be in respect to so macro an activity as a social movement, as in the case of Melanie, the woman cited in Chapter I who described her personal reflections on the meaning of civil rights in her own life and experience. Such observations and participation may also be found in micro interaction: a flight attendant's recounting of her observation of another woman play acting the "sexy stewardess" role in an interaction with the airplane captain, a Goffmanesque "put-on" that delighted her colleagues; the performance acknowledged transcendence in her own and her colleagues' consciousness vis-a-vis a particular public conception or image. Processing and reprocessing of viewpoint and interpretation take place in many situations on many levels, and adds up to a continually evolving occupational identity.

Choosing to Become

"Reprocessing" of viewpoint emerges not only as an analytic cateogry, but also as a methodological problem when one asks, "Why did you become a flight attendant?" It is difficult to penetrate people's reconstructions of that particular event. Think of your interpretations of past decisions. I know that my answer to why I became a nurse, and later a sociologist, is quite different than motivations I expressed at the time. Which explanation is the more correct? Both probably have bearing, especially if one adopts the perspective that becoming is a lifelong process (Becker, 1964). Bucher and Strauss wisely observed that the emergent approach to the study of occupations and careers resembles a commonsense point of view; it uses everyday language to construct an analysis of how people order their lives (Bucher and Strauss, 1961). Eliciting everyday language was therefore central to building an analysis of the women's early job considerations. The following are illustrative comments:

> I was going to be a nurse....I joined (the airline) because of the exposure to travel. I didn't know what Paris looked like. I couldn't imagine what downtown New York looked like.
>
> We were talking to a girl the other day who said, 'you think this is bad (flying), try teaching school.'
>
> I worked in an office for a couple of years and I didn't like the regularity. I hated it. This affords me the opportunity to decide when I'm going to work.

The stories go on and what they indicate is the now well documented range of occupational choices presented to women. Socialized since childhood to think of marriage and family as a career (Laws, 1976) and paid work as short term (Roby, 1975), women are encouraged into sex-typed work (Ireson, 1978). Prior socialization works powerfully with

exclusion from high level white collar training and employment to keep women in female job ghettos (Huber, 1976; Lowe, 1981).

In the sociological studies of women flight attendants (Moles, 1971; Givens, 1975; Botteri, 1979; Stuckey, 1977), questions of occupational choice are addressed in varying degrees. The Givens' paper, purportedly a study of occupational choice, manages to treat the subject ahistorically by concentrating on a model of "equilibrium between rational and irrational choice processes" borrowed from positivistic psychology (1975). Botteri examines the status of flight attendants particularly noting the R.N. licensure requirement of the first stewardesses but never politically connects the two (1979). Moles concentrates on the feminine image promoted, and although she contrasts "the reality of the work," the socializing function of that image is not addressed (1971). What these three studies illustrate are misogynist assumptions so culturally ingrained that it is even difficult to ask the larger sociological questions when specifically studying a woman's occupation. Notably only one out of four, Stuckey, addresses the presentation of gender-related choices to women, and the reinforcement of this in the job (1977), a finding consistent with the data in this study.

Women entering in the sixties conceptualized the work in relation to traditional visions of middle class female futures, a conception that came out in depth interviews if not in superficial comments. At work, the flight attendant is frequently asked, "Why did you become a stewardess?" and develops certain routinized answers. These packaged responses can easily be fitted into predictably short time periods and do not call for a great deal of further explanation; they are interactional shorthand. Correspondingly, such standardized responses

usually relate to travel. Says Alesha, after 12 years in a domestic airline, "I got into it at age 22 because my youth fare card expired and I didn't know how else to travel."

In a less flippant and more confessional moment, this same flight attendant tells a group of women being interviewed of her motivation for being a flight attendant as it has changed over the years. This is clearly a response tailored to a different audience; it illustrates more especially the connection to traditional future plans as well as the reformulation that has been described by Roby (1975) as coming in the late twenties or early thirties:

> I personally did not plan to be in this job the 12 years I've been in it today. That's probably because I was really young and idealistic at the time and I thought I was going to find prince charming. I really did. And I'm not ashamed to admit it because I think a lot of girls did back then. I expected not so much to find this man on a flight, but in being as mobile as we are, I figured my chances were multiplied compared to my girlfriend who stayed in Carbondale, Illinois, where I'm from. She married somebody who went to our same high school. And you just didn't have much to choose from. But I figured, for me, who knows! Go for the big time....Well, those were my hopes. I've given up on that part of it, and have become a little more realistic in my years. Now I'm in it because I can't think of anything else that is going to give me the freedom...and pay as well as it does. Not that it pays <u>that</u> great, but at least you get a good salary and you acquire a certain lifestyle...and you acquire it on your own.
>
> Alesha, 12 years

It is undoubtedly because of this relationship of the job to marriage that in the sixties the idea of leaving at age 32 did not seem unreasonable to most flight attendants. They told themselves, "I won't be there that long anyway; I'll be married" (2). Very few initially toyed with the idea of what it might be like to do both, and even fewer

thought about the motivations which Alesha describes recognizing later. It was pointed out that the notion of "freedom" in the flight attendant's job relates to freedom to play an instrumental role, to function in a democratic division of labor, and to use large amounts of time for one's own purposes. This conception of freedom, however, is one that was acquired experientially. The women did not consciously choose the job because of such freedom, although this notion contributed to a decision to remain working. And Alesha's final comment, that you "acquire it (your lifestyle) on your own" is definitely an interpretation indicative of a new consciousness produced by the feminist movement. Thus the reasons for staying on the job become "layered" rather than changing completely, for it would appear that people retain some of that old self (i.e., some still expect to meet a husband), even though the more recent explanations of one's self and motivations become preeminent.

For almost all flight attendants in the sixties, the job was related to marriage in some way. Either, as in Alesha's case, providing the vehicle for meeting someone, or as simply enhancing one's attractiveness to the opposite sex and therefore one's chances of making a good match. Says another woman, Margie, with a great deal of animation and a bit of cynicism: "...here I was, young, fresh out of training, hitting a new city--I was a stewardess, I was a hot item!" Even in the case of the women who didn't think of looking for someone to marry at that time (and there are those who talked specifically about "avoiding" it for a while as hometown boyfriends were left behind), the job was generally seen as something you did "until" then. It definitely bore a very conscious relationship to marriage.

In addition to whatever increased possibilities for finding a

husband one's mobility in the job offered, there was also the self-enhancing aspect of assuming a "valuable identity. That is, just being a stewardess meant that you were a worthy female candidate. Thus, a type of self-validating situation was created in which to be this person was to be special; it was a case of what has been termed "positive deviance" (Norland, et al, 1976). The society considered it a positive role for certain "well-qualified" young women. The awareness of societal estimation is illustrated by the comments of Nancy, a 37-year-old woman hired 16 years ago:

> I knew that I wanted to go into this work since I was eight years old. We had career day in my sophomore year in high school. I stood up and said to the other students and to the teacher that I wanted to be an airline stewardess, and the teacher said to me in front of the entire class, 'Nancy, you must be kidding, only the beauty queens ever become airline stewardesses.'

Obviously Nancy made it and, in spite of insensitive comments or perhaps because of them, proved her worthiness to herself and others. The fact of her hiring is "evidence" of her attractiveness. This proving-of-worth theme occurs again and again as women tell their stories of how proud their parents and families were of their becoming stewardesses. And family pride had little to do with whether the job represented upward social mobility. Women coming from financially secure professional families recount the same parental endorsement for their new stewardess identity as did those from working class families who had never traveled or had the opportunities their daughters now did. Rather, it is clear that positive estimation had much to do with designation as a lovely, charming, bright and attractive young woman, a summary designation conferred on the candidates by the occasion of their being hired by the airlines. What more could a family want?

Margie, like many stewardesses then, had "some college," while her brother went to graduate school in business. But being a stewardess was a secure stamp of positive identity. She didn't need anything else.

Entering the occupation under such conditions cannot help but have ramifications for ways of thinking about oneself in later years, and for thinking about one's "prospects" when it comes to future endeavors such as second careers. Although second careers rarely follow rigid sex-typing, identity layering is still apparent. Trading on the "beauty queen" image alone could be shattering as age takes its toll, and thus women flight attendants have endeavored to create an evolving image which continues to include "attractiveness" but which is marked by other qualities of personality, e.g., "having knowledge and interests" sparked by varied travel and contacts, etc. In other words, the quality of "personal attribute" remains significant, but again it evolves into a slightly different form.

The prominence of "self" as a marketable commodity is not unique to flight attendants. C. Wright Mills has described the way in which, "for the vast, previously unforeseen "white collar" bureaucratic management class, one's personality and personal traits become part of the means of production," and that in this sense, "a person... externalizes intimate features of his person and disposition" (Mills, 1956:225). When Mills notes that in certain white collar areas this self and social alienation has been carried to extremes, he could well have been talking about the situation of flight attendants. Mills' critique touched a vital dimension of the corporate world that continues to be apparent. Years later in investigation of the real world of airline flight attendants, representing an extreme case of the marketing

of "self," it is apparent how thoroughly ingrained acceptance of the primacy and saliency of self in work really is. This is even more the case for women as they are expected to carry over roles and images from the family to their performance in the work world. Dorothy Smith has described the woman's role in the family as the socializer of good future bureaucrats who today sell "self" rather than "labor power" to the business world (Smith, 1972). Are they then supposed to know how to do it better than men as well as teach it?

It was on just such personal political issues that the women's movement turned a critical eye, nudging the awareness of everyone, causing some to applaud and others to scramble to defend cherished ways of thinking. This was as true in the airline world as any other. Gusfield has directed attention to the polarizing features of social movements, noting, most importantly, that not everyone has the same experience of social change (Gusfield, 1970). In its most extreme form, a movement divides people into conflicting camps with markedly contrasting identities. However, sometimes the effects are more subtle. The movement participants may change, some even radically, and yet at the same time may retain something of a nostalgia for the old self, the old ways. An illustration is provided by the controversy arising over a nude photographic pictorial of flight attendants appearing in Playboy magazine in the spring of 1980. One flight attendant union spokeswoman characterized it as "a step backward" after the "career work force" efforts of recent years, while one of the women photographed, in defending her decision, stated, "I think our company should be glad it has some nice-looking flight attendants—there aren't many of us around" (Wall Street Journal, May, 1980). The overwhelming response of most flight attendants, including the union official cited

above, was that what the participants did was their own business. The fact that most respond with a shrug has less to do with predominantly liberal tendencies than it does with nostalgia for a glamorous image: Playboy didn't choose social workers, it selected flight attendants. And though it is doubtful that Playboy picked "typical" flight attendants (whoever they are) and certainly not those of the current average age, still, for the rest, it confers glamour by association. It invokes nostalgic image, albeit one that at other times women flight attendants have sought to bury.

For the young women applying for the job with the airlines, not only were personal characteristics important, she also had to surpass the competition. The positive aspects of the job were further enhanced by the competition for it. Everyone remembers her job interview, the judgment of self it entailed and the numbers of other applicants vying for the same spot. Says Ginger,

> I was interviewed on Halloween night, 1963. Just sitting there I had decided I wasn't going to pass the interview. There were so many in that room, dozens, it was just incredible....When they called me in a few days and told me I had the job I was shocked.

Or, Rebecca describes her 1968 interview as follows:

> Actually there were three interviews then, and they were really traumatic. They had you walking up and down stairs, sitting down, standing up, and having you turn to look at your profile; checking out your mannerisms. They took us each individually. There was only one interviewer, and she had me walk up and down this little set of false stairs.... After the second interview I knew that I was hired because she told me what would happen and that they would get in touch with me, and she told me, 'Please don't discuss it with any of the other ladies who are waiting.'

So Rebecca walked out and didn't say a word, positively elated that

she had gotten the job.

Satisfaction in the knowledge that one is among the "elect" is of course not idiosyncratic to flight attendants. Most medical students (and practicing physicians for that matter) can state exactly how many applicants applied to their medical school the year they were accepted. Recollections such as "they only took 104 out of 7,000 applications," abound. Election to this "in" group (i.e., "don't tell the other ladies") serves to build loyalty as well as a sense of responsibility for sticking with it during the training period.

Induction

Undoubtedly the competition for selection and satisfaction once acceptance is achieved help account for the ability of the new recruits to endure the various mortifications attendant to induction. For it is with mixed feelings even now that flight attendants describe their training school days, what they call the six weeks at the "charm farm." On the one hand there is derision and ridicule for the attempts at identity packaging that went on while on the other there is a certain sense of pride in having been selected; moreover there is satisfaction in having survived and prevailed to the point of being able to look back and laugh.

Given that the predominant taken-for-granted assumption was that "most of the girls were interested in finding a husband," the idea of making oneself as attractive as possible didn't seem so repugnant. The stewardess interviewed by Studs Terkel in Working describes a scenario in which, at the training school, she is coached in extremely seductive behaviors. She learns to look in a man's eyes in a certain way, speak in well-modulated, breathy tones to him alone, and to lean

toward him with great interest when he speaks (Terkel, 1972:73-75). Such a description makes an eye-catching story, and although it is rather unlikely that such "teaching" was part of the formal curriculum and not the brainchild of an overly enthusiastic instructor seemingly out to produce the airborne version of "The Total Woman," its inclusion by the flight attendant, and even by Terkel is notable. Terry (Terkel's interviewee) recalls that everyone in class laughed when instructions were made this explicit, but goes on to explain how handling oneself in the presence of men, both passengers and crew members, is part of the job, and therefore anticipated even in training. Thus, the manner in which that interaction will take place becomes an issue to be addressed by the airline company, and apparently even the subject of specific policy. According to a 1965 newspaper article entitled, "Airlines Vie With Cupid for Stewardesses," the airlines were doing their job very well in the selection and training of "marriageable" young women. While complaining about the cost of the high turnover in stewardesses who left the job to get married, a senior vice president of United Air Lines said that he "preferred it that way." He stated, "If that figure (the 30-month average tenure of stewardesses on the job), ever got up to 35 months, I'd know we're getting the wrong girl....She's not getting married" (Appel, 1965). The intention of the airlines was to select a woman who conformed to each company's notion of its image, and then to re-groom her during the training period "in such aspects of <u>womanliness</u> as clothing, hair style, make-up, poise, and posture" (Root, 1966).

For the new recruits even more difficult than working at beauty was to contend with the seeming obliteration of personal identity. They recall the process with phrases such as: "all alike," "molded,"

"being what I would now call a clone." As one observed, "We all came out in a Vidal Sassoon." The only variation allowed among the group seemed to be in terms of whether, as another woman recalls, "you got the one-side-down-on-the-jaw hairdo or the plastered-down-sidecurls number."

A characteristic of total institutions, places in which the daily round of life--work, eating, sleeping, and leisure--is regulated, is a systematic stripping away of the past, most often exemplified by haircutting and issuance of regulation clothing, with a careful specification of the new identity to be assumed by the inmates. In this case, the objects of social control are pretty young women, not prisoners or mental patients (cf., Goffman, 1961; Sykes, 1968), and although the objective of the institution in this case is to secure adherence based more on loyalty and less on fear, rather than the reverse, it is through such control that the organization selling "service" can regulate its movement (3).

But, as in all total institutions, for the individual being stripped, processed and "identity-forced" (Strauss, 1969), there is a transcendant part of self laughing all the way, even as another part of self is being, in the eyes of the institution, carefully molded and transformed. Margie, hired in 1968 at the age of 19, describes the total picture accordingly:

> Grooming was the big thing. They cut your hair off. I had long, long hair, and I knew they were going to do it. I had no choice. They always cut off your hair. It could be no longer than your ears. We weren't allowed to wear earrings. I had pierced ears and we weren't allowed to wear posts. We had two colors of lips and nails to choose from. Electric pink and hot orange. Nothing in between. Horrible! In 1968 they weren't even wearing lipstick! But we were. I had never

> really worn make-up. And they put you in all this full face make-up and blush and the minute you got out of training you threw it all away. God, it was terrible. We spent hours in training putting this crap on our faces. I could feel the zits starting—don't make me put this crap on my face, please don't make me'—it didn't matter. Lots of mascara, lots of blush. Hats. We had our little pill box hats and our gloves. It was funny, especially for me, because I had already started not wearing a bra, and here I was, not only in a bra but in a girdle! We had our regulation girdles and I was so skinny I couldn't hold it up. What a picture. Here I was, smiling through all this make-up and trying to hold all this gear up!
>
> Margie, 12 years

It is evident that the new recruits may not have always agreed with their instructors on what constitutes "beauty," but literally make their way through it they did. Melanie terms it "an aggravation that you had to go through at the time to get where you wanted to go." And where did they want to go? For many of them the answer could be summed up as "anywhere but where they came from." It is not unusual to discover that many in the sixties had hardly flown at all before joining the airlines. Seeing it as a way to leave the home town, whether home was a small mid-western town or a metropolitan city, seeing it as upward mobility, as an alternative to going to college, or as a first job just out of college, were all views that expressed the desire to gain life experience through the job and gain "independence." If the new inhabitants of the "charm farm" found that independence was not quite what the airline had in mind, there were other compensations. One was learning new skills and competencies—even then a week of training was spent ensuring that the new stewardesses could take little old ladies and blind men with guide dogs off a burning airplane (Root, 1966)—and the other was mixing with other recruits from other places and sharing

the new experiences. Margie, a New Yorker, again provides an illustration that enlightenment can occur whether one is the small-town girl setting out for the big city, or just the reverse:

> Being born and raised in New York and being sent very abruptly to Kansas City was total culture shock. I mean those people amazed me. I thought they were kidding. I had always thought that when everyone went home they talked just like me. Ha! I couldn't believe they didn't know what a bagel was in 1968. And they were still doing their hair with bicycle pumps. It was like a different planet....Where I grew up it's about 45 minutes to downtown New York. As a kid my friend and I would get on the Long Island Railroad and go into the city on a Saturday afternoon to see a show. And it doesn't occur to you that people in Kansas don't do this...a lot of the other new girls were mid-westerners, the company's stronghold was Kansas City. So a lot of the girls came from towns in the bible belt area. Wholesome types. They had no idea what marijuana was. I was totally out of my element, and I was for a long time. They really boggled me, and I guess I amazed them. Anyway, it was o.k. I learned a lot, and I'm sure they did.

Margie, like everyone else in training, made lasting friends. A woman in another airline, Laura, who describes herself as having been an overwhelmed and discouraged high school teacher for one year before becoming a stewardess in 1970, recalls training as "a pleasant surprise....I really liked the other people...at that time, our company was hiring college graduates with a second language....It was a fun group; we had a lot in common." Today, Margie, the self-described footloose and nutty kid from New York, seems a bit surprised herself that she owns her own home and two horses, while Laura, working continuously as a flight attendant, has just finished first in her class in an eastern law school. As other women flight attendants of their age and tenure who see themselves as feminists now, they can reconcile their acceptance of the donning of the earlier image in an earlier time.

Laura also says with a rueful chuckle that she thought at the time she was hired that being a stewardess for six months would be a good transition into something else. Although she may have entered as a college graduate and at age 32, slightly older than her counterparts, her perception of job tenure and of living "the traditional young stewardess life in Washington, D.C." did not differ from theirs. Being a college graduate was not all that unusual even in the sixties. One major airline reported that its single largest group of applicants were school teachers desiring to become flight attendants. Also, although the new-hires were young, being a flight attendant was rarely a first job for most because the major airlines would not employ anyone less than nineteen or twenty, or even twenty-one, depending on their own particular preferences. For some women, such as Ginger, the fact of having to wait until one was old enough to apply simply added to the mystique of the occupation. In talking about the early days on the job in the sixties, another woman, Roxanne, points out that "no 19 or 20 year old thinks about starting a job that they will keep for 20 years with plans for retirement," and points to the difference between 1960's cohorts and current ones. Recent entrants, at least those interviewed for the study and those described by other flight attendants, aren't thinking about working to age 65 either, but in many cases they are thinking about issues that imply staying around a bit longer. Even by 1976 the majority surveyed planned to stay 10 years (Stuckey, 1977). Thus, mulling over possible future scenarios regarding management of various aspects of personal life in the face of the job is not all that unusual. An interesting incidence of this occurred in the course of the study in which a young woman flying for a commuter airline for a little over a year began interviewing <u>me</u> about the life patterns of

flight attendants with children. She said that this was something she and her husband had been discussing and even though she didn't personally know any flight attendants in her small airline who were parents she wanted to look into the possibility because she liked her work and wanted to remain in it. Reflecting on one's future working career is understandable for women like this one, coming in now. But what is of interest is how the "sixties' women" transcended their own expectations. Recent hirees now have plenty of "role models" in women who have worked for 15 years. The women of the sixties had relatively none.

The Crucial Significance of Age in the Sixties: A Cohort Begins

The age distribution was markedly different from today in the decade of the 1960s. The "senior" women were the "Gold Wingers," so designated because they had been flying five years and received a gold pin, the airline version of a gold watch. Their presence was awesome to the youngsters, who remember their images of these women:

> Someone that was senior in those days was a one-year flight attendant. And the real senior ones were five years. If you flew with a Gold Star Mother—they had gold wings and a gold star so you called them gold star mothers—I mean you didn't talk to them or anything. You just got on, shut up, and worked your trip. Because after all, these were old broads that were in there flying!
>
> Jane, 19 years

> In New York when we flew with a gold winger we thought, 'Oh, my, they're so senior.' I figured maybe I would fly five years if I didn't get married sooner, but I loved it and so I never saw myself quitting on my own to do something else....I would have been awfully surprised to know that I would still be flying at 39. There were no women who were 39!
>
> Ginger, 16 1/2 years

What the age distribution during the sixties meant was that there

were no role models for what these women are today. In some airlines the women were grounded at 32, in others at 35, but the woman who worked for 12 years, from age 20 to 32, was rare. The five-year women provided the role models for the new recruits coming in during the sixties. To the sixties' women today, five years seems like nothing, but to someone in their early twenties, as they were then, that particular decade stretching out ahead seemed endless. People didn't look all the way down the road, and they don't now. They looked in increments. It is simply that now the increments, in the face of widespread social changes, have gotten a little longer. When one-year people got to be five-year people, they began to take a bit more notice of the 32 year olds. The plight of the 32 year olds raised the consciousness of the younger women; questions regarding the equity of grounding 32 year olds began to creep into some of the women's thinking. Long before the dawn of an explicitly feminist consciousness, an awareness, a response of "how could they do this to them," and a sadness over the arbitrary nature of the age limitations was expressed by the flight attendants. Ginger, the woman quoted above goes on to say:

> When I was 22 or 23 I flew with a girl who was almost 32. It was three or four months before she was to quit and it stands out in my mind. It was out of New York, and I remember thinking, 'she looks better than me, she's not a 'has-been' at 32, look at how good looking she is.' She was a very good flight attendant and I remember thinking, 'the company is really going to lose something by losing her.' I would like to think she was one of the ones who came back. I said to myself, 'It's a dumb rule.'
>
> Ginger, 16 1/2 years

That awareness of inequities could emerge and grow is in some ways rather surprising because of the level on which it remained for a long period of time. As Ginger's comment illustrates, inequities for

stewardesses were seen mainly in the realm of physical appearance, image, the same old marketable "self." When stewardesses first protested the arbitrary nature of age limitations a 35 year old being fired asked an interviewing Time magazine reporter, "Do I look like an old bag?" The reporter describes her as "pert" (Time, April 22, 1963). There is evidence that there were stewardesses who were trying to emphasize competence rather than looks, to make the point that a woman over 35 is able to do the job, rather than "she looks good enough to do the job." In a number of newspaper and magazine articles Colleen Boland, who was in 1966 president of Local 550, The Air Line Stewards and Stewardesses Association, Chicago, appears to be trying to make such an argument, while reporters in this and other articles regularly refer to her as "an attractive 38-year-old, blue-eyed blonde" (King, 1966). For stewardesses on the line, awareness of their civil rights still hinged on the argument that women are not unattractive over age 32. (Maybe they were just a bit ahead of their time since celebration of older women's beauty—if we can accept the thirties as "older"—didn't really become faddish until the seventies.)

Making this kind of an argument had its drawbacks, however, because it tended to diminish the seriousness of women's complaints. But it also would appear from the newspaper accounts that they didn't have much choice, that was simply the only argument that policy makers would hear. In 1965 several stewardesses nearing 32 and facing dismissal testified before a House Labor Subcommittee considering the problems of older workers. Representative James H. Scheuer of New York is quoted as saying to the stewardesses in the hearing room, "Stand up, so we can see the dimensions of the problem." Later in the hearing, Mr. Scheuer announced, "I would oppose with my dying breath the notion that

a woman is less beautiful, less appealing, less sensitive after 30, and I'm sure my colleagues would agree" (New York Times, September 9, 1965). And flattery as a diversionary tactic in response to women's protests appears to have a surprisingly consistent history. In 1912 the Senator from New York, when confronted by suffragettes expounded, "Now there is nobody to whom I yield in respect and admiration and devotion to the sex." Mollie Schepps, a protesting working woman replied, "We want man's admiration, but we do not think that is all there is to live for" (Baxandall, et al, 1976).

For the protesting stewardesses political support on any basis was not to be rebuffed. And for women who had been recruited, groomed and positively rewarded for their good looks for years, perhaps the first thing they had to establish in their own minds before they could start thinking of job competence after 32 was that they looked good after 32. Not looking good had been held up to them as indicative of disgust and rejection. On the subject of dismissal an unnamed airline executive is quoted as saying, "It's the sex thing....Put a dog on an airplane and 20 businessmen are sore for a month" (New York Times, September 9, 1965)—harsh words indeed with which to contend.

At the beginning of this study the theoretical assertion was made that women's notions of career have come about differently than those of men. These struggles over age, physical attractiveness, and appropriateness of the worker could not be more to the point. The woman is told point-blank that she is "over the hill," finished, at 32 or 35, while it is made clear to males in most organizations that those are the ages when they should first strive for significant promotion, for securing their future. Moreover men are socialized to regard the prior period as preparation to career acceleration, a time in which

they should be establishing families and acquiring other signs of stability and preparation (Oppenheimer, 1974). Since this is quite the opposite of the experience of these women, change in notions of career have had to come about incrementally, starting with the knocking down of the early barriers.

Until the time that age restrictions were eliminated (in 1968), four major domestic airlines which employed the bulk of the flight attendant work force had age limitations (New York Times, September 9, 1965). But, most airlines reported that long before their stewardesses reached 35 years of age, "marriage nearly always solves the problem." One airline employing 1,500 stewardesses indicated that only eight to ten a year "reach 35 without a wedding ring" (Time, April 22, 1963). European carriers had cut down on their turnover rate and the cost of training new stewardesses (which U.S. airlines reported as significant) by allowing them to fly after marriage. Interestingly enough, in 1965 the stewardess that Scandinavian Airlines System used in its advertisements, Carin Holmberg, had been flying seven years, was married and the mother of a child (Appel, 1965). In contrast, all the American carriers, including those flying international and employing Europeans, required that their female (though not male) flight attendants be single.

There was one rather notable exception to the age limitation. When commercial aviation first began to grow as an industry after the second world war and more women were hired as cabin attendants than ever before, there were no age limitations. It was only as the industry began to market itself to a wider public, and particularly the business world, in the 1950s, that age limits were conceived. They were implemented with the agreement of flight attendants then working, who

would themselves be unaffected by the limitation. One current national union official explains the event as a trade-off for higher wages:

> (The age limitation) was a negotiated item. It was no law to terminate people at 32. The union negotiated it into the contract in 1954. The company tried to implement an age termination, and the union's part in it was, 'o.k., you can implement the age restriction but it will only affect those hired after us. Just give us the money.' And so what they did was to sell out those in the future, for some short-run benefit. The person who was head of the union at the time was then a flight attendant on the line, and she went into management immediately after signing that agreement. So of course her name is mud on the line to this day. The older people that had to leave and then fought to come back especially have animosity.

There were two important consequences of this turn of events and they highlight several important social processes. By approximately 1963 more and more women began to be affected by a rule implemented just prior to their hiring. Thus, it was at this time that protest by terminated stewardesses began to occur (cf., Time, April 22, 1963; San Francisco Examiner, Spring, 1963). There was resentment, not just of the rule and the companies, but of the people who had escaped termination and who younger flight attendants approaching 32 saw as being responsible for their imminent dismissal (cf., King, 1966). Some of the energy that might have gone into affecting social change was initially drained off, directed at fellow workers rather than at the employing companies.

Secondly, this occurrence had a bearing on the development of career orientation for a number of years to come. Some of the women hired in the 1940s did stay on—in the seniority lists of every airline their hiring dates appear at the top of the lists. Some of these people stayed while each year others from the younger group left at age 32,

creating an ever-widening span between them. By 1968 this meant that the work force was polarized into two cohorts—one averaging around age 22 and another, albeit much smaller, well over age 40. If anything, the presence of these twenty and thirty-year seniority women in the rapidly growing work force and in the light of the ever-increasing airline marketing emphasis on youthful beauty and romance, was not an object of identification, a role model, but only served to reinforce the dictum that "you should quit." And since success for women was still being measured in terms of ability to find a husband, "how successful could these old unmarried stewardesses be?" reasoned the new recruits (4).

The comparative experience of nurses and elementary school teachers illustrates the significance of the prevailing normative structure over and above specific rules that characterize one particular sex-segregated occupation. Nurses and teachers who began in the sixties also remember a polarized work force, the younger cohort constantly turning over as marriage and childrearing claimed their numbers, while a few seemed, as one nurse recalls, "to have been there forever." With the constant turnover at the lower rungs, there were really very few continuous practice role models; a work force that was well distributed along the age continuum did not exist. This distribution of women's work participation which until the seventies prevailed (cf., U.S. Department of Labor, 1975), explains why it is that women's notions of career had to be created in process. And the few older career women that existed had yet to be appreciated.

This is not to say that there weren't enlightening experiences for the hirees of the sixties that made them very much aware of the value of their senior colleagues. One sixties' woman tells a dramatic

story:

> I went through an emergency on the airplane, and it really hit home to me. I was flying with the most senior flight attendant at our base at that time. She had been flying about 17 or 18 years, and here I was, only flying about a year. And we had to prepare for a 'gear-up,' an emergency landing. Prior to that people had been getting on and making comments like, 'Is this a mother/daughter team?' and all that kind of B.S., and 'ha, ha, ha.' She was an excellent flight attendant, a real perfectionist type of person, and after the captain told us we were going to have a gear-up landing, all of a sudden they didn't talk to me. They didn't want me to come and tell them how to get in the crash position, they wanted the senior flight attendant. And then it hit home real fast, that in a crunch, in a real crunch, it was experience that most passengers look for, not youth.
>
> Jane, 19 years

Many individuals had valuable lessons on age and experience like this one, but it would take the more widespread impact of the women's movement to create an appreciation for all of their number among the flight attendants.

The Coincidence of Structural Conditions and Personal Biography

Personal change does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in the context of a complex social environment. When one begins to note marked changes in the participants, in this case, new ways of thinking about their careers, one also needs to ask whether there were changes in external structure. And, conversely, with sweeping changes in structure, i.e., socioeconomic organization of the airline industry, one must ask what the people were doing at this time. For the women hired in the sixties, in contrast to all those hired in earlier years, the occupational environment changed very rapidly. The airline industry experienced steady growth throughout the sixties and anticipated an

even greater growth spurt with the introduction of the wide-bodied, or "jumbo jet" aircraft. Air travel increased, business was on the rise, and more flight attendants were needed. One woman observed that, "It wasn't a career and now it is, because economics have changed it." She refers both to a national economy which found more women working, and the "economics" of the industry with better wages than formerly.

Seniority was a key factor in boosting flight attendants' tenure. With the increase in hiring and the vast swelling of the existing flight attendant ranks, seniority for the sixties' cohort built up rapidly. And, in an occupation in which it is said that "seniority is everything," becoming "senior" means being able to create more of what is desirable. For the newly senior flight attendant it meant being able to "hold" better trips, manage increased time off, and arrange more immediate transfers to desired bases. Also, attainment of these privileges of increased seniority at a time in which, for many, marriage and personal life was changing, was highly significant. Melanie, for example, had flown for six years when she married in 1969 and her seniority made it possible not only to transfer from New York to Chicago, but also for the first year of her marriage to bid successfully for a flight schedule that allowed her to be home almost every night. This is in contrast to Jean, a married flight attendant who, at seven years' seniority, is still flying "reserve," a continuously unpredictable "on call" schedule in which one stands by, subject to being called in to work. Jean and her husband, himself a former flight attendant, assess that "being hired after 1972 is like having a whole different job."

Vera, an 18-year flight attendant based in New York, and Ginger, now based in Los Angeles with nearly seventeen years, consider

themselves typical of women hired in the sixties in that they can practically count the number of times they flew on reserve status. Although an assessment of "what I think I can hold" goes into their bidding for a month's schedule of trips (and in spite of the fact that everyone agrees that the schedules overall are less desirable than they used to be) both will only bid "good trips." That is, usually non-stops, destinations of interest, and most importantly trips that count toward more total monthly flying time (5). Such an occupational history explains why, Ginger believes, people with over ten years' seniority become the most vehement about deteriorating working conditions.

Being "junior" or "senior" is definitely an historically specific phenomenon, being a different state of affairs for flight attendants now compared to the sixties. Virginia, at 15 years seniority, says, "I don't know what it's like to be a junior flight attendant today." Because of the rapid rise in seniority in the 1960s, many women were not junior—in the sense of having little choice in the making of one's occupational fate—for as long a time as people hired in the 1970s (6). Furthermore, there are two different, although not unrelated meanings for the word "junior." One meaning is the new-hire, the inexperienced amateur. The other meaning designates placement. Thus, on one trip during the study, when a flight attendant was explaining to me the division of duties and the cabin position of the flight attendants, she noted that she was in a certain position because she was "junior on the flight." Her seniority, however, happened to be 10 years, hardly qualifying her as the inexperienced new-hire. But, for the most part, when flight attendants, particularly on national and international carriers speak of "senior people," they mean those with at least twelve

or more years on the job. Those hired prior to 1970 realize that their experience of the job is different, but the following comment of a 17-year senior illustrates that all that comes with the "new senior" status sometimes catches them by surprise:

> I can't imagine being on reserve for two or three or five years, or never being able to hold a trip. These conditions did not exist when I first started flying. My friend was telling me that reserve is up to nine years in her company now. It's depressing. It's a whole different thing today. But maybe for them (juniors) it doesn't mean the same thing because they've never known it any other way. There are not many really junior people now. When we do get somebody who is 21 years old on the flight, which is rare, it's kind of fun. They ask about your experiences and you do comparisons. And of course we start sounding very old!

Although getting in under the seniority wire may have eased some aspects of the working conditions for the sixties' women as compared to those hired more recently, they have, in their own recurring words, "paid their dues." Those dues included flying their share of the "dog trips," but more often what it meant was "gutting-out" the continued assaults on their identity created by marketing departments convinced that the glamorization of low-paid flight attendants was the only way to sell air travel. Thigh-high miniskirts and flashy white boots below a thin regulation coat to keep out the five a.m. wind on a dark Chicago bus stop, a scenario described by one sixties' woman, constitute such "dues paying" memories.

But returning to the question of continuity, of why these women began to stay on as never before, it should be noted that there are two additional job properties of some importance. One was security and the other stability. The notion of "security" is a difficult one to convey, because it is meant in both a positive and a negative sense.

It is certainly desirable for a woman, for anyone, to have a job which she likes doing and which she also feels reasonably sure will be there for her. After age, marriage and childbearing restrictions were finally overcome, and, with the industry in a state of expansion, such a state existed. And as many women, both married and single, realized that they would be working throughout their adult lives, there was for some a sense that they couldn't quit. They couldn't quit this secure job. One clinical psychologist who has many flight attendants in her practice believes that many are "hooked on the job" and can't leave it, and that "fear of quitting" is a widespread emotional fear experienced by flight attendants. Flight attendants may indeed have a problem with confidence in the job market, but that may be in large part due to the fact that flight attendants are mostly women; and women, particularly those without highly specialized and in-demand training, whose college background, if any, is often in the humanities and social sciences, all tend to have a confidence problem in the job market. Jobs for this segment of society <u>are</u> hard to find. As Melanie says, "At one point I didn't feel that there were other alternatives." But even more to the point is the fact that at the heart of the job is the seniority system. One woman, Rebecca, with 13 years' seniority, noting that "people just don't quit," calls the job "an investment." "It's not a blueprint for the future, but at this point (for people with her seniority) it's very solid." Also, apropos to seniority system jobs and financial security, Virginia points out the <u>finality</u> of quitting when she says:

> That's what's important about quitting. It's final! If you wanted to start again, you'd have to start at the bottom. Yes, I've had friends do that. One friend was a model, just quit and took off with her boyfriend. Modeled

> for a few years and then came back. There were advantages to the job, the security, the steady pay. But she started all over again. It's only in the last year that leaves have been available and so people could try doing something else for six months or so without losing anything (7).

Virginia concedes that even if her husband could provide her with "a lot of financial security," she would not be quick to quit. Like many other women, including married ones interviewed in very comfortable upper middle class homes, she has gotten used to the idea that she can take care of herself.

Another way to "quit" would have been to have gone into management. Almost all of the sixties' women have had the opportunity at some point in their career to do so. Some, like Virginia, and Melanie, did go into management and then decided to go back "on the line." Melanie says that after her temporary job in supervision, the person who was offering her a permanent position said, "You're wasting your life just flying around." Replied Melanie, "Well, I might be wasting my life, but I'd rather waste it three on and four off, than five on and two off." She did not feel the job would be gratifying enough to justify working nine to five, "when basically I liked what I was doing." And, going into management means giving up security; flight attendants see people "coming and going in lower management all the time." Virginia echoes this notion of "weighing the alternatives," and in respect to quitting in any form, says that, with the seniority system, "whatever you're going to change it for, you'd better be very sure, and you'd better really love it." Practically everyone with a considerable degree of seniority has gone through a period in which she thought very seriously of quitting and no matter what the reasons for staying, finally decided that the dimension of security, both

negatively and positively, at some point entered in.

The second important property of job relevant to longevity is that for these women the conditions offered continuity and a great deal of stability, in short, an excellent foil for making changes in other areas of life. For example, because transfers were readily available they could easily move from one area of the country to another, knowing that if the new spot didn't turn out to be all that was expected, it wasn't forever, and one could move back to more familiar ground. Even if one moved, the job was the same and so were the expectations, the continuity, the predictability. People make comments like, "I adjusted to Atlanta easier than I thought." Compare this to moving to a new area of the country and new job. One can feel freer to test the unknown waters in certain areas with the confident knowledge that some important areas of life will remain the same. This was true in terms of the features of the job and also of the social network surrounding it. There was, for the young flight attendant, a rather predictable social milieu already in place to ease the transition to a new domicile in a new city, which often even extended to living arrangements with other flight attendants. As Nancy says of the more mundane aspects of working:

> ...everything is taken care of, the job just rolls on. It doesn't matter where you're doing it, you know pretty much what to expect. And once you get there you don't have to worry about your transportation, your hotel, everything is taken care of.
>
> Nancy, 2 years on one airline, 13 on another

Nancy herself has dimensionalized this feature of the job, stability, when she says that "growth was on one side and security was on the other." When she came back to being a flight attendant for the second

time at age 24, it was because she wanted to "see the world," and "get out and learn and grow." For young women like Nancy, the occupation offered this opportunity while it provided a backdrop of continuing stability.

In addition to the structural conditions which influenced the women hired in the sixties, there was also their interpretation of the job and their part in it to influence career assessment. In the very early years there was the emergence of independence, as people described the sometimes painful triumph over homesickness and uncertainty. Says one woman from North Carolina who recalls how it felt to be sent to New York:

> I told my mother I'm only going to do this for six months. I was so scared. There was so much uncertainty. Constant changes. I was always exhausted. They would call me and I'd have to rush to a flight. I was miserable and just felt like I had no place to belong. I thought of quitting, but somehow I decided to see if I could just hang in there and make it better. And I did. It began to develop more pattern, more set, more schedule. I made friends. It all started to take shape. And then I liked it.

This and many similar comments illustrate a testing of self, forcing oneself to deal with the unknown in order to prove one's worth—becoming independent women.

Another related interpretation of an early change in self brought about by the job was learning to be flexible. The same woman illustrates:

> I was learning to live with non-routine. I could see myself changing. Friday night had always meant something, and Sunday had always meant something else, and that didn't hold anymore. I found I could manage that, and it was a great release. It was a giant step.

Interestingly enough, while learning to live with non-routine is at

first a hurdle to be conquered (and this triumph itself offers satisfaction) non-routine later becomes an attraction of the job. Flight attendants will always note its absence from most other types of work such as the office work or teaching that many have already done.

Another aspect of becoming independent mentioned by this age group is having learned to be alone. That flight attendants have come to relish their privacy after having just dealt with 300 passengers comes as no real surprise, but the growth characteristic refers to having learned to deal confidently with seeking one's own ends independently. People describe trips in which every flight attendant goes off to pursue her own interests in the layover city—visit a museum, sightsee, shop, or read or write alone. And among this group, in the last few years, as second careers have blossomed, their pursuit may consume layover time. After arriving in Tokyo , Laura studied all night toward her law degree. Fumi, another international flight attendant, is buying for her silk business. The pursuit of second careers is a phenomenon in itself, which will be explored in Chapter VII, but the point is that for most, being alone and on one's own ceased to be a frightening experience. Says Marlene, "I enjoy going out to dinner with the others and I look forward to it, but if it doesn't work out, I'm comfortable with going out alone. I'd never stay in my room just because I didn't have others to go with." Most would agree that this represents a pronounced turnaround over the years, a new state that their gradual experiences brought them to.

With the evolution of instrumental role behavior coupled, no doubt with aging itself, have come increased feelings of responsibility. This sense of being a care-taker, of being responsible, of being, as one woman says, "the one who can take the hard knocks," is typical of

the new seniors and manifests itself in both personal and professional life. Thus, flight attendants, both married and single, may worry about those at home, but feel confident that they can take care of themselves. Professionally, practically everyone in the sixties' cohort has at some time gone through some kind of emergency on the airplane and learned that they could handle it well. A rather surprising number of incidents, hijackings, crash landings, doors open in flight, passenger illnesses, injuries from turbulence, and so forth was related by this group. They emphasize that such events are not the norm--"flying is just hours and hours of boredom with a few moments of stark terror thrown in"--but learning that they could handle such events was not only ego strengthening, but has also served to bolster individual notions of professionalism, a flight attendant's way of telling herself why she is really on board, rising above both the sexpot and servitude images that have been popularly promoted. Occupational integrity is further promoted as such incidents become woven into the descriptive lore that the participants exchange with each other. If there is "glamour" in being a flight attendant, it is herein that it lies, not in walking through airports in designer uniforms.

Finally, as the women's own interpretations go, having gotten this far, there is comfort in their age group. As someone said, "It's good being in our thirties, it takes the pressure off." A 38-year-old flight attendant in the following statement observes that the public is often unkind to women older than herself, but that there is far less problem for her age group:

> I think the public is getting used to seeing people in their thirties. They don't do a double-take at me. They are used to us being more professional, that we're not young kids anymore.

The sixties' women represent a whole cohort that has moved through time, changing the image of a job as much by their presence as by their activism. There is mutual support in that cohort membership and moreover, protection from attack by those who would from time to time wave the old standards for occupational qualification. Several flight attendants mentioned what they considered to be a particularly offensive newspaper article which had recently come out, in which the reporter complained that flight attendants were "old and surly and didn't have cute young personalities." Said one woman, "I feel that I'm enthusiastic and that I like what I do, but that has nothing to do with age or being cute." Unlike a 38-year-old woman 15 years ago, she has a lot of colleague support for her opinion, and social support has much to do with the molding of both personal and occupational identity.

The tenure of this group of women has encompassed legal changes, redefinitions of women's work, and structural changes in the industry, all the while allowing for growth and development in individuals. In the 51 years of the flight attendant occupation, the sixties' women "the new seniors," more than any others have themselves changed and have markedly changed the occupation.

CHAPTER II

NOTES

1. This will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter V when it is seen what flight attendants do, but here the point is that a group of women who saw themselves in a particular way, with a particular set of expectations, now see themselves as changed, and with a new set of expectations. And, we might add, sometimes to their own seeming surprise.
2. The airlines, to their own advantage, encouraged this thinking. In a recruitment booklet, Eastern airlines pointed out: "After all, the same poise, grace, and efficiency for which Eastern stewardesses are noted are the qualities every man seeks in a wife" (Moskowitz, 1969).
3. It's important to note that the marketing of self in business and industry was and is a ubiquitous phenomena in post-industrial society. Even the specific training and molding of personality characteristics by the airlines does not stand out as that extreme. C. Wright Mills in a chapter entitled "The Great Salesroom," says that, "In Milwaukee, a 'Charm School' was recently set up for city employees to teach them in eight one-hour classes 'the art of pleasant, courteous, prompt and efficient service' (Mills, 1956: 187).
4. There was one international airline that did not have an age limit at that time, and although it was referred to as a comparison in some newspaper articles, it was not an especially significant symbol to the flight attendants in other airlines. For one thing there weren't that many flight attendants over 35, and moreover, to

those flying for domestic airlines the experience of others flying international seemed at that time somewhat removed. In an article entitled "Kind Word for 'Old' Air Girls," the fact that these older women were flying seems to have been used more by the airlines to demonstrate that they had their token old ladies, thus mollifying the more critical flight attendant union groups who were already pressing for change (San Francisco Examiner, Spring, 1963).

5. Although "good trips" do have certain universal features, their designation as such by flight attendants is also somewhat idiosyncratic. In addition, sometimes people will bid a schedule totally around personal priorities and needed time off. As one woman told me, "This month I'm flying dog trips because I'm helping out a friend in her flower shop and had to have certain days off."
6. It may be in large part because of their own compromised seniority position vis-a-vis the senior flight attendants, that occasionally some junior flight attendants are apt to suggest that the 15-year people should quit, and find reasons like attitude and appearance to justify it.
7. Ironically, the newly available leaves have been coupled with the downturn in business.

CHAPTER III

"SWEETHEART TO SEX SYMBOL" TO...?

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN THE FACE OF IMAGE DEMANDS

In a founding meeting of Stewardesses for Women's Rights, when the subject of "our psychological state" was introduced, Elizabeth Rich remarked that the image of the stewardess had changed from sweetheart to sex symbol (Kane and Chandler, 1974:88). The comment aptly sums up the kind of transformation that was taking place in the advertising promotion of the stewardess in the late sixties anud early seventies, and moreover, in the context in which the comment was offered, expresses the notion that such a turn of events has consequences for those whose image is being made, consequences with which they must deal.

History of an Image

Although it may have shifted drastically in the late sixties, public identity has always been a central feature of the flight attendant's work. It has been preeminent since the first stewardesses climbed aboard a 12-passenger Ford Tri-motor in 1930. In fact, maintaining a public self is such a key feature of this job that if one were to write a job description in sociological terms, it would have to head the list of tasks.

The imagery of the young women in the air was not lost on the new commercial airline executives of the 1930s. At that time flying in the incredibly noisy, vibrating and cramped airplanes was a dangerous business. Crash landings were not altogether uncommon, and even if one was lucky enough to avoid something that dramatic, air sickness was commonplace in the turbulence of flying at 2,000 feet in the

unpressurized planes. Passengers were sick and they were scared. Although Western Air and Pan American had hired a few stewards in 1928 (or "couriers" as they were then called, likening them to the young men that Santa Fe hired to lead parties of rail passengers on special trips), for the most part commercial airlines flew without a cabin attendant (Solberg, 1979:110,215). The general rule was that the co-pilot came out to see to the passengers, passing out chewing gum, air sickness bags, and spirits of ammonia, and for hearty souls who could eat, cold sandwiches. But as planes became more complex, the co-pilot was more useful in the cockpit, and another crew member was needed for the cabin (Ashwood, 1974). That that crew member was to be a woman became a reality because of the meeting of Ellen Church and Steve Stimpson.

In 1930, Ellen Church, a young San Francisco nurse who had taken flying lessons went to see Steve Stimpson, the manager of Boeing Air Transport's San Francisco office. She was interested in becoming a Boeing pilot (Quindlen, 1978). Paula Kane has noted, quite correctly, that most accounts of that meeting depict Church as "proposing" her idea that women become stewardesses to Stimpson (Kane and Chandler, 1974:97). [See, for example, in Carl Solberg's colorful and detailed history of commercial aviation in America, the story of Ellen Church "unfolding" her plan (Solberg, 1979:211)]. In an interview in 1974, Stimpson recalled that Church had had hopes of becoming a co-pilot, but that "we agreed that day it would be better to try to sell Boeing on the idea of women as stewards" (Kane and Chandler, 1974:98).

Industry higher-ups balked at first, but the energetic Stimpson persisted, emphasizing what the presence of women could do for the airlines. In a memo to his boss Stimpson wrote:

> It strikes me that there would be a great psychological punch to having young women stewardesses or couriers or whatever you want to call them. I am certain that there are some mighty good ones available....Imagine the psychology of having young women as regular members of the crew. Imagine the national publicity we could get from it, and the tremendous effect it would have on the traveling public (Solberg, 1979:211).

Stimpson also noted that although they would not want to publicize the fact, it would be good to have nursing skills available sub rosa as well. However, the main idea was to use the stewardess to promote an image. Flying was safe--safe enough even for women. Flying was glamorous--a place even for attractive young women, or, as Solberg says, "young women as fetching as Ellen Church."

So it was that Ellen Church became the first stewardess, and hired seven other nurses from San Francisco and Chicago hospitals to come to work for Boeing, the forerunner of United Air Lines; the pay was $125 a month for 100 hours of flying (Roseberry, 1966:393). But all the airlines were not quick to accept women. It was not until 1933 that American Air Lines followed suit, and it was 1935 before Trans World Airlines (TWA) hired stewardesses, or, as the TWA president insisted they be called, "hostesses." A TWA executive said later that there was simply no choice, the stewardesses were extremely popular with the public. It was not lost on the other companies that United was getting most of the business, even though TWA ran a survey which showed that customers were satisfied having the co-pilot care for their needs. They may have said that, but they flew with the line that had stewardesses. Eddie Rickenbacker, the World War I flying ace who had founded Eastern, stubbornly maintained that "flying was a man's business," and, except for one brief period of hiring nurses, held out against hiring women until 1944, when all his male stewards had gone

to war (Solberg, 1979:215).

The notion that the company could mold a uniform and specific image of its women cabin attendants to set before the public was an early one. That was as much a reason for hiring nurses as their skills in first aid. In the popular 1974 book, This Is Your Captain Speaking, Thomas Ashwood quotes a Boeing official who wrote, "We want institutionally trained persons accustomed to discipline, since discipline must be paramount at all times." Ashwood remarks that the Boeing official might also have noted that nurses were a good choice because "they were already used to making starvation wages..." (Ashwood, 1974:99).

Early on, beauty was used as a weapon in the competitive war between the airlines. Charles Kelly, in his aviation history, illustrates this as he relates "the stormy career of National Airlines" (1963). Kelly describes National's founder, George Baker, as a "big bulky cigar-smoking man rumored to have, among other things, mafia connections." In the airline business, traffic ordinarily goes to the carrier offering the most frequent service. If the carrier can't offer the routes it then has to compete in other ways. Kelly described such an instance with National Airlines:

> Against Eastern, Baker was hopelessly overmatched in trying to offer flight for flight. Instead, he used showmanship and every salesman's trick to lure customers away from Rickenbacker....A good start was pretty girls. While Eastern offered only male stewards on its planes, Baker adopted the policy of hiring the prettiest girls he could find as his airline hostesses. In seeking beauty, Baker was among the first to break with the old airline tradition that hostesses had to be nurses. Before long, National's reputation for beautiful hostesses had grown to the point that a story was started in the industry that Baker had once hired the entire chorus line of a show stranded in Pittsburgh. National executives liked to claim

> that they had beaten Eastern with Service, Safety and Sex (Kelly, 1963:266).

Yet "sex" as even George Baker advertised it in the forties was not the "sexiness" that would later be promoted. The look being marketed was "marriageable" not "available." It was this image which stewardess/author Elizabeth Rich has characterized as "when we looked more like Doris Day," and to which Fred Davis refers when he suggests a theory of "positive deviance" for explaining at least one prominent phase in the occupational identity development of stewardesses—just "a little bit too good to be true" (1).

This image prevailed for 30 years and is clearly evident in photographs of the women in their uniforms. Photo journalist Jack Engeman's 1960 book, The Airline Stewardess: A Picture Story is a marvelous illustration not only of this image, but its tone and style also demonstrates the Pollyanna aura that surrounded the stewardess. One photo shows uniforms from 1930 to 1960; almost all featured very tailored two-piece suits with a double or single breasted long-sleeved jacket, and skirts with a kick pleat or two, usually falling just below the knees, except in the fifties when skirts were somewhat longer. The airlines were always very aware of the advertising potential of their flight attendants, and in 1937 Newton K. Wilson of American Airlines is said to have ordered the "first break from mannish style uniforms," although Engeman's photographs belie any significant changes throughout this entire period. Wilson color coordinated the outfits with the plane interior, and rationalized the move by stating that "for confidence women have to know they are well dressed" (Solberg, 1979:215).

Despite these early attempts at fashion, uniforms were hardly haute

couture throughout the piston engine flying days, especially in the case of some of the smaller so-called "feeder" airlines. In an article describing Challenger Airlines' class of '48, former flight attendant Ellie Bastar recalls that all 10 stewardesses "trooped down" to Neusteters' Department Store in Denver to scour the racks for something that had the "twin virtues of quantity and availability." They came up with 10 "navy blue, battle-jacket type dresses on sale," and Bastar adds that "the bargain price probably stemmed from the fact that no one else wanted them" (Bastar, 1979:27). Yet in spite of what Bastar ironically refers to as "those glamorous uniforms," the photo of Bastar and her colleagues depicts a group of attractive young women in the first graduating class. Similarly, a woman of 33 years' seniority says,

> They always told you that 'only the cute girls get to be stewardesses.' Hear that? Get to be. They had you where you live!

If uniforms weren't glamorous, flying was, and pretty young women were part of it. The DC-3, the best known, highly touted, and enormously successful plane of that era carried two stewardesses and took 21 passengers, most of whom had never flown before, on long multi-stop flights across the country. And the DC-6, with one of the first pressurized cabins, carried people to previously unheard-of heights. A 34-year veteran of Pan Am recalls the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, one of the most luxurious planes ever built, which people said looked like a beached whale and couldn't even make it above 12,000 feet with a full load of fuel and its maximum load of 60 passengers. In addition to trying to keep the passengers comfortable and entertained and preparing elaborate meals, the cabin attendants also had to be agile and strong enough to make up berths and stow tables in planes like the stratocruiser. The general consensus of 30-year women (and men) is

that they worked like dogs, and for practically nothing, but that it was exciting. There was the sense of being in on something new, pioneering. It just hadn't been done before.

Accounts of the growth of the airline industry are saturated with nostalgia (cf., Solberg, 1979; Ashwood, 1974; Rae, 1968), and to a certain extent so are the interview accounts of not only the 30-year veterans, but of people hired in the 1960s as well. Engaging in nostalgia may indeed offer a pleasant antidote to transitional upheavals and current uneasiness (Davis, 1979), but it is also the built-in feature of an industry, a whole mode of transportation that skyrocketed out of nothing in a short 75 years, and that more than any other has altered perceptions of those basic components of orientation—time, place and person. A detailed history of the flight attendant profession does not yet exist, but were it to be written it would be difficult to separate it from this kind of "glamour," the glamour of seemingly new horizons emerging.

The image of the flight attendant was a combination of the "girl-next-door sweetheart" and the "tailored and smart and savvy girl-on-the-go" so popularized in 1940's movies by actresses such as Roz Russel and Eve Arden. If, by the fifties, the image of the "girl-next-door sweetheart" predominated, it was only in keeping with women's post-war return to less independent roles. Unlike poor Rosie the riveter, stewardesses weren't returned to home and hearth to be <u>replaced</u> by men—after all, the lesson of their value had been learned more than twenty years before—but for the most part they did retire there after a year or two of flying. It has been said that in those days "most stewardesses made excellent matches" (Solberg, 1979), or, in other words, married money. Whether that occurred with "most" one will never

know, but the economic facts of flying were simply that it was expensive and therefore tended to select for wealthier passengers. Also, on the long flights cabin attendants and passengers addressed one another by name and had time to talk. The problem then was how to make the time go by as opposed to the problem today, how to get all the advertised service performed in the limited amount of time.

Solberg includes in his airline history the following anecdote about the serving of liquor aboard the domestic flights in the 1950s which unwittingly also illustrates the prom queen image of the stewardess. In the early fifties, American and TWA had begun to pour drinks for their passengers, just two before dinner. United had been more cautious about public confidence in any airline that mixed drinking and flying, and its president, Pat Patterson, had held out. His daughter had gotten a job as a stewardess for American, and Patterson objected that "they're treating her like a barmaid." "Patterson was damned if his airline would have its stewardesses performing such unladylike tasks." But the other carriers were killing United with the competition, and to meet it, a whole new "technology" was invented—tiny individual liquor bottles with color-keyed caps which fit snugly beside a glass in a small plastic tray. The problem was solved—"the stewardess would not have to use her lily-white hands to pour liquor at all" (Solberg, 1979:378).

There are very few women who would like to return to the fifties, including flight attendants. But, for those who remember the fifties, and similarly the early sixties, their nostalgia is for the respect and awe that was accorded them as working women and as being incredibly reliable in the face of their rather adventuresome work (2).

The fact that the women who were hired as stewardesses in the

sixties account for the greatest increase in career commitment in the history of the flight attendants is paradoxical, for it was this group that received some of the shabbiest public image treatment, in popular books and magazines, in movies, and, most significantly, in the advertising of the airline companies themselves. This demeaning trend peaked in the early seventies. But as pointed out previously, the sixties women, because of civil rights battles that eliminated age and marital restrictions, constituted the first cohort—the later battles they waged and the issues they fought made them conscious of their unity. The sixties was a polarizing decade, and many identities in various areas of society, particularly in younger people, were shaped in conflict rather than harmony.

But in order to understand "the stewardess rebellion" (cf., Kane and Chandler, 1974) or what some have called "the revolt of the Barbie dolls" (Gray, 1975), one has to understand how they came to be seen as "Barbie dolls," that is, the factors that caused the airlines to focus so heavily on marketing their flight attendants in the sixties at all and particularly marketing them on the basis of sex. The occupational history of flight attendants is intertwined, as are most social histories, with technological innovation and socioeconomic change.

The Influence of Changing Technology

When the first scheduled jet flight, a Pan American Boeing 707 took off from New York for Paris on October 26, 1958, it ushered in a new era in commercial airline transportation, the jet age. It changed not only business and travel, but even notions about time and space (cf., Hulse, 1981). Within the next few years all the major airlines

acquired 707s, and the very similar Douglas DC-8s, the new airplanes that could carry up to 179 passengers and fly at 600 miles per hour. The further invention of the fan jet engine after a year or two made the jets as fuel efficient as their piston engine predecessors, and this, coupled with their greater mechanical reliability, larger capacity, and tremendous speed, made them into the greatest boon since commercial aviation began and the greatest stimulant to its growth and popularity. Another development in equipment in the early sixties had a salutary effect on the industry, and affected the type of customer that would be the mainstay of the airlines' revenues: businessmen. That development was the introduction of the short to mid-range jet, the Boeing 727 and Douglas DC-9, jets that could take off and land on pre-existing shorter runways and climb and descend rapidly to take advantage of economical high altitude flying even on shorter trips. These jets opened up trunk routes to smaller cities all over the country and in addition could bring business commuters to the close-in airports in the big cities. Jets were rapidly changing the way American business was done as the following quote illustrates:

> Declaring that 'one of the country's greatest romances is between businessmen and the jet,' Time magazine reported in 1964 that no fewer than 86 percent of domestic airline passengers were businessmen. Though that number is certainly high, it appears that close to two-thirds of passengers on planes flying in and out of New York at that time were business executives and others traveling on expense accounts. Not only that, these were by far the most frequent air travelers, which made for a paradox: at the very time air travel was turning into a mass phenomenon, most jetliner seats were occupied by a relatively small part of the flying public (Solberg, 1979:406) (underline added).

The industry, shored with government subsidies (Kelly, 1963), continued to grow at a rate of 15 percent per year (Solberg, 1979).

For the airlines the opportunities seemed limitless, and thus in 1965, Juan Trippe, the president of Pan American Airlines put in an unprecedented order of $525 million for a fleet of 25 of the giant Boeing 747s, a move which many of his critics would later say was responsible for the overexpansion and equally giant losses the airlines sustained six years later (Seiler, 1981). But in the late sixties when the planes were being built (they came out by the end of 1969), the airlines were still in a state of expansion. More stewardesses were being hired all the time and it was anticipated that many more would be needed once the big aircraft were in full service by the early seventies.

But, almost as if the airlines could already sniff the foreboding winds of an overbuilding phenomenon, by 1969 the competition quickened, and as in George Baker's heyday, the companies turned to their stewardesses to sell seats. A newspaper editorial observed in regard to stewardesses, "More than ever before she is today bearing the brunt of the competition battle in the industry" (Moskowitz, 1969). The flight attendant, then, as now, has always been the first-touched victim of fluctuations in the industry either by means of hiring or layoffs or, as in the industry's response to that particular battle, by means of advertising, competition and marketing. Furthermore, the flight attendant was marketed to the airlines' most frequent traveler, the businessman.

However, the context of advertising was the sixties, a decade when everything from air travel to toothpaste was advertised in an unprecedentedly sexual way. The "Playboy ethic" predominated by the end of the decade as the airline advertising promised its male travelers "friendly" in-flight titillation in addition to direct flights,

cocktails and meals. The number of references to Playboy clubs and Playmates in articles describing stewardesses beginning in the sixties is illustrative (cf., Newsweek, April 8, 1964; Hulse, 1971; Kaufman, 1979, etc.).

It is indicative of the advertising as well as the work rules that in a letter written in 1966 to the United Air Lines vice president, Congresswoman Martha Griffiths exclaimed, "What are you running, Mr. Mason, an airline, or a whorehouse?" While the airline was still reeling from the shock, Mrs. Griffiths told an interviewer, "This emphasis on young and single girls is an insult to every girl who ever served as a stewardess and to every man who ever rode a plane." The Congresswoman's public charges against the airlines stemmed from letters from women flight attendants protesting that they were fired by the company after getting married, and Mrs. Griffiths was a staunch supporter of their right to work (Kraslow, 1966).

It is not so ironic that, just after the time that civil rights disputes had been won by stewardesses and most union/company contracts reflected the end of age and marital discrimination (throughout 1968), sexually explicit advertising accelerated. That is, as the number of "older" women began to increase (Ouding, 1974) and, as a growing proportion were married (Detroit Free Press, 1976), advertising and promotion that insinuated sexual availability boomed.

Whether the intent of the airline companies was conspiratorial in nature or was simply a refusal to acknowledge the presence of their older flight attendants, the effect of clothing and other advertising demands broadcasted a powerful message to the mature women regarding her "appropriateness" in the air. One of the more graphic ways that the company, and really the society, can tell the flight attendant that

she is no longer wanted on the job is by requiring clothing that is inappropriately youthful. Perhaps such demands are even more powerful than age and marriage work rules, because they have a social base in discrimination against the "older woman" (cf., Payne and Whittington, 1976). This type of demand is more social psychological in that it depends on the woman's internalization of societal standards for youth and beauty. Goffman and others have shown how identity is expressed in clothing (Goffman, 1961:18,20), and, if we are either forced to wear or experience a great deal of social pressure to wear clothing that is at odds with our conception of self, we experience identity threat. That may be one compelling reason to make a job change. On the other hand, in a climate of activism, it may be a reason to fight (3).

However, it was not in 1968 or in 1971, but rather well into the seventies before the "stewardess rebellion" began. There are several reasons for this. The first was the overexpansion of the airlines because of the introduction of the big planes. There were simply not enough passengers to fill the seats and in 1971 the airline industry suffered severe and unforeseen financial troubles. New classes of stewardesses were graduated only to be furloughed immediately. In addition, by 1971 the annual retirement rate had dropped from one stewardess out of three to one out of nine (San Francisco Chronicle, September 7, 1971). Both factors contributed to a good deal of competition for the job, and therefore, possibly greater tolerance for the advertising. At the same time neither a consciousness of longevity on the job nor an identification with a growing women's movement had yet taken hold.

But circumstances soon began to change and to polarize. The advertising slogans used by the various domestic companies are

familiar. Who hasn't heard National's "I'm Cheryl, Fly Me," or Continental's "We really move our tails for you," as well as the heated protests that arose over them. A 1973 San Francisco Examiner photo shows a National Airlines flight attendant wearing a placard that proclaims, "I'm Helen—Go Fly a Kite!" (San Francisco Examiner, July 8, 1973). But as the article confirms, "the company loved it," because even protest generates publicity. And later that same year, the companies appeared to be even less shaken by the actions of a PSA stewardess who posed naked for a Playboy magazine centerfold, a company official saying gravely, "We can't tell them (not to pose) because that would be against the law" (San Francisco Chronicle, October 15, 1974) (4).

Selling Sex and Beauty

The stage for "sexploitation" had most definitely been set in the sixties, because of recognition of the market for the airlines, as well as general changes in the mores that brought sex into public consciousness. In 1965, Braniff International had swerved from the long tradition of tailored, military-type uniforms and introduced its layered look, a combination of turtlenecks, tunics and capes created by Italian designer Emilio Pucci. In hailing Braniff's new wildly painted aircraft and new look for stewardesses, Braniff's president promised the peeling off of the layers in flight and billed it as "The Air Strip."

The race in airborne clothing was on. A woman who flies for TWA recalls working one particular flight, trying to get out a busy service between two midwest cities in too little time, with a full load and wearing a paper dress with her name emblazoned across her chest.

Her flying partner had the bad luck of possessing a first initial and a last name which when combined resulted in a new "word" which my informant relates was shouted from Kansas City to Albuquerque by hooting, male passengers. She adds,

> We just shook our heads and wondered what kind of get-up they were going to put us in next. We soon found out. It turned out to be tinfoil. Eventually I wouldn't have been surprised if it had been Saran wrap!

There were extremes in the way the companies garbed their flight attendants, from the continued conservatism of Pan Am with its navy officer blue to commuter airlines like Pacific Southwest which until 1976 outfitted its stewardesses in orange "hot pants" and top hats, starting a clothing trend that all the feminist protest among flight attendants was never able to completely bury. In fact, it has re-emerged recently along with the introduction of new companies that sprang up following airline deregulation in 1978. For example, Southwest, the Texas airline, and its offshoot, Muse Air, feature female cabin attendants in tight hot pants and leather go-go boots, while the airlines' advertising promises that "we give you love" (Time, November 17, 1980).

It is doubtful that PSA (or most of the domestic companies for that matter) were engaged in a misogynist plot or that Pan Am harbored an inherent respect for women which kept the company from exploiting their feminine appeal [See, for example, the article entitled, "Kind Word for Old Air Girls," which describes Pan Am's view of its flight attendants.] Rather, what is represented was a resort to the most effective advertising means available by the companies combatting the competition for a lucrative business market. Pan Am kept its hemlines down not only because it flew into countries that insisted on

conservatism in female dress, but also because it didn't have to compete the way most others did and certainly not for any domestic routes. Its competition, what there was of it, was overseas. The commuter jet airlines, on the other hand, competing against others holding the same routes, used everything they could. And they had an attractive advertising object already in hand: good-looking young women, a seemingly renewable resource. Similarly, there are structural explanations for the fact that young women tolerate the Muse Air kind of sexual exploitation today, and those reasons are mostly economic. This is an industry where not ony do people no longer quit, but where hundreds have been laid off in the past three years. The societal context is a depressed economy with a rising rate of unemployment, and women need jobs today just as much as men do. Furthermore, that a significant proportion of jobs open to women are explicitly related to stereotypes of female sexuality is not news [See, for example, work on general sex stereotypes of occupations (Shinar, 1975), and more specific and extreme forms such as cocktail waitresses (Hearn and Stoll, 1975), strip teasers (McCaghy and Skipper, 1970), and call girls (Bryan, 1966)]. Finally, in a non-union company like Muse Air and the other subsidiaries popping up in 1981, if the women employed didn't accept this kind of advertising promotion, they would quite simply be out of a job.

A nagging question for the social psychologist is what this continued emphasis on feminine image, beauty, allure, attractiveness, or youthful sexuality does to the women involved? Assuredly, it occurs in other work. Most women have learned that attention to "feminine appearance" makes a difference in how they are received. But what are the consequences for women in an industry that has made this appearance

its raison d'etre?

Image Promotion and Other Job Contradictions: Cohort Response

It would appear that the consequences of image building on the part of the industry are not so devastating as Paula Kane's description in Sex Objects in the Sky, but neither are they are benign as her detractors would imply (cf., Alford, 1974). Kane recounts feelings of depersonalization and humiliation as a result of being made to feel like a subservient "geisha girl," a "non-entity," a "thing," a state for which the only cure was resigning. Her book is part of the feminist-stewardess protest against sexist treatment and sex-object status, it was symbolic of the women's growing demand for respect and for treatment on the basis of competence rather than looks. Kane's conclusion that the only way to deal with the demoralizing consequences of sexist treatment was to resign was her personal decision, a decision which she clearly was not advocating for others and which, also quite obviously, most female flight attendants did not make. People interviewed have demonstrated that it is certainly a tough job in that it requires constant "identity work," but that it is not necessarily a killer of women's souls—it doesn't seem to have the corner on that market more than any other job.

No matter what the airline spokespersons have had to say to defend their hiring and personnel policies, including for example, contending that the women's problems are "self inflicted" (cf., Newsweek, March 18, 1974; Rattner, 1976), the primary emphasis on image has not been without its painful consequences (5). If one extreme reaction to the sex-object image is to flee the scene and quit, logically the other extreme is to believe industry press, i.e., "What's wrong with being

valued for 'good looks and out-going personality?'" (Alford, 1974). There is probably nothing wrong with it, as long as young women are being hired at age 20 and resigning at age 23. This value system ceases to work so well, however, when women find themselves staying on a job that no longer presents barriers to marriage, parenthood and age. In other words, even for those who didn't stop off at the women's movement to elevate their consciousness, the emphasis on image finally begins to have its consequences.

Youthful beauty is an elusive thing—a scarce resource, a disappearing commodity. It is by definition not possible to "keep" it. Never mind what articles in Vogue magazine proclaim in praise of Katherine Hepburn or Greta Garbo in their seventies (Vogue, December, 1981), we mortals know that we may as well set our timepieces to the synchrony of a different planet. When beauty is accompanied by great talent, persona or charisma such qualities have the strength to "carry" the former; that is, it is always difficult to discern just which was the "master status" (Hughes, 1971). This is not the case in situations in which youthful good looks constituted not only "master status" but were further seen as an incredibly valuable status. Since by definition, the term of this status possession is limited, the consequences can be very great.

Beauty—that is, this kind of youthful beauty—exists like a two-edged sword—wonderful and terrible. About the closest occupational comparison one could make would be with the world champion prize fighter whose career is always so rapidly over but who always seems to be the last one to realize it. At what precise moment did the essential qualities disappear? Of course, there is no remarkable moment, which explains why this phenomenon is so definitely a social process.

Other professional athletes whose efforts depend on youthful strength and agility also have time-bound careers. For some of these, the training involved or money accumulated offers a transition into a later second career. But the fact of the matter is that not all former star basketball players become sports announcers or invest wisely and become business tycoons. Some become "people who were once..." "Former this-and-that" clubs and associations spring up among the retired occupants of time-bound careers. This even happens with stewardesses, although the significance of alumni clubs sporting names like "clipped wings" seems to have passed its heyday as "early retirement" has passed into history. Undoubtedly the value of the clubs—for all such occupations—is that the members interact on the basis of old identities and thus reaffirm the existence of particularly meaningful selves.

Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin have remarked on the necessary functions of an orderly disengagement process for easing the transition into old age retirement status (1977:550-553). Even in the elderly years, for individuals to make satisfying social psychological adjustment, passage must occur gradually and be marked by structured transition into a new "niche" or community of discourse (1977:550). The authors note Blauner's observation that chaos followed the Kennedy assasination in 1963 because the idea of sudden mortality in the middle years of the adult work cycle could not be tolerated (Blauner, 1968). Similarly, when occupational "death" occurs because the qualifications are lost forever, and lost in the early middle years of the adult life cycle, the resulting transition to nothingness presents an intolerably chaotic situation.

Beauty is a two-edged sword in yet another way. Just at the age at which people in other careers are being seen as competent or

seasoned, the glamour girl is being seen as "over the hill." A vivid contrast is presented to the flight attendants daily in the person of the pilots. Aside from whatever other occupational divisiveness exists between the two groups, the total diachrony of two occupational trajectories existing side by side is a source of frequently unrecognized discontent.

The cutting edge of glamour is that no matter how much one puts into it, no matter how much energy is devoted to developing the attributes that are number one for the job, it is too soon lost. Unlike other American myths surrounding upward mobility, there is little relation between the outcome and the time and effort and hard work invested. The occupation rooted in fleeting personal physical characteristics is not like the occupation centered on externalized productive tasks—for instance, computer programming, in which self-improvement increases value. In an industry that values youthful beauty, no matter how good one is from a performance standpoint, the passage of time moves in to override individual effort more quickly than in other occupations.

The "image" aspect of the flight attendant's job presents a no-win situation. And recognizing this, one would anticipate that the participants would have to do a certain amount of "work" of a social psychological nature in order to redefine their situation to themselves and to others, as well as to find ways to defend themselves interpersonally against the more negative aspects of loss of "qualifications." Morever, if this couldn't be done, women would not have stayed on the job.

Included here are but a few contributing remarks to a sociological analysis of beauty, a sociology that has yet to truly be done because

it is one of those areas so part of the "taken for granted" realm of our lives. My interviews with the flight attendants demonstrate that the issue is much more complex than the early feminist protest literature suggests. However, I do not mean to denigrate those feminist protests; indeed, I cannot divorce my sociological perspectives from them. As Gouldner admonished, none of us are doing value-free sociology, and we are naive if we think we are; thus, I freely acknowledge the possession of a feminist world view. However, even as a feminist who has protested exclusionary and sexist emphasis on women's looks, I would contend that the issue of women and beauty in our culture is far from simple.

Protesting that which we also accept is the crucial contradiction, and as such is difficult indeed. Who does not want to be told that they possess socially desirable virtues, even if it means repressing the fact that what is so thoroughly socially rewarded now will later be criticized, or, at best, disregarded. That distant future appears only dimly, unless one is tempted to experiment with reality as was Doris Lessing's heroine, Kate, in The Summer Before the Dark. Both fascinated and terrified by the confrontation with her own future, Kate undertakes a sort of masquerade one afternoon, going out at one point in the personage of a nondescript, middle-aged woman, and the next in the dress, make-up and head covering of a woman much younger. Concentrating at first on the responses of others, she later becomes fully aware of her feelings about herself.

In order to be kept in a second-class position, it is not essential that women believe in a system of thinking and values that keeps them there, but such belief, as long as it is sustained, does function to stabilize inequality. Noting that reality is subject to social

definition, and that for women, that reality has been male-described, in Another Voice, Millman and Kantor assert that "collective delusions can be undone by introducing fresh perspectives (1975:vii). They refer, first, to the impact of social movements in introducing "fresh perspectives" and second, to the conscious choice that individuals can make to attempt to transcend old views and describe reality with "another voice." Such individuals may be social scientists or they may be activists in a particular social world.

The analogue to Millman and Kantor's feminist sociology is the feminist occupational activity of Cynthia Glacken, Elizabeth Rich, Anne Sweeney, Kathleen Heenan, Joanna Chaplin and others who founded Stewardesses for Women's Rights and the Stewardess Anti-Defamation Defense League, and who wrote about a re-examination of the prevalent definitions of women in their occupation (cf., SFWR News, November/ December, 1974). Social scientist or stewardess, both represented conscious attempts to examine reality with another perspective.

At the same time, social change occurs on two levels. While some change occurs on the level of conscious choice that actors make, other change concerns the gradual shifting of what one might call the larger structural features of situations. A number of social scientists have termed the increase in participation of women in the paid work force as the single most influential structural feature in this century's society, pointing to the implications for social relations in all areas of life. Similarly, for this study group, women flight attendants, the structural feature which has had the most impact is the elimination of age and other restrictions to employment, allowing, for the first time in the occupation's history, cohort formation.

Thus, the existence of an age-related group, moving through time

together, a cohort, accounts for the participants' ability to deal with problematic issues, the central issue being image demands. It is age as much as activism (as long as aging occurs in a group) that enables female flight attendants to cope with the impositions of glamour and the other contradictions of their role. Psychology alone cannot explain the ability to cope. Identities are shaped in a social context and the context provided by a stable cohort is highly influential in framing collective opinion.

The unity, cohesion and social support that the cohort offers, the fact that "there are a lot of us now," makes managing contradictions easier. The converse, a lack of social support networks, makes managing decidedly tougher. A very senior woman sadly related the story of her friend who walked into the company office and quit after a flight: a passenger had told her that she and her husband had a bet: "I say you're at least 60 and he says you're not--settle it for us, would you?" This won't happen with Melanie quoted above and her cohort, and if it does, it won't have the same personally devastating consequences.

Contradictory Demands and the Preeminence of Femininity

Having seen that it is cohort formation that allows people to manage the contradictions of the job, let us backtrack a bit and examine more of those contradictions. The time-bound aspect of beauty is the most fundamental contradiction, but even for relatively junior people who still qualify for young and beautiful status there are others to be handled. Taking seemingly endless arbitrary orders that not infrequently relate to appearance, doing dirty and menial work while maintaining a glamorous image, and most difficult of all, dealing with gender-related presumptions regarding their role are all issues that

women flight attendants have to account for in the balancing of self and occupation.

Performing repetitious, often dirty, and sometimes boring work and reconciling it with a decidedly contrary image represents no small definitional problem. Effecting that reconciliation is, however, part of the daily task of the flight attendant. In her paper on the development of cynicism in flight attendants, Stuckey illustrates a bit of such cynicism with a well-worn joke: As the flight attendant struggles with the airplane trash, she proclaims, "If they ever take the glamour out of this job, I quit" (1977). This is an insider's joke and it indicates an awareness of the irony in the disparity between the promoted image and the reality of the job. Savoring the irony, seeing it as humorous in the light of how the uninformed "outsiders" see it, is, of course, one way of dealing with this and other role contradictions. The functionalist explanation of humor as a safety valve for the pressures generated by a hierarchy of authority is well known (Martineau, 1972). Stebbins, however, in taking an interactionist approach, has found that humor also facilitates the performance of immediate, but "inescapable tasks" facing a group (1979), certainly the case here as well. Yet, for many, the flight attendant's standing in the industry hierarchy and the taking of what many view as highly arbitrary and seemingly meaningless orders is a harder pill to swallow. Everyone interviewed talked about this. For example, in most airlines, an "appearance check" can be conducted by any supervisor on any flight attendant at any time. Pamela, a woman with 12 years on a major airline, related a story about the time when her entire DC-10 crew, who were waiting for their 2 a.m. departure, were made to go through an appearance and weight check. Pamela, size four and less

than 100 pounds, refused to be weighed, arguing that the supervisor had no obvious reason to check her weight. She was then suspended for "insubordination." Indeed, the quasi-military type discipline at times seems odd when paired with issues relating to lipstick, high-heeled shoes and hip sizes (6).

The issue of weight deserves some extra attention because it is highly significant. First of all, it represents some semblance of an "objective" issue in the muddy waters of what constitutes the agreed-upon image. It's difficult to specify the precise parameters for face blusher, but somewhat easier to indicate required poundage. Weight is also symbolic of the sometimes painful tug of war between the individual flight attendant and the company or, as Millman has said, "weight is a political issue." The weight issue has frequently appeared in newspaper articles illustrative of the image demands of the company and the outcries of the flight attendants of sexism (cf., San Francisco Chronicle, August 22, 1973, August 7, 1974; Zane, 1974). Further, deciding what one's own weight should be is seen by many as an indicator of who controls one's body, and as evidence that it is "body" and not occupational "competence" that is at stake. On the one side, flight attendants argue that as adults and appearance-conscious people, they know perfectly well what constitutes desirable weight without being monitored. Company spokespersons reply that if that is so, why do some people have to be put on weight control programs—how did responsible adults let themselves get to be overweight? Flight attendants charge that the standards are arbitrary and reflect the fact that "skinny is sexy" at this point in history, and that if "rounded" were seen as the mark of beauty, then that would be the desired standard. The companies argue that overweight people can't function in emergencies (Zane,

1974). The flight attendants respond with, "Ridiculous! Are you saying I can't open an emergency door carrying four more pounds?" The arguments go on and on and the fact that they do is a mirror of the intensity and personal meaning of the issue. The numbers of suspensions, firings, and grievances initiated over weight is rather staggering. The result has been a number of legal actions, with the resultant establishment in some companies of weight monitoring programs so complex and detailed as to cast doubt on whether weight is really that "objective" a conflict issue after all. In other words, size-four Pamela is being weighed while size-fourteen Rebecca admits to having "hid from my supervisor for quite awhile now." Meanwhile, firings occur and litigations ensue for literally four extra pounds (Zane, 1974).

Flight attendants have formally fought the weight restrictions since 1974 when they did so with the support of their union, which at that time was part of the Airline Pilots' Association (San Francisco Chronicle, August 7, 1974). That the union backed the flight attendant section at all is a rather interesting contradiction in itself, particularly since a criticism made by women fired was that pilots didn't have the same weight restrictions for overweight that they did (Zane, 1974). A New York Times reporter who talked to a number of stewardesses at that time reported,

> No one, the girls say, is a militant supporter of obesity. On the other hand, no one should lose her job just because she eats a pint of ice cream over the weekend (Ouding, December 1, 1974).

But in spite of formal union protests, or the battles of ousted stewardesses whose news photos show them to be anything but obese, (cf., San Francisco Chronicle, August 7, 1974), the issues remain, and the weight regulations remain. And the reason that they do may in part

be determined by the women's own ambivalence and slightly cautious doubt over whether women can control their own bodies without the imposition of exteriority and constraint. Said one woman, a well-educated union leader who otherwise frequently made biting critiques of company policies,

> Well, I don't know about not having any weight limitations. Some women, who just don't care that much would really get to be a mess.

Such a statement sounds contradictory in terms of her own pro-flight-attendant-independence stand, but it also illustrates that, as was the case with regard to appearance regulations, since protest itself would impinge on one's positive definition of self, the person finds it difficult to back the fighting of arbitrary and discretionary standards, even when those standards at the same time impinge on personal freedom. In other words, locating the boundaries between the oversocialized self and the undersocialized self, that which is created by the exterior and constraining social environment and that which is generated by the person, is very difficult indeed. Moreover, people may well ask themselves, "Is this how I really feel about myself, or is this a standard of others that I have incorporated into my feelings about myself?" Besides, there quite simply are social rewards for maintaining a socially desirable appearance.

Pamela is not alone in her opinion, and in her confusion. A few people remember that complaints were once lodged against the airlines by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission asking for abolishment of the requirements that stewardesses be attractive (cf., San Francisco Chronicle, August 7, 1974), and even remember rejected applicants picketing American Airlines with signs that read, "Hire the Uglies." But, they also remember that, unlike the earlier civil rights issues

with which they could identify, there wasn't much interest, and even less identification with the protestors on the part of those already working (7).

Finally, there is yet another glaring contradiction to be managed in the assessment of the occupational self, and it too bears on image, although somewhat less directly. Flight attendants have to deal with the fact that, despite continuously great competition for the job, the applicants—and the hirees—could range from unskilled to highly educated. Job qualifications that hinge on looks and personality bear little direct connection to intelligence and education. And, even though a 1976 survey showed that 40 percent of flight attendants had college degrees, another six percent had graduate degrees, and 40 percent spoke a foreign language (Detroit Free Press, August 30, 1976), these are merely significant characteristics of the work force and not requirements for the job. A woman from Texas who has earned a master's degree while flying told me of the welling of resentment she experienced when a fellow flight attendant likened "stewardessing" to "waitressing" in a taco stand, her former job, and asserted that it had prepared her well for her present job.

One cannot hear this without thinking comparatively of other kinds of "women's work," nursing, where much internal strife and resentment has brewed over the different levels of educational preparation for a work force all doing the same job. If one favored "conspiratorial social models" and were given to a bit of fantasy as well, one could postulate what an "evil genius" would do. In order to create a weak and unorganized woman's occupation and make certain that it was even further disarmed as a cohesive force, this malevolent spirit need only see that the field was composed of women with great variation in

occupational preparation—and variation and doubt in estimation of social worth would follow. This uncertainty as to social worth would insure that a great deal of the energy of the participants would be directed at fighting among themselves, thus rendering them a much more docile and controllable group. Obviously Descartes' "evil genius" is not needed, either to insure conflicting levels of education or even internal chaos, for, as long as it is assumed that there exists some innate quality associated with femaleness that qualifies women for a job, such attributes will override all other qualifications.

Gender-based distinctions were very well illustrated when Mr. Celio Diaz applied for a job as a flight attendant and was rejected because he was not female. Pan American defended its barring of males from employment by arguing that only females possess the ability to soothe anxious air travelers (Diaz v. Pan American, 1971). The fact that there existed social support for such an argument and therefore for the preeminence of alleged feminine characteristics is evident in the fact that the lower court found in favor of the company and against the would-be male flight attendant.

Thus, the final and most complex contradiction to be handled by the participants in a women's occupation is the blurring of attributed female qualities with definable work tasks. Flight attendants frequently told me, "We don't really have a job description." Such a statement is indicative of a search for definition and understood parameters in the face of gender-related expectations that are held not only by the public and the airline companies, but in varying degrees by the women themselves. These women are, however, the ones who question assumptions about such work tasks because they are the ones most affected. In spite of the fact that this is an era in which the

taken-for-granted sex roles in the work place have been called into question, those in the extremely gender-related occupations are unlikely to possess highly defined and agreed-upon definitions of their work in the near future, and therefore might well be prepared to find themselves in the flux and flow of role making for some time to come.

Mechanisms For Coping With Contradictory Demands

In addition to the existence of mutual support offered by the cohort, there are also particular ways of thinking about the relationship of the self to the work. There are two identifiable social psychological mechanisms for coping with the contradictory demands of the occupation. One involves a way of thinking about others—or what might be termed more precisely, one's audience—and the second involves the maintenance of a particular view of self as it is involved with work demands. In both of these the flight attendants are reinforced by their interchanges with their colleagues, a fact that I observed in group interviews and field work sites and heard in interviews with individuals.

If the insiders know the work to be dirty, the demands exhausting and the company to be largely unconcerned, they are also well aware that this is an "insider's view." Long ago Everett Hughes, turning his ever-acute sociological eye to the study of people at work, pointed out that there is a public side and a private side, and that when the participants talk together about their occupational endeavor, they always turn it over to examine its meaner underbelly (Hughes; 1935, 1971). But even in doing this, people are aware of the very different public aspects of their work. Flight attendants, for example, have a very keen awareness of the public aspects of their work, and of course

"take the role of the other" in depicting the way in which those observers view their work. This imputed view of the public may or may not exist "out there." Other than casual conversations that arose with people who learned of the study, extensive interviews with outsiders with the purpose of inquiring systematically into what they thought about flight attendants was not done. However, such validation would contribute little to an understanding of collective representations of that public held by the flight attendants and of how those representations are brought into play as a way of coping with job demands. In other words, the view imputed to "out there" influences the "in here" of the work world.

"Others are jealous". One way that flight attendants manage to maintain a positive estimation of their work in spite of its contradictory nature and also successfully bury snide remarks about it is to conclude that others must be jealous of them. Envy is imputed to those expressing friendly interest and to haranguing detractors as well. The fact that not only friends, but to a certain extent an admiring public, express interest in the job helps to mitigate its contradictions and provides evidence that when it comes right down to it, "many people would like to have this job." Ergo, even the people who treat one badly are jealous of the opportunities and freedoms the job brings. This self-protective reasoning will be illustrated.

Flight attendants cite evidence of the desirability of their job by pointing to its social confirmation. While they may describe the unreasonable inside characteristics of their work, they point out that its positive aspects are quickly evident to outsiders. They can think of instances of even their friends expressing envy. Says one:

> Some of your friends who are secure enough will

> admit that they would love to do with you do—to be able to take off and go to New York. I have a friend who is a librarian in a little branch library in Los Angeles, and she said, 'I'd love to fly—do you think they'd take me?' And she's well educated and has a good job (8).

Another woman, Donna, points to the fact that, compared to other jobs, there is much more interest in this and people now make career changes to get into it. Since Donna was a "returning mother" she has the unique perspective of having gone through basic training twice, once 16 years ago and once again in 1978, just two years prior to our interview. She saw a great deal of change in the entrants and desribes it as follows:

> I started when I was 19. I turned 20 in training. I'll tell you, the difference between training then and now was phenomenal. This time we had everything in our class. We had nurses, we had school teachers, we had one woman who called herself the 'bug lady'—her degree was in recognizing bugs and how to exterminate them, and she had worked for an exterminating company. I mean, we had the whole spectrum.
>
> The people hired now are all college graduates or they have had some other career. And this one looks better!

Finally, cabin crew members note that there was always a great deal of competition for the job. It had a large element of public performance and therefore carried a certain excitement. They remember thinking of it that way, and even though they may now possess the insider's cynicism as well, they are aware that many outsiders still see it the way they did. Says Gail of her hiring 11 years ago, "I thought, if I couldn't be a movie star, I'd be an airline stewardess!" Says Ralph after 35 years as a cabin attendant, "Of course there's a certain amount of glamour to it—I always loved being up there, getting everyone's attention, telling them funny stories, kidding them, doing

my whole routine." Says Fumi, an international flight attendant, "People are constantly watching you—it's like you're part of the show. Of course, after a while that gets a little tiresome." Doug and Pete, with eight and nine years respectively on the job, both agree that, "It's performance, yes, it's very much a performance, and sometimes you're really on."

Comments regarding envious friends, anxious aspirants or awed publics are ever-present evidence that one's occupational identity is a desirable one. Such "evidence" can be used not only to build a general case for fending off slurs against the occupation and its members, but it also serves as a specific defense against abusive and degrading statements and remarks and demands for service that flight attendants see as implying a devalued status. For every comment that is made ascribing devalued status to their work, flight attendants respond with an analysis of the personal discontent of that individual. This is particularly true in conversations within a group and forms a foundation for emotional support given to each other in such incidents. If someone complains of bad treatment by a passenger, her friends will point out that the person is resentful of her time off, freedom, job security, etc. In short, he or she is jealous.

The use of various coping mechanisms to protect one's status and self-esteem under attack is not confined to the neurotic or disturbed individual, nor is use of coping mechanisms necessarily unconscious (Lindesmith, et al, 1977:418-421). As Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin state:

> Human interaction is such that one's status is often challenged, feelings hurt, and reputation impugned by the acts, whether intentional or not, of others. Anyone who does not learn to cope with these occurrences is in a particularly helpless

and vulnerable position (1977:420).

If one's friends are envious, and individual nasty passengers are jealous, public critics are resentful. It is not as if there is one public that has a negative view of flight attendants and another that has a positive view. Rather, there is a public which gives out mixed reviews and ambiguous messages regarding their worth; thus the interpretation that flight attendants have is frequently of a resentful public. Flight attendants express the view that that resentment is demonstrated in attacks on highly personal attributes which the job itself has underscored. There is, in other words, fuel for the fire in the way that the job and the people who hold it have been presented to the public. Some concrete data will further explicate this point.

The issue of sexuality is illustrative of the ambiguous estimations of worth accorded women flight attendants. Attributions involving sexuality and sexual availability, since they are so personal and fundamental, constitute more powerful mechanisms for social control than attributions regarding even intelligence or competence. The following quotes illustrate the women's awareness of, first, how their sexuality is perceived, second, how it is seen by society as "threatening," and then, because it is threatening, how it is turned around and used against them. Finally, with this in mind, we return to the significance of "the jealousy mechanism" as a usual coping device against attacks on personal integrity.

As an illustration of what is perceived by women flight attendants as their prevailing sexual image, Roxanne tells a group of her colleagues of a personal experience in these worlds:

> I think the public in general has a very negative image of us...last week on the flight a boy who couldn't have been more than twelve or thirteen

> came up to me in the buffet and said, 'Stewardesses are only good for one night.' I looked hard at him and said, 'You should have more respect for women than to say such a bad thing.' That made him mad so he took my arm and pinched and twisted the skin.' (She shows us the bruise.) Now where did this child get that impression of stewardesses?

Her point, with which her friends immediately agreed, was that the boy was picking up and reflecting an adult male attitude. With the boldness of youth he expressed what usually remains unspoken, a thought generally revealed only in more indirect ways.

One indirect way in which attitudes may be reflected is in newspaper articles which describe stewardesses. A former New York flight attendant pulled out a New York Times article which had angered her over this kind of negative sexual connotation. The article concerned the financial hardships experienced by stewardesses when their hours were cut back by the airline business slump of 1971. It describes New York stewardesses' "classic ploy of allowing a passenger to buy an extra drink or so—the limit is two—to warm him up to take you out or pay for groceries while you're home" (Johnston, 1971). Says the angry flight attendant, "Classic ploy! Classic ploy! Can you believe such garbage! Where do they get off printing this. It's like they want to make us out to be whores."

In the last illustration, Barbara, a San Francisco flight attendant for many years and a married mother of two, discusses the way in which she believes negative sexual attributions are used as a "weapon." She gives an example and then offers an explanation in her statement that:

> There are a lot of creeps that hang around the hotels airline people stay in. You get telephone calls to your room, sometimes they won't say anything, just breathe, things like that....There's the assumption that if you're a woman alone, you must be available. And some are, I'm not saying that doesn't exist. But I'll tell you, what I

> think really pisses people off is that we are on our own. That we could have sexual affairs if we wanted to. That's the issue. That we have a choice. And I think a lot of people really resent that choice.

Women who fly have weathered attacks on their intelligence and their job performance, but attacks on their sexuality go straight to the roots of what many feminist social critics would contend is most threatening about women—their potential control of their own sexuality (cf., Firestone, 1970). Protesting sexist treatment and sexually promising advertising is only one dimension (cf., "Why They Don't Want to be Sex Symbols," San Francisco Chronicle, August 22, 1973). Developing an everyday view of the situation which puts one's own status in positive perspective, while at the same time filtering out and explaining away the attitudes and behaviors of others is what is necessary for all. Some women, like Barbara, go further, offering an analysis in terms of the politics of sexual domination, but the group as a whole requires a self-protective mechanism. As a consequence, women flight attendants always talk in terms of "jealousy" and "resentment," using a language of explanation which, by definition, places the critic, not the actor, in the meaner status. And such a view serves reciprocally to maintain esteem and worthiness for themselves.

Such a coping mechanism is very social in nature, and reflects the strength of the flight attendant cohort network and its collective self-impression, over and above that of outsiders. The relationships with individual members of the public are "fleeting" (cf., Davis, 1959); although the members of the public constitute "others" against whose judgments the self is continually shaped, in the transient contact greater impersonality can be maintained—the definitions of self offered

by those others can be held at arm's length. Conversely, cohort formation with its familiar universe of discourse constitutes the more closely-held mirror of self (cf., Cooley, 1902). It would further appear that in situations, such as the "stewardess occupation," where certain types of attacks on status are regularly experienced, particular coping mechanisms such as these become institutionalized (9).

The "Transcendent Self". If it takes a good bit of social psychological sleight of hand to reconcile a public that is both "jealous of us" and also "has a very negative image of us," it is probably equally complex to maintain the second defense or coping mechanism that flight attendants use to deal with the contradictions of the job. That mechanism is the maintaining of a "transcendent self." By "transcendent," is meant the prevalent attitude that the person being abused by a callous company and an harassing public is "not really me." Psychiatrist H.S. Sullivan described the "not me" as one category of self-description used to disavow or disassociate onself from dreaded events (1953). However, as in the previously described case of turning the tables on one's attackers with the jealousy mechanism, it is not necessary to postulate unconscious motivations. Rather, transcendence too is an institutionalized social process.

When I first began to interview flight attendants, I was quite amazed that people would tell me in one breadth of their efforts to gain professional status, and in another tell me, "I can do this job like a robot; I just put it on 'automatic.'" What took longer to understand was that this conception of self was a defense; that it was a way of saying that the mean and dirty and abusive things are not happening to me, not the real me, they are happening to the self that I put on stage, to act the part. It is a way of coping by "detachment"

and although the mechanism is frequently regarded as quite individual and personal (Lindesmith, et al, 1977:423-24), in this occupation it is a way of thinking that is socially supported in the ranks.

When one thinks of the existence of a transcendent self, a self that is "true" and that somehow rises above the pain of mortal existence, it brings to mind Sartrean visions of existential heroes in exile or prison, castigated lonely souls who, in spite of their mal-treatment, see their finer side as untouched by it all. Certainly, such characterization doesn't immediately bring to mind visions of everyday people in their everyday working lives, especially attractive people who wear designer uniforms and who are lauded for their personal attractiveness and grace. Yet because these qualities are so transient—that which is so immediately praised is equally quickly castigated—always measuring up to an image is not an easy task. And for not measuring up, the interactional punishments can be stunning. Flight attendant authors Elizabeth Rich (1970) and Paula Kane (1974) have frequently remarked on the hard work involved in maintaining a good-looking appearance under the conditions of the work. Monica, an international flight attendant, describes how, furthermore, the expectation that one will always "look good" is woven into interaction. She reports that passengers often chide, "What's the matter, you look tired," or "Your eyes are red," or even, "You look awful." Monica commented that she couldn't imagine how people thought she could appear otherwise after 15 hours on duty. Such comments could constitute attacks on one's self esteem if not warded off. To feel that the blows fall on a self that is detached, impervious, less feeling, is a tremendously self-protective mechanism.

Numerous symbolic interactionists have said that we all have

multiple selves and that these multiple selves come into play in the various settings in which we conduct our lives. Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin conceive of the private self as analogous to a series of concentric circles, the innermost circle being forbidden to all, the next circles accessible only to one's intimates, and the outer being open to all (1977:424). In addition, what is a more personal circle of self in one situation, is the outer edge of self in another; the concept of "lateral roles" is illustrative of this—the worker as a parent is a more private self, while parenthood at home is the immediately accessible outer self. [See further discussion of lateral roles in Chapter VII.] Thus, as well as admitting others to one's inner circles of self, it would also appear that individuals choose, with some caution and reserve, whether or not to let their various selves into a particular arena. If it appears safe to one's integrity and self-esteem, it is done. For example, from little cues the flight attendant who is a mother will early on judge whether this revelation will be met with positive confirmation. Where it appears that self-esteem management may be in jeopardy, the "not me" predominates, and the self of interaction is consciously "playing a role." A further example is that, in spite of all the injunctions to flight attendants to get out and sell the company by talking to the passengers, certainly a good business approach for the airlines, to really have a conversation with a passenger is a more self-revealing way is rare. It is simply too interactionally risky in the context of work that promotes a romanticized image of the employee's self above all else. It is not merely coincidental that the ethnographic accounts of flight attendants are frequently presented in dramaturgical terms which emphasize the difference between front-stage and back-stage behavior [See, for

example, Auburn, 1972; Negri, 1976.]

Much has also been written about the part of self that is transcendent during the various indignities of induction into institutions; in fact, the concepts of Goffman and others were noted when the induction rituals involved in turning applicants into new probationers into predictable representatives of "the company." Yet, just as part of the self is transcendent during the phase of induction, so also is the self of ongoing social life. There is a working conception both of the "me" and the "not me" and if the "not me" must be called into action for some of the work period, one might well expect to see it in those jobs that trade most exclusively on the person of the participants.

There are numerous contradictions involved in doing the work of the flight attendant. Although on the one hand it constitutes a defense against the contradictions, perhaps balancing two selves is but one more contradiction and requires management of a sort. The job involves learning to live with contradictions, and as long as women flight attendants, and more recently, men flight attendants, have been able to do that, they are able to think in career terms and to plan for the future. They seem to have been succeeding...

CHAPTER III

NOTES

1. Fred Davis, personal communication.
2. In fact, I remember a personal experience illustrative of the public character of the stewardess. In 1951, at the age of eight, my mother placed me aboard a DC-3 for my first 8-hour "solo" trip, reassuring me that the stewardess was the person to count on. In the fifties, as far as public image was concerned, there was no question of the stewardess' professionalism and responsibility. Flight attendants still shepherd countless children flying alone, and under much more harried conditions, but this is not made a visible part of their image.
3. There was certainly reason to protest sexist treatment but not everyone did, at least not at that time. Even women who would later become militant feminists were playing the "Barbie doll" role in the sixties. Certainly the feminist movement was not yet in full swing, but more importantly, the sexual revolution of the sixties was having its impact. With the introduction of the birth control pill, women for the first time had control of their own reproduction, an innovation which had a widespread impact and an importance which is sometimes neglected. The sexual freedom that accompanied it was not without its social price, i.e., being labeled a sex object, but it was a price that women may have <u>initially</u> been willing to pay. It was only later that a consciousness of one's right to make one's own sexual choices, without being labeled as "loose women" became a cause celebre.

   Stewardesses are particularly aware of that history as the following

anecdote demonstrates. During the course of my fieldwork, I spent a few days interviewing and observing in the Kennedy Airport operations of two major companies. At the end of the day I found myself, at the invitation of several flight attendants, riding the crew bus from the hanger to the terminal. I'll never forget the breezy, gum-snapping, 39-year-old redhead who introduced me to the gray-haired, late-middle-aged pilot sitting across the aisle. Matter of factly, without so much as cracking a smile, the slight twinkle in her eyes the only clue, she said, "Yeah, Captain, she's been here interviewing us—she's writin' all about us—gonna put it in Hustler magazine!"

4. In 1980, after Playboy magazine did an entire photographic pictorial on airline flight attendants, the reaction of the companies was much the same, that is, they protested, but rather unconvincingly. Reports the Wall Street Journal, "After noting with a touch of pride that Eastern had the most flight attendants selected (three, including the centerfold)—the spokesman said the airline planned to 'convey its dismay' to the attendants involved, although it probably wouldn't dismiss them" (Wall Street Journal, May, 1980). As airlines had indicated in earlier troubled times, any publicity is good publicity (San Francisco Examiner, July 8, 1973).

5. In 1975 Millie Alford, director of flight service and recruitment at the American Airlines flight college was asked by Flagship News to review Kane's book and wrote what is quite admittedly a snappy and entertaining review in which she chides, "Really, Ms. Kane, did these activities (e.g., "playing out the stewardess role") really cause you to lose your identity? Did the airlines really

write your script? I perused our entire curriculum for flight attendants and couldn't find a single thing on this subject." In spite of her understandable defensiveness, Alford does, however, seem to have some rudimentary sense of the intermingling of occupational identity with other attributions of person which make up the total self, because she suggests to Kane that she didn't have to tell people she was a stewardess. This suggests that Alford, in spite of the fact that she never mentions it, does have some inkling of the public imagery of the stewardess as it came about in the sixties and early seventies.

6. Along these lines, I love the story told to me by one male flight attendant who was corrected in writing by his supervisor for wearing his "Excellent Pin" in the wrong spot on his uniform. This is a pin awarded to a single flight attendant in an entire base who best exemplifies the highest standards for performance on the job and is given the award and pin by management. The flight attendant's reaction to this, in addition to amusement, is, like many other flight attendants, not anger but sympathy instead. He feels that the supervisor has so little actual authority and real responsibility that it forces him to focus on ridiculous things—a situation that not only makes it uncomfortable for the flight attendants, but for the supervisor as well. It is notable that a large number of flight attendants interviewed had had the experience of being a supervisor for a short time at some point in their career and had elected to return to the line for precisely that reason, that is, no important responsibilities and no authority.

7. During the course of this study, I am dismayed to report, a number

of people, on learning of my work, have asked me, "Why is it they don't have good-looking stewardesses anymore?" A few even go so far as to say, "Not just the old ones--I've seen some ugly young ones."

8. Just to set the record straight, friends aren't always envious even though we're citing that they sometimes are just to make a point. Sometimes friends will ask the flight attendant when they're going to come down out of the clouds and "do something serious." When one woman was presented with that comment, she said, "Listen, Beverly, let me stop you while we're still friends," and then proceeded to tell her how her job is serious!

9. Elsewhere in the paper I have referred to the sizable number of flight attendants who have university degrees, speak a foreign language and are knowledgeable about foreign cultures which they have both visited and studied. Although some of their expertness may be revealed in public contacts, much of it is reserved for demonstration in interaction within their own group. In the cohort expertness is taken as a matter of fact, and is not viewed either patronizingly or as deviant. When popular television comedy shows can do a routine where the actress says, "Hi, I'm your stewardess and I'm about as bright as a small appliance bulb," (Saturday Night Live, May 22, 1982), it is illustrative of the continuing myth that if a woman is good-looking she can't possibly be intelligent as well. The prevalence of this myth is one reason why some women flight attendants are "not willing to bother to try talking to some passengers," and instead seek validation from each other. To illustrate, the same day that the television "comedy" scene appeared, I spoke with a flight attendant who told me that she had

flown a number of trips in the past month with a woman who had just received a graduate degree in archeology, and how much she had enjoyed their discussions of places familiar to both.

CHAPTER IV

DIVERGENT IDENTITIES AND IMAGE DEMANDS

The status passage of women flight attendants has been far from regularized and predictable. The rising of a cohort out of the sixties has constituted a central process in the continuing definition of occupational identity. In addition, played off against this central process are other elements which contribute to identity development and lead eventually to change. I refer to the rise of what I shall call "divergent identities," that is, significant subgroups that have had notable impact on the definition of "who is the flight attendant." There are three of recognizable importance: the 30-year women, racial minorities (particularly black women), and men.

Certainly there are other subgroups that diverge from what so many newspaper articles over the years have been wont to call "the typical stewardess" (1). For example, there is a representation of re-entry women within the ranks of flight attendants. These are women who left, or more correctly, were fired, when they became pregnant a decade ago and who have only recently returned to the job following protracted legal battles. Then there are those flight attendants who were hired during the seventies at the atypical age of thirty or older and who exemplify people who have made a complete career change.

Although such people may diverge from earlier patterns, and although their presence is not without consequence within the occupational group as a whole, they do not constitute either a significant number, or more importantly, a visible and publicly exceptional presence. Conversely, the three aforementioned prominent, divergent groups all share the dimension of visibility and thus have had some

influence on both public image and personal identity of flight attendants.

Image Building: Status-Forcing and Countering

The concept of "status-forcing" proposed by Anselm Strauss (1969) is useful for understanding the experiences of divergent groups. The concept conveys the image of the social structural conditions influencing, molding, sorting or rejecting the selves of individual actors or groups of actors. And because the concept is interactional, it also suggests that there is perhaps a reverse process as well. It may be that the divergent groups in turn have their impact on the master status of the dominant group through an activity that may be termed "countering" and which will be apparent in later discussion.

Strauss has described status-forcing as a process whereby the onlookers or public, through communication, gesture and other subtleties of interaction, force the actor into a new status. He constructs a rough typology of status-forcing to illustrate its several directions:

> One dimension is the forcing of status 'up and down:' for instance to shame, degrade, make a fool or villain, to heroize, to exalt. A second dimension is forcing the person 'in and out' of the group: to exile, hold incommunicado; and all the various steps of approach to the heart or inner sanctum of a group as we see them spelled out, say in political and religious sects (Strauss, 1969:77).

The story recounted in the previous chapter of the "60-year-old" stewardess, thrust into the status of misfit or oddity is an example of attempted forcing-out. However, all three divergent groups mentioned previously, 30-year women, minorities and men, have experienced notable attempts to press them into a different status, both upward and downward, and in and out of the group.

Minority Women

Data from interviews with black women is instructive. They have experienced both forcing "in" and forcing "out"—the former early in their careers and under the conditions imposed by the airline companies and their training schools, and the latter from time to time by a public apparently attempting to reconcile their presence with the pre-existing image of the stewardess as cheerleader.

The induction which has earlier been described as typical of the 1960s most definitely constituted status-forcing for everyone. The history of black women rather highlights an induction process designed to turn everyone, black and white, into "nice young ladies," or what C. Wright Mills would have called properly preparing individuals for "the personality market" (Mills, 1956:187).

In addition, the experience of black stewardesses constitutes a unique and particular one. It is, of course, an experience that is akin to that of blacks integrating other employment areas of society at that time. In spite of the new black movements under way, integration still meant conformity to white standards of appearance and beauty. Black psychiatrists Grier and Cobbs, writing at that time, described what they saw as the "peculiar vise" which gripped the black woman trying to achieve femininity according to impossible standards and what this attempt frequently meant in terms of loss of self-esteem (1968:39-54). Although enlightening, many of Grier and Cobbs' conclusions are drawn from cases of severely disturbed patients, and perhaps tell less about the experiences of a larger group of blacks who at times made the secondary adjustments that occupational integration demanded, yet maintained their integrity because they saw them as "adjustments" and not total loss of self. Grier and Cobbs discuss loss of self-esteem

as it results from societal rejection (1968:52); the case of black stewardesses was quite different because, although they endured efforts to push, shape and even redo their persons, they were not rejected. And further, although at times they experienced greater pressures (see for example the story, "'Natural' Hair Style Grounds Stewardess," New York Times, September 23, 1969), they were well aware that they had entered an occupation in which image pressure was exerted on all.

Black stewardesses, like many blacks of the sixties' generation, also found themselves in the position of being "firsts." Though there hadn't been any tradition of black stewardesses, these women were often already familiar with the experience of being the first black. One woman described always seeming to have been the first black in whatever she did. Her assessment is that she applied at a time when "the companies were under pressure to hire blacks as the movement got more militant." She also happened to possess that seemingly primary job qualification for stewardesses at that time, stunning good looks. She says that, in 1967, "I felt confident that I would probably be hired because I was black."

However, other women, like Irene and Louise quoted below, relate feeling surprised that they were hired even in the context of the civil rights movement. Says Irene,

> Between 63 and 70 the civil rights movement occurred, and as a result the attempt to get minorities into all phases of jobs was initiated. That's when the girls who were just out of college or looking for a job sought a job in the airline industry—because it just wasn't open to you before then. Let's see, when did the first black woman get hired in our company? I think it was 1964...

Irene, who herself was hired in 1968, continues,

> My friend, Lee, was a trailblazer. Lee said to me,

> 'I'm going to be a stewardess,' and I said, 'What?' She said, 'I think we should apply with the airlines.' I didn't think I could get hired. I wasn't challenging her, but I just thought that she was such a trailblazer, a pioneer, that she could think beyond. It was just beyond my wildest dreams.

Once hired, they may in fact have been better prepared than their white counterparts to weather the full frontal assault on identity and the recasting of image and appearance that new recruits had to manage in order to remain. "After all," says Louise in a discussion of image conformity, "we'd been doing it for years while many of the white women hadn't." Trailblazers often know a great deal about status-forcing. Thus, among black flight attendants stories of individuals who couldn't meet the demands of the status-forcing process stand out as atypical rather than the reverse.

Illustratively, Alesha tells how a friend encouraged her to go into the airlines. When Alesha was in her sixth week of training her friend telephoned to tell her that she had been fired: "I wanted to kill her! She didn't even make it off probation." In a group interview, another woman told Alesha that she thought she remembered her friend, and asked whether she was the one with the "sort of red-orange complexion." Alesha replied laughing,

> Yeah, that was one of the things that got her fired. That and showing up for trips in white satin evening pumps with pearl buckles on 'em. I mean she was the original beatnik, which they were called back in those days. And when there were hippies she was a hippie. She just wasn't into clothes and she definitely wasn't into uniforms!

Most of the time, getting through training meant going to great lengths to conform to what was expected. A black woman told of how her grooming instructors in training were not unsympathetic, yet at

the same time seemed somewhat frustrated over what to do with her delicate, kinky hair. Trying to be helpful in the ever-present quest for the institutionally groomed flight attendant that demanded hair cut and curled in the proper manner, the instructors finally contacted a woman who was a leader in a prominent black church in the area. The woman was able to suggest a beauty shop that could do the job. The flight attendant relates, "So, when everyone got her hair done at the training school, I took a cab clear across town to the black beauty shop."

Her assessment of her experience, however, is similar to that of the white stewardess quoted earlier: "It was just something you had to put up with to get where you wanted to go." They share another characteristic with all the other women too, and that is that they will no longer allow themselves to be pushed quite so far by abusive passengers, demanding supervisors, or even the cockpit crew. And in regard to grooming too, in spite of their necessary passage through the depersonalizing initial standards, they have come to insist on their own. Alesha says that all her hair finally broke off from straightening it to conform to the expected style. Today she has her long hair in fashionable tiny braids, but she still carries her 1968 crew card picture in a bubble hairdo as a reminder of her identity passage.

In addition to the induction process, black women have also experienced a particular kind of status-forcing throughout their careers, often subject to the implied comment that, "you don't quite fit" in this image-dominated work. Alesha adds that passengers have asked, "What nationality are you?" When she replies, "Black American," she has never failed to be jolted by responses such as, "But you're so attractive!" This kind of status-forcing represented a steady but

continuing pressure to be countered, usually successfully. This is certainly the case for these women, who now, like the rest of their cohort, have twelve to sixteen years of unanticipated longevity.

There were pressures from within the occupational group as well. Some were pressures for simple conformity which, when successfully accomplished, led to rewards like being elected class president. Others were racist in nature. Fumi, a Japanese-American, described her shock and hurt on one occasion years ago when women flight attendants still shared hotel rooms: when the crew got to the hotel and was pairing up for room assignments, no one would share with her. Putting the incident into perspective, she feels that it was also fostered by "company policies that segregated third-world women." She said that it was only just before that time that her company had ceased to base all its Japanese flight attendants in Hawaii. She describes how traumatic this was for the women because it had the net effect of insuring that they never flew with a familiar or even partially familiar crew, but instead, would be picked up in the course of a flight (to have Japanese language competence on board) whose crew was already arranged. Often it meant tremendous isolation for the Japanese woman who would find herself alone in South America, speaking only Japanese and English. Fumi notes that it was the rare Japanese woman who stayed very long under these circumstances and that changed conditions have contributed to her tenure on the job.

Men In the Airplane Cabin

If minority women felt pressured by first the prom queen, and then the sexy swinger image, the experience of men was somewhat different. Most men have been hired since 1971, following Diaz's eventually

successful Superior Court appeal which opened up the flight attendant ranks to men. Prior to that time, there had been men in the cabin as pursers in charge of the money and paperwork on international flights, but, since pursers weren't needed on domestic flights, there were no men. Recalling the facts that domestic business flying, as it boomed in the sixties, was the backbone of the U.S. airline industry, and that the stewardess' image was sold to this market, it is immediately apparent that men entered a distinctly different work situation than did others of divergent identity. Also unlike the others, they entered it very suddenly, and seemingly en mass.

There are several dimensions that characterize the career of men flight attendants. The first is the relatively fixed entry time, 1971 or after, which means that most men have had less than ten years on the job. They came in under a vastly different set of structural conditions. There were no age or marriage barriers (although for the few men who had remained since the early forties as cabin attendants, and for the pursers, such barriers had never existed). Also, by this time the unions were becoming much stronger and wages and working conditions were improving. The women's movement and the call to end sexism in the work place were already underway (2). Pete, a flight attendant for eight years at the time of our interview, explained the appeal of the job from his perspective:

> The job is no longer a teeny-bopper-under-twenty-five-year-old female out to have a good time. The image is no longer there. I've been flying since early '72. It's interesting that 1972 was the year that all the airlines started a big hiring kick and expanded--I think the recession was out, the war was in, the economy was expanding. The men were really hired then. For the first time people looked at the job of flight attendant as a career. The word profession began to be used—you're not a doctor, you're not a lawyer, but

> you're a career person--you're a professional at what you do. And that image--or I should say the feeling of flight attendants--is more and more that way....I'm in the biggest union, the AFA, and I've seen growing pains in the union to try to overcome the sexist image of the job, to become a career image. And it's really exciting to see that happen...

Coming in at a time in history when the structural conditions and the dominant social movement favored their presence established a different context for consciousness development for the men. Furthermore, men often had a ready-made cohort to fend off status-forcing attempts. There were large numbers of men in the entering training classes in all the airlines in 1972 (New York Times, April 7, 1972, 37:1). Pete remembers that his class was composed of approximately 50 percent men and 50 percent women; Derek's class was composed entirely of men and most were "older" than the usual new recruits, Derek was 28 at the time. The sudden arrival of men on the scene must have caught the airlines by surprise as it took some time for the companies to readjust. On the other hand, perhaps no one had thought about the way in which the training schools had been run like girls' finishing schools until they were confronted with the ludicrousness of putting men through the same routine. The entry of men threw the whole process that everyone experienced into clear relief.

Pete recalls that the instructors in his school were in an uproar over the fact that there were no locked doors between the men's and women's wings of the dormitories. He remembers how angry everyone became over being treated like "adolescents out to panty raid the girls' dorm." Derek and his classmates resented being given class lectures on how to rent an apartment and other "parental lessons." But it was risky to go about knocking down occupational stereotypes too brashly.

Doug was called in by the director of the training school in his company and given a severe warning about "learning to do things our way" after he had made comments in class about being interested in what kind of first aid training the airline would give since he had already had first aid training in the Navy. As he said, "I was pretty sure I was just that close to being thrown out." So, an obvious way in which they initially experienced status-forcing was being shown in their station, Doug was nearly shown the door. However, that station was already changing largely as a result of the presence and activity of the sixties' women.

It has been said that men were recruited into the work with promises of rapid upward mobility and that accordingly they expected upward mobility in the industry. And they did in fact have better benefits until a U.S. District Court in an important 1974 case enjoined Northwest Airlines from discriminating in any aspect of employment of cabin attendants on the basis of sex, ordering equal pay, pension and lodging (Lett and Silverman, 1980). But as is usually true of fieldwork research, when people relate what they make of a situation, one finds their view to be frequently more complex than supposed. For instance, Pete, when hired, didn't have any illusions about rapid upward mobility in the airline, but, on the other hand, he had enough "savvy" to tell his interviewers that that was where his interests lay because he sensed that that was what they expected to hear from a man. He said that he was interviewed by people from several management levels because he was one of the first five men hired in the western region of the company. His final interview was conducted by the vice president of personnel for the region because apparently "the company wanted to know what they were hiring, what are these men like." Pete described the

interview in which,

> He asked me my goals. I said I wanted to go into corporate management. He looked over at the guy who has already hired me and they both smiled and nodded. I knew I said the right thing.

It would appear that channels to upward mobility are in reality as blocked for men as they are for women--beyond the level of being a flight attendant supervisor, that is. Men have, however, taken a role in union affairs that is disproportionate to their numbers.

But just as Pete was quick enough to pick up in his interview, not only leadership goals, but leadership roles are often attributed to men. Frank, a five-year flight attendant based in New York told of numerous instances in which passengers would ask him to get the stewardess for them. It would turn out that they wanted something that could be provided by any flight attendant, but that they had assumed that Frank must just be there to supervise. Both Pete and Doug echoed this experience, although they both think it has decreased as men have become a more familiar sight. Doug says,

> At first people would say, 'Are you in charge?' 'What are you?' I was a real novelty I guess.

With regard to assumptions about sex roles, consider the two quotes that follow. One has to appreciate the honesty if not the sentiments of this passenger quoted in the New York Times.

> 'It wasn't until I saw my first steward,' said a management consultant who flies frequently, 'that I began to take seriously the fact that these people are there for public safety and not just for drinks and decoration. And I'm still hesitant about asking a steward for something when there's a stewardess around' (Quindlen, 1978).

In a not unrelated comment, a man who is a national flight attendant union official told me that what he describes in the following passage is a not infrequent occurrence:

> When I'm traveling a lot of the flight attendants either know me or recognize my face and will come over and talk to me. And the passenger next to me will say, 'How come all these people know you? All these women. I mean you really are a popular fellow. What do you do? Do you run this company?' And if...sometimes I don't tell them what I do just to avoid getting into this very thing...if I tell them, they go, 'Haaaaa!!!' and it's like the old elbow in the side, and 'ha, ha, ha, you must really have a good time; what are you going to do when you get off the flight tonight?' I mean that happens nine out of ten times....And if I tell them all those notions about stewardesses they've gotten from T.V. or wherever are just crap, just baloney, they all say, 'Oh yeah, right. Right.' I get that all the time because I'm a male. If I were a female and told them what I do it wouldn't make much of a difference.

The experiences of men serve to underscore the fact that neither the servant nor sexpot image of female flight attendants is dead and buried. The fact that such notions continue to linger around the occupation has consequences for men too in terms of attitudes concerning both sexuality and servility. In contrast to Derek from the quote above who was cast into the master status of pimp or superstud whose main occupational goal is perceived as making sexual conquests of the women (a trivializing attribution that others have also described), the other extreme is to be cast into the role of "effeminate" homosexual (accompanied by all the negative connotations which "effeminate" implies). As is the case in nursing, a sizeable number of the men who have broken the sex-segregated barriers of a woman's occupation are homosexual. That they have suffered because of sexual preference in this occupation, as in every other, is undeniable judging from histories that people have given. However, the point is that whatever form they take, assumptions about sexual activity of both men and women assume a dominant role in notions about the occupation, and thus constitute

a unique and powerful weapon in the status-forcing battle (3).

Research done by Hesselbart suggests that men in relatively lower status "women's professions" may have more difficulty establishing their claim to legitimacy than do women in higher status "men's professions." She found that women seeking to become physicians were rated as being as competent and attractive as their male counterparts, while men seeking to become nurses were seen as "unattractive, unrealistic, and unambitious (Hesselbart, 1977). It is doubtful that the same measures, if repeated for flight attendants, would coincide precisely, due to the attribute of physical attractiveness that is generally ascribed to flight attendants; however, the accounts given by men who are cabin attendants suggest that those in higher status positions such as pilots, often have difficulty in adjusting to the idea of a man in a low status (and possibly "low ambition") woman's position. When this is the case, routinized patterns of male-female interaction require rearticulation, a task which those in the higher status, more powerful positions, by virtue of greater power, can often avoid, sometimes merely with orders such as "send one of the girls up here." This is in contrast to the situation in the late forties described by Ralph, a cabin attendant for 35 years. Pilots would often request that he "fix something special for them," rather than having one of the women bring what they assumed would be the routine mealtime fare. Before rationalization of the meal-distribution process, meal preparation was associated with expert abilities, and such abilities were associated with males. Routinization transformed meal preparation into a feminine task.

Acceptance of men by their female occupational peers, however, has actually moved relatively smoothly; this is evidenced by the fact that almost every woman interviewed stated that she liked having men

in the work too, and almost all interviewees expressed the view that they enjoyed working with mixed-sex crews. Men, quite interestingly, and logically, have commented that the only working arrangement that they distinctly dislike is the rare cabin crew that is all-male. Clearly, such an arrangement flies in the face of convention so strongly that the interactional awkwardness engendered makes it difficult for the men to do their job. The women have eased the transition of the men into the work force and continue to do so (4).

The question of the extent to which the existence of divergent groups has eased the image transformation of the entire flight attendant work force requires further research. Limited evidence from these interviews and observations, as well as logical deduction, suggest that where status-forcing exists, counter pressure is exerted by the participants in order to create legitimacy for the existence of their identities. In some cases just <u>being</u> there is enough to have some influence on how flight attendants as a whole are perceived, as illustrated by the comment of the management consultant who suddenly realized after seeing men that perhaps the purpose of flight attendants was not altogether decorative.

In other cases the existence of divergent identity may mean that the participants have to work very hard and actively to counter such status pressure, by purposefully managing interaction. One way this is done is through the performance of "sentimental work." So designated by a group of researchers currently studying this process (Weiner, et al, forthcoming), sentimental work is frequently an ingredient where the task structure at hand requires that the object being worked on is alive, sentient and reacting, thus requiring that the task structure being applied also contain an emotive component. "Sentimental" is not

used here in the sense of romantic or maudlin, but in the sense of containing feeling or sensibility in addition to mere appraisal. For example, the old notion of the importance of "bedside manner" for physicians suggests that it has been always known that there is more to the work than just its physiological core. Similarly, the task structure of the flight attendant on board the airplane requires that she or he be the agent of social control, effecting the movement and order of a group of people under a variety of conditions. It goes without saying that such work cannot be carried out without a fair amount of sentimental work. If, in addition, there is some question as to the legitimacy of the flight attendant's status as the appropriate person to take responsibility for the tasks at hand, then more than ever one might expect to see the various types of sentimental work applied. These include: (1) composure work, (2) trust work, (3) identity work, (4) biographical work, (5) rectification work, and (6) awareness work (Weiner, et al, 1982). When brought to bear on the interactional situation these sentimental tasks have, beyond the application of mere object tasks, the effect of enhancing the actor's legitimacy, not to mention professionalism, in the situation. Of course, as has been discussed in earlier chapters, sometimes the public has to be educated first as to what the task structure is.

In a moment the discussion will turn to the highly relevant case of the "30-year woman," but first, in order to illustrate the necessity of sentimental work for carrying out tasks and for structuring credibility, the "divergent identity of the very young flight attendant might be considered. Such people are few in numbers today because of longevity and because no hiring has occurred for two years while layoffs have diminished the standing of the lower seniority people even

further. However, most cabin attendants now working have at one time had the experience of being the visibly young greenhorn. A 23 year old with less than two years of working for Pan Am told of the difficulties of "getting people to take me seriously" surrounded as she is by flight attendants much senior to her both in age and experience. And, in her descriptions of her interactions with passengers, "trust work" quite predictably arose as a prominent task. On the other hand, in the case of Ruth, a 56-year-old flight attendant whose narrative follows, identity work assumes dominance. The promotional image of the female flight attendant and the concomitant status-forcing experienced by anyone who deviates markedly from this image dictate this result. Thus, Ruth's narrative contains, in addition to an abundance of material applicable to the job experiences of all flight attendants, a number of cogent examples of both status-forcing and countering.

Thirty-Year Women

Black and other minority women entered the flight attendant occupation during the sixties and now constitute an estimated 15 percent of the work force. Men came in after 1971 and now make up nearly 17 percent. A third divergent group that has for many more years stood visibly apart as a constant contrast to the prevailing image, however, is the "senior woman" or "30-year woman" as she is frequently known. Their numbers are much less than these two other groups, although they vary among the major trunk carriers. In American Airlines, for example, women with thirty years or more constitute about three-tenths of one percent of the total work force of over 6,000, and women with over twenty years make up about three percent of the total. In Pan American

the percentages are somewhat higher because of less restrictive age and marriage policies in the early years. In TWA almost 1,000 flight attendants have 20 years with the company, although 30-year people constitute a small nucleus within that group. (As has been noted, in terms of total distribution of seniority, the largest increase in numbers of flight attendants begins with those hired in the sixties.)

Other than their first few years of flying, the 30-year women have never had a time when they weren't marginal to "the image." They were there when five years was "so senior," and when 10 years was incredibly long. Because they were always ahead of their time, they were atypical examples of women in the work force, while women who are approaching twenty years now and whose careers have spanned the sixties and seventies are not. Also unlike the sixties' women, the present 30-year women never had a cohort, or at least not one of significant enough size to have an impact both on in-group identity and support or on public image.

But, marginality can give one a perspective that other things cannot, and this marginality combined with history and experience is perhaps why the 30-year people are generally respected and even revered by their younger colleagues. As Doug says, "I've flown with people twice my age who've been flying since before I was born—they are great!" Pamela talks about what "an upper it is to fly with the 'Number One'" (the person at the top of her seniority list) in her company because "she's seen so much, knows so much, everyone knows her—it makes you really glad to be associated with her." The 30-year women have experienced the transitions in image from the forties to the seventies—from savvy to sweetheart to sex symbol and beyond—and have a perspective that is both transcendent and firmly located within the

occupational history.

Ruth's Story

Ruth agreed to be interviewed in her home, a townhouse located in a large Eastern seaboard city that is literally crammed with fascinating artifacts from every continent. Her home is a visual delight, representative of her interest in art history and her "second career" as a successful collector and designer of clothing and jewelry assembled from often rare imported materials. Ruth is a charismatic person attuned to the color and liveliness of her surroundings. About five foot three and very slender, Ruth's athletic buoyancy and dark-haired beauty belie the age which she almost never reveals. She skis, rides horseback and jogs regularly. There are few places in the world she has not explored. Ruth talked candidly about both the difficulties and rewards of "living this life for 33 years." She is especially articulate regarding the many obstacles that beset women in maintaining their identity throughout the career, and illustrates status-forcing in its sexist extreme. At the same time, she is able to convey the positive rewards accrued, thus increasing the listener's sense of why women have stayed in the occupation. Ruth tells her story as follows:

> There's something about this job that allows women to give themselves away. It's part of being female, it's part of a service orientation, it's part of this job, it's part of the time structure. You take care of everybody else....Maybe it's even more the fact of being an unmarried female, the fact that you constantly feel that you have to give and have to please and have to do. I'm seeing all that now and seeing it in a new light. I used to think it was just my problem, now I don't think so. It's a woman's problem....When I started flying over thirty years ago, it was only for a little while....I said to myself, 'I'll do this for the summer.' It just somehow happened to be a long summer. And then somehow, it was just going to be for a couple of years. And then just for awhile, until all those segments of your life just stretch out together.

And the job has changed so much. Well, what I mean is that people's impressions of you have changed, the way the public treats you has changed so much from what it was in the beginning. It went from being adored to being punished. In the beginning I think it was cheap flattery. You liked it because, quote, only the cute girls get to be stewardesses! Get to be! So it was not only cheap flattery, but it kept you totally unaware of what the job was. It played right into things you learn as a little girl. As a child I remember that although I was fairly independent, I grew up in a very male world in mining towns; I also learned very quickly that if I smiled I got the ice cream cone. And it was kind of like going from that world into the pilot's world, where it's still a very male-dominated world. All the passengerse were even male.

And even though in some ways I was independent, it was still satisfying enough to know that only the cute girls got to be stewardesses. And then gradually, as your thinking evolves, you say, 'Hey, wait a minute,' you're now being punished because you're no longer cute. You hear the comments from the pilots sitting around the pool. If you've been flying for awhile they kind of see you as one of the fellows, or you're a friend. Anyway, they just speak freely. We look across the pool and somebody says, 'Gee, she'd look o.k. if she'd take off a few pounds of that lard.' And I'd say, 'What?' And for years you'd hurt a little inside, because you'd finally realize that they were talking about you. Or about any woman, that that's part of your group. And it took me a long time before I ever had the courage to say, 'Hey, have you checked the mirror lately?' Then, the minute you got up, you knew he turned to his friends, the other pilots, and said, 'Jesus, get that one, she's been around too long,' or, 'Man, is she frustrated!' Consequently, it takes a lot of painful evaluation to realize that you've come to the point where you're no longer a member of that cute gang. You've been around too long. You're too old. And so that comes as a little bit of a shock. Because I've always been attracted to and attractive to men. I always have a beau, or two or three, if geography permits.

And it always comes as a little of a shock too when passengers say, 'Well how long have you been flying?' And I say, 'Did you ask anybody else here that?' 'Well, nooo.' So I say, 'Well what do you want to know about me for?' See, because they aren't used to seeing somebody a little older. And they don't like it. They

want to think that what they've bought for this ticket is movie-star quality, because of course the airlines let them think that.

I think this has been a very difficult hurdle. I called a friend of mine and told her, 'Well, it finally happened to me today: some fool called me Mother!' 'Mother, can you come here.' I don't know if it's being the purser, the 'mother superior or something,' but they carry that mentality. I walked over to the bar, I had tears in my eyes and one of the stewardesses came over and put her arms around me. When I told my friend she said, 'You've got to be a little tougher.' She said, 'The first time somebody said that to me, I told him if I was his mother it's the first time they kept the placenta and threw away the child!' That's a deserved comment, but I'm not up to that sort of thing. To me what they say is always such a shock it's impossible to respond to it in kind... I do that to try to put it back on the level of time invested in any career, so that they don't assume that this is a job for 21 year olds. And yet, I've had many women say that it was a pleasure to see a professional, or it's a pleasure to see a mature woman, that it makes them feel more secure about how things were going to be handled.

But there's also a certain something within the stewardess group itself, or maybe this is just the fact of being young. Women themselves somehow seem to feel more superior when they're younger in this job. Sometimes they're the first ones to say—they won't say it to you—about yourself but they'll say it to you about somebody else: 'Gee, how long has she been flying? How old are you? She's been flying a lot longer, huh?' It occurs to me that that estimation of older women, that sizing up is very much a part of things. One day one of the girls picked up a magazine and there was a picture of that wonderful, leggy South African dancer, Juliet Prowse doing the most fantastic high kick. And one of the other girls said, 'How old is she?' And somebody said, 'Well she's an old lady!' I said, 'I hope when you're Juliet Prowse's age nobody would call you an old lady.' But it doesn't occur to them somehow. I'd like to think that women are changing and can identify with other women, but sometimes I'm not so sure it's happening all that fast.

It's still in the mind that they have a husband and you don't. Many of the younger ones I mean. Not the mature ones, but some of the younger ones will think that they lucked out, and you didn't luck

out--some notion like that. So I think this job still appeals to some people who are still into that kind of 'female' role. They're pretty, and this job kind of allows you to look pretty, and you don't have to get too dirty, even though when you get into it you find out you really do.

The other thing that's interesting is how long it takes your self-concept to change. I went for years and years without signing up for retirement--I only did it about eight years ago. Even your co-workers would have been shocked if you'd said that you planned to retire at retirement age. Now it's no longer an embarrassment for me. Passengers ask, 'How long do you plan to stay around?' And I say, 'Well it depends on how long they let me, maybe til I'm 70.'

I think that this job will change when men begin to accept women in the work force as working equals. I suppose it's because women have been in the service-oriented jobs for so long that it doesn't occur to men that that isn't just the natural order of things. So therefore, it doesn't even occur to them to be responsive, to even say thank you. It's simply expected.

And men are so totally insensitive about letting you know they think you're a little old or that somebody else is 'pretty.' Those kind of judgments that enter in. I can't believe that they do that to their wives and daughters. Maybe they do. Maybe there's something to the fact that they bought the ticket and the advertising department makes them think they bought you, that makes them be insensitive. But it really happens a lot more than you would believe. And I never think of myself as unpleasant, and I never think of myself as unattractive. And still...I always wonder what an ugly person must feel like, or a relatively unattractive person must feel like. Maybe they've just grown used to it more quickly. Maybe when you've always been an attractive person it hits you harder when they say those things.

When they're always calling attention to your age, maybe they're just interested. But I wonder why? I should think they'd be interested in other things, like the kind of service they're getting or the competence of the people. If you become personally involved with someone, get to know them, then you become personally interested in them. But it doesn't seem to work that way. Instead, the first thing that comes to their minds is, Why is this older woman working? <u>Working</u>! What should she

be doing?

You take a certain amount from the cockpit too. There are a lot of midwestern farm boys who lucked out because once upon a time the government gave them a job where they learned to fly an airplane and so they got to be glamour boys. And they make more money than they should, and they haven't been conditioned to act quite like the Rockefellers, so once they get that money they want to protect it. Uptight and far-right in so many ways--that describes them. And they have the hurry-home-a-hero and every-trip-a-mission idea, with the little wife at home and the little stewardess here. The wives are at home to accommodate them, and we're here to accommodate them. And although some do their best never to be bad-mannered, you know that the attitude is always there. It's in the back of the head. Some of them have sensitivity enough so they don't show it, but it's basically there. At all the crew parties, the topic of conversation always becomes the female role and the male role. So you can tell, they don't understand this emerging female. Most of them married somebody very attractive and accommodating. Well they have money and their wives can travel, and they're only home half the time, so it's easier to be accommodating under those circumstances. Well, I won't say that it's easy, but the wives do it. I think that because they bring this topic up all the time that they're threatened by the idea of women too.

We do travel in an almost totally male world. Where it's male viewpoints you constantly hear, and male opinions that are always expressed. And they become the ones you react to, even when you don't want to. It is impressive that women's feminist awareness has grown as much as it has in this kind of a world. Another interesting thing is how it is the married women who have given so much more of a professionalism to the job. I think that they can take a stand because they feel more secure, both emotionally and economically. And I think that many of the women, especially the married ones who are active in the union, have been encouraged by their husbands who say, 'You shouldn't have to take this or that in the business world.' Women have been taken more seriously in our job since they've been married. Another kind of male validation? Well, perhaps.

You say that maybe the women are just getting more confidence as they get older. I'm not so sure. Not necessarily. I can only speak for myself. When you're as senior as I am, it means that basically,

you started out with the idea that you got rewarded for being cute and sweet and deferring to men, thinking it would only be a matter of time until you got married. It's almost an old knee-jerk reaction—I tell you it's terrible because for somebody in my seniority, it's very, very difficult to change that initial approach to life. Although, like I say, it took awhile for me to say, 'Have you checked the mirror recently,' but now I do. So you do gain more confidence and you do get to thinking about how things just aren't fair and that there's no reason why I can't say it isn't. But then, in our society, as a woman you get to a point where you just don't want to call attention to yourself too much either. In this job I think you feel it more than in others, but still, it's a sad commentary in our society that women are made to feel shame for growing older. The over-50 woman is almost the ultimate disposable in the throw-away society. You're especially aware of it if you've been geared to the kind of life that the flight attendant job supposedly revolved around, looks, image, attractiveness, service.

For at least half of my career—listen to that: my career...well, for half of my career you weren't allowed to be married or have children. So if you didn't wish to marry or didn't want to quit, you had to continue on in this same kind of mentality. I think that somehow always I felt, and maybe this was self-destructive, that I won't do this or that because next year I'll probably be married anyhow and have to quit. You put yourself on 'hold' in anticipation of marriage. That was how it was. To show you the difference in thinking now, you'll notice that so many of the stewardesses own houses. Well, it never would have occurred to me. I would have been embarrassed to tell anyone that I bought a house. Because it would have meant that I was making a statement, saying I was going to take care of myself. I don't know why we thought this. Now if you're single and buy a house it doesn't mean anything. It just means you're investing your money wisely. But then it would have meant that I wasn't going to get married, and worse, I was publicly announcing it. It's just like not joining the retirement fund. You go from year to year thinking I'll get married anyhow.

You always thought of it as a kind of temporary job. I mean, even now, I think of it as a temporary job. I know that sounds ridiculous, but what I'm trying to say is that one side of my head says that, while realistically, I know that it is not. Partly even because of the fact that the public doesn't expect senior people and acts as if it should be a temporary

job, I've come to describe it in permanent terms...

In the flight service office they're talking out of one side of their mouth, saying, 'You have the experience,' this sort of thing, building you up, while in the other way they're giving you the subtle message that they want to get rid of you. One day in class the instructor, one of our supervisors who was teaching the class, said he wanted to read us something from Advertising Weekly. It said that Pan American had just turned in its old uniforms for new uniforms, but that maybe it should have started instead by turning in some of its old flight attendants for new flight attendants. I immediately raised my hand, I didn't let him get any further, and I said, 'What point are you trying to make?' Like I said before, you don't want to call attention to yourself--I'd never stand up in a union meeting and say, 'What about the retirement fund?' because that just calls attention to how long you've been flying. But you don't want to be walked on. I stopped him right there. He said, 'Oh, oh, I see some sensitivity here.' So at the break I went up to him and said, 'Joe, just what did you hope to gain by reading that in class?' He made some feeble answer, and I said to him, 'I'll tell you one thing, when comments are made about aging flight instructors, I'm not going to mention your name.' It somehow doesn't occur to people that 24 hours a day for me is 24 hours a day for them too! Somehow the focus gets on the women.

I'm stunned at that sort of thing. That's from our own office. He's a supervisor; he's supposed to be dealing with everybody, no matter what their age. Now those are subtle ways of making you feel unattractive. It takes a backbone well stiffened with ego, I think, not to crumble in there.

It's as simple as they're trying to cut the budget, and so they're trying to get those higher salaries out. But it doesn't bother them that they're working on you. Also, maybe they think that the younger women will be easier to handle. Although I doubt it. The young kids aren't going to take anything. Whereas I'd be so nervous if my name came up as part of a big protest....They're about to call their attorney, threaten a lawsuit, call the American Civil Liberties Union....They have much more courage to challenge authority.

I won't be pushed around either and I take my own actions, it's just that I handle it a little differently. But it took me a long time to do that....

We're all learning all the time. It's just a shame we didn't learn sooner!

I think that the business of wearing a uniform has something to do with focusing attention on your appearance. I understand the reason for the uniform, but in addition to the purpose it serves, it also... puts your looks under scrutiny. As an aside, it was only until recently that we still wore the white gloves and the hat. You were to be in your white gloves even if you were driving in your car to the airport. If you were wearing one part of your uniform, you were to wear the whole thing. So there was always this mad scramble just before going in to put it all on. It was an as they paid you portal to portal to be a walking ad!

In the flight service office there is still this mother-child or teacher-pupil sort of feeling. Even though most of the flight service supervisors are women, the flight attendants are treated like errant children. I know they feel they have to keep you in line, and god knows it's probably hard to do, because the only time they get their eye on you is when you come through that office. Because then you're gone, you're out there. So consequently they tend to... treat you as if you're children. We have passport check! Well the pilots never had passport check. They treat flight service very differently in that respect. It's as if, given a chance the minute their back is turned, you're gonna misbehave. And so if they continue to treat you that way, they're going to perpetuate that kind of thinking.

That adult-to-child way of treating women, of treating the flight attendants, still goes on. I mean, the reward pins, and the giving out of little gold stars, those are things that are in a way, well, demeaning. I'm not saying that people shouldn't be given awards for doing something that is beyond the call of duty, that's different. But all those little rewards and flatteries are self-defeating. Because it never helps to flatter someone at somebody else's expense. All those are ways of focusing attention on you, controlling you.

A job, the work you do, becomes so influential in your life. I think especially when the expectations of you as a person are tremendous.... They consider nothing. Nothing. It doesn't matter what pressures they have already put you under with a service routine; it doesn't matter what there is to contend with, there is no time when they don't theoretically expect you to be ready to be totally understanding, totally giving—even after 15 hours—

extremely gracious, extremely pleasant. Maybe that carried over into my personal life. So that even after all these years, I have very few controls on it. I never had a husband to help me say, 'turn it off.' Or also, I think if you have a husband and children, just they're being there helps you turn it off. You focus toward them and you know you can't do anything else. You know you can't so you don't even try.

Do I think this job has had any influence on why I never married? Oh yes, I'm sure it did. The job never allows you to really work through any relationship. As I said before, I always find that I have men in my life. Interestingly, I always think of myself as growing old married. Also I always think in terms of 'I can do that next year.' Maybe I'm getting to the point where I would marry, but then, realistically, I don't know....I don't know exactly what the reasons were, may be not wanting to have children, whatever the reasons....But it was just so easy to say, 'I don't want to think about that now, I'm going on a trip.' I've had many proposals, many pressures for marriage. And it's funny, because people say, 'Don't you get worried?' And I say, 'No, because the older you get, somehow it seems the more men want to marry.' If they just get out of a divorce, they can't wait to marry again! It's the craziest thing. So I find that I'm the one that's reluctant, and while I wanna say, 'What was your name...?' they're saying, 'I wonder how you feel about...?' So I say that to the young girls....Don't worry, there are always people to marry. If you're a little bit interesting, even a little bit attractive, a little bit game, there are people to marry! That's not a concern. But I think that what happens with this job, what is a concern, is that it can prevent you from forming really close relationships. So unless you're really motivated to have children, or for social reasons, or if you do in fact have a very strong desire to marry, it's a very easy thing to side-step.

And taking care of yourself financially too in this job has an influence. I mean, it wasn't always. But currently, I notice that the new stewardesses buy a house, they do all kinds of things like that. Because with our salary you can do it, if you're careful, and prudent. Of course we were never encouraged along those lines, to become independent, self-sufficient. Of course we were never encouraged to stay long either and look what happened! The career idea just gradually happened, developed. Because people seemed to hang in there with the job and once they let the girls be married, they found

> out that it worked very well. Sometimes I think that the job has gone from being a totally young, single vocation to being one that is almost ideal for married women. They can take their kids traveling, get their teeth fixed. They can give their families more. So being married has had a lot to do with how it became a long-term job.
>
> It is truly like one side of your head is telling you one thing, and the other is saying, 'Hey, be realistic,' and so about five years ago I said to my friend Faye—we've kind of lived our lives the same, spending our money—'You know, maybe we better buy some property too like all these kids are doing. Maybe we're not going to get married!' That's how we came to buy the downtown riverfront development property when our real estate agent called up and said that this might be a good investment. And you know, that was an instance of how you're not taken seriously when you're 'A Stewardess.' Once it turned out that we had laid first claim to what had overnight become this desirable property with all the builders scrambling to get it, and we got interviewed by the newspaper, we became 'The Two Stewardesses—The Girls' who innocently fell into this deal and found themselves holding the high card. That was just how we were portrayed, like two little girls, not like mature women who had every right to be making this investment.
>
> I find that it's not uncommon with the senior women, women as senior as I am, to at one point or another, get depressed. It's like something they have to go through. There's a point at which you then get your life into focus a little more. Seeing that you do take care of yourself already, that you may want to get married, or you may not, but that doing it to be taken care of isn't the reason. Or seeing that you won't marry after all. Or recognizing that you will retire in this job at 65 in spite of all that you've been told and all the pressures that worked against it.
>
> It's a painful process to come to know and respect yourself for who you are, but the really tough part is to finally demand that respect from others.

Ruth's narrative is filled with insights, many of which speak for themselves. There are, however, two analytic points to be underscored. The first relates to deviance attributed to the midlife woman, and the second to the subjective problems such women face both in dealing with deviant status and in constructing a comfortable self-image related

to career/aging.

The problem that the social scientist confronts in constructing an analysis of the 30-year women is a little bit like the problem that the women themselves face: there is very little known about the woman who has worked continuously since her youth, and is now in midlife. Working continuously is, of course, the subject of this study; while uninterrupted work may be atypical for women in the work force generally, it is not atypical of airline flight attendants. However, even in the case of flight attendants, working continuously only begins to characterize the women's pattern from the 1960s to today.

The literature on women working in midlife for the most part assumes an interrupted work pattern (cf., Rubin, 1979; Rosenthal, 1978; Troll and Turner, 1978), and delineates patterns that have limited application here. For example, Rosenthal notes that re-entry, midlife women are apt to accrue less tangible rewards and lower prestige than they had in their first job (1978:241). In addition, conclusions reached in these studies and other studies might lead one to the making of rather hasty assumptions regarding all midlife women before all the data is in. More specifically, Rosenthal distinguishes between those jobs filled by younger women and those filled by older women; employers manipulate features of the work such as glamour and the opportunity to talk with high status men, in order to attract a stream of skilled young women for low wages. Stewardesses, cocktail waitresses and receptionists are cited. Older women, Rosenthal asserts, are unwilling and unable to compete for such jobs, and as such are the "reluctant pioneers" in "jobs formerly held by men." However, many of the "older women's jobs" cited have little more to offer in terms of security, or financial stability, e.g., commission sales or "home party

hostessing." What this and other literature neglects is the transformation of the sex-segregated female job into long-term careers as uninterrupted worker perseverance has increased the tangible rewards (see, for example, Chapter I on the labor movement). (Not that employers have not endeavored to keep these jobs as temporary low-wage employment for young women—indeed, that is one reason for the application of "forcing-out" measures as illustrated in the narrative.) Not all women leave such jobs, and therefore are doubly "deviant:" they are mature women in a young women's job, and they have an uninterrupted work pattern.

Perhaps the more relevant problem is how the ascription of deviance is squared with one's conception of self. Again, this is a problem that has begun to be addressed in regard to re-entry women (Troll and Turner, 1978), but not with regard to continuous-participation women. Karp and Yoels identify five stages of working life—preparation, learning the ropes, coming to grips, settling in, and exiting—and correlate these stages with the subjective sense of aging. They indicate that by age 40 one has a settled occupational past to look back upon and that further, one's sense of aging is a function of where one is "supposed to be" occupationally at a given time (Karp and Yoels, 1978). In a footnote they concede that the experience of women may be seen as deviant because it is different from this pattern, and they ask, "Do women think about careers and evaluate job success differently than men?" It would appear that they do in at least one respect—that of always first having to deal with deviant status.

Thirty-year women are able to cope with designations of deviance in several ways. First of all, the value of uninterrupted participation in one job is a crucial factor in increasing the rewards in that job.

This has been noted in the case of union participation particularly (Koziara and Pierson, 1981). Thus, for the 30-year woman seniority brings rewards of its own in respect to preferred work schedules, time off, extensive travel, and most importantly, higher wages. All this helps to weigh the balance in favor of positive self-esteem as a career worker.

Further, in "a young woman's occupation," or in a "beautiful woman's occupation," particularly if the older woman is energetic and attractive, the tendency may be to identify with those prominent features of the occupation rather than to feel excluded by them. One may feel very much a part of the occupation, and even if occasional detractors comment on one's age, it is still possible to designate the critics as the deviants, not oneself, if other "markers" of appropriateness are in place. One mark of singular importance appears to be the woman's relationship to men. Even if she has determined that she has no desire to marry, to still be pursued, to still have "several beaus", is a mark of age/career appropriateness. One should be cautioned about generalizing such an explanation to continuous-participation career women, even those in "glamourous careers, other than airline flight attendants. However, appropriate to this, author Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her biography,

> I was 40 when I went down the Mississippi with Algren and I felt very young; I was 44 when I met Lanzman, and I did not feel old (1972:43).

And in years well beyond "forty-four," sexuality and sexual interest contrary to still prevalent mythology [according to Payne and Whittington (1976)] continue to provide meaning and validation.

These are but two ways of coping with deviance assignment. Obviously there are others. And unquestionably, although it did not

begin with women in this age group, the women's movement has had its impact; as Lillian Rubin observes, its effects on midlife women have been immense (1979). Perhaps also because of the movement, younger flight attendants interviewed feel that the 30-year women have much to say; there is a sense that while some of the specifics have changed, somehow the older women's perception of the particular demands placed on women in this occupation encompasses the experience of all.

Finally, the process of long-term career making, and consciousness of it, rather than having been marked by stages as sharply delineated as those described by Karp and Yoels (1981), appears to be much more dialectical in nature. The present unfolds gradually into the future day by day, and when there are stages they tend to be noticed more in retrospect than in present fact; this is not an indication of lack of plan but rather an indication of a way of conceptualizing. A quote from de Beauvoir is again illustrative of this phenomenon when she says:

> I am neither a slave to my past nor am I haunted by it; I do not retain a sufficiently sharp image of it to be able to gauge the alterations that take place around me; I cannot therefore grasp the passage of time as it fleets by. When I am in a country that I have not seen for a long while, the changes are obvious to me; but what I seem to see is a sudden replacement of one scene by another rather than a transformation. But if on the other hand I watch the various stages of a development day by day, I adjust myself to it so thoroughly that I do not notice it. From my window and from Sartre's I see huge buildings, great blocks that did not exist ten years ago. When they began to rise they did not spoil the landscape; and I had forgotten it by the time they were finished.... From this point of view, history is no less disappointing. As the present asserts itself, so the earlier moments are swallowed up in the darkness. Seeing that one is swept on towards the future, one rarely has the time to look back (1972:42).

DIVERGENT IDENTITY AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE CONCEPT

To set out and describe "divergent identities," 30-year women such as Ruth, minority women or men, is to make an analytic point, rather than do describe a separate reality. First of all, the contradictions of the job in respect to image, identity and even aging are to a certain extent shared by all flight attendants. Secondly, status-forcing is most definitely a process experienced by all the participants, a case that the historical account in the preceding chapter and the three illustrations in this chapter brought out. The concept of divergent identities serves to set the overall process in relief.

While the day-to-day aspects of carrying out the job are routine enough and easily mastered by well-motivated people, it is the maintenance of personal identity that constitutes the central "work" in an occupation that has always existed because an industry deemed the image most important. The delicate balance of remaining "qualified," whether one accepts some, all, or none of those image "qualifications" as legitimate, while at the same time feeling true or real to oneself necessitates a good bit of social psychological effort. Some of it is highly individual and takes a seemingly extraordinary amount of personality strength, vitality and purpose. It is these kinds of qualities that are undoubtedly present in that very small segment of 30-year people, and which are so immediately recognized and applauded by younger flight attendants. Some of that social psychological effort draws from a fund of past experience or even history that is brought to bear in the situation—this is well illustrated by the minority women. And, of course, a great deal of support for the effort is provided by a recognizable cohort, a stable set of associates who are able to provide identity approval for one another. Remaining in

CHAPTER IV

NOTES

1. Any number of articles have appeared concerning the "typical stewardess." In 1965 an editorial praising the "tender loving care" that could be experienced on any U.S. trunk carrier explained that each of the major lines seems to have its "own personal type of girl" doing hostess duties, but that there is no "Miss Average." "They're all better." It goes on to describe "a girl 21 years of age, 5 feet 5 inches tall, weighing 118 pounds, with brown hair, blue eyes and two years of college" (San Francisco Examiner, November 23, 1965). In 1971 Jerry Hulse in the Los Angeles Times tells his readers that, "After researching my subject I feel a little like Hugh Hefner searching out bunnies," and goes on to illustrate that from his "data," only the gorgeous and sexy "angels" are the ones to "make the grade" (Hulse, June 6, 1971). However, New York Time's journalist Diane Ouding's research left her with a different impression. In her article on "The Typical Stewardess" she says, "Now, I realize, instead of being 19 and dimpled and trying to recapture how it felt to be a prom queen, the typical 'stew' is apt to be 30, worldly, tired, funny, and human" (Ouding, December 1, 1974). By 1978 Anna Quindlen writing in the New York Times says that anyone "who still thinks of them as the coffee-tea-or-me type is in for a jolt...the perception of flight attendant as swinger has disappeared," and goes on to cite the rising age statistics to prove it (Quindlen, April 24, 1978). Apparently the swinger perception, age and marital statistics not-withstanding, hadn't quite disappeared, and in an article entitled,

"After the Flight the Fun Begins: The Stews of New York," Judson Hand of the Daily News reassures us that stewardesses hang out with celebrities, pick up mail held for them at singles bars, and dream about meeting Mr. Right along the way (Hand, October 28, 1979).

2. In this regard, one male union official interviewed gives credit to the women's movement for professionalizing the attitude of the rank and file, stating that in the long history of flight attendant exploitation, the unions had done little to erode either sexist exploitation or to strengthen the collective resolve of flight attendants wanting better treatment.
3. In sex-segregated occupations, it can always be seen how gender is raised to the most significant status, and how closely imputations of sexual interest or activity follow. This is illustrated by the case of a male R.N. who is appealing a decision barring him from working in a labor and delivery unit (The American Nurse, September, 1981). The judge ruled that males were inappropriate because of the "intimate touching required," clearly an indication that gender status was to be seen as dominant over professional status, and that the "touching required" was to be seen in the light of sexual activity rather than professional task.
4. It is notable that the men's civil rights battles, just like the women's, have not ended. In 1981, Gregory Wilson had to go to court to win his battle against Southwest Airlines and its policy of barring males from employment. Southwest had argued that its business was generated largely from advertizing based on sexual allusions and its "unique, feminized image" and that hiring males would tarnish that image. The judge did not share this view, and

said that running an airline is not "a business where vicarious sex entertainment is the primary service provided" (Wall Street Journal, June 15, 1981). Such current events indicate that image pressures for both men and women are still very much in evidence.

CHAPTER V

THE WORKPLACE AT 37,000 FEET

In his essay, "Some General Observations on the Problem of Work," Peter Berger examined the historical transformations in work itself, as well as the intellectual tradition that underlies the study of work and occupations in western society. From this history and these studies Berger has concluded that there are three aspects of work that ought to be included in any sociological analysis of work: the structural, the social psychological, and the ideological (1964).

In the foregoing chapters the focus has been directed most intensely at the social psychological dimension of the flight attendant's work; it is an occupation which, more than most emphasizes person as opposed to, for instance, product produced. Further, while all work "socializes" to the point that its efficient performance has psychological requirements (Berger, 1964), because of the intensity of socialization in this occupation, constant struggle rages between the socializing institution and the individual worker over the extent to which person will be controlled.

One thing that should be made clear, however, is that the definition of "work" in this research is a comprehensive one. As mentioned in the earlier discussion of the social psychological dimensions of the occupation, the tasks embodied therein are seen as part of the totality of work required. Thus, "identity work" such as that described by Ruth, the 30-year woman who must counter forcing-out pressures, is as much a part of the job as the most concrete, visible, and physically structural task, e.g., conducting a safety demonstration. The structural, social psychological and ideological

aspects are always intertwined. Furthermore, these aspects can be understood on several different levels.

In Chapter I the discussion involved macro social movements and their relationship to the structure of the occupation. In studying organizations and associations that have arisen within the occupation (e.g., unions, protest organizations and the like) emergent ideology as well as certain macro aspects of the occupational structure became apparent.

Consequently, the thrust of this chapter will be structure and ideology, but focusing more specifically on the level of day-to-day work experiences, identifying what it is that people do (the structure of work) and what they have to say about what they do (the ideological component). The aim of this analysis is to make explicit the more deeply embedded ideological rhetoric, shifts in ideology in the last decade, and the reasons for that shift. Doing so should contribute to further understanding of issues at play in the development of occupational longevity.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK: SERVICE, SAFETY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Flight attendants have one of those kind of jobs where everyone, everyone outside the occupation thinks that they know exactly what they do. It seems quite apparent: they greet the passenger at the door, demonstrate a predictable safety routine, serve drinks, pass out meal trays, show a movie, and then, after collecting the residue of these services, say good-bye at the door. They are, as columnist Anthony Burton once observed, "merely flying waitresses with the additional burden that (flying) entails." Is this an accurate perception? As Burton goes on to ask, if it is accurate, why are they so rigidly

stereotyped? To quote him, "in cartoons, they're sexy and dumb, the skirt hem too high, the brow too low...They are the coffee, tea or me girls, and don't let anybody tell you differently." Burton muses that perhaps the reason they are the object of such affronting labels is that their "authority" is resented by a dependent public which, if the truth be known, has a bit of underlying fear of "getting into a machine which is going to carry them off the sanity of the dearly beloved earth." Thus, contends Burton, "She's the mother figure authority in a way no ground-bound waitress is. Perhaps she is resented for it."

The flight attendant's promoted image presents her with a double bind when it comes to carrying out her duties. The practical meaning of this is best illustrated by the comment of one interviewee that, "It's pretty hard to keep control of the situation when you're waltzing down the aisle in a sarong." Burton's quips and the flight attendant's statements direct attention to the fact that the name of the occupational game is maintaining social control in the aircraft cabin. Defined in the broadest terms, the job of the flight attendant is agent of social control. The specific forms that agency takes range widely. On one extreme it entails performing personal service tasks that keep people mollified, quiet and uncomplaining, and, on the other it entails ordering, leading and moving people in the event of an emergency. The most common example, however, is negotiating with people who present any number of demands, problems and entanglements. It is the flight attendant's task to create some sort of organized harmony for all present until the particular enclosed and confined social configuration can be disbanded.

As I interviewed flight attendants, when our discussions got to the point of asking what they do at work, I tried always to adopt

Leonard Schatzman's fieldwork advice: "Think of yourself as an inhabitant of Mars who has just set foot here, who doesn't know a thing about what goes on, and who therefore must ask the most basic naive questions" (1). I had constantly to think of myself in this way to avoid falling into the trap of assuming too much about an ostensibly very visible kind of work, and one which is doubly a problem to study because I, like everyone else, have all observed it in other than a research capacity, and therefore possessed a plethora of preconceived ideas of the reality of the occupation. I had to ask, "What do you do on a flight? What happens next? And after that? And then what? Tell me about a routine flight. Tell me about one that was out of the ordinary. What is difficult to handle? What is easy?" And so on and on to build a picture of the work.

Once the problems and tasks of the occupation come into focus, the next sociological task is to describe them with some kind of organizational scheme. To this end the analysis draws from the work of C. Wright Mills and Harry Braverman on the labor process, from Everett Hughes' conception of the struggle inherent in the work situation, and to a limited degree on the principally dramaturgical insights of Irving Goffman. Finally, in an attempt to pull the observations and analyses together, Berger's coupling of structure and ideology will be viewed in the context of the flight attendant occupation.

The labor process: object-work and people-work. Flight attendants are required to perform a set of tasks, some of which are predetermined (the specific service routines) and some of which are not (dealing with passenger behavior), under a number of conditions, some of which are predetermined (time allotted or available space) and

some of which are not (changing weather conditions or equipment failure). As will become apparent, the tasks do not stand alone but must always be understood in terms of the particular conditions under which they must be accomplished.

The task structure of the flight attendant's work can be seen in terms of two components: working with objects, that is, the equipment attached to the services, and working with people, the relational aspect of the work. Looking at these two components as evolving work processes, it is evident that the labor process related to object work is becoming more simplified and rationalized, while the process of working with people is becoming more complex.

Object-work. In 1951 in his ground-breaking book on the emergence of the white collar bureaucratic class in America, C. Wright Mills predicted that as corporate industry grew, it would be discovered that more and more people were doing more and more jobs that failed to come anywhere near challenging their intellectual capacities. Mills' predictions appeared to be borne out by the findings of the 1973 Presidential Task Force on "Work in America," which found that, even in the face of ever-increasing education, there was more dissatisfaction than ever with work (Special Task Force, 1973). The report seemed to suggest that increasing education in the face of decreasingly challenging jobs only made matters worse as it widened the disparity between qualifications and expected performance. This trend seems unlikely to diminish in that a recent study shows that, by 1985, 21 percent of the people in the labor force will be college graduates, up from 13 percent in 1970 (Cook, 1981).

The percentage of flight attendants with college degrees is already far above that future predicted labor force level, pushing their educa-

tional qualifications beyond a significant proportion of their required tasks. Given this discrepancy, at least two consequences might result: one is that people would begin to attach more importance to time outside of work. Another consequence is that, in work itself, people would find their greatest satisfaction in other than the routine objectifying tasks and more in the unforeseen, unpredictable and unscheduled events that disrupt the structured steps of the daily routine. It would be in these spaces that the self would be more fully realized in work. In short, people would define their working identities in terms of the things that challenge them as well as enhance their self-concept. In spite of the fact that these women represent relative newcomers to the world of paid work (the occupation is but 50 years old and careerism has only developed in the last decade), it would appear that these consequences have transpired in this occupation. The area of second careers and life outside of work will be considered in a future chapter.

Turning, for the moment, to the quality of work on the job, it is to the object-work that flight attendants refer when they talk about the "mindless" or "robot-like" aspects of work. Coupling the notion of manipulating objects in a service routine with the earlier contrived image of flight attendants, Virginia commented that she was reminded of a recent movie which depicted women being turned into beautiful and obedient mechanical servants. To quote Virginia:

> When I saw 'The Stepford Wives' I thought, 'My God, wouldn't the company just love it if they could turn us into that. We'd do all that serving like a machine, work like hell, never have a hair out of place and keep smiling the whole time. Yeah, if they could just give us a pill that would last the duration...'

Manipulating objects requires that items like headphones and menus be distributed, that a cocktail service be dispensed, and that a meal

service be completed in a prescribed amount of time, each so that it can be followed by what one woman very aptly termed, "the next wave of service." These waves wash out upon all, flight attendants and passengers alike, according to a rigorously defined division of labor. Meals are pre-packaged, pre-cooked, portioned and put aboard the aircraft by food service personnel, ready to be heated, transferred to trays, and placed by the flight attendant in front of the passenger (whose required task in the division of labor is to spend time disposing of the food).

To use Weber's concept, all of the tasks which the airlines have mandated as necessary to the production process have gradually become more rationalized. That is to say such tasks are goal directed and segmented in the interest of getting them accomplished rapidly and on a large scale. Not only is food (or any service to be distributed) prepared in advance, but it is necessarily distributed in production line fashion. In addition, the division of labor on board the airplane is segmented into specialties to some extent. There is, for example, what is known as "the galley girl position" on the wide-bodied planes. This is a position located on the lower level which contains the ovens for heating the food. The food can then be sent upstairs in carts on the lift to the passenger cabin. This place of work occupied by one of the flight attendants is not a room or galley cabin per se, but rather a place that is temporarily created by the placing aboard of movable food storage carts in the baggage compartment. The "galley girl" finds herself surrounded on all sides by carts filled with food, which will later be removed from the airplane.

The choice by the airline industry to provide food and drink as time-filling diversion throughout the flight is an interesting one.

It has, of course, some historical basis as a habit developed in the time when all flights were longer and people couldn't make the flight from New York to Paris in ten or twelve hours without having something to eat (2). And naturally there are long flights now; the non-stop flights are in fact longer than ever. Then there is the ubiquitous nature of the activity. Presumably everyone eats and drinks, whereas not all might partake of other entertainments with quite the same sense of necessity, e.g., a consuming electronic game flashing in front of every seat comes to mind. And, in a competitive business the companies must have some form of entertainment to offer. The idea of leaving twentieth century travelers to their own devices, expecting most to read or sit quietly is out of the question. Flight attendants attest to the fact that very few people can do so. Finally, there is the notion that providing food and drink may offer some satiating consolation in the face of the anxiety provoked by flying. New York Times columnist Russell Baker once suggested that the stewardess' role is more akin to nurse than to geisha, in that she administers drugs, in the form of a wide selection of alcohol, to keep the passengers sedated and still, a cynical remark that has a ring of truth to it. A flight attendant told a story about having "put out a couple of loud rowdies traveling in a certain heavyweight boxer's entourage....I knew these two would pass out so I just started pouring the drinks a little heavier—they did." Numerous others have referred to providing liquor and food as "pacifiers" to a querulous, demanding, irritable crowd.

The tasks given the passenger are passive and consuming, as is much entertainment that fills time even in ground-bound activities. A passive state of being is encouraged and is not without some degree of necessity—imagine attempting to transport up to 464 people (3)

safely from one point to another without some degree of social control. However, acknowledging the necessity for some measure of order just to accomplish the basic transportation task, beyond that it is crucial to understand the nature of impersonal social control as it operates in this setting. Only then can the work of the flight attendant be understood.

One might well ask how flight attendants "control" people when these items are being distributed [or as some flight personnel put it, "passing out junk," which has been more academically stated as, "gratifying false needs created by advertising" (Stuckey, 1977)]. Such a process constitutes an impersonal type of social control, the attempt of the market to control customers. Taking part in impersonal social control is one of the ways in which the worker acts in the interest of the company; and in acting as the market's instrument or agent the worker, is controlled as well (4).

Attempts at market control manifest themselves in the ever increasing blitz of service that each company unleashes on the public and delivers through its flight attendants. Such a service blitz requires several components. Two components are constant change and a seemingly "new" product. For example, United Air Lines may serve mixed nuts, so Southwest Air will go them one better and serve "love bites." One is immediately reminded of the competition between the pharmaceutical companies over drugs such as Valium. Competing companies produce another product that is generically the same but call it something else (5).

The more important component in terms of the worker on the job is what Sweezy has referred to as the "speed-up," that is, producing more product (or in this case service) within a specified time period

(Sweezy, 1968). A good example of this is the addition of the "pre-flight" champagne or cocktail hurriedly prepared in the time between boarding and take-off. Flight attendants feel that it is not unreasonable for people to wait until they are airborne to begin consuming alcohol, and that moreover, in squeezing in this added service, the time for relatively invisible tasks such as checking for safety equipment, making certain that loose items are secured, or even "looking over the load" before take-off is reduced. The problem is that these invisible tasks cannot be sold, and are of little value in controlling the market.

Certainly in terms of object-work with trays, cups, food, audio-entertainment headsets and other paraphenalia, Braverman's comments regarding the labor process in other industrial settings is equally apt here. An increasing "separation between head and hand" in the performance of work has occurred (Braverman, 1974). Simply stated, this means that the planning of this sort of object work is done in one place in the corporate order and the worker's task to carry it out is done in another.

In addition to the area of passive entertainment on board the aircraft, another notable area in which this split occurs has been recently introduced. This involves the substitution on some airlines of a pre-recorded videotape for the live safety demonstration formerly given by the flight attendants. The argument offered by the airlines using it is that the uniformity of message allows "quality control" (Harris, June 8, 1981). In other words, the message can be predictably planned in advance right down to "the proper low-key tones" that, according to an airline public relations man, "don't raise anybody's emotions" (Harris, 1981). Anxiety is a human emotion and flight

attendants may possess it from time to time. A flight attendant may be anxious over something else unrelated to the safety lesson. And the public relations man is quite correct, anxiety is interpersonally transmissible. Therefore it has been deemed necessary to remove the human component; or, put more graphically, if the flight attendants can't be "Stepfordized", create a film instead (6).

If the object-work is becoming more simplified, controlled, broken into smaller piece-work to be divied up in the allocation of labor, and described as boring and mindless, the people-work, on the other hand, is becoming increasingly complex. The two are, of course, not unrelated, and sometimes the task becomes one of keeping them separated. An example of this attempt at separation occurs when the flight attendant consciously avoids eye contact with the passenger attempting to get her attention as she's trying to deliver a meal service. If she allows the passenger to catch her eye, she gives him the opportunity to make a request that will throw off the whole timed service, back things up in the aisle, delay the progression of the meals through the rows, and, consequently, delay the progression of the next wave following upon that. Hence, the prescribed object-tasks under the further constraints of time and space, preclude doing the people work.

Stepping out of the occupational sociology mode and into the consulting tradition of industrial sociology (cf., Hughes, 1956), the policies of the airline companies bear observation. If indeed the companies want to compete by providing personalized, "friendly" service, it would appear that adding more object service may subvert their goal in spite of the best efforts of the cabin personnel to expedite these objects. As more object services are added the problem of their

containment under conditions of restricted time and space necessitates increasing withdrawal from personalized contact with passengers. And, the only efficient and uniform way to dispense multiple services then becomes through the development of organizational (as opposed to personal) strategies.

Time and space as "conditions under which..." Time and space are crucial conditions which influence the way the flight attendant's work is done. The aircraft cabin can offer both too much and too little space. If the already restricted space is further blocked by even the smallest unforeseen object or event it can throw routine into chaos because the restricted space dictates a linear form to process. In such a situation, one can hardly step out the front door and circumvent the delay by going round to the back door of the work place. As illustrated in the previously mentioned example of the avoidance of eye contact, it follows that social processes rather than physical must be developed.

Conversely, sometimes there is too much space, and ways must be found to render it manageable. The women's own words will illustrate best:

> There's so much more complication now. I hate to say, when I started it was on the DC-3s. There were 21 passengers and I felt the necessity of knowing all their names and being nice to all of them. Whereas now, especially with the purser's job, it's a lot more of an organizational job. Nobody realizes the complications. The 747 is like four planes, four cabins. Even the service work is most organizational. It's impersonal. It has to be. Somebody said, 'You've been flying so long you must really like to please people.' I said, 'No, I don't please people, I only alienate them.' I think the traveling public is harrassed too. You have high expectations (for what you would like to do for people), but it can't be done. If you care, it rips you apart,

because it can't be done.

Ruth, 33 years

> The wider the airplane gets, the less control you have. In the old days, with the narrow-body planes, there was more personal contact. We still had our ups and downs but people didn't get really rowdy, because it wasn't possible. We had only the 707s. But now, when they're in row 50 and you're in row 10, by the time you get back there it's a whole big shabang!

Irene, 13 years

As the airplane gets larger, social control must be substituted for the physical control imposed by smaller space. And as the physical operation gets bigger, social control must become more highly developed, organized. This is evident in the formal control imposed by routine but it can also be seen in the informal control mechanisms developed by the flight attendants trying to do organizational work.

One such mechanism is "team work," as the concept of "flying partners" has developed over the years along with changing conditions. Precise strategies are not always planned, but what is established is the expectation that others will define the situation similarly:

> It's not really mapped out, but you'll certainly tell your flying partner or the next one down, 'hey, I've refused this person liquor,' and it's understood, 'you do the same, don't make me look like an ass.' But it's not done ahead of time because situations change.

Roxanne, 12 years

Another mechanism dependent upon team work which flight attendants use to do organizational work is task rotation. This is a mechanism that not only aids in keeping the large numbers of people manageable on the large planes, but also serves to keep the process psychologically manageable. For instance, one person rarely "boards" completely. Instead, the job of greeting people and looking them over at the door

is split up and assumed by a number of flight attendants in shorter intervals because, as Virginia says, "If you do the whole thing, by the time you're finished you're hoarse," and Gloria's comment is that, "coming face to face with that many people, that quickly, is just too overwhelming."

Negri has also commented on space limitations in the aircraft as they are juxtaposed with the large numbers of people present, and notes that flight attendants develop "defensive techniques" such as placing newspapers and personal belongings in the seat surrounding the galley work space so that when passengers come to select a seat these will already appear occupied. The flight attendant will then tell the passenger, "It is very noisy here by the galley and the trolleys will be in your way most of the time—I have a much nicer seat for you, etc." (Negri, 1976:6). In so doing she manages to preserve an increased amount of personal space that is not constantly intruded upon.

A recent study has confirmed the obvious fact that privacy is one of many needs of the person at work. With the space limitations under which flight attendants work this presents a problem on most flights. If every seat is taken, or if the above tactic for keeping passengers at a bit of distance is ineffective, flight attendants will face away from passengers and into the galley during those intervals in which they attempt to preserve privacy. If the face can be momentarily removed from scrutiny a significant feature of self is privately preserved.

The dimension of time is perhaps the most demanding condition under which work is performed and is a constant consideration for the flight attendant. One component of the time dimension is "time of day." Each trip has its time frame in which to accomplish the task structure.

Moreover, that time frame can be set into practically any given interval during the 24-hour day, further differentiating the tasks that are required. For instance, time of day may force either object-work or people-work into priority as this quote illustrates:

> ...Now, 29 at 9 p.m., is one of the worst flights out of New York. My theory is, as the day goes on, they get worse. In the morning their energies aren't up yet, and as the day goes on, passengers become more and more aggressive. That's why all-nighters are so bad. Because they're at their absolute worst. They've been up all day been through everything, and then they walk on the plane, and they're doing all this liquor...

Such an arrangement is similar to shift work as described by Shostak (1980). Further, working at night goes against the "natural" human bent to work in daylight and sleep at night, thus creating an atmosphere in which it is expected that even problems should be put "on hold" throughout the night and that activities will start up again with daylight. This situation is similar to that in hospitals, summer camps and other total institutions in which work, play, sleeping and eating are all done in the same sphere. In these institutions there exists the sense of the availability of increased time for taking care of problems at some future point. Because the time of confinement of the inhabitants of the aircraft cabin is markedly different, it does not qualify as a total institution; however, the fact that a daily "round of activity," to use Goffman's terminology, does occur should raise some questions regarding the consequences of its very similar attributes (Goffman, 1961). In any case, if the passengers can be quieted, this nighttime calm can settle on the environment; if, for whatever reason, tranquility cannot be established, disturbances are magnified.

Time frames constitute a major differentiating factor among types of flight attendant jobs. Although flight attendants in most types

of airlines must log 75 or 80 flight hours per month, the way in which this is done varies greatly between international flight attendants and those flying the so-called commuter airlines or the shorter commuter routes of national airlines (7). An international flight attendant in some cases may make three trips a month in which any one trip may have a flight up to 19 hours in length, while a commuter flight attendant may make a substantial number of flights of less than an hour's duration in one day. The fact that time frames carry such weight in dictating the division of labor is sometimes most apparent when a sudden re-arrangement occurs. I observed aboard several flights in which this was the case.

One of the major international carriers that picks up passengers from both San Francisco and Los Angeles before going to the orient (and that returns them to the same two stops), in 1978 began to compete for the commuter business also. It seemed simple enough since they were flying the 400 miles up and down the coast anyway and had all those empty seats in a huge 747. The cut-rates being offered to those willing to stand by for one of the empty seats were appealing to commuters. However, the arduousness of the working conditions aside, the mismatch of conditions and tasks was astoundingly apparent. The time and energy on everyone's part that it takes to board and seat the number of people that can fill a 747 is clearly out of proportion to the let-down of a 45-minute flight. More importantly, the fact that the whole operation was clearly geared for something other than a short flight lent an air of illegitimacy to the entire operation.

But whether time frames are constricted or extensive, the ratio of flight attendants to passengers and the object tasks to be accomplished within the time frame dictate that interaction between

the two be bounded (8). In most instances there is not sufficient time for much conversation beyond an exchange of pleasantries and the making of small talk. It should be noted that space comes in again here to work its effect on interaction as well. The seating space for the flight attendant to seat herself beside the passenger, even for a few moments usually does not exist. Therefore, no opportunity exists to exchange words on the same level. Whenever one person assumes the posture of a person ready to be on the way, while another is consigned to a fixed place, it has a decided effect on the interaction of both. Hospitalized patients attempting to converse with nurses and doctors realize this immediately. The situation in the aircraft is similar and has the additional feature that the tight space in the cabin acts to increase the proximity between the two interactants and increases the sense of discrepancy in their levels and therefore the disparity between them (9). Flight attendants have an awareness of this sitting/standing disparity and at times may even use it to control an unruly passenger. Because the disparity is powerful, it is often tempered by other gestures, such as inclining the head or leaning toward the person. Says Virginia, "I'm very aware of the psychology of the situation—you can come on like a sergeant if you're not careful."

There is yet another, deeper way in which interaction is bounded. The flight attendant comes into contact with many people she will never see again. Passengers, and certain other workers, are met under fleeting temporal circumstances necessitating the development of a perspective for dealing with this which, though not defensive, is to some degree guarded. To have a "real conversation" in which the self is shared under such circumstances, and to do so time and time again, can be very unsettling. This notion of distance brings to mind Ruth's

comment that, "This job allows a woman to give herself away." The corollary to this would be that her self must therefore be guarded. Thus, strategies are developed. On the one extreme, Nancy exemplifies someone who has worked out a whole philosophy for denying discomfort caused by fleeting contacts and talks about how she has learned to appreciate any interaction in her life, both on the job and off, for what it offers at that moment. She even extends this view to her friendships stating that because the schedule of the job often makes it difficult to see people regularly, she is more appreciative of the contact when it occurs and doesn't expect anything for the future. At the other extreme is Monica, so sensitive to people that she pleads "shyness" as a defense against getting either into meaningless small talk or real involvement that will be abruptly attenuated. In any case, the giving of self in interaction must be weighed in a sort of personal risk/benefit ratio by all. The pseudo-intimacy created by the closed darkened aircraft cabin and the constant drone of the engines which acts to shield a conversation from distant ears, together with the sense of unreality this creates, makes passengers press the flight attendant for conversation. "And," says Monica, "they get drunk and all they want to do is talk, talk, talk." This comment suggests that if the flight attendant can categorize the person as an invalid interactant, that is, can say, "they're drunk," or "they're not themselves," interactional distance is more comfortably maintained.

In addition to time frames and bounded time, there is "real time" as opposed to "dead time." These descriptions are derived from the flight attendants' terminology and conceptions. Real time is counted in terms of compensated work time, the time that can be added up to the required number of duty hours in a month. Real time exists in what

is known in the jargon of the industry as "block-to-block." When the blocks are removed from the wheels of the plane, their turning symbolically sets time into motion: paid work begins, the task structure gets underway. Real time continues until the wheels are brought to a stop again, and blocked into place. Whether compensated in some degree or not, all other time spent in, around and in the service of block-to-block (real) time does not have the same degree of legitimacy. It is for all intents and purposes, dead. Take-off delays, a backed-up customs area that temporarily halts disembarkation or any number of similar occurrences necessitate "killing time." Time must be "killed" or, at best, "marked" when it is not intrinsically valuable; it's only peripherally related to something else. Most of us know this feeling in the experience of driving to work or waiting in the reception room of a professional's office. We have some usual sense of how long this should take and often become uneasy when it defies our expectations. One of the features of the flight attendant's job is that she must take into account a wider range of indeterminancy than most of us. Although this may become familiar, it is not always easy. As energetic Virginia says, "Killing time is physically draining and it takes a lot out of you--I'd much rather be working." With these conceptions of time, the term used by flight personnel to describe riding home on a flight on which one is not working is, not surprisingly, known as "deadheading."

The unreality of time as it relates to speed in flight and the crossing of time zones merits brief mention here. The great significance of this will be taken up in detail when health on the job is considered. The crossing of time zones, the rapid spinning of the clock forward or backward only adds to the fantasy-disconnectedness

of flying. To combat this and remain anchored in the reality of their own personal lives, some flight attendants never reset their watches from their home time. A few, especially those who have a particularly consuming project which is running apace, even conduct their affairs on the basis of that home clock. For example, when she was going to law school Laura never changed her sleep/study routine even flying two or three times a month to Tokyo. While the rest of the city slept she studied and when the city awoke she retired; in this way, she was able to resist the discontinuity imposed by the unreality of crossing time zones.

The unreality of time seemingly spinning rapidly forward or setting one back is a major condition under which the flight attendant works. This is truer in international flying, but speed and the concommitant changing of scene can work a similar and potentially disorienting effect even in the commuter flyer. A better way of putting it may be that time casts its spell and must be resisted to the degree that it can and also must be understood to be irresistable in some ways. This not only stands as a preeminent feature of the occupation, but is also a condition to be kept in mind when looking at people-work, the activity of the flight attendant with passengers.

People work. As earlier stated, people-work is becoming more difficult while object-work is becoming more fragmented and boring. In some ways this is so because of the demands generated by the offering of objected-dominated service. Advertising and the prevalent knowledge that various gimmicks and choices will be available aboard an airliner not only engender ever more demand for "things" that will divert, fill time and entertain, but moreover, convey the illusion that the consumer has some say over his situation. This amounts to a mollifying-the-

consumer tactic on the part of the industry. The prime example of this is in the offering of choices to the passenger, in music stations, seating, and food. The diversion which requires the greatest adaptation on the part of the flight attendant is, again, food. I observed a typical example when, on one trip to the East Coast, I sat elbow to elbow with a young man who couldn't seem to make up his mind over the two entrees offered. Seated in the front row and therefore at the peak of the first wave of service, he had a choice between pancakes and omelettes. When the flight attendant indicated the selections and asked his preference he said he needed more time to consider it. When she returned he made a choice, only to later place his third order when he overheard that yet another entree had been unexpectedly found on board. When the flight attendant returned with his pancakes he demanded fruit salad with all the authority of a board room decision.

However, even if people don't get caught up in dilemmas over their choices, there is <u>always</u> another problem for the flight attendant in the mere fact of the selection arrangement. The fact of the matter is that there are not, on board even the largest aircraft, 300 steaks, 300 chicken entrees, and 300 mounds of shrimp in cream sauce. Everyone does <u>not</u> have a choice, and, the printed disclaimers warning "subject to availability" notwithstanding, passengers often hold the flight attendant, as the only visible embodiment of the company, personally responsible for the thwarting of their right to choose steak over chicken.

Juggling people and their possessions presents its difficulties to be sure, but the primary way in which people-work has grown more complex relates to predictability, or, more specifically, the lack thereof. As the flight attendants say, "God only knows who's going

to get on that plane and what they're going to do." The preeminent and most extreme example is, of course, the airline hijacker. The first hijackings began in the 1960s, not only prompting the development of a whole technology for dealing with the threat and the actuality, but also ushering in yet a new era in passenger relations and assessment. Hijacking, or "skyjacking" as it became known, added the previously unknown dimension of "potential threat" to the many factors on which passengers were judged. It becomes another feature, often subtle, perhaps based only on a hunch, to which the cabin attendant needs to be sharply tuned. Thus, greeting at the door is not only a required courtesy, but also a chance for quick appraisal. Attention must be paid to words and cues which might indicate the need for action. A flight attendant tells the following related story:

> Last week I was standing in the back of a 747, at row 53, boarding. And I'm watching people come on, and saying hello, and here comes this little old man with a typewriter case. And he's unshaven, and he looks a little nutty, but he looks harmless. But that case keeps attracting my attention. So I say, 'Are you going to do some typing?' And then he says, 'What would you say if I told you it was a bomb?' I said, 'Oh, why'd ya wanna go and say that!' thinking, 'here goes the whole can of worms.' So I told him, 'I'm going to have to ask you to open the case so I can look at it now.' Then he started to swear about having already been checked, and 'goddamn it, and...' I said, 'Sir, everyone has to go through security, it's for your own protection, and...' He kept insisting that he had already been checked. I said, 'Well, yes, but since you've said that, I'm going to have to have a look.' So he opened his typewriter case and it was only his shabby clothes and it was really kind of sad. But he was going off on a rampage, he was going so crazy.

The story illustrates that, real or presumed, out of the ordinary behavior calls for a whole series of interactions. The ensuing turmoil with the passenger necessitated team work and support among the flight

attendants, and eventually involved thue passenger service agent who came aboard to remove the man from the flight which is, of course, an option only available for a short period. Most of the time even the most complex passenger problems must be taken care of by the flight attendants alone because for a specific period of time there is no exit from what they often refer to as "the closed box."

Once airborne, the cabin crew must deal with any manner of situation by either determining some way to hold things together until landing or solving the problem. A woman who has flown international routes for 10 years told of one of her experiences several years ago. A frantic passenger came running to her saying there was "something awful" going on with a man in the back, that he was "all bloody." She and the purser, a quite senior woman, hurried to the back to find that the man, sitting seemingly quietly in his seat, had cut himself in many places with a pocket knife. The interviewee described how the senior woman had handled the situation, directing others away, talking softly to the man, taking the knife, and attending to the bleeding wounds. The fact of the matter was that they were still hours out over the ocean and the flight attendants had no choice but to take care of the situation until the plane landed.

Although they usually fall short of something as extreme as hijackings, the acts of a disturbed mind or suicide attempts, there are other conditions of the social structure at large which manifest themselves as unpredictable passenger behavior. One such aspect of the culture that was frequently mentioned by flight attendants is the prevalence of drug use and the frequency with which passengers come aboard "high" and apparently continue to pop pills or snort cocaine en route. Drug use sometimes creates a variety of bizarre behavior

which the flight attendant tries to contain and keep from disrupting order. This is more prevalent on some routes than others. It was frequently explained in terms like, "What you see going from L.A. to New York you won't see from Salt Lake City to Phoenix, and vice versa."

Drug-taking may, however, simply be the more recent embodiment of the promotion of flying as a joyride. Flying is often portrayed in both the media and in advertising as escapist leisure. "Get away from it all." "Let your hair down." Or, as one airline puts it, "Have a drink, have ten." In a paper entitled "Who's Who at 37,000 Feet," Canadian flight attendant/sociologist R. Negri observes the changes in behavior that particularly occur after meals are cleared away and the lights go down in the long hours of an international flight. She notes that the aircraft, in spite of its being a public place, demanding appropriately "public" behavior, becomes a kind of "home territory" pervaded by "a relative freedom of behavior and sense of intimacy." In field notes, Negri describes what is a familiar scene, suggesting by a comment at the end that, the people involved have an awareness of their changed behavior too:

> The film tonight is 'Frankenstein Junior.' The people watching it are laughing loudly. Other passengers try to sleep with their feet in the air. A man of about thirty is sitting straight in a yoga position. A couple is flirting and a lot of playing seems to be going on under the blanket. A businessman is recording letters for his secretary to type. Two ladies put on their rollers to look nice the next day for their brothers and sisters they have not seen for the last five years. A group of five people are playing cards sitting on the floor by the galley. Two of them are musicians, one is a farmer and two are bank managers. They are quite loud and are told by flight attendants to keep quieter because people are complaining. A man is snoring with his mouth open. A few passengers are around here, there is more space to stand and move about. The aircraft cabin is in complete chaos. Shoes

> all over, boots in the aisles, blankets on the floor and newspaper everywhere.
>
> Passengers do not seem to care about anybody else and do not give a damn about their behavior. This is because they will perhaps never see each other again, so why make the effort of acting to save their faces when nobody knows who they are. A surgeon told me, 'At the hospital we doctors cannot act the way we like. Otherwise nurses and patients would not respect us, but now, the hell with them. They won't see me' ("Field Notes," Negri, 1976:11).

Out of character behavior may be as benign as creating a personal environment in public space or as disruptive as a bad drug "trip," but passengers clearly present an increasingly complex human panorama with which the cabin personnel must contend.

It has been noted by Negri and by others writing on the work of the flight attendant (Auburn, 1972; Moles, 1971), that airline advertising itself promotes uncontrollable behavior by suggesting that flying is part of the adventure. First of all, why is it that such a promotional notion would be seized upon, and secondly, why is it so successful? After all, the public's behavior suggests that they do see it that way. Reflecting on Rose Coser's analysis (cited earlier), that geographic displacement lends itself to the setting aside of usual values and controls, one can easily see why such a suggestion would be so powerful and also so easily adopted by travelers (Coser, 1975). In Chapter II we cited the variability of geographic location and its attendant re-definition of usual taken-for-granted values as one positive component of the women flight attendants' ability to develop new consciousness. In discussing this we referred to the women's ability to locate, even for a short while, in a different city even a new country. The flight environment itself however, is familiar for the cabin crew. This is not, in contrast, the case for most air

travelers in that the flight itself represents alien territory and an erosion of the usual social controls. So, again, in a rather contradictory way, the message of the airline to the traveler is, "cut loose, do your own thing," while on the other hand, its own social control in the form of service order, routine, and the efforts of the flight attendants, are imposed. The flight attendant is caught in the double-bind of the anything-goes advertising and the imposition of routine, and, therefore, becomes Burton's resented authority figure in the process.

The fact that the geographical displacement inherent in flying precipitates what Goffman first called "out of character" behavior (Goffman, 1959), has a whole range of manifestations. Of concern is how those manifestations engender consequences for people-work. As might be assumed from the foregoing examples, sometimes the behaviors are difficult, insulting, or harrassing. The women's recollections illustrate this difficulty in the following examples:

> I've gone in the bathroom and cried. A little boy threw a glass of milk at me and his mother didn't even spank his hand!
>
> ...and as he went by he slapped me on the behind, so I spun around and slapped him back and asked him how it felt.
>
> Some people fantasize that they are rich and they have servants, and they like to look at you as being a servant. This middle-aged man looked down his nose and said, 'I'm sorry, I just keep not noticing you.' His comment really got me--the implication was that I'm just a servant here, let me just disappear into the walls. I thought, 'ya, you'll notice me, because if this plane goes down and you want to get out, I'm going to be the first one you'll look to to get out of here.'

But, just as often, out of character behavior offers the opposite: interpersonal challenge, interest, satisfaction, or even a good laugh.

The following are examples of the positive aspects of people-work:

> ...and she told me that they'd been married something like 38 years, and now after she'd been taking care of him he'd died. She was flying across the country to live with her son, but she was worried about that too. She just broke down and cried right there. She looked so bad that I sat down and talked to her while one of the other girls took over for me for a little while.
>
> Or,
>
> And there I was, in the middle of the night, talking to the Ambassador and her secretary. The Norwegian Ambassador is a woman and her secretary is a man. Isn't that terrific. And she was just standing there in her stocking feet, and we talked about what you automatically assume about who's who.
>
> Or,
>
> A lot of them are afraid of flying and they look to you for support.
>
> Or,
>
> Dave: Working the smoking section is the pits. You have to hold your breath sometimes while you race the length of the aisle. And the smokers drink more too and so they tend to get louder. It can be a handful.
> Pete: But you've got to admit, there've been times when we've had a lot of fun in smoking too.
> Dave: Yeah, right.

Add to the effect of geographic displacement the fact that in the public flying today there is the widest possible range of personalities and personal quirks represented, and that the flight attendant never knows with whom or what she or he will have to deal. The challenges are very great. People-work <u>is</u> complex.

This raises an important point. Flight attendants often say that they prefer the frequent traveler, the business person who flies, much like they do, because flying is part of their job—the passenger for whom flying is routinized. Similarly, I have often heard nostalgia expressed on the part of the older flight attendants for the by-gone

years when "a better class of passengers flew." Even those too young to actually be nostalgic are wont to say, "Now we're just the bus in the sky; we get everything."

Given these and other statements, there might be a tendency to characterize flight attendants as elitist. True, there are some women who describe themselves as living beyond their means and others who characterize their colleagues as "identifying with the rich and famous people who fly." But whatever the extent of the elitist association, it has little relevance for explaining the commonly expressed desire for "better passengers."

What people are expressing is not nostalgia for a rich and important passenger, but rather nostalgia for a predictable passenger. The preference for this idealized passenger of old is coupled with the preference for the "professional passenger," also someone whose role and status and behavior is relatively unambiguous. Why should flight attendants prefer it?

First of all, in examining the task structure as it relates to the manipulation of objects, it has been found to be not only fragmented and alienating, but more importantly, from the point of view of the flight attendants to be repetitious, boring and unstimulating. Secondly, the people-work component of the job, in spite of the fact that it can be difficult, has been found to be the complex realm in which the true challenges to the ingenuity, abilities and creativity of the flight attendant lie. But, thirdly, despite the creativity needed to do people-work, flight attendants idealize a predictable, non-threatening, non-demanding passenger. The reason for this clearly lies in the connection between the two realms of work, object-work and people-work.

The airline industry and each airline company, through their imposition of object-work in the form of services, attempt to control both public and flight attendants in the company's interest. In controlling the work by the imposition of a set of services that "have to get done," the company is able to control the workers. Recall Ruth's words: "After you're out the office door, they don't get another look at you." In creating a speeded-up worker who administers ever more object services increasingly efficiently to a large number of people, competitive industry demands turn creativity into the enemy. The flight attendant not only resents the clamoring public's frenzied demands for the services, but moreover, resents their demands on her time and attention for that which falls outside the object routine. She is necessarily occupied doing the object-work so that she cannot do the people-work and worse yet, she begins to resent the only thing which would demand her intellect and creativity.

There is one final connection between object-work and people-work. There is also a need of the economic system under which the airlines must operate to turn people into objects to be worked on—the objectification of people-work. We have seen in earlier chapters how the institution objectifies the flight attendant through image demands. Having dictated the other task impositions, it is necessary that the company dictate to the flight attendants the required level of passenger contacts to be inserted in the string of other object tasks. Flight attendants refer to this as the requirement for "selling the company." These passenger contacts are judged and rated on those occasions when performance is assessed by a check-rider. Being "check-ridden" means that a supervisor comes aboard as a passenger on the flight and is there to evaluate the performance of one of the flight attendants. Some

flight attendant unions have negotiated certain constraints on the practice in their favor and the check riders in those companies must indicate their presence openly. In other companies this is not in effect, and the check ride is done by a "blind rider," meaning the cabin crew doesn't know an evaluator is present. However, even in that instance strategies have been developed for making an educated guess and then adjusting performance accordingly (Goffman has commented on this as a near universal process which usually includes doing what he calls "make-work" [Goffman, 1959]). But, whether overt or covert, in addition to notation of accomplishment of expected routines, people-work is quantitatively judged in terms of number and frequency of contacts. The current stiff competition between airlines under pressing economic conditions has stepped up the pressure to increase the number of times the task is performed, leading humorist Art Buchwald to comment on the "new policy" of beleagured Eastern Airlines:

> Frank Borman has requested that flight crews start conversations with at least two passengers in the terminal and three in the air, as a way of showing that Eastern is friendlier in the skies than United. According to Rudy Maxa of the Washington Post, Eastern inspectors are spot checking their employees to make sure the directive is being carried out (Buchwald, 1982).

Whether or not this is strictly true, there is, even to the public, an active sense that competitive survival demands all manner of extremes of inauthentic behavior. The point is, of course, that there is irony (and flight attendants use it all the time to recoup) in the realization that real things (people) are being handled in a manner consistent with the handling of unreal things (objects). Perhaps such paradoxes reveal best of all the irrationality of a rationalized system (10).

Although it may appear that social control has been examined

largely from the constraining institutional side, it is never that static. The institution (A) acting upon the worker (B) does not cause attitude (C) to develop like so many rebounding billiard balls. There are always gradations, and even in one person attitudes may vary from time to time. Everything from identification to out and out rebellion is apparent. For instance, one male flight attendant, when first interviewed, described himself as "pretty much a company man." Several months later he reported that all had changed when he suddenly found himself unsupported by the company in a bitter situation with a passenger.

Given the feelings of many employees toward "the company," it is less a sign of allegiance to an organization than it is a testimony to the deep desire of human beings to do something well, to bring "craft" into work, that they will take object-work and actually make something of it (cf., Shostak, 1980). Here is a description of this process:

> You want the world to recognize you as important. You're there for safety, and then for your performance (service) too. Pouring coffee, pouring tea, serving trays, you think it's menial, but do it. Do it with a little flair. I don't know quite how to say it. Be somewhat professional. Be gracious about it. Put the tray down for the person, don't throw it. That's the way I look at it. And it took me a long time to come to that. I remember resisting. One time when I was first flying, the first year, a senior woman insisted we do a service by carefully arranging each steak, and we had 165 steaks to serve, and putting a pat of butter with a pick through it on top of each one. She wanted it just so. I had to do it, she was in charge. I think about her now, and I realize why she wanted it that way. She wanted things done nicely. She had a certain pride. And I think that's really important. That's why I see this transformation as all part of that, having our own unions now, that's all a reflection of pride, that's part of me, I really feel that way....You can't do everything for people, I mean, they may get mis-

> handled on the ground, or they may be late, I don't expect miracles--but you can do a nice job for them and for yourself.
>
> Monica, 12 years

Monica's words convey a sense of the way in which people strive to integrate the various tasks of a job into a coherent picture of occupational self that is not only self-enhancing, but also complete. The human tendency is to resist the fragmentation, to resist the rationalized goal-directed process, even while performing it.

Further, there occurs in people who have worked for some time an interest in taking control of the work environment which, at its worst, could be described in Freudian terms as "identification with the aggressor," and at it's best might be described as independently taking a concerned interest in one's charges. The following statement expresses this:

> The biggest thing an airline stewardess learns is manipulating people. I'm in charge and I'm the one who's running the show, and I'll always be a step ahead of you. It's my moment of victory or power....It's not only learning what to say but how to say it. As long as I convey that I care, I can tell them what I want them to do....The uniform helps to set a tone, the one we have now helps a lot. You control people either through your body language, or your dress code or your handling of the environment, what else have you got?....The interior of the airplane is strange and people's reliance on you is very great. It's my environment. Like in turbulence, they look immediately to you for reassurance....Back down on the ground I'm just a little nothing again.

Thus, even in the depersonalized task situation, there is power to be taken; in some respects even a proprietary interest is taken. With the increase in longevity this proprietary familiarity with the environment increases. The woman quoted above is not the only one to have said, "It's my plane," and reflecting on this attitude it's easy

to understand how, for instance, the impetus grew among the employees at Continental Airlines in 1981 to buy controlling interest in the company to save it from a forced merger that would have scrapped half the company (Harris, April 9, 1981) (11).

In many ways flight attendants do (most of the time in fact) align their interests with those of the company and its management. Because of this people often express dismay over how "little credit" they get for "the good job we really do." Such credit would not come in the form of written memos, already in abundance, that say "you're doing a fine job," but rather in being treated in ways that indicate they are seen as adults with dignity. For example, calling in sick would not be met with the request of "come down here so I can see you."

It is the social control measures, sometimes extremely personal, but more often bureaucratic and impersonal, to which the women object the most and toward which the greatest rage is directed. In an ethnography of the airline stewardess, Paula Auburn writes about "checks," the system of regulation over the workers that "strip personal freedom and identity." Auburn contends that the stewardesses' retaliation, which she terms "beating the system," comes in stealing from the company. She describes the theft of all sorts of items from the airplane, everything from Lysol to blankets to Coca Cola (Auburn, 1972).

Not to invalidate Auburn's observations (flight attendants have told of making off with cash from the liquor money—euphemistically called obtaining the "taxi-fare home") nor to contend that theft as an impersonal retaliation against the impersonal affrontery of the organization does not occur. However, it is notable that in collecting data in 1970, Auburn did not note other avenues of rebellion against

the organization, aspects which were clearly in evidence by the late seventies. One of the most significant of these is the flight attendant's action, in the face of a limiting or oppressive situation, of taking a stand. Numerous examples of this aspect of rebellion were presented, such as: a woman refusing to complacently endure sexual harrassment from a passenger even knowing that while the company might not back her up, her flying partners would; and, in other cases observing people coming into the union office to file a grievance, sensing that their rights as a worker had been violated. It is notable that actions such as these have taken a long time to happen. As Roxanne says, "You see someone else stand up, and you have the courage to try it too." When women tell their stories and detail their part in various incidents, it is always prefaced by some statement to the effect that she "never would have done this is the early days," and how she "has changed."

Everett Hughes once advised that the student of occupations and the division of labor should begin the investigation with the presumption of "a struggle of wills, or conscience or both over the level of effort and of product" (Hughes, 1952). Hughes points to Weber's observations that "putting on the brakes," or "restriction of production" can occur without unions or even conscious agreement, but rather is "a manifestation of man's (sic) resistance to another's determination of how hard he should work." It matters little whether the worker performs for a single client or labors on the production line; there is always a struggle inherent in the social and psychological processes by which levels of effort and product are determined with the worker, the professional, on the one side trying to define the situations and standards, and the management, or the client, on

the other, trying to force things round to his terms.

This is as apparent in the flight attendant's work as in any other occupation when it is carefully investigated. It will be even more apparent as the ideological underpinnings of the occupation are exposed. But, what is important, in terms of the overriding questions of this research is that, with increased time on the job, not only does the struggle increase, but it also takes a different form, becoming more formalized, as in the development of unions, and, in the case of individuals, more expressly articulated.

CHANGING IDEOLOGY: FROM COMFORT TO SAFETY

If the structure of work is found in what people do, the ideology of work may be discovered in what they say they do and the corresponding importance they attach to their position in the division of labor. It can be said that ideologies constitute the collective pretensions members of an occupation share regarding their work. Berger has noted that ideologies increase in density as one moves up the occupational hierarchy. Minimally, the ideology will enhance the occupation's importance, and maximally, the ideology will produce a full-blown definition of society, as in the case of the "aristocratic ethos" of top business executives or the "elaborate distortions of the American Medical Association." According to Berger, distortion is an indispensible part of an occupational ideology: "Pretending to be what one is not, unites both janitor and executive" (Berger, 1964).

Given this state of affairs, in identifying the ideological in a given occupation the best question to ask is, "why this distortion and not another?" Particularly in occupations that are not, as Underwood would say, the "top dog" variety (1964), we may seek to

determine how it is that ideologies not only publicly enhance, but also console, justify, arm, and function in a variety of other ways to sustain the members of the occupation. In addition to reflecting the structure of the work, they may also provide a blueprint for changing it.

In describing the meaning and importance of what they do, the women again talked about changes they perceived. Certainly no one framed her explanation in terms of "ideology" per se, but rather spoke of what they used to think was important and what they now know to be important. The survey literature on flight attendants, scarce though it is, supports the field data on this point. Even a comparison of studies done in the late sixties to those done in the mid-seventies reveals a notable shift. For example, whereas people might originally have promoted their role as one of providing service and comfort, they later described it in terms of providing safety. Such a significant ideological shift demands an explanation.

Moles collected her data on women flight attendants in 1969 and she termed the preeminent characteristic of the job "client-relations." Although Moles does not state it explicitly, it is clear from her description that then as now, the objectification process of both flight attendants and passengers was in full swing. Apparent in her descriptions is the unification of marketable image and required task structure. She cites the dictum taught to airline hostesses (12), that is, "always smile, even when you don't feel like it." Most illuminating is Moles' description of a hostess training film produced by the Coca Cola Company shown to promote the value of "tender loving care." In the film the hostess is shown the "grouchy" passenger and is advised that the way to handle him is not by ignoring him or

responding in a defensive manner (appropriate when one is being abused), but rather by being extra nice to him (Moles, 1971:51-52) (13).

Moles doesn't comment on how the watching flight attendants responded to this message. Perhaps they laughed as did the stewardesses interviewed by Studs Terkel who had laughed over being instructed on how to be sexy (Terkel, 1975). In any event, it seems clear that the overall theme, however it was received, played into a different view of their role than compared to now.

In 1969 Moles found that 60 percent of flight attendant questionnaire respondents cited "providing comfort in an alien environment" as their "most important activity," while 25 percent cited "safety" as their most important role on the airplane (Moles, 1971:53). When Stuckey collected similar questionnaire data seven years later, asking the women to rank the importance of their activities, being a "safety agent" ranked as their first choice while providing comfort ranked second. In the 1970s there is evidence that changes had begun to occur in the way that flight attendants saw their role. The ideological description began to take on a new character.

Stuckey notes that, in spite of the importance attached to the safety agent role by the flight attendants, safety and the activities related to it were completely played down by the airline companies in their advertising and work performance expectations. She argues that this created a "role strain" for the actors in that "their primary role is invisible" (Stuckey, 1977:23). There seemed to be a continuing authenticity problem for the women in that the old service role as it was now promoted was vacuous, while the new safety role didn't receive much social validation. But more importantly, it is remarkable how so many people sustained that notion (i.e., "I'm here for safety") in

the face of institutional opposition.

In the interviews many people expressed the opinion that their most important reason for being on board was to evacuate the passengers in the event of a survivable crash. However, most went on to tell the very different story of what they actually do at work. It is important to note that, in telling of their tasks, they did not do so in a self-deprecating manner, but rather attached great importance to the professionalization of social control functions, some of which have already been mentioned and some of which will be detailed. Although a very few shrugged off the importance of the safety role (just one told me that, "confidentially, I don't really believe that when it comes right down to it, anybody's going to get out alive") if I had given a questionnaire, it would undoubtedly have come out much like the above. That is, people emphasize the safety role in spite of the fact that they rarely have to act in it, and even only think of it in brief, routine moments. The intriguing question which follows, of course, is why such an emphasis on the safety role exists when it is so far removed from the actual routine of the job. First, the influence of one structural determinant should be dealt with, and then, in ethnomethodological terms, be promptly "bracketed." The fact is that the notion of safety, in spite of the blind eye turned toward it by airline advertising, has come into greater public prominence. There have been, in recent years, a number of airline crashes that were awesome in magnitude. In histories of aviation, we are reminded that air crashes have occurred since airplanes started to fly (cf., Solberg, 1979). Yet in 1979 when American Airlines Flight Number 191 crashed while taking off from Chicago because its engine simply fell off the plane, 271 people were killed. Nothing like that air tragedy ever

occurred in the pre-jet age or even in the era of the narrow-bodied jets. Further, because these planes and the numbers of people they carry are so awesome, the near misses, the crash landings in which people do survive, are all the more sensational. In these survivable crashes, it is the flight attendants who have helped people escape (Hall, 1980). Consequently, it is with some hard evidence that, in an article in a national magazine flight attendant and safety instructor Sarah Uzzell-Rindlaub, herself the survivor of two DC-10 crashes, can state that lives can be saved with well-trained flight attendants and cooperative passengers.

Yet, as the passenger/mile statistics demonstrate, the odds are slim that a commercial airliner will crash. Further, flight attendants emphasize all the time how safe they feel, that they know they're not going to crash, etc. Therefore, while there is no need to deny the validity of the safety agent role, one does wonder about its overriding nature given the fact that the chances of performing the role are minimal.

Perhaps, however, the more germane issue is why "comfort" work is downgraded. What is wrong with making anxious people feel at ease in an alien environment? Certainly there is nothing intrinsically degrading in the use of one's self in a meaningful way to bring another person solace. And, it follows that there is, for the provider, potentially a great deal of satisfaction, even a sense of power, in savoring one's expertise in being able to carry it off. Recall, for example, Nancy's words about the passengers looking to the flight attendant for reassurance.

The answer undoubtedly lies in the kind of "comfort" that it is expected the flight attendant will provide. In Botteri's words, with

the advent of the jet-age, "flight attendants were increasingly used in advertising campaigns as objects of comfort and pleasure" (Botteri, 1979:iii). Very clearly, along the way comfort and the way comfort could be sold changed. Providing comfort ranked more respectably when comfort meant having the time to assess the problems and requirements of passengers and acting accordingly, rather than rushing headlong to dispense every conceivable gimmick to a restless, clamoring public. But more importantly, when providing comfort didn't mean having one's self marketed to the business world by the company as an object providing comfort was a valued role. Thus, when providing comfort is seen as defiling rather than as dignifying, it would be expected that those charged with the task would not define it as their primary responsibility but would point to another task which has, at least, an aura of dignity.

In addition, defining one's work as safety agent rather than as comforter shifts the emphasis from expressive (emotive) functions to instrumental (manipulative) functions, and from person to object, from person to action. Creating a distance between the description of one's duties and the appraisal of one's self is self-protective. It places the attributes of "person", such as age, appearance, and personality, in the background while functional activity and expert ability are emphasized instead. Emphasizing instrumental functions rather than expressive work offers an understandable ideological retreat from exploitive practices of the industry. Unfortunately, it is a forced retreat into what Oakley has termed a "masculine mode," which, although it protects, also excludes, in that an important half of human action, the emotional side, is cut away (cf., Oakley, 1981).

This ideological interchange can be seen of late in other

sex-segregated women's occupations, for example, in the surge of activity in nursing toward pathophysiology and complex technical procedures, the press for credentials as a therapist on the part of social workers, and the "return" to goal-oriented versus person-oriented education in elementary school teaching. Perhaps all are attempts of "women's work" to garner some status claim in the light of valued characteristics of rational masculine pursuits. And, like the flight attendants' claims, they are partially valid; that is, instrumentality is half of the picture. But even while emphasizing instrumentality as a sort of definitional umbrella over the occupation, it is clear that it is not the only aspect of the work in which flight attendants take pride. Nonetheless, at this point in the development of this female-oriented occupation, it is the half on which ideology is built.

Finally, both Botteri (1979) and Stuckey (1977) note the decline in the status of the flight attendant over the years, the dropping of the requirement that she be a registered nurse, the lowering of the educational requirements. Botteri contends that this lowering of entrance requirements coupled with the increasingly rationalized work contributed to the status decline. In addition to these measurable status factors, there are also the less quantifiable social psychological aspects of status. Selection on the basis of physical attractiveness constituted no small claim to status in itself. Yet, aging intervenes to weaken that status claim as well. Reduction in status for any of the foregoing reasons also explains the flight attendant's ideological assertions. Such assertions at first sound like rather misplaced testimonials but when seen first in terms of comfort work degradation and, then, in a related way, in terms of status reduction, the instrumental claims begin to make a great deal of sense.

There are two additional changes in ideology worth noting in that they bear more directly on the day-to-day work as it is actually done. The first, regarding female independence, provides an illustration of how ideology can justify changed structure as well as change it. The second, regarding the notion of service, demonstrates how changed structures require a new ideology.

The ideology of the feminist movement contributed greatly to changing notions of what constituted the work of the flight attendant and it should be noted that feminists actively used tactics to shift the scrutiny away from what the woman looked like to what she did. Thus, ideology was actively used to change structure. But there were also certain significant social structural conditions which turned that process around and in which structural transformations dictated the adoption of a new ideology. Here again, the advent of airplane hijacking had a powerful effect. A new reality had come into being which mandated independence on the part of the women. This was a different environment from the early days which one sixties' woman describes as follows:

> It was kind of an understood thing between the workers. There were times when the captain used to come back and look over the seating area and if a guy was acting up, a look was all that was needed....And it used to be that if we had a problem we'd knock on the door and say, 'could you come rescue me.' Now we have to remain strong because we can't really get support all the time from the male co-workers.

Under current conditions it is not unusual to hear women flight attendants refer to it as "an insult" or as "relinquishing my power" to call a man from the cockpit to handle problems in the cabin or to assert, "I can handle it ten times better anyway." A senior woman says with finality:

> We're the specialists here now. We don't tell the captain how to handle the brakes and he doesn't tell us how to handle unreasonable passengers. It's really an insult, especially for me, because many times I am as senior as the captain.

Her words additionally reflect the idea that women expect more independence of themselves because of their age and experience.

It's difficult to discern whether the structural reality (e.g., men not coming out of the cockpit) or the feminist position ("I can do it myself") came first. It would appear that both have significance. With the advent of hijacking, the whole new notion that passengers could be totally unpredictable has had a tremendous impact. In point of fact, under duress, that cockpit door is locked and those men aren't coming out. The ideology that promotes and values women's independence, therefore isn't just talk, it's a necessity.

Whatever its origin, that ideological position has become generalized and firmly integrated. The men flight attendants interviewed stated emphatically how "independent" their female colleagues were and how unlikely the women were to call on them for help. As one man said,

> On the rare occasion that this happens—my coming on as the male heavy—it's that we're on stage—we're playing the roles just to get the job done. But even that is generally not the case. The women don't make a practice of it. They don't want it. Men and women in the job to me are the same.

Questioning of supposed gender-related roles has also been responsible in no small measure for the changing ideology of independence.

Service work as it is currently manifested as object-work has been described in detail, but some attention should be directed toward the redefinition of "service" over the years. Here the very senior people

can provide perspective. Ralph, with 35 years experience and not-a-little insight, points out that "in those days you didn't mind being subservient. Being of 'service' was different." It certainly was different. On the Paris layover Ralph shopped for food and delicacies to fill the galley on the Boeing Stratocruiser. Although the women working with him weren't given this commission, on the plane they also enjoyed a certain glory in the work. They too knew about the gourmet food, how to serve it, and the other details that went with creating a particularly impressive atmosphere.

On the one hand, the basis of differentiation between social classes was not questioned to the extent that it would later be and therefore people tended to be more accepting of their service role. But in that service role they carried a very complete set of responsibilities. In a related manner, the deterioration of complete responsibility and the gradual rationalization of the work has effected the ideology that explains it. Reducing work to its lowest common denominator (rationalization), while calling it "service", caused the concept of "service" to become a despised rather than valued. Further, the fact that this occupation specifically, and the majority of other service occupations in general are occupied by women caused the notion of service work to be further devalued.

As Braverman has noted, there is nothing either immoral or illogical in the rationalization process itself. By making work more efficient it is possible to accomplish more in a shorter time and therefore, logically, to serve more human needs and serve them better, while freeing workers in the process. Why shouldn't one economical Boeing 747 carry ten or twelve times as many people faster and more efficiently than the Boeing Stratocruiser of the forties? With that

shorter time and those increased numbers, it is, of course, impossible to feed people in the way that was done in those early years. Consequently, the work process needs to be rationalized under these new conditions. Rationalization could be more efficient, and also more acceptable, but the problem arises with the "operationalization" of work as it has occurred in the course of the managerial movement. Operationalization refers to the counting and detailing of the precise amount of time it takes to do the rationalized parts of a particular work task; work is reduced to nothing more than the sum total of its rationalized parts. That which cannot be measured is discounted. One is hard pressed to measure creativity, or to measure what Strauss has so aptly termed "sentimental work," that is, those human factors that not only get the job done, but bring satisfaction to both the provider of the service and the recipient.

Unhappily, the net result of this declared effort toward greater efficiency has not been to free workers by reducing the proportion of their time spent in operationalized tasks. In the case of the flight attendant's work, this bundle of operationalized tasks is known as "service," and as it becomes more efficient, more tasks, regardless of their merit, can be added. It is little wonder then that the idea of service would come to be seen as decreasingly valuable. When people such as Ralph express nostalgic reminiscences over a bygone era, it is not the elite (or even predictable) passenger they mourn but rather the loss of a little bit of self.

The analysis has examined the task structure of the work itself, and in this chapter perhaps conveyed a sense of its changing nature, thereby locating and explaining the meanings that people attach to it. All of this raises a final question: Why is it that women have stayed

on in this work in great numbers? It cannot be denied that economic necessity has played a part, having as it does, a crucial effect on both men and women. This does not, however, explain why women remain in this field. Perhaps there are two reasons. One has to do with the opportunities for creativity that, in spite of the rationalization of work, people can still attempt to make for themselves. Every trip offers the potential of the unknown. Workers are able to circumvent the oblivion of the tasks. A comfortable place in the work world can sometimes be found, to paraphrase Goffman, not on the occupational steps, but rather, between the cracks. The other reason for women remaining flight attendants has to do with the greater emphasis that has been placed on privatism, the world outside of work. This kind of work has a particularly liberating effect on that part of an individual's life. We shall consider that structural reality and its ideological underpinnings elsewhere (14).

CHAPTER V

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Dr. Schatzman for his continuing advice and guidance with respect to research in the field (for further elaboration of his methods, see Schatzman and Strauss, Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology, 1973).
2. The fact that the meals on these long trips were very grand had its antecedent in the style of the great ocean-crossing passenger ships.
3. The Boeing 747 can carry up to 464 people with an "all-coach seating configuration." This is what is known as a "high density load."
4. Earlier in this writing the point was made that from the perspective of the flight attendant, particularly as this occupation compares to other types of work, that there is great freedom in the work. One of the ways that this freedom manifests itself is in not having an on-the-spot supervisor as workers do in most other settings. There may be someone designated to "coordinate the service" but that person is in no way the other flight attendants' direct supervisor. On the other hand, when depicting the structure of their work, flight attendants realize the part that service objectives play in "supervising" the work. For instance, in talking about freedom at work, one Pan Am flight attendant said, "Of course you know when the meal service is and so forth, but other than that, it's quite loose." Yet even in the social control exerted by object-work, subjective freedom exists. To state that object-work enforces social control is not to imply that it completely determines the flight attendants' activity.

5. The "beauty-work" expected of the women flight attendants is subject to the expectation of constant change as well, as the image is redesigned to stay ahead of the market.
6. In the same article (Harris, 1981), it was noted by a United Air Lines spokesman that United was not using the film because safety was enhanced by "having the flight attendants do a hands-on demonstration...thus ensuring that passengers identify with these individuals should there be a malfunction on the aircraft." Another factor that comes to mind is that, in the companies which elected to use the videotape, perhaps their flight attendants might have been beginning to take their instruction responsibilities too seriously. As Sheila said, "we were always taught to gesture delicately toward the exit doors; how could anyone think you really meant it? Now I point at those doors, not very ladylike, but I get their attention and make them look."
7. The total amount of time worked by an individual flight attendant in any one month is variable, but the goal is to accumulate enough trips or, more specifically, flights, to add up to the 80 hours that constitute full-time work. Further explanation of how "bidding the schedule" operates will be found in the next chapter on occupational health.
8. Federal Aviation Administration safety regulations mandate the presence of one flight attendant to every 50 passengers. This is the presumed number needed to "man the exits" and evacuate passengers in the event of an emergency. Consequently, on a DC-10 which carries 264 passengers, the minimum number of flight attendants would be six. However, because of the demands of service work, the various flight attendant unions have negotiated closer ratios

in their contracts which then require more flight attendants. For example, in one company a flight attendant told me, "On the DC-10, for a full load, we should have 10 cabin attendants; but if the loads aren't full they'll schedule seven or eight. Then when the flight starts filling, they don't call more people in. We're always going out with less than we should have." Another woman who flies internationaly and mostly on 747s indicated that "we always used to have 14, now we usually fly with 10." Because these ratios are negotiated contract items, violations on the part of the company can be challenged by the filing of grievances, but even though a formal mechanism for relief exists, it often does not help the day-to-day uncertainty of how many will be aboard.

9. People who are very tall often experience the sense of this disparity in conversing with someone who is very short. The awareness of the form of the interaction and the sharp "angle of interaction" between the two sometimes overwhelms all else. If even some temporary form of equalization cannot be quickly located, for example, the arm of a chair, the tendency frequently is to terminate the interaction as rapidly as possible. Discrepancies are exaggerated if usual social expectations are further violated, for instance, the expectation that most men will be of a certain height or more. For a woman, the automatic inclination is not necessarily to seize with pleasure on one's unexpected position of dominance; status, age, the purpose of the interaction and other dimensions enter in to determine one's degree of comfort or discomfort in the situation.

10. The situation of the flight attendant, and the ways in which the job requires the estrangement of self, call to mind Eric Fromm's

discussion of alienation in The Sane Society. Whereas Fromm initially notes that under industrial capitalism the worker has lost control, he describes how the owner is alienated as well. According to Fromm, the manager is alienated from the "concreteness" of the product, and moreover, "the attitude of those who own is characterized by almost complete alienation...the spiritual values of ownership have been separated from it." When one looks back on the short, flamboyant history of commercial aviation and the people who began it because they loved to fly, and then considers the rapid transition of the industry to its present Weberian bureaucratic state, one is struck by this industry as an almost perfect example of Fromm's description of alienation on all levels.

11. The employees would have gained a controlling 51% interest in the company through a stock purchase plan (Harris, April 9, 1981). The slogan of the call to become what would have been the largest employee-owned company in the country was, "We built it, let's buy it." A record 9,000 workers voted for it, and only 359 voted against the plan (Oppenheim, June 14, 1981). While a federal court upheld the employees' bid for ownership (Sing, June 17, 1981), the plan was grounded by a New York Stock Exchange ruling (Wall Street Journal, June 25, 1981).

12. Moles uses the term airline "hostesses" in her study. The data was collected in 1969, at a time when only females occupied flight attendant positions and when a number of airlines called them "hostess" not "stewardess." [See discussion in Chapter III for origin of these terms early in the industry.]

13. This is borne out by my own data in which flight attendants tell of being expected to apologize "when the passenger steps on my

foot!" Twenty-two percent of Moles' respondents indicated that the best way to deal with "bad passengers" was to "always apologize, even when you have nothing to do with the problem" (Moles, 1971:58). As described by the interviewees in this study, the tactics of apologizing and "being extra nice" may be used, but, if they are, more often than not it is in the way of a "put-on." Goffman has described the tactic of "putting people on" as often used by the underlings in an institution to maintain dignity and personal identity (Goffman, 1961).

14. The analysis of the structural and ideological components of the work in this chapter has benefited greatly from extensive discussions with Professor Virginia Olesen.

CHAPTER VI

RISK REDEFINED:

THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF STAYING ON

In 1935, in answer to queries about health risks on the job, most flight attendants would have replied in terms of the risk of flying into a barn while trying to lift off the early "airfields" that were more field than airport. Similarly, even though technology had changed vastly in another ten years, the 30-year people interviewed in this study indicated that in their early years of flying, that is, in the late forties, they too thought more in terms of risk to life and limb than they did about personal health problems related to their occupation. It has been during their flying career, and particularly in the last decade, that the health risks of flying have switched in emphasis from the idea of sudden death to the idea of gradual health impairment. The gradual shift in priority from safety to health, is identifiable during this period in many industries in which people experienced long-term exposure to all manner of post-World War II technology. The case of the asbestos industry where workers have developed debilitating and even fatal lung diseases is well known (Brodeur, 1973), and exemplifies many industries where workers have begun to relate health to working conditions.

A Decade of Change: The Base is Broadened

To a certain extent the health movement of the 1970s formed a macro context for career development of flight attendants. As was the case in other social movements, awareness of civil rights generally and of women's rights specifically had produced major re-thinking of

careerism. Paralleling this, occupational health awareness prompted consideration of career length. If consideration of occupational health came somewhat later to flight attendants than it did to workers in other industries, this is explained by the fact that until the late 1960s the bulk of the work force was prevented from making the occupation a long-term career. But once the longevity barriers had been broken down, occupational health awareness dawned quickly. In addition, at about the same time a major issue being raised by the feminist movement, and shown for the first time to be intensely political, was the issue of women's health (cf., Ruzek, 1978). Unionists in the flight attendant corps thus began to raise health issues, feminist stewardesses began to point to health threats, and the fact of increasing longevity on the job itself began to stimulate awareness as health problems developed.

It has also become apparent that although risk has been redefined, it is not so much a situation of a switch from safety to health as it is a situation in which safety has become subsumed by health. The whole notion of "health and safety" has been broadened. Going down in an airplane crash is still seen as a risk of the job, although a remote one. Some flight attendants said they never think about it, most said they think about it during take-off when they mentally run through an emergency check of what they would do "if..." Even then they are considering the risk of ditching and how they would survive it. After a major air crash tragedy everyone thinks of it, but few become frightened enough to leave the job. And, even under these circumstances, reactions are not uniformly fearful, as this woman's words illustrate:

> After the DC-10 crash my husband talked about it

> a lot, fixated, worried. It didn't bother me, which is strange, because when we had our Cincinnati crash in 1965 I was a wreck. I wouldn't fly a 727; I wouldn't fly into Cincinnati. I had a list of 'wouldn'ts' a mile long. That crash hit me hard. I don't know why. I guess 'cause I'd only been flying a short time. Then you think, 'if I fly five more years, maybe my number is coming up.' You know, the old 'numbers/my turn' thing. This last one, I felt terrible, I mean I felt horrible. I knew the captain. But I bid the 10 the very next month. I guess I had become more of a fatalist. You can walk out your front door and get run over.
>
> Melanie, 17 years

Melanie further expresses the sentiments of flight attendants when she says that "there are some days when you get what we call a little 'squirrelly'." She illustrates in the following quote:

> I have a friend who is a really steady flyer. But there were those days when she was just nervous. But that's it. You're on the ride, you can't get off. You've got to stick it through to the end. You just try to calm yourself down.

Crashing is seen as one of many risks, but seen as less pervasive or likely than others. In terms of injuries, the interviewees expressed more fear of being injured by equipment on the plane and told of injuries from falling ceiling panels and heavy food carts. In September of 1981, a World Airways flight attendant was killed when she was crushed in the elevator of a DC-10; several interviewees in other airlines said that they had often noted the malfunction of the DC-10 elevator in their log books. The people interviewed also expressed fear of being injured in assaults by passengers or at layover hotels, an increasing problem for flight attendants (Guyon, 1980). Further, the idea of safety at work and risk of sustaining sudden acute injury has been redefined under prevailing social conditions. As an illustration of this point, a current newspaper article chronicles the ordeal

of a Delta Airlines flight attendant who was doused with gasoline by a hijacker demanding re-routing of the aircraft (Salinas Californian, April 5, 1982). In a violent society, a highly visible occupation in a very public industry is more likely than others to find itself included in the arena of violence. Although, like crashing, the statistical likelihood of being the victim of a hijacking is low, the threat of the whole spectrum of violence exists, and the thought of it is on the flight attendant's mind. As indicated in the previous chapter, the apparent potential for violence becomes part of the criteria by which the traveling public is assessed. Thus, the general state of the society and what are seen as the risks it presents is yet another macro social condition which has a shaping influence on the attitudes and actions within a public occupation.

There is still another and highly significant way in which safety has been subsumed by health. The way in which flight attendants have come to describe their function on board the aircraft is frequently in terms of safety agent (Stuckey, 1977). That is, if an emergency occurs, it is the flight attendant who must be able to react quickly and assume a leadership and decision-making role in providing for the safety of passengers including perhaps, evacuating them from the aircraft. To assume such responsibilities, the person needs to be awake, alert, in good physical and mental condition, and strong—in short, healthy. Further, the flight attendant must be able to respond to an emergency while performing a demanding number of required tasks and dealing with a multitude of problematic interactions. (See Chapter V for a full discussion of work tasks). Thus, among professional flight attendants health is viewed as a priority not only in human terms, that is, as a "right" of workers, but also as a "necessity" for job

performance.

That good health is essential to the judgment and decision-making abilities of pilots has always been acknowledged (c.f., Barron, 1970). Flight attendants too got support for this contention when the Aviation Safety Institute, an independent non-profit organization, conducted "A Study of Airline Flight Attendant Sleepiness, Fatigue and Stress" and related these parameters to functioning on the job. The institute reported after their investigation that:

> There are few occupations where the job participant must be receptionist, luggage porter, food server, instructor, room leader, good listener, guardian of children or the handicapped or the elderly, disciplinarian, acceptor of criticism for the action of others, nurse, emergency evacuator, fire fighter, and tactician while facing conditions of mild or severe hypoxdia, rapid decompression, flash fires, combatant people, atmospheric turbulence, extremely dry air, high pitched sound disturbances, inflight acceleration forces, circadian rhythm desynchronosis, chronic and acute fatigue, high levels of mental stress, mild malnutrition, dehydration, ozone effects, and even mild radiation. Yet more than 50,000 flight attendants in the United States alone share these common functions and discomforts an average of 70 flight hours each month...airline flight attendants work under some of the most bizarre environmental and work assignment conditions in the world, but with only minimal protection under the law (Aviation Safety Institute, 1980:2).

The Aviation Safety Institute study is one of only a few independent studies of flight attendant health, even though it brought to light a number of serious health hazards in the work environment. Another recent paper by aerospace physicians at Wright State University pulls together known aviation health data and examines it in the light of both the working conditions of flight attendants under current U.S. regulations and the objective physics of technological conditions (Alter and Mohler, 1980). Alter and Mohler examine environmental factors in

the work environment such as G-forces, turbulence, trim of the aircraft, and oxygen and humidity levels against energy expenditure requirements (known as "mets") of flight attendants and come to the conclusion that "a clear basis exists for the development of medical problems" (1980:170). A third paper developed under the auspices of the Program in Social Ecology at the University of California at Irvine, examines the increasing occurrence of physical assaults against flight attendants and isolates as precipitating factors (1) the "juxtaposition" of roles in which the woman flight attendant is in the position of authority, (2) the innuendos of sexual availability created by airline advertising, (3) the influence of readily available alcohol as well as drug use, (4) the presence of smoking regulations which the flight attendant is called upon to enforce. The authors in their analysis also pay attention to the politics of social problems and find a situation in which the unions attempt to offer service and protection to their members while the reactions of the airlines are "aimed at preventing assaults from surfacing as a social problem" (Pontell, et al, 1981). These studies of the social and physical work environment of the flight attendant are very recent, only being reported in the past two years. There are reasons for this absence of studies until now.

It is, first, instructive to look at the nature of previous investigative work. A search of the aviation medicine literature reveals little attention having been paid to flight attendants in the preceeding twenty years. For example, a review of the Index to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Office of Aviation Medicine Reports, 1961-1973, a collection which encompasses many volumes, reveals but a single study specifically addressing the subject of flight attendants' health. Interestingly enough, this particular study of air crew

personnel demonstrates that flight attendants suffer a measurable hearing loss after seven years as a consequence of exposure to jet engine noise. Because of the proximity of their seating to the engine on take-off and landing it was found that flight attendants manifest significantly greater hearing loss than do commercial pilots over the same time period (Tobias, 1972). Yet even in this scientific study the seriousness of the women flight attendants' problems is undercut by the devaluation of their professional intentions (indicating that they don't usually stay on the job very long anyway) and their status (they are all referred to as "girls" although the research population extends to age 44).

In a similar vein, another writer exemplifies the tendency of the older textbooks on aviation medicine when he dismisses stewardess health complaints such as "rhinitis, menstrual dysfunction, and gastritis" as the result of "nervous fatigue." His solution is, first of all, to urge "better psychological selection," and secondly, to recommend "supervision of working conditions" which "might help to lower the frequency rate for neurasthenia among females" (McFarland, 1953:219). There have also been limited studies conducted by company doctors which have tended to be narrow in focus and not infrequently have engaged in an occupational health equivalent of blaming the victim (cf., Scholten, 1976; Cameron, 1969; Cameron, 1973)(1). A newer text (Billings, 1975) alerts the occupational health practitioner to the fact that flight attendants will experience increased health problems as they work longer, but there is little speculation as to what such health problems might be.

The position of the airline companies in respect to a number of health-related issues would seem to indicate that they want healthy

employees. For example, weight limitations are enforced with intensity and company spokespersons cite as the reason physical fitness in addition to appearance (cf., Zane, 1974). Further, both pilots and cabin crew members are valuable to the company in that the commercial airliner is not permitted to fly without both. However, since one sees the majority of study focused on the high reward and high status group, this strongly suggests that there may be an economic bias to the definition of health problems (2). In regard to the selection of subjects for scientific research, it has been pointed out that such study is a subjective construction "on the part of somebody to whom the...institutional order appeared problematic" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:104), and that, further, one's position in the social structure is one significant determinant of what one sees as problematic or even a legitimate subject for study. Moreover, such a study, by excluding portions of the social world and emphasizing others, serves to legitimate and reify the existing social order (Colfax and Roach, 1971). In other words, because the subject (pilots and their health) is seen as more important, it gets studied. The more it gets studied, the more important it becomes.

Undoubtedly, the health concerns of pilots have been given priority in the industry because they are closer to the means of production than other workers. Their economic interests and rewards, in the past at least, have been more directly related to the profit margin of the company than have those of flight attendants (3). But even more importantly, from an industry and government point of view, the health of pilots has been more important because of the relatively high labor replacement costs. It has been economically rational to worry about them, while the labor replacement cost of flight attendants has been

negligible by comparison (Friedland, 1978) (4). There has always been a ready reserve of new flight attendants just waiting to be let in the doors and the "old" flight attendants kept their turn-over rate at 30 percent per year.

To understand the growth of occupational health awareness and how the very recent scientific studies originated, it is first necessary to note the structural changes in the occupation over the decade from 1968 to 1978. Until 1968, the year when age and marriage limitations were struck down, roughly one in three stewardesses resigned each year. By 1971, just three years later, only one in nine quit each year (San Francisco Chronicle, September 7, 1971). The number of long-term workers increased rapidly and as they did they began to address the issues that were most important to them—wages and benefits and working conditions certainly, but also health. Additionally, the sociopolitical activities of flight attendants contributed greatly to the increase in scientific studies.

As early as 1968, a flight attendant activist wrote a position paper stating that the problem of fatigue had been inadequately studied because all studies had neglected "the only person on an aircraft who is engaged in intense physical activity at reduced oxygen levels...the airline flight attendant" (Dedmon, 1968). During the next decade other voices were heard. If the Federal Aviation Administration and the airline companies had largely ignored them in the past, flight attendants began to take it upon themselves to sponsor their own studies and to gather statistics on the incidence of health problems such as repeated bladder and upper respiratory infections, back and foot troubles, menstrual irregularities, spontaneous abortion, sleep disturbances and depression. Flight attendant health activists formed

their own investigative organizations such as the National Occupational Health Committee under Local 552 of the Transport Workers Union and they constructed and distributed their own early questionnaires. They asked about perceived problems—dizziness in smokey cabins, hearing and vision difficulties, nutrition and elimination problems, and they also asked about the things people were doing to protect their health such as wearing support stockings, exercising, not smoking, and drinking water. Flight attendant unions made surveys and began to report on them in newly organized women's occupational health coalitions and symposiums (cf., Wofford, 1977). They began to speculate about carcinogenic agents in the flight environment and they asked their members about breast lumps and other cancers. And, as well as doing their own initial data gathering in the form of surveys, flight attendants approached the academic community for research and validation of their health concerns. The Stewardesses for Women's Rights organization, already concerned about the effects of radioactive cargo on board commercial planes, contacted and later cooperated with the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Arizona State University in a study of the radiation exposure of cabin personnel. The results of the study validated the importance of their concerns and demonstrated that working continuously on board an aircraft one is exposed to approximately twice as much background radiation as that present on the ground, and that further, "the presence of man-made radioactive materials" was detectable on the dosimeters worn by flight attendants on three occasions during six weeks (Uselman and McKlveen). These findings were important to the subsequent efforts of flight attendants attempting to get regulations passed restricting the additional hazard of radioactive cargo.

With regard to this and other health issues that concerned passengers as well as workers, flight attendants began to go public. Flight attendant Carmen Azzopardi more than once presented key testimony on the health hazards of ozone before Congressional committees. That regulations now exist which will require improved ozone filtration on future airplanes is largely the result of her perseverance.

Throughout the 1970s flight attendants began to gain visibility as well as a broader base of support. It is important to realize that it is principally through the efforts of flight attendants themselves, first on an individual, and then on organizational and political levels, that the issue of health was raised to its present degree of scientific concern. I first began to interview flight attendants regarding occupational health in 1977, nearly five years ago, and it is notable that the health problems which they singled out, including specific environmental factors to which they attributed those problems, have since been scientifically validated (Lessor Rosen, 1980) (5). The locus of the occupational health problems has been shown to be in the structure of the work environment and in the working conditions and not in the nature of the worker as was hypothesized in McFarland's conception of the "neurasthenic female."

The foregoing is a broad sketch of the emergence of health issues for the occupation as a whole over the past decade. In the remainder of the chapter the way in which health consciousness emerged will be analyzed. The way in which it moved from the personal concerns of individual flight attendants to a highly politicized issue of collective concern will be examined. The process of the development of health consciousness can be related to changing technology and consequent changing working conditions in the industry, as well as to the increased

longevity in those people who had time to experience health problems and to begin to deal with them. Both of these factors underlie the discussion of changing awareness.

Time, Personal Health and Consciousness

The statistical picture of increasing longevity has already been well established, but the meaning of time at work to the participants themselves remains to be understood. People in the aviation industry who fly, and even those outside the industry who are very frequent flyers, evidence a view of time and its passage that is peculiar to their world. Phrases like "catching up" and "ahead of myself" and thoughts such as "sometimes I feel my life is being lived without me" abound. Unquestionably, if a special sense of time exists it is related to constant rapid traversing of distance which serves, in the shrinking of time, to accelerate it. And for those who cross time zones, time can take on an almost mystical quality, promoting reflection on the effects of time itself upon the body, and moreover, what the effect of tinkering with time must mean. In observing people whose lives are lived in this way, it strikes the social psychologist that people can have experiences which enable them to "know" in an intuitive way precisely what Einstein was talking about when he described relativity. Writer Lee Weston tells a story about an American pilot on loan to a British airline for five years. Returning to his U.S. base he was shocked when he saw his former colleagues. One group appeared to have aged normally while the other appeared much older. "It took him weeks to discover the explanation—those who seemed older had been flying east-west routes, while the pilots who appeared more typical of their age were flying north-south" (Hulse, April 3, 1981).

One of the very senior flight attendants interviewed wrote his recollection of what had happened to the cabin crew when single direction, round-the-world flying (from Los Angeles to Los Angeles) had been initiated without benefit of sufficiently lengthy recovery periods in these words:

> We thought we had reached the limit in working conditions when this type of flying was introduced to us in 1974. It saved the company money as it took only one crew to fly each day around the world in each direction with a minimum layover cost. They told us at the time that the saving was in millions, so naturally we had no recourse but to obey. However after a few trips we became too disoriented for too long a period to fly, and we cost the company more than if they instituted a meeting point for return to recover. Since those times, we have found out that had we continued to fly in one direction in a continuous manner, we would have gone out of our minds for real. Anyway, we did have quite a few breakdowns in Los Angeles....All this to keep flying so we could keep our jobs. It took the threat of a lawsuit to make the higher-ups realize what was happening.
>
> Ralph, 35 years with an international carrier

His comments indicate an awareness of what going too far in defying the power of time and space may mean, and how a sense of the existence of that outer limit may prompt people to consider the "everyday" effects of time upon themselves.

The interview data suggests that there are three analytic conceptions of time held by the flight attendants: the notion of time passing, of future or projected time, and as has already been suggested, the idea of accelerated time.

Time passing. There is, of course, a direct relationship between time on the job and development of health problems in that increasing age is always related to the probability of developing increasing health problems. But, more specifically, with increasing time on the job there

is increasing exposure to health hazards and more time for symptom development. And, with chronic illness, it may take a long time to develop, but with increasing longevity may be manifested while the work continues rather than after termination. Many of the health problems would suggest some degree of chronicity by nature, for example, hearing loss, sinusitis, varicose veins, bunions and other foot disorders, low backache, mental health and sleep disorders, repeated infections and menstrual irregularities. When flight attendants tell about these problems, they frequently allude to the notion of passing time. There is also the sense of new illnesses having been "accumulated" as time has passed, as this quote illustrates:

> ...of course the longer you fly, the more diseases and problems you have—the more things you hear about other people getting, like this fungus thing, and ozone sickness....God only knows what we'll be like if we do this until we're 65!

In addition to chronic maladies that have familiar names, it has indeed appeared that flight attendants have suffered a number of bizarre illnesses unique to their environment and which have appeared quickly in connection with new technology. For instance, in 1980 Eastern Airlines flight attendants working on board the European-built A300 began to break out in red spots that oozed a pinkish fluid. The cause of the "Red Sweat" as it was termed was not immediately known, but the main fear of the flight attendants was the internal effects that it was having in addition to the obvious ones (Carley, March 10, 1980).

Projected time. There is an awareness in this quite constant population that time has passed and that it has taken a certain amount of time to develop health problems. There is also the notion of "projected time" and what the future will bring. The women talk about "staying in" or "continuing to fly" and how that will affect future

health. For example:

> I have a feeling I'm a pretty healthy person; I have a feeling that things that are going to show up are going to show up when I'm old. Other than the immediate things like getting colds very frequently, dry skin, things like that, I think some of the problems will show up later. They'll take a long time to develop, the changes, because we start out as healthy young people to begin with...

This flight attendant went on to talk about the prevalent apprehension that future health problems ("I don't know what...possibly cancer, other things...we don't know") may develop later. Most were related to the unknown result of working actively and moving about at high altitudes combined with exposure to constant pressure changes, radiation, low oxygen levels, and chemicals. Since this is an area in which little is known scientifically, it is open to their speculations. These and similar statements indicate that cabin crew members have a notion of a future health biography in that they can conceive of a normal health trajectory as well as certain deviations which are as yet unlabeled.

Many flight attendants feel that they are risk-taking with projected time, but since in many ways they are not certain what the risks are, the future health biography is necessarily socially constructed. This means that it is based on the participant's experiences up to that point, through whatever information is available through the union and the company and is also based on the flight attendant's acquaintance with the small percentage of women who have been flight attendants for 30 years. Although, as was pointed out earlier, the conditions under which they worked in the past 30 years and the conditions under which the sixties' women will work 30 years are quite different.

Accelerated time. There is yet a third time dimension and that

is "accelerated time." This is a sense that, for the flight attendants time is passing more quickly than it is for people in other jobs. The following quote from one commuter flight attendant typifies comments made by others, and, in fact, is a truism often heard in the industry: "You age two years for one of everyone else on the ground." This accelerated aging is felt to have both visible and invisible components. What can be observed and what is most frequently offered as evidence for this aging is the flight attendants' observation that "your skin wrinkles up, mainly from lack of humidity in the cabin" (6). Or as someone else suggested, "Maybe it's related to low oxygen levels, maybe something else." And, as Michele says, "Some of the international women who are maybe only in their forties look a lot older from the time stress of the job."

The invisible side of the "aging faster" argument is summed up by one woman when she says, "And probably because you do get sick more often, you age faster." Two commuter flight attendants being interviewed together said that it was their opinion that "most flight attendants get six or seven bladder infections a year" because they get dehydrated from lack of humidity and the added stress of not having time to drink enough water or urinate frequently enough. This seems like an unusually high number of infections for "most flight attendants," but that is really not the point. What is significant is that the women's view is this: "If you keep doing the work some injurious things may happen to you, and happen to you faster than they will to other people." This necessitates weighing the consequences as much as they are known (or at least projected) against the benefits of staying on the job. It also imparts a sense of urgency to the health problems; as one woman says, "We have to deal with these things now."

Awareness as a consequence of occupational permanence. The idea of health risks functions to sensitize a great many flight attendants to the health problems of the job and to increase their consciousness of their own health. But this is not always the case. There are instances in which just the opposite is true and in which deciding that most of the health risks lie in the future or "are not as bad as in some jobs" can make some persons less conscious of the risks and even likely to derogate the complaints of others. A flight attendant was interviewed who exemplified the "negative case" and who didn't see any health hazards or problems. The common sense interpretation of this is that these must be the views of "young" flight attendants or of those newest to the job. One would undoubtedly see more young flight attendants in this category, however, the dichotomy is not between young and old or new and seasoned, but rather, temporary versus permanent. Women who are planning to stay or at least are not thinking of leaving soon are the ones who are most conscious of the effects of the job on health. On the other hand, a person can stay on for years and still of herself as temporary (7). This is by no means a typical situation, but it illustrates by contrast how health consciousness is rooted not only in time, but in awareness of time. As the women who fly realize that this job means their livelihood, that, "it's a pretty good job," and that they have already committed a good deal of time and self to it, their serious consideration of its hazards and activism in respect to these health hazards increases.

Health management decisions and strategies. Recognizing threats to health in the work environment has prompted flight attendants to take several different lines of action. The selection of a line of action is based on whether the person believes she can avoid the health

threat or can develop any number of self-care strategies to mitigate it.

Some avoidance strategies are directed at circumventing mental and physical health hazards at work, while the extreme of avoidance is to totally remove oneself from the situation and quit the job. To make this latter decision in respect to one's health usually involves balancing a number of considerations which are both related to the job and to external employment and support options. For example, one woman told of having had difficulty with recurrent ear infections over a three-year period. She felt that the problem could be controlled if, when she contracted an upper respiratory infection, she could take adequate sick time off. She had taken 12 sick days off the previous year however, and had been pressured by her supervisors and warned about her absenteeism. The intrastate airline she works for allots 12 paid sick days per year. Thus, this woman had decided to continue flying as long as she could keep the factors in balance and "manage" her health. If something in this context changed, for instance, if the company were to exert more pressure or the working conditions were to change in some way that would worsen her ear problem, then her decision to quit the job would be clear. This is an example of balancing internal job/health factors. An external factor that often has to be balanced in addition, particularly when the health stakes are less critical, is the availability of equally good employment in some other field. As one 11-year veteran of flying pointed out:

> It depends on what kind of a job you can get, what else you might be trained for, or whether you have somebody who can take care of you while you're trying to get something better.

Balancing health factors and job factors, even considerations regarding

leaving, is all done within the constraints imposed by the job itself. That is, since, for the individual flight attendant not much in the job itself is negotiable, the adjustments are likely to be made on the part of the employee, not the company.

Another situation in which increasing degrees of avoidance may be considered is if the conditions of work create mental health problems with which the individual is no longer able to deal, particularly if she sees them as limiting other areas of her life. For example, one woman, Margo, told of having difficulty relating to groups of people in any but the most established and familiar friendship situations because she had been made so anxious by the constant small-talk demands of the job. She reported having increasing anxiety in meeting new people or relaxing when in a large group. She felt that the job was responsible for this particularly because of the company's demand that the flight attendants "get out and sell the company." As another woman described it:

> 'Selling the company' means that as soon as you're done serving, you are to go talk to passengers and smile and laugh and be nice in order to sell them on this airline. You're not allowed to sit down after you finish serving...it's (selling) one of the biggest things they rate you on.

Although Margo tried to make certain "secondary adjustments" on the job to avoid meaningless talk and masses of people (for example, "discovering" paperwork or inventory work to do), avoidance on the job wasn't working very well for her. She did not envision any way of changing either the job or herself to make the work more conducive to her own mental health. As she saw it different work would be the only remedy.

There is another situation in which leaving the job is the option

selected. That is when the health hazard is seen as sufficiently critical to preclude the selection of other options. To cite perhaps the primary example, the thing that most flight attendants indicate would make them stop flying is pregnancy. Most feel that the danger to themselves and the fetus is sufficiently high to warrant this definitive a move. Flight attendants have felt this health hazard to be critical enough that they have elected to stop flying despite the sacrifice of seniority and benefits lost during the pregnancy period or despite the loss of the job itself.

Much could be written about this single issue of the effect of flying while pregnant and the fact that volumes of courtroom testimony exist regarding it is proof of the extent of controversy. Evidence has been given to show that pregnant stewardesses are unharmed by flying and evidence has been advanced to support the case that they should not be allowed to fly. Originally stewardesses were fired when they became pregnant, although the reason for this was probably less to protect their health than to protect the company from "embarrassment" (cf., Sprogis v. United Air Lines, 1971:1207). It took years of litigation for many of these women, who have been termed "the returning mothers," to be awarded back pay and to have their seniority restored (8). Later, in the early 1970s, other women, were denied seniority and benefits when they took maternity leaves although they did not lose their jobs. Court cases continue and division still exists among the various unions and their members over what policies to promote.

But what is important about this controversy for analytic purposes in trying to understand the <u>meaning</u> of health hazards to the women, is that most have seen the hazards (known, unknown, or imagined) of flying during pregnancy as sufficiently high to avoid flying, <u>whatever</u>

the occupational consequences. The companies recognize this very well and have even capitalized on it, often taking the opportunity to deny rehire, leave, seniority and benefits. The women who have fought the companies regarding their right to fly while pregnant are no less concerned about their health, but are also angry over the violation of their rights as workers who are being penalized on the basis of their biology. As Stellman has demonstrated in regard to women's occupational health generally, where industrial medicine has concerned itself with women's health at all, it has usually focused on pregnancy to the exclusion of all else and has functioned to rationalize women's exclusion from both work and temporary disability status (Stellman, 1977). Odessa Komer, vice president of the United Auto Workers could easily be talking about women flight attendants when she describes the double-bind placed on women workers who decide to bear children:

> Another contradiction arises...when we consider the alternatives available to a woman who works in an environment that may be unsafe and who wants to avoid any risks. Just recently automatic eligibility for temporary income-replacement plans for maternity-related disabilities was disallowed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Such a benefit was part of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and provided the same disability pay for pregnant women that any other worker is entitled to when he or she is temporarily unable to work. If women cannot have the same economic backup when they do wish to work because they may be exposed to something injurious to their fetuses while they are pregnant, and also are not allowed the option to continue to work, what then are their real choices? Even people that become pregnant have to eat (Komer, 1977:xix).

The airline companies, in addition to their motive of increasing the economic benefit to themselves by denying temporary income replacement to pregnant women, reveal other motivations in the policy stand that they take. Not only in court cases (cf., Los Angeles Times, September 3, 1980), but in company-physician-authored medical

articles (Scholten, 1976), it is apparent that the industry is most concerned with preventing women from working during the third trimester of pregnancy. Flight attendants, on the other hand, express more concern about environmental hazards during the first trimester when critical formation of the fetus takes place. Some women have said that, "I stopped working as soon as I knew I was pregnant," or have expressed the intention to stop working should the situation arise. If health hazards do exist, they would seem, from a physiological basis, to have the greatest potential during the first trimester. On the other hand, if concern is for keeping the appearance of the flight attendants in line with the image of the attractive available female, a flight attendant bulging with a third trimester pregnancy is hardly desirable from the company's viewpoint.

The fact that the Madison Avenue image of the sexy woman willing to serve has been foremost in advertising and promotion for so long is, flight attendants feel, not only unfair but unhealthy. Good mental health after all, demands self-respect as well as a sense of personal integrity, both of which are eroded by sexism and sexual harrassment. In 1974 Paula Kane wrote of the demoralizing effects of being treated as a sex object and concluded that that was a very good reason for leaving the job (Kane and Chandler, 1974). Obviously, all of the interviewees did not come to that conclusion. They found sexism on the job just as repugnant, but tried to find ways to manage their self-esteem in addition to fighting it.

In addition to avoidance tactics on the job and the extreme of opting out of the job, there are a variety of health management strategies that have been developed by the flight attendants. All of these management tactics involve the assessment of the effect of the

work environment on health and the pursuit of activities related to reclaiming, countering, re-adjusting, or replacing the healthy for the unhealthy.

This preservation of "self" may mean taking back control over various small, but personally significant, areas of one's life by reclaiming space or asserting in other ways that one's own self and body are a priority. Being assertive on the issue of one's health interests occurs in mundane ways. Flight attendants tell, for example, of asking passengers if they mind if she uses the bathroom before them if there is a line. One woman told me that she would never have done this a few years ago, but that now she does. She explains that, "People can see you're busy and can't wait in line...if I didn't break into the line I'd never get to go, and I'm not going to do that to myself."

A few flight attendants bring their own water in a bottle or thermos to drink rather than drinking the water on board the plane which has a bad taste due to being held in large tanks. There is widespread awareness of this replacement practice. although only three women were interviewed who actually bring their own water. Whether they brought it from home or drank the water or juices on the plane, the women have an awareness of the incidence of bladder infections and respiratory diseases, the relationship of these conditions to lack of humidity and dehydration, and therefore, their need for non-dehydrating fluids.

Another thing that many women do once on the plane is to substitute good shoes for good-looking shoes. Although the U.S. companies for the most part have dropped their strict requirements for high-heeled shoes, they still require that shoes be leather soled and at least two inches high and match the uniform in color. Some of the women with

greater seniority remember working in the high-heeled shoes and even in high-heeled "go-go" boots in the 1960s, and have the bunions to show for it. But leather-soled shoes, particularly on long flights become fatiguing to wear and many women switch to non-regulation shoes as soon as they are unobserved. On one major airline the flight attendants are practically a walking advertisement for a well-known brand of cushioned sport shoes, all "illegally" worn. Says Kathy, "Until they came out with them in blue, we had to paint the white ones." Flight attendants have been putting on comfortable shoes for years because they knew their feet and legs felt better. In 1980, Alter and Mohler substantiated what flight attendants already knew, stating that crepe-soled shoes (which are not allowed by the airline companies) absorb vibration from the floor without transmitting it to the body (Alter and Mohler, 1980:1969).

Other readjustments to the effects of the environment include techniques such as spraying one's face with water from a little atomizer and putting non-medicinal saline drops in the eyes or even in the nose (9).

Circadian desynchronosis and chronic fatigue are perhaps the greatest health problems of all. In addition to long periods of sleeplessness and, for international flight attendants, crossing as many as nine time zones, it has now been shown how fatigue is compounded by vibration and gravitational pull factors (Alter and Mohler, 1980). The only cure for "jet lag" is a rest and recovery period of sufficient length for the body to readjust itself; the more time in the air and the more time zones crossed, the longer recovery takes. Many feel that the problems of fatigue have led to an additional problem, drug taking which translates into the taking of "uppers" and "downers" just to be

able to wake up and work or go to bed and sleep at times that are foreign to the body's routine. Says Roxanne,

> ...related to using drugs or alcohol is the crazy hours we keep. You have to get up at one or two in the morning back east for a flight, and you have to go to sleep at four or five in the afternoon your time. Well, the only way you can do that is to take drugs—to pop pills. And then, the reverse is to stay awake the next day 'cause you hardly got any sleep. People do that, it forces people to do that.

That people take stimulants and depressants to manage their sleeping/waking patterns in jobs with long and unusual hours is not news. In fact transportation workers, for instance, long-distance truck drivers, constitute a recognized market for such drugs. Nor is it news that such drugs are obtainable from physicians. The flight attendants have gotten their drugs from the company physicians in the form of diet pills and sleeping pill prescriptions. The difficulty that company doctors have in looking independently at the needs of the worker-as-patient rather than looking after the interests of the company has been documented (Brodeur, 1975) and demonstrated in their writings (cf., Rogg and D'Alonzo, 1965). What is particularly interesting about the flight attendants' developing self-health consciousness however, is the movement away from such practices. In some cases it is a relative change; for example, a woman on a domestic airline stated that she and many of her friends ask for tranquilizers instead of barbiturates to sleep when working east-west schedules because "they are not addicting like barbiturates." Taking a glass of wine seemed to be the preferred sleep inducer for many of the women interviewed. But, a Seattle flight attendant of 15 years' seniority told of her serious concern over using alcohol in this way becoming a drinking problem for her. A number of women have given up tranquilizers for

similar reasons. Many people have tried to find ways to keep from "medicalizing" their sleep problem trying instead exercises such as running or trying yoga, transcendental meditation, just "will power," or even, as one woman said, "counting sheep rather than taking sleeping pills!" And, for those who did say that they do take something "if necessary," they indicated an increased awareness of the need for moderation in something that will very likely be continued over a long period of time.

A major issue in the phenomenon of self-care raised by Levin is the philosophical/political one wherein "...acceleration of self-care competence among laypersons could result in fundamental challenges to the perceived efficacy of the professional health care system..." (Levin, 1976:72). What this occupational data suggests is that such challenges are especially likely to occur when worker/patients identify the interests of professional health care as linked to something other than their own health. Consider, for example, the link between the interests of the company and the selling of the company in the case of the airline industry. The diet pills have been so freely given because they help the flight attendant to maintain the image that sells the company. Undoubtedly they have been so freely <u>taken</u> because becoming overweight continues to be a ground for being fired. But, in examining these practices with regard to drugs and refusing and changing them, there is no question that the flight attendants are challenging the efficacy of medical practice that is questionable to their interests as well as substituting practices that they believe are more personally healthy.

Nutrition is another area in which much replacing and avoiding is done. A good deal of change in both attitudes and actions has

occurred in this area and much of this seems linked to cultural changes brought about by the nutritional emphasis of the health movements of the 1970s, and the "you are what you eat" philosophy. During the 1970s nutritional activists emerged in all walks of life. Julius Roth described them as "health nuts and food hippies" whose lives seemed devoted to the pursuit of good nutrition and the avoidance of poisonous additives (1976). Just as in any area of life, there are flight attendants who qualify as "health nuts and hippies" when it comes to food. One woman on a national carrier brings all her own organically grown food and has devised ways to keep it cold in hotel rooms and even heats what needs to be heated on the motor beyind the hotel ice machine. And other flight attendants bring their own food which, although not necessarily organically grown, is still considered by them to be of better quality than that which is available on the plane or in airport restaurants. The function of the "food hippies" for the rest of the flight attendant population is not to be missionaries for conversion to the consumption of organically grown food, but rather to make them more conscious of the nutritional value of food and of some of the problematic eating practices connected with the job. Thus, although the vast majority don't bring their own food, they rarely eat the food on the airplane. This is even true of many flight attendants on international routes. The monotony and tastelessness of the menu probably has something to do with this aversion to the food served, but people also cited the inclusion of preservatives, the lack of time to relax and eat, and "the high stress environment" in which "you can't enjoy and adequately digest food (10). When they do eat food on board the airplane, they chose carefully. It was pointed out that, for one thing, almost every item is immersed in high-calorie sauce to disguise

it and the flight attendants reaffirmed their need to restrict caloric intake.

Health consciousness in regard to food has changed some other practices as well. Some of the airlines do not allow their flight attendants meals on the flight, and all disallow eating in front of passengers. In the past, the response of flight attendants to this was to "sneak a few bites of something;" and since crew meals (except for the cockpit) were not provided on some airlines this often meant helping oneself to an untouched course coming back on a passenger tray. Says one woman, "I never do this now, and in general it's done less...if I see someone doing it I ask them how they know the passenger didn't sneeze on it! That gets the message across."

These are but a few of the many tactics that flight attendants use during their daily work to attempt to protect and maintain their health. These are at best attempts to take the rough edges off some of the abuses to health when one can't remove the abuses themselves. Such strategies are not unlike Goffman's characterization of "the make-do" under conditions of institutional deprivation (Goffman, 1961).

The Breakdown of Individual Strategies

Perhaps the primary means which flight attendants have used to "make do" within the working conditions of their occupation has been the seniority system. It is on the basis of seniority that flight attendants "bid a schedule" of trips to be worked. Each month a new schedule, or more correctly, the listing of many different schedules is circulated to the flight attendants. Any one schedule shows the combinations of flights to be covered and the concommitant hours and days off. Each flight attendant bids for her ranked choices. Seniority

with the company determines the outcome of the bidding and flight attendants soon learn approximately what their own seniority level can bring them or "what they can hold." There is little doubt that physical and mental comfort is a high priority in the bidding as this San Francisco-based woman illustrates in the following comment:

> My first consideration when I bid is to be on my own time. For example, not to have to wake up before 9 a.m. Eastern time, which would be 6 a.m. on my body time. The second consideration is not to have to fly in the smoking section.

Another priority for some is to avoid "the big planes." Several women in different airlines expressed concern over what the results might be of walking constantly at an angle. The large planes such as the DC-10, unlike the smaller 727s and even 707s, fly at a constant angle. Some express concerns over "what this may do to our insides eventually" while others simply find it uncomfortable and more fatiguing to legs and backs than working on a conventional flat surface. In addition, on the bigger planes there are 250 pound carts containing the meal trays to be pushed up and down the aisles. The medical effects for flight personnel who walk constantly "up and down hill" have now been partially documented (cf., Alter and Mohler, 1980:169).

On the intrastate and commuter airlines, jumbo jets and east-west time changes are not the problem, but increased take-offs and landings and, therefore, increased exposure to engine noise, acceleration and pressure changes present greater problems (11). In bidding their schedule, the attendants on these flights expressed concern over how much time was available on a given schedule for rest and sleep. As an example they showed one schedule which included a 14-hour working day which finished at 11 p.m. and required going back on duty at 7 a.m. The flight attendants explaining this pointed out that they would try

to bid out of that schedule, but with three and five years' seniority respectively they weren't often successful.

Almost everyone reported her or his aversion to working the smoking section and reported trying to bid their way out of it (12). One woman stated that, "Even the people who smoke don't like to work in the smoking section" and said she uses her seniority to bid a number one cabin position in the no-smoking section whenever possible. On airlines where bidding for cabin position is not done, the flight attendants must negotiate with one another over working this section versus taking a larger number of passengers or some other trade-off. Very often smokers are pressured by their peers into taking it. Similar to the smoking/no smoking bidding (although not nearly as much of a priority) are bidding or negotiating for a jumpseat that is not so close to the deafening engine noise or managing to get the "galley girl" position on the lower level of the jumbo jets. Although it's monotonous work, this position has as its most attractive feature the fact that the 300 or so passengers can be avoided (for some, on the other hand, it is considered literally "the pit" because of its isolation).

In analyzing the work of the airline flight attendant over the past 20 years it is evident that the work itself has not been changed greatly (cf., Chapter V). The flight attendant has always had the responsibility for organizing the passengers, seating them appropriately, instructing them in safety precautions, applying first aid, interpreting changing weather conditions, seeing that they were made comfortable and cooperative and were fed. She was the agent of social control in the aircraft cabin. But what has changed rather strikingly are the conditions under which the work is carried out (cf., Chapter V). In a 1977 interview a woman with 10 years experience as

a cabin attendant on a national airline explained what flying "reserve" meant. When she began working in 1966 "senior" flight attendants never had to take "reserve". The conditions have changed markedly. She explained as follows:

> ...at least when you have a schedule you can rest up on the three days off that you have between two day trips, but when you're on reserve you have five days at a time when they can do whatever they want with you. They have to give you 10 hours off between flights, so if you came home at three that afternoon you could be sent out that night at one. You don't know when to sleep or whether to try to sleep. It gets into all kinds of things as far as health goes....When we first started flying 10 years ago it wasn't like this. We would never have thought we'd be serving reserve at this point. There weren't the big airplanes; there wasn't the charter operation; they weren't putting extra flight attendants on at the last minute because they hadn't scheduled enough to begin with. It was just sick call they were covering at that point. It's just, well, everyone hates to serve it.
>
> Gloria, 10 1/2 years

When interviews were conducted for the present study in 1980 and 1981 the scenario described by Gloria was even more accurate. People with even 14 years' seniority in some bases flew nothing but reserve.

Reserve not only means standing by waiting to be called, it also exemplifies other changed conditions: the big airplanes, more people to deal with, last minute filling of flights (which Pontell, et al [1981] have associated with assaultive passenger behavior), and a good deal more uncertainty as to what may be expected on a flight. Gloria told how seniority could still be used, to a degree, to avoid "reserve." A person with seniority who doesn't want to fly can do what is called "bumping off." This means that people with less seniority have to take the first calls and the more senior person may not get called. However, this also means that the senior person doesn't work. The choice is

then between working under unhealthy or undesirable conditions or not working at all. There is a realization that not only does seniority not confront situations, operating instead by passing them on but, also that it has become less adequate at even doing that.

Furthermore, working conditions have worsened in a number of ways. Although the duty hours required for a month's full-time work, 80 hours in most airlines, have, through many contract battles, been reduced over the years, productivity demands have been increased by the companies in other ways. As one union president says:

> Management is saying how hard hit they are by the economy and that in order to increase productivity you need to work more hours. Well our flight attendants are starting to realize that they have already increased productivity, and many times, by doing more in one hour. The flight attendants didn't make the decision to put 44 more seats on a plane that formerly held 90. And in that one hour on board that plane they still have to serve.

It is evident also that, as distances are being spanned in shorter times and the services offered are being increased, productivity per passenger mile is being boosted even more.

The above-quoted union president goes on to specify the ways in which not only productivity has been increased, but also how the conditions under which increasing production norms are expected have worsened in the past two decades. She also illustrates the way in which working conditions are directly related to health in the following quote:

> For one thing you have alcohol on every flight. You have meal service on almost all flights. In the old days you usually only did coffee, tea and milk and that was it. They didn't have soft drinks. They didn't have liquor. They didn't have all this other stuff. You didn't serve all this food. You talked to the people. It was strictly to get from point A to point B. You flew at low altitudes. You weren't in pressurized

> cabins. And you were flying 8 hours in one day and having a nice long layover when you got there. And you flew 8 hours back and had five or six days off. So it was different. When the jets came along, they pumped up the hours and we were flying even more distance. It used to take a piston, if you were on a Convair 240 or something like that, 8 hours to get to the coast with the stops. A jet is going to the coast in 4 1/2 hours and at flight altitudes and at radiation levels that are much higher. And it's going through ozone which you didn't have at lower altitudes. Most passengers don't know about the ventilation packs on the airplane and what they do with them, that the airlines in order to conserve fuel shut them down. They'll shut down one or two packs, maybe even three on a big airplane. The total ventilation system going on in the airplane is not the same all over. The cockpit ventilation is changed every 7 minutes. But the cabin can be every 16 minutes to as long as every 23 minutes (13). That's a long time to have the same air in the cabin. And that's another thing. When the CAB designated this concentrated smoking section what they did is make it damn near impossible on a 707 for people to survive. Because the galley's back there. You're working right in this cloud of carbon monoxide. And even in terms of ventilation there are the fumes from the engine. This is mixed ram air. You're never getting pure air. A real reminder of this is when you walk out and you look at this brown streak down the side of the airplane out of the little hole in the vent—that's nicotine all the way down the side.

All of the interviews have demonstrated that working conditions have come to constitute a threat to health in many ways and that individual solutions can go only so far in ameliorating them (14). This is particularly true in efforts to use seniority to avoid unfavorable conditions. When the flight attendant who has seniority looks around now, she finds that she is not alone. Unhealthy working conditions are no longer something the flight attendant can put up with knowing that if she stays on it will get better. In addition, even people who once had seniority enough to bid their way out of poor schedules and situations have now had their seniority "reduced" and

as a consequence, their consciousness abruptly raised. When the industry declined economically in the late 1970s and massive layoffs or "furloughs," as they were called, occurred, "the senior people," says one woman, "moved back down the pole, and now they're flying the junior-type reserve and everything else."

Another realization is that "you can't bid your way out of everything." Nothing illustrates this better than the random nature of assaults on flight attendants in the past several years and the problems they have faced in attempting to create a more secure working environment. The only protection that flight attendants have is to press charges against the assailants and to force the airline companies away from their common policy of overlooking the incidences. A further dilemma for the employee is highlighted by this situation. If the cabin attendant is severely injured by a combative passenger, her or his biggest problem may be in getting the company to recognize that it happened, yet, on the other hand, the development of medical problems frequently must be hidden in order to keep the job. A flight attendant who had worked for 15 years confided that her hearing was becoming increasingly impaired, but that she was hiding this fact from the company because she knew that the impairment could be an excuse "to get rid of me." A union president confirmed that older flight attendants are harrassed routinely when they use medical leave. This 15-year veteran felt that her hearing loss perhaps had something to do with her exposure to noise level, but if she were not able to prove this, she would be out of a job.

The breakdown of personal strategies or the knowledge of the futility or dysfunction of strategies sometimes serves as well to move health care efforts out of the personal realm and into the collective

bargaining arena. The problem of fatigue is an instructive example. Crossing time zones can't be avoided, but there are other ways to insure that adequate rest is provided. Providing for sleep in time zones alien to one's "body clock" with barbiturates and tranquilizers is, according to flight attendants talking from personal experience, a decidedly dysfunctional way to deal with the problem (cf., San Francisco Chronicle, May 20, 1978). It was felt by women in numerous airlines that one rational way to provide for adequate rest was to give flight attendants individual rooms on layovers, as cockpit crew members had always had, indeed, as male flight attendants had usually had. The women had been required to share a double room. It was only three or four years ago that women flight attendants on most airlines were able to negotiate for and obtain their right to single rooms on overnight trips, an advance that many credit as the greatest single contribution promoting rest. But with respect to the fatigue problem, even now there are no duty time limitations on flight attendants under the law. The FAA has refused to enact regulations limiting the amount of hours a flight attendant can be on duty. The limitations that do exist have been negotiated into union contracts (in the unionized airlines), but flight attendants have become aware of some difficulties of this as a negotiated item rather than as a regulated item. In any case, as far as the fatigue problem is concerned, many people have come to feel that it is senseless to debate the merits of meditation programs rather than tranquilizers, coffee or amphetamines while people can still be kept up without sleep for 25 hours. Both seniority and individual solutions just aren't enough.

But the opposite side of the decreased adequacy of seniority is the positive aspect of a whole work force with increased longevity and

experience. The visibility of the status of others and their interactions makes the worker increasingly aware of her own similar status. Jean-Paul Sartre termed taking this observer position as, "becoming the third person" and explained that through interaction each person has the opportunity to be both observer and observed, part of the collectivity and outside of it, while mentally organizing it (Sartre, 1960:398). Thus, the flight attendant worker not only learns from her colleagues the strategies and techniques of self-care, but moreover experiences and observes the breakdown of strategies in the face of working conditions and, in the process, begins to develop an awareness of the collective interests of the occupation of which she is a part.

The Linking of Individual and Collective Strategies

Moving efforts from the level of individual strategies to collective bargaining or even to the level of governmental regulation comes from a recognition that the problems that exist are not simply the personal troubles of the solitary worker. Certain conditions for change must exist as well as certain activities that promote that change.

Essential conditions for awareness. Data from this particular women's occupation contribute to a more general understanding of women's occupational health because they reveal several conditions which appear to be essential in linking personal experience to social issues. These concern (1) history, (2) network development, and (3) status consciousness.

Until women remain in an occupation for a considerable period of time, their development of a sense of "history" in a collective sense over and above personal biography is unlikely. And, until the last

decade, flight attendants did not have such a history. Of course, people were familiar with accounts of Ellen Church and the advent of the first flight attendants 50 years ago as well as a number of other stories about the beginnings of the occupation, but that it is not the kind of history to which I refer. The kind of history that had not yet occurred was a working sense of involvement and the placement of the self within continuing issues of personal and occupational significance. Just as not remaining on the job a long period of time to some extent precludes development of health problems, it also precludes the development of health awareness and activism. The accounts of women of varied longevity on the job that have been interviewed indicate that one has to have seen a problem recur and have also seen a progression of efforts, both successful and futile, aimed at that problem before one begins to see and understand in a more comprehensive way and to look past one's own experience. Such "historical" vision also illuminates one's own experience. Until recently such a situation could not exist.

A second feature is the development of a network of communication through which to transmit accounts of individual health experience, strategies attempted, and personal evaluations of the situation. It has often been said that one of the prime difficulties for women (and thus a key task for the women's movement) has been to overcome the isolation of women which is characteristic not only of the home sector (Smith, 1972) but which often prevails in the work place as well. Whereas a predominately male managerial force may have a variety of formal channels of communication, women in line jobs in one organization tend to be alienated and separated from those in another with which they could share their similar concerns. At first the flight attendant

world would seem to be the extreme of a "non-network" in that not even small stable work groups exist as in an office or factory. Each flight attendant bids her schedule for a month and possibly may work with people she has never seen before, or not seen for a long time. This is particularly true of the large international carriers that have bases in several parts of the world. Yet again, increasing longevity on the job has managed to erode even the "non-network." For one thing, particularly on national carriers the seniority system used in bidding schedules frequently means that people of a similar seniority will find themselves on the same flight (all about ten years' seniority, 15 or more, and so forth) again providing the opportunity for women with similar histories and understandings to be together (15). Not only shared experience, but especially in this occupation, the "time limitedness" of interaction makes immediate communication possible. In fact, it is quite possible that their great mobility and intermingling actually makes communication on issues of occupational relevance more possible than if they were to work in consistently stable settings. As Ruzek has pointed out in respect to the women's movement in general, health concerns can be one of the most unifying points in fostering discussion of collective concerns (Ruzek, 1975). This is also true on the organizational level in that coalitions among the independent U.S. flight attendant unions are composed of their health and safety committees.

A third factor that has impacted the linking of individual problems with collective interests is consciousness of "occupational classism" and sexist oppression. As in any occupation, the women flight attendants vary in the extent of their articulation of a feminist analysis, but almost all express some sense of what it means to be

"invalidated" because one is female and thus represents the lower half of the particular occupational world. A blatant example of "invalidation" was provided during the early controversy over ozone sickness, a condition in which chest pain, shortness of breath, and coughing up of blood occurs during the passage through the ozone layers of the atmosphere. Apparently flight attendants, because they move actively about, and therefore have increased oxygen requirements, are more apt to suffer from the effects of ozone. Initially, pilots dismissed the complaints as bogus, referring to "the bunch of hysterical women back there" (Carley, 1977) and it was not until cockpit crews and, most especially, passengers began to suffer ozone sickness that the problem achieved more recognition. The ozone situation is, of course, an extreme example, but does serve as an indicator of how, when problems are seen as "women's problems," the answer is too frequently to get rid of the women rather than investigate the problem.

When those in positions of power are able to define problems out of existence in this way it serves to defuse efforts at addressing them. If this response could occur with a condition like ozone sickness, it is even more likely that it has occurred with more patently "female" disorders. Menstrual cycle irregularities, reproductive problems such as spontaneous abortion and infertility are examples of problems which union health and safety officials and flight attendant activist groups (as well as many of the interviewees here) contend that flight attendants report with greater than normal frequency (cf., Newsweek, March 18, 1974). An added difficulty that flight attendants have faced in demonstrating the importance of these problems is that the data that exists is largely based solely on inferences from related studies. Little hard, experimental cause/effect data precisely

examining the effects of this environment on these problems has been formulated. Flight attendants may strongly suspect and justifiably reason, for example, that ionizing radiation in cargo is responsible for certain reproductive problems and that time zone changes may be responsible for other more minor problems, yet they have met with strong opposition in both trying to prove it or to bring attention to it without jeopardizing their jobs. The difficulty has been in shifting attention to potential causes and away from the presumed unsuitability of workers for the job.

As long as the health problems are seen as something women would get no matter where they were rather than as related to the conditions of work and the work environment there is danger of those problems being brushed aside. Flight attendants have also seen that there is danger to their job security as well. Being forced out because one takes too much medical leave is no idle fear. As one woman says, "The company is totally paranoid about getting an "industrial" (a claim in which the worker is able to prove job-related, permanent disability) and they will do everything they can to get rid of someone who is getting sick." "If you complain, you should quit, and if it's too rough for you, you shouldn't be there," is often the dominant ethic. The history of "protective legislation" for women, legislation supposedly to protect their health and "delicate" natures, is a history of exclusion of women from the work force (Huber, 1976; Stellman, 1977). But, as more working women are beginning to point out, and as writers on women's occupational health have argued (Hricko, 1976; Stellman, 1977), if it's dangerous for women on the job, chemically, physically, or radiologically, it's dangerous for men too and the answer is not to exclude women from the work area, but to make the work area safe for everyone.

Yet one of the characteristics of a woman's occupation is the almost daily realization of one's standing. This is brought home to people in little incidents that sometimes have a great impact, such as the following: When stewardesses began their health activism in 1973 one of the issues of major concern was radioactive cargo (Childers, 1974). Up until that time radioactive materials could be shipped in commercial airliners unbeknownst to all on board. Through the activism of Stewardesses for Women's Rights, flight attendant unions and the Airline Pilots' Association, regulations were enacted that required that the captain be informed and consulted before such materials could be shipped. It soon became apparent to stewardesses that, although the new regulations were an important step, the gain was only relative. Michelle will never forget watching one day as the captain signed for "God knows what" and they loaded it aboard. It occurred to her that:

> ...he didn't know anymore about what the radiation level meant than anybody else did. So big deal, it was no secret that it was on the plane, so what! The guy was in his late fifties, I'm sure he didn't worry about his ability to have normal children, or even what else it might do to him. I had two children. I probably wasn't going to have any more, but it made me think. I just realized that I had no say in things that were important to me.

So it is that threats to women's health are only part of the problem. What many women are seeing is the effect of their gender and status on the definition of problems and on their relative power to do anything about them. The status of the participants is incorporated into the definition of the problem and because of that it affects all of the workers in the flight attendant ranks, that is, women and men (16). Sociologist Everett Hughes first brought attention to the concept of "master status," or the notion that the prominently identifiable

status is seen as overriding all others. In sex-segregated occupations that master status is gender and, therefore, in so-called "women's work" gender as master status can mean invalidation.

All of the above illustrate conditions under which individual problems become organizational issues. Women must be on the job long enough to embrace the history of effort; they must have a network of communication in which to appraise the situations of others and compare them to their own; and finally, they must begin to develop a collective consciousness of the impact of their status on the definition of the problems.

Health activism. Social change is always the result of both evolving structural conditions, be they large-scale social processes or technological innovation, and active human practice through the conscious intervention of individuals. This pattern has been demonstrated in other areas of this evolving women's occupation, as, for example, in the earlier discussions of image demands and identity pursuits. This is the case with health awareness too. Changing structural conditions are necessary for consciousness to evolve, but it cannot do so without the activism of the participants who would attempt to show the world that, in the words of C. Wright Mills, these are not personal troubles, but public issues (Mills, 1956).

Those flight attendants who have made the connections between their personal health problems and the organizational environment are concerned that there are others who mistake public issues for personal troubles. To this end many have translated their concerns into tactical actions for creating such a consciousness in others. Such tactics are not necessarily planned and organized and are, in fact, often spontaneous and informal. They are, in essence, actions that

one worker uses in an attempt to apprise another of the observations she has made as "the third person." The use of a tactic is for the most part, situationally specific and the tactic can be characterized variously as teaching, sharing experience, validating, guiding, comparing, exposing and reassuring. Beyond these personalized tactics are the strategies of coalition-building and promoting public awareness.

The use of a tactic like teaching exemplifies the use of new information to shed light on an old problem. For example, a familiar problem is that of middle ear infections and blocked ears. The teacher who is attempting to show her colleague that this is not just her personal trouble, but rather a collective health problem, may teach or inform in several ways. She may cite research literature that she has read or heard, or even teach physiology (explain how infection is carried, etc.). In informing her colleague about physiological functions she will undoubtedly compare the way in which the body's defenses function under "normal" circumstances versus the way in which they are impaired by the working conditions of the flight attendant. The following is an illustration of this informational process taken from field notes written after meeting with several flight attendants:

> One woman explained that the cilia, little hair-like projections lining the air passages, function to move bacteria up and out of the lungs. The cilia depend on a certain amount of mucus to function well and thus are greatly impaired in low humidity. She further explained that as humidity drops in the aircraft cabin, increased dryness occurs in the nose and throat making the person more susceptible to upper respiratory infection.

Much teaching occurs with respect to health maintenance. Members of a union health committee said that a study was done in England which showed that heavy tea drinking by British Overseas Airline Flight

Attendants contributed to dehydration because of the large ingestion of caffeine. Therefore, these members were telling their colleagues to drink increased quantities of water or juice, but to try to avoid coffee, tea and colas containing caffeine.

Teaching is sometimes done in more planned ways. More informal teaching occurs in the unionized airlines where the union organization provides a mechanism such as committee formation which lends itself to an occasional formal presentation. Of course, union and even association newsletters offer a vehicle for the widespread communication of items on health, illness and the work place, an addition which those involved with the newsletters say is a decided change from years past in which the emphasis may have at times been on safety but never on health. In fact, all of the recent studies cited earlier in this paper have been reproduced in union newsletters.

Another notable tactic is validation for it is used by the proponent as well as the recipient. For example, a flight attendant who notices the onset of leg and backaches after working on the DC-10 may check this experience with others to see whether they too have had the same thing. Yet another tactic is to reassure; more experienced flight attendants are apt to reassure others that they are not alone in the problems that they experience and further, may guide someone in using the grievance process in matters related to health. The following case from a taped interview demonstrates such an instance of such guidance; a union field representative has been explaining the relationship between body fluid retention and altitude and how a colleague was aided in filing a grievance after being fired for a health problem and continues thus:

> One of my friends was fired last year for being six

> pounds overweight--not overweight, over her maximum. She was not overweight but she was fired after being a flight attendant for 12 years. I was her union rep so I processed the grievance, and I was called as a witness later in the arbitration. They had weighed her after a flight. She was pre-menstrual, which was verified by a doctor; they allow five pounds for that, and they allow three pounds for clothing, but she was still over because she was bloated. And they refused to allow that. As a witness the lawyer for our side asked me to tell what I knew about this. And I said we talk about health all the time...so we know, that people are bloated all the time after flights, and it's outrageous that she should be weighed after a flight and that they should base her weight on that and fire her. And so the company lawyer said to me, 'What makes you an expert?' and I said, 'Well, I am an expert; I certainly know a lot more than you do about it.' I said, 'Because I work with these people and I talk to them, and you're not going to tell me that my experience over the last 10 years of flying doesn't count, that people don't get bloated.

The filing of grievances related to health after a worker has been terminated illustrates increasingly sophisticated knowledge and an increasing ability to manipulate significant symbols. This and similar instances could be termed the tactic of "using health as evidence." Citing health problems in this way also indicates increasing concern with and attention to personal health that is closely derived from one's experience on the job over time. As this woman's words illustrated so beautifully, increased longevity gives one increased legitimacy in the eyes of one's peers. The above grievance proceeding was lost, but that did not dampen the same union representative's hopes for a case which she described in the following language:

> We had a grievance a few weeks ago and the woman had had a supervisor on board who had given her a very bad 'ride' and said she was rude. She also got a complaint letter from a passenger. Shortly after that she called in sick and was out sick for a month...(and was

> fired at that point). We showed that her health was responsible for her attitude on the plane. She was getting so sick she just couldn't deal with situations. It was coming on slowly, and pretty soon it just got so bad she couldn't go to work....I just know we're going to win that one...it's so important to start relating our health to so many things that happen on the job.

Flight attendants are relating their health to what happens on the job to an increasing extent. They judge their own experiences and the experiences of colleagues and, through their interaction with one another, legitimacy is increasing lent not only to individual health problems, but to the entirety of the occupational problems (17).

In addition to talking to each other about their health, flight attendants also talk to others: the union, the public, other groups with similar interests, and even middle management. Convincing these other groups lends added legitimacy to the struggle over the problems, but, more importantly, it helps the flight attendant to reinforce her own developing consciousness.

Union health activities gained momentum in the latter half of the 1970s and facilitated communication among the members regarding these concerns. In a union in which I conducted interviews in 1977, committees had been formed to study and act on issues related to health; a new union health committee the focus of which was on "health" and not "safety" was formed. The giving of such a priority to health as an issue had not occurred previously. Another contract study group was initiated in which the women met to study their union contract, demystify its language, and communicate their findings to their fellow workers. Often the issues generated by the contract study related to health such as worker's compensation or long-term disability insurance. The significance of the union for health issues was brought home when

one woman said emphatically, "Health is the single most important organizing tool you can have right now." At the same time other committee members pointed to the national interest that had been shown recently with respect to the asbestos, chemical and textile industries. There was a sense that the public might recognize that health on the job is an idea whose time had come.

The union is the offical representative of the flight attendants and if this organization fails to recognize the concerns of its members and plan and act with respect to them, workers will turn to other sources which they see as potentially supportive and capable of providing validation of their health problems. In some cases the seeking of outside help may be justified in order to learn strategies that can be used to convince the union. This occurred in another national carrier which was not the subject of my 1977 study but the union activities and member concerns of which were later brought to my attention when flight attendants read an article I had written with a flight attendant union health activist (Lessor Rosen and Egeth, 1977). These women sought help in dealing not only with their grievances but with their union. In explaining the viewpoint of the women flight attendants and how their concerns were not being addressed by the union concerned, the Teamsters Union, one woman wrote to complain that the international refused to recognize that the flight attendants' local, in a current job action, was primarily concerned with <u>health</u> and working conditions. She and other women wanted ammunition with which to confront the union and make it responsive to the flight attendant segment of the union.

Similar to this union member's attempt to reach out is the tactic of forming coalitions (which Anselm Strauss has characterized as an

approach that is "typically American") (18). Forming coalitions means to "plug in" to larger issues, to "link up" with similar interest groups and thus, to solidify one's thinking and one's estimation of the problem. Shortly after forming independent flight attendant unions in 1977, five unions formed a joint national committee concerned with health problems. In addition, some flight attendants have formed liaisons with organizations such as "The Coalition for the Medical Rights of Women," the University of California-based "Labor Occupational Health Group," and "Union W.A.G.E." (Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality). Through joining, sharing information, planning educational programs, writing, and generally building networks of people aware of their health problems and sympathetic to them strong and productive coalitions are built.

Yet another tactic for change is going public, for example, talking to passengers. Often this occurs in the course of helping a passenger with some transitory problem (for example, unblocking ears) and the subject of flight attendant health comes up. Of course there are more formal ways to "go public" as well. To cite an earlier example, the Stewardesses Anti-defamation Defense League and Stewardesses for Women's Rights gave press conferences on the issue of occupational health. Later the ozone problem was covered in the national newspapers and flight attendants began to speak out on what they believed were the companies' priorities of profits over health. More recently flight attendant unions have given interviews regarding the assault problem. These voices were heard because these first two groups had the courage to stand up and be heard.

Even talking to middle management people has a role in the continuing process of consciousness development; regardless of how the

company representative relates to the flight attendant (despite, for example, such comments as, "I don't think it's as important as you're making out," or even "I see what you're saying but I can't do anything"), the management representative is forced to relate to her as someone who sees her own health as important even if the manager does not. The content may not be as significant as the process itself because the process becomes so many mirrors reflecting a developing identity.

That management is aware of health hazards, at least to some extent, seems clear, but it is not management that is attempting to make others aware. It is the flight attendants who are building awareness and they are doing it first between and among flight attendants. The other interactions through unions, the public, coalition groups, and management, are additional stimulants of consciousness development in that the effect of these interactions returns to the flight attendant group. If outside people can be convinced then they begin to relate to the flight attendants as people who have a legitimate problem. Their estimation then becomes incorporated into the self and is evaluated along with the flight attendant's own estimation of self; that is, "in self-appraisal the responses of others must be taken into account," just as the self "makes itself its own object of scrutiny" (Strauss, 1969:34). These others relate to the flight attendants and the flight attendants interact with one another in a continually dynamic process of consciousness formation.

Health and the Development of Career Consciousness

In the evolving career of the flight attendants it has been shown that health problems posed by a work environment can become a focus

for the development of a collective consciousness, of an awareness of one's powerlessness as a worker alone and of the need for collective strength. Alienation from control over one's health is one of the most profound types of alienation one can experience. In the last decade there have been numerous examples of industrial hazards fomenting worker consciousness and action as organizations have been formed, and health issues have supported demands at the bargaining table, and where this has failed, lawsuits have been initiated (cf., Laufer, 1982). The flight attendant case is unique because the work force is overwhelmingly female and many of their problems and their difficulties in getting those problems recognized relate to the fact that they are female. Furthermore, their alienation from the power structure of airline management and pilots is clearly a male/female separation in which men hold the power. Women are alienated from the means of production and a consequence of this is that it jeopardizes their health. But the process of the identification of industrial jeopardy to health and sexist domination has produced a group of workers that is in the process of evolving its consciousness of self-interests. Such findings lend additional credence to the explanation for the existence of a woman's movement rather than a (male) workers' movement. Women are even more alienated than are men and, therefore, have more "opportunity" to develop consciousness of their position.

It would appear that the industry's response to the health problems in this female-oriented occupation has been along the lines of "if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen" (an aphorism which has a quite literal application!). Flight attendants aren't getting out, both because they can't and because they prefer not to. First, ceasing to work is simply not an option anymore, if it ever really was, for

the majority of women. As Odessa Komer indicates:

> Most women workers seek and hold jobs for the same reasons men do. About three-quarters of all working women either support themselves and/or their families alone, or work to bring their family income above $10,000 a year, an amount now inadequate to maintain even middle class life. Forcing women out of their jobs will only bring economic hardships to more Americans (Komer, 1977:xviii).

In addition, for a flight attendant without other specialized qualifications to select among other available jobs in the labor force (if any exist) would probably mean a smaller salary since it is a fact that most jobs available to women would not pay as well. The fact that the flight attendant's job pays moderately well now is directly related to longevity and the efforts that the women have contributed in regard to wages and benefits. And, in the case of nearly 60,000 American flight attendants, 85 percent of whom are women, relocation into other "healthier" and equally remunerative jobs within the industry is equally impossible, logistically, sensibly, and in every other way. Participants are agreed on the fact that it should be made as safe and healthy as possible for women and men. Finally, that women flight attendants have found much that is desirable in their occupation was expressed by the interviewees and is attested to by the fact that they began to remain in increasing numbers as soon as employment barriers were knocked down. As Fran, with 15 years' experience, expressed it, "It's a good job, but it could be so much better."

The health issues, rather than forcing people out, for the most part have had just the opposite effect. Because the health issues have been seen as universal, they have come to constitute a unifying core of interest around which occupational activism could arise. And occupational activism has, in its turn promoted a greater identification

CHAPTER VI

NOTES

1. During the course of the research I had the opportunity to interview a former company doctor to one of the large airlines that flew both domestic and international routes. He indicated that over a 15-year period from approximately 1955 to 1970 he had examined stewardesses at entrance, six months, and again at one year for the purpose of determining whether menstrual irregularities occurred at a rate higher than for women in the general population. From this one-year study period, in which he also had the women keep records of their menses, he concluded that "there was little direct effect" from flying. He stated, "They have a sense of menstrual irregularities but they don't have significant menstrual irregularities." For one thing, his results are questionable when he studied people only during the first year of flying. In addition, although toward the latter half of the 15-year time span his subjects were presumably flying in jets, monitoring took place prior to the introduction of the jumbo jets with their increased altitudes and other varied conditions. But further, what the doctor was measuring and what the women's indicators of normalcy vs. change consisted of were perhaps not identical; it's often the case that when the patient doesn't fit the medical model the medical presumption is made that nothing is wrong. As union health and safety coordinator Sunny Wofford wrote, "There seem to be coinflicting opinions on this subject, but one thing everyone (women flight attendants) agrees on is that changes do occur" (Wofford, 1977:182). Women indicated the specifics of their own experiences and observations

during interviews. For example, a very senior woman said that she had ceased to menstruate at age 34 and that "that was not unusual."

2. The class bias of clinical medicine has been amply demonstrated from both conservative (Fuchs, 1974) and radical/critical (Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich, 1971) quarters. That it should also be true of epidemiological research that investigates disease causation should come as no surprise.

3. Although there is debate over this issue, and since deregulation in 1978, pilots have found themselves nearly as powerless as other worker groups in maintaining even job security. See for example, an article in the Airline Pilots Association Newsletter, April 1981, on the proliferation of "alter ego" and non-union airlines. The article describes the current situation in which an airline company sets up a non-union subsidiary, transfers a substantial amount of capital to this new company, and gradually economically squeezes out the old "unprofitable" unionized company, pilots, flight attendants, and all.

4. I am particularly grateful to William Friedland for his detailed critique of the first draft of an earlier paper concerning flight attendant health (Lessor Rosen, 1980). His many insights concerning the labor process and his political economic analyses, such as this one, were extremely helpful in linking health issues to working conditions.

5. For instance, flight attendants reported that they were much more tired walking "up and downhill" on the big planes, particularly the DC-10, and expressed additional concern over the effect of this on their bodies. Three years later, Alter and Mohler addressed that issue in their paper:

> Today's fuel conservation flight plans call for higher flight altitudes and somewhat slower cruising speeds. These result in an increased angle of attack and a relatively nose-high altitude. The aircraft floor consequently slopes 'uphill' when walking forward and 'downhill' when walking aft. This incline is a contributor to flight attendant fatigue, especially on longer duration flights.... During flight, there are fuselage trim and turbulence oscillations about the lateral axis. These oscillations are more marked toward the aft cabin, and standing or walking flight attendants will absorb this energy within the feet, ankles, knees, hips, and spine. When yaw and roll oscillations occur, the amounts of energy absorbed are increased. In addition, during turns, the increase in G forces augments the stresses noted above....The floors of the aircraft are made of relatively thin metal and, as each step is taken, the floor gives somewhat as a trampoline does, storing the energy, and delivering it back into the feet and legs. This double-shock effect is particularly fatiguing, especially with leather sole shoes (crepe sole shoes are much less fatiguing due to their absorption of significant amounts of vibrational energy) (Alter and Mohler, 1980:169).

6. "Inflight cabin humidities gradually fall on long-distance, high-altitude flights to well below 10 percent in many cases approaching one percent. It has been shown that humidity levels below 15 percent are uncomfortable to the membranes of the eyes, nose and throat" (Alter and Mohler, 1980:170). According to a union official interviewed in 1977, only one airline in the world, a foreign carrier, humidified its cabins.

7. The woman who represented the "negative case" was a nurse who had "begun flying too," five years earlier. It was clearly not her medical knowledge that enabled her to deny the presence of any environmental health hazards because at the time of interview (1977) she refused even to acknowledge that ozone sickness existed, in spite of its well-documented occurrence at that time. She had been

able for most of the five years to fly a very preferred route between Los Angeles and Hawaii almost exclusively. She intended to stop flying as soon as she could find a desirable professional setting in which to practice her nurse practitioner skills. Another flight attendant who minimized health problems was a 28-year-old man who although he planned to "stay in it forever," said he thought it was a "very healthy job compared to most because you're so active, moving, walking and bending." After a bit of prompting from his friend and colleague being interviewed at the same time, he conceded that "perhaps there were some problems," but that mainly he got tired of hearing the women who had been there longer "bitching about them all the time."

8. For up to ten years the "returning mothers" engaged in legal battles with the airline companies to return to work, receive back pay and restored seniority. Once this was won, they found themselves in litigation with their own unions as the unions tried to prevent restoration of seniority which would have a sudden and drastic effect on current flight attendants. One union president related a conversation with a company vice-president who had seemed to take a good deal of perverse satisfaction in the company's handing over seniority and sitting back to watch the ensuing battle over an issue that affected the company not at all. Some of the seniority litigations between returning mothers who were fired twelve or thirteen years ago and their unions are still going on, and these women have not returned to work. In other unions the suits were dropped, the leadership concluding that, "battles among ourselves are stupid and energy consuming." In addition, it should be noted that the women involved do not constitute <u>all</u> the women

who were fired when they became pregnant. The courts have ruled that only those women who filed a formal complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at the time, charging that their rights under Title VII had been violated, were eligible to sue for reinstatement.

9. I have learned a great deal from flight attendants about these and other measures and have adopted many practices that now make my own travel at least more comfortable and perhaps more healthy.

10. That nutrition was a major flight attendant concern was a significant finding in 1977 (Lessor Rosen, 1980). In 1980 the Aviation Safety Institute reported "the existence of mild states of malnutrition" as a common occurrence. In addition to often lacking crew meals or time to eat them on board, on long schedules that bring the crew into layover hotels at late night hours, in many places restaurants and other eating facilities are already closed.

11. Billings notes that:

> The environmental threats to workers in most industries in technologic society are largely toxicologic in nature. In contrast, most of the hazards in the aerospace environment are physical. Undesirable effects of this environment usually are caused by exposure to too much, or too little, of substances or forces that in 'normal' exposures are present in our normal environment on earth (1975).

Examples of these threats are decreases in oxygen, barometric pressure changes, acceleration, noise, and radiation (Billings, 1975:165). Yet as has been more recently pointed out, chemicals, cleaning solutions, and especially the materials incorporated into the cabin interiors which produce hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, hydrogen chloride and other substances when burned (Alter and Mohler, 1980) are

present as well. It would seem that the aviation worker is exposed to both physical and toxicologic hazards.

12. The issue of smoking on board airplanes is a difficult one and in every way becomes the flight attendants' problem. Dealing with enforcement and the complaints and uproar that arise out of it is almost as bad as inhaling smoke. In 1979 for instance, the Association of Flight Attendants, a major union, went on record opposing new regulations banning cigars and pipes and requiring a ban on all smoking aboard airplanes any time the ventilation system is not functioning adequately. The regulations went into effect February 23, 1979 (Hedges, 1979). The AFA stance seems contradictory until one considers the number of attacks and assaults by irate smokers on flight attendants precipitated by attempts to enforce no-smoking areas (Pontell, et al, 1981).
13. Alter and Mohler report that, "Flight deck crew members of modern jet transports receive 10 feet of fresh air flow each minute. The cabin air turns over each 3 minutes." We can assume that they are relating the capability of the aircraft, since they make no mention of discretionary changes in this level that might be made related to fuel savings, nor do they indicate how use of the system is monitored.
14. In discussing the self-care movement Sehnert cites research that has shown that the practice of certain self-care factors are indisputedly associated with better health if practiced consistently. The seven factors are as follows: (1) seven to eight hours sleep each day; (2) eating breakfast every day; (3) staying slender, slightly below normal weight; (4) seldom snacking between meals (which implies normal meals); (5) staying active in planned

exercise, sports, walking or vigorous work; (6) using alcohol moderately; (7) never smoking (Sehnert, 1977:44). The nature, timing, periodicity and conditions of the flight attendant's work crosscut several of these factors. No matter how well motivated an individual might be, it would be impossible to manipulate all factors on a consistence basis without attempting to change the working conditions as well.

15. The reserve system also provides opportunity for significant cross-overs to occur; that is, there is pairing of workers with vastly different seniority, and it occurs in the context of a sensitizing issue, flying reserve.

16. For men in a "women's occupation" this status awareness is just as significant; relative low status and power for the majority of the occupational group is just that for all. Bringing men into the occupation does not elevate the occupation's status, especially when, as the organization Stewardesses for Women's Rights once charged, 'The airlines are telling men that being a steward is the 'first step' toward a management position.' But as one of the founders of SFWR has indicated in personal communication, even if upward mobility is only a myth, it serves to keep men and women ideologically separated and ignorant of the fact that they have mutual interests as workers.

17. As has been pointed out previously in a slightly different context, 'consciousness building' or 'the convincing process' is not universally successful. Not everyone is 'sensitized' to self-health, just as everyone is not committed to her job nor sensitive to other job-related issues. Again, this was apparent in the 'temporary worker' who although she may have been a flight attendant for

several years compares with the 'float nurse' who 'can't seem to recognize' the dreadful conditions on the ward with which the 'regulars' are concerned. Quite reasonably, the more the ranks of the occupation are filled with 'floaters,' the slower the change. But as this structural condition is modified, change is accelerated.

18. Personal communication with Dr. Strauss.

CHAPTER VII

INCREASING ROLE COMPLEXITY: MARRIAGE, MOTHERHOOD AND SECOND CAREERS

The socialization process for a work role is never one-dimensional. Assuredly, the way in which the professional role will be molded is in large part a product of the socializing institution, but not solely the product of the institution. This is true of career flight attendants just as it has been shown to be the case for physicians (Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss, 1961; Broadhead, 1978), nurses (Olesen and Whittaker, 1968), professional musicians (Becker, 1963), ministers (Klink, 1964), and numerous other occupations (Hughes, 1971). The significance of lateral roles in professional socialization has been demonstrated (Olesen and Whittaker, 1968). As well as playing the occupational role--flight attendant--everyone also plays lateral roles: woman, mother, wife, girlfriend, friend, colleague, as well as roles connected with participation in increasingly diverse interests that come with adulthood. Progression in each role constitutes something of a career in itself marked by pacing, timing and turning points (Becker, 1964), and is embedded in interactional arenas that sustain the roles. But moreover, lateral roles continually interplay with, act upon and influence the professional role itself (Olesen and Whittaker, 1968). So it is that interactions within the domain of one role, for instance "wife," merge with the domain of the other, "flight attendant." What is evident from these data is that not only does laterality have implications for individual identities, laterality is also influential in reshaping the entirety of a collective occupational consciousness.

Before conclusions regarding the flight attendant career building process can be drawn, there are two additional contributing areas to be examined. One is the importance of increasing role assumption, primarily related to domestic and childrearing roles. The other is the emergence of second careers.

Increasing Role Assumption: Wives and Mothers

Joan Huber's comment that, "Only after married women entered the labor force on a long-term basis did the Women's Movement develop into a force which could not be reversed" (Huber, 1976) could be paraphrased here: Only after married flight attendants stayed in the occupation did fundamental challenges to the old stereotypes occur resulting in irreversible social changes. The structural changes which enabled married women with children to fly resulted in new ways of thinking and acting for all concerned, and thus have general implications for women's roles and family patterns. The structure, timing and location of the flight attendant's work necessarily induces fundamental readjustments in home life, particularly as it relates to the allocation of childcare responsibilities. The structure of work forces redefinition of the old notion that women are the sole guardians of childrearing. Ironically, one of the most sex-segregated "feminine" occupations (1), has challenged the socially constructed, second-class position of women in a serious and profound way—not only in the work arena, but in the division of labor in the home.

The transition to marriage and motherhood came on gradually but steadily. The young women who started in the sixties and early seventies are now still flying, but with husbands and children at home. And they would "never," as one exclaims, "have dreamed it could be

done." In 1968 when the stewardesses who had been fired for being over-age at 32 came back to work, there was a sense that new things could be tried: staying on a bit longer, getting married and continuing to fly. Not that any number of stewardesses hadn't been married secretly before that. But now it was openly possible. Some husbands needed more convincing than others, and not surprisingly the argument that was used on them often centered on the woman's ability to handle the dual responsibilities of home and work. A Chicago stewardess remembers making the case that,

> This is my job. I'll do it, and I'll provide a home and keep it clean. He was non-airline and had his own set of experiences. It worked. It was a great balance. I had my job, my housework and our leisure time. I never thought of quitting after that.

It was several more years before all the airlines hired married women even though the women already working could get married. This meant that everyone had to do some on-the-job revising of her outlook on being a working wife. Those who tried it were scrutinized by their peers and plied with questions. "How does your husband feel about it?" "Does he resent it when you're on a long trip?" "What about the housework?" Even today, when more than half of all women flight attendants are married, the questions continue. An American Airlines flight attendant who at age 39 has been "very happily married" for 10 years told of her efforts to convince a prospective husband that the wife's continuing to fly was as "normal a way to live as any other":

> I had a couple on my flight, she was a Pan Am flight attendant, he was adamant about her quitting. They were going out to Utah to meet her family....I kept telling them, 'My husband likes my having my own career.' 'Just try it.' He was a bit chauvinistic. But I said, 'Try it. You can always quit.' Quitting is the easiest thing in the world to do. But you may decide that

it works just fine.

> Just like if you have a child. Don't quit. Try it and see how it works out. You can quit later. Don't say, 'just because I have a child now I can't go back to work.' Don't quit because you're going into something new--you're going into marriage, you're going into motherhood. Don't burn your bridges behind you. I wouldn't. I value my job too much.

Of course the implied message was, "Don't become too dependent and put yourself in a situation where you can lose too much." In a job that derives much of its benefits from the seniority system, quitting at any time is indeed a big decision. In the early years a few women did quit and then in a year or two came back to work, an option that was still possible then. But many of the women who married from 1968 to 1972 had already built up enough seniority that they realized they could bid for a schedule of trips which would fit more comfortably with home life. So the relative flexibility they could create in their jobs prompted them to give being a working wife a try.

Certainly many married women worked out of financial necessity and they would have continued in the paid labor force even if they had quit flying. This was even more true in later years, and as the 1980 Census Bureau report had recently shown, the only way for most American families to succeed economically is for women to work. For many of the women interviewed this was less true in the late sixties. But they realized that they also worked for other reasons. Virginia, after flying 15 years, thinks this is true of everyone, even those who clearly have few money worries. She believes that "marrying a wealthy man can create more dependence," which must then be counteracted by having your own job:

> I have found that a lot of the very wealthy flight attendants need independence from their husbands.

> The husbands are also gone a lot, traveling, busy. But that's not all it is. The women like having their side, having their own thing.

In a study of working class women who are usually purported to be those most happy to be full-time housewives, Ferree (1976) found that housewives are more dissatisfied than their working counterparts. Without trivializing economic need, it is essential to recognize the important social psychological dimensions of paid work: a sense of competence, social connectedness and self-determination. As Ferree further notes (and this is particularly appropriate when one considers certain of the less desirable aspects of the flight attendant's job), "The fact that most men work from financial necessity and in alienating, dead-end jobs has not disguised the fact that for them work is also a major source of satisfaction and an important part of their self-image" (Ferree, 1976:432). That work was a source of satisfaction and identity was also seen to be true by the women flight attendants who married.

And who did they marry? They married attorneys, actors, graduate students, bus drivers, computer scientists, artists, writers, engineers, businessmen, policemen, tree surgeons and military officers to name but a few of the range of occupations encountered just in the course of the interviews. And some even married pilots. Just as the occupations vary, so too their homes reflect a variety of lifestyles and income levels, from "Bohemian" to lower-middle class to upper-middle class. The traditional sociological impulse would be to characterize the social status of married flight attendants on the basis of their husbands' occupations rather than to see both lifestyle and economic level, and therefore social status, as the summation of both wife and husband together. One can only speculate what it would be without the

woman's contribution. Gender has been the unrecognized central element in social stratification research (Acker, 1977). To make determinations without separating out adult workers as individual breadwinners is to obscure a significant portion of reality, and Joan Acker has argued persuasively that in order to overcome gender biases in social research, the individual rather than the family should be considered in measuring stratification. By "family" she refers to the traditional designation based on occupation and income of the male head of household. Acker points out that the status earned by "close association" (i.e., marriage), is qualitatively different than that earned by oneself. Acker's point cannot be denied, but it is clear that in marriages where both husband and wife have a long-term career commitment, as in the case of flight attendants and their husbands, the cumulative contribution of both should be considered. The case of flight attendants illustrates further that the contribution to family lifestyle and social status is not always readily quantified. Individuals may contribute in other than directly economic ways, as when Virginia says, "Michael and I really enjoy flying together...flying has been great for him." Because of the benefits of her employment, the woman is able to contribute to and elevate the social status of the family unit in various ways.

Not every flight attendant has immediately had her independent "adult" contribution to the family unit fully recognized and applauded to the extent that "career women" were by the 40-year-old man who wrote to a syndicated newspaper column on the subject (Scott, 1981). The man declared that he preferred women who were "emotionally invested in their jobs," because although he wanted warmth and sharing, trust and respect, he did not want to "dominate OR take care of another

adult," adding that "the only way a woman can be independent is to have her own income." There are flight attendant husbands who have come to feel this way too. But while some men appreciated their wives' economic contribution and lack of dependence, they were less critical about their potential sexual independence. While several women shrugged that "some men just have a problem about this" or are "threatened and insecure," most pointed out that sexual availability is what airline advertizing has promised, thereby creating a climate for suspicion and fear among husbands, or at the very least an issue with which the family must deal. More than in other jobs women are offered an independent world, and an opportunity structure in which they have sexual choices. Along these lines, Virginia, in considering the necessary characteristics of equality in marriage says,

> I don't think the job causes divorce or marriage problems....I think it can make a good marriage better or a bad marriage worse....There is the opportunity for getting into an affair with another man. It's the independence. Even if you're shy or if you're quiet, you have to develop some independence.

The corollary is of course that women, just as men who travel, must decide what their relationship priorities will be. For instance, Michele says, "I consciously avoid situations where I think it might lead to something more, like if certain male crew members ask me to dinner....I know what it means in some cases and I avoid it." It is felt that the means to insuring intact marriages is not to restrict women's independence, but rather to recognize the necessary commitment of equals to the marriage, whatever the particular agreed-upon sexual arrangements (2). Considering this, one is again reminded of Mollie Schepp's 1912 speech to the U.S. Senators. It concerned sufferage, but when she speaks of disincentives it could as rightly apply to other

areas of female independence:

> ...it is said that equal say will enable women to get equal pay, and equal pay is dangerous. Why? Because it would keep the women from getting married. Well, then, if long, miserable hours and starvation wages are the only means man can find to encourage marriage it is a very poor compliment to themselves. In the name of a purer marriage we must have equal voice in making the laws for we have found out from experience that it is not only men who have to get married! (in Baxandall, et al, 1976:217).

Some seventy years later it is the opinion and situational ethic of working flight attendants that if keeping women at home is the only way to insure their devotion to the marriage, likewise it is a very poor compliment to the marriage.

Kinder, Kuche, Karriere. In a 1982 speech feminist author and social critic Gloria Steinem said that she was still waiting for the day that some young man would stand up in a college audience and ask her how he could solve the dilemma of combining family and a career! The line got a great laugh from the 600 or so working nurses assembled, because the dual role, known historically as "women's double burden" (cf., Baxandall, et al, 1976) continues. It is clear that women pay dearly for the privilege of attaining the aforementioned properties of job satisfaction, or even the privilege of providing part or all of the economic security for their families. Not everyone is like this woman:

> I married when I was 30. I had been flying nine years. He is very liberal, very independent. We live our own lives. I can't believe some other married flight attendants. They put the food in the oven before they leave the house. They spend three days cooking and cleaning up after they come home. It's like anything else, it's not the flying, it's the relationship.

Another woman who characterizes herself as having a great deal

of flexibility in being able to do what is "comfortable for me" and "good for both of us," observes that,

> Some married women are really restricted, can only fly turn-arounds and so forth. That's no good. They're ready to shoot themselves each month. Too bad. Too much pressure.

There are many women who because of the demands of marriage and family take the work schedules that are less comfortable or restful but that provide more time at home, or provide for being home at strategic times for child care. This often means taking "all-nighters" so that husbands are left with small children mostly at night. In spite of the fact that this can leave the doubly burdened mother exhausted, it is an historically well-known solution to the working mother problem (see, for example, "Women on the Night Shift," in Baxandall, et al, 1914).

Although some women still manage not to thwart societal expectations too badly by managing to give priority to the home subsystem over the occupational subsystem (cf., Coser and Rokoff, 1971), all have had to make adjustments at home to accommodate the work experience. It is in parenthood that the greatest changes are to be found. And parenthood is the issue that more than any other can be related to women's liberation and actualization. An excerpt from Joan Huber's sociotechnological theory of the women's movement will set out the problem:

> One basic theme pervades feminist literature: Women are kept in their place by their responsibility for childcare and domestic work. This proposition implies that the problem is not only women's invisibility in market and political institutions but also men's invisibility in the home. Many men still see only one side of the problem: desegregating the world of work, hard as that may be. The other side may be even harder: bringing men back in—to the kitchen, to the bath-

> room when it is time to scour the kiddies, and to the utility room which contains a fancy many-dialed machine that many men have not mastered. The most intractable issue is childcare--a problem of equality in parental responsibility that has hardly been addressed....Institutions that would support shared childcare are almost non-existent; hence, even those couples who favor equality for women find it almost impossible to incorporate their convictions into their lifestyles (Huber, 1976:371).

Huber is quite correct with regard to the dearth of supportive institutions that would support domestic equality. Rebecca, who has flown with the interstate branch of a large airline for 13 years described her own and her husband's variable schedules and the way in which they attempt to work them out to (1) provide for the care of their two daughters and family activities, (2) still manage sufficient time to be together as a couple, and (3) not be so exhausted from the type of work hours required to do this that they can't function. This is not always an easy order to fill, and from time to time the whole organization breaks down. At that point for Rebecca and Frank there are grandparents who become the supportive institution, but here the couple is resolute about "not making excessive demands on them." Rebecca's daughters are seven and nine years old, and she commented that, "As they grow older, their lives get more complex too." Everyone in the family has more interests and activities and places to go that now have to be meshed together. Most often it is Rebecca who still coordinates the meshing process even though Frank is actively involved with the girls. A major readjustment that Rebecca has made is in priorities at home. In the context of limited time and human resources, the children and the existence of activities she feels are essential for their development come before other "non-essential" housework. For example, cleaning is done over a period of several days, one room

at a time never all at once. Donna, a returning mother in another airline says that housework must be shared among herself, her husband, a one-day-a-week housekeeper, and her three children, the oldest of whom is 13. Although many women flight attendants attempt to prioritize and parcel out responsibilities, in some households the woman tries hard to "provide for everything"—meals, cleaning, errands and chores, shopping—and would feel guilty not doing so.

In spite of the elaborate arrangements women make for the running of the household in their absence, or that some women markedly restrict their flying schedules to their own detriment and the family's advantage, the fact of the matter is that for periods of time all flight attendant mothers are not at home. Husbands have to take over the scrubbing and dressing of small bodies, feeding—even if it is to reheat what has already been cooked—and transportation to school or childcare. Even in those cases where grandmothers help out, or where an au pair housekeeper is present (3), actual parenting because it involves interaction above and beyond the cleaning and feeding tasks, must be assumed by homebound fathers. Our society has never lacked for those who are quick to blame the absence of working mothers for "the moral decline of youth" (Cowley, 1955), and much psychological study has been devoted to both defending against and making such charges. On the other hand, very little investigation has ever been devoted to what the effect of lack of fathering might be (Huber, 1976); it was not even a question. Coser and Rokoff have suggested that shared responsibilities need not threaten the family but may actually increase its cohesion, as children perceive that "both parents are committed to their vocation at work and to their calling at home as well" (1971). The present existence in the flight attendant families of arrangements

that place the father more prominently in the parenting role cannot fail to have significant effects on parental consciousness and should provide added incentive to social science research investigations.

Flight attendants with children at home not infrequently at work confront attempts by others to make them feel guilty for transgressing the norms. Male pilots have few qualms about leaving their children at home, having comfortably adopted the more traditional male view that mothers are not only responsible for bearing children but for rearing them (cf., National Manpower Council, 1957). The mothers indicated that <u>their</u> working seems to bother the pilots quite a bit, and that, "many make it clear they think you're not a good mother." As research on policewomen in interchanges with their male counterparts has demonstrated, social interaction is a powerful means of social control and of keeping women in their "place" (Martin, 1978). Such control is exercised by clients as well as co-workers too. Reflects Rebecca,

> Men and women react a little differently though.
> The women passengers will say, 'It must be hard.'
> The men make judgments: 'How can you do it?'

Another adds, "When people ask me how can I leave my children alone, I tell them, 'They are certainly not, they're with their father.'"

What the comments indicate is that first of all the normative perception exists that the woman must not be giving highest priority to the family and that she should be. Secondly, because she must relate in some way to these normative demands, unlike a man she is placed in the constant dilemma of what Coser and Rokoff term, having to "rearticulate status," that is, continually decide to which system she will attend. The decisions are not automatic and patterned as they are for males, but must be constantly reconsidered. Continual rearticulation is a cause for anxiety in the individual and potential disruption

in the system (Coser and Rokoff, 1971). These investigators have further argued that this contradictory situation explains why women are underrepresented in the professions and high-status work. Because they are made to feel guilty for at times giving priority work over family, they tend to select from among jobs that will not take too much away from family responsibilities. Features of the jobs that most women occupy are high replaceability, low status and a temporary nature. Correspondingly, women in other than high-status professional jobs, and therefore most women in general, tend to identify themselves as "temporary workers" (Dixon, 1978:9-10). That was once true of flight attendants too, but is true no longer. These women do not identify themselves as temporary workers (5). It is therefore necessary to resolve their feelings about conflicts between home and work demands in a variety of ways.

One way is to minimize the conflict by being so competent in both that one is beyond reproach. Current articles in popular women's magazines about the "myth of the supermom" to the contrary, for many women the demands are not a myth. Women do try to be supermom/homemaker and superworker on the job. One flight attendant brings her portable sewing machine with her to her hotel room on layovers to make her children's clothing during her rest time. There are multiple ways in which women try to refute insinuations that they are not good mothers if they go away from home. The cooking in advance, the making of arrangements for the family that extends down to the precise writing out of timed schedules, are all ways in which women articulate status as they balance and juggle the two worlds.

But probably the most important way in which women flight attendants are able to resolve the dilemma is pragmatically. In spite

of all the problems, "fathering" works. Flight attendant families have been able to prove to themselves and others that children left with their fathers manage quite well. There are other positive results reported, such as childrens' demonstrated regard for their mothers' efforts. "My 12-year-old son tells everyone how proud he is of his mother who is a flight attendant—last week he made a report in school on the trip that we all took to Washington, D.C.," said one mother.

On one level working mothers still have to resolve the demands of two conflicting systems vying for their time and energies. On another level the structure of those systems is shifting, providing an empirical illustration of what Safilios-Rothschild theorized would be necessary to provide "balance between occupational and family systems" (1976). But beyond the functional demands, it is also the case that people are changing their views of what "ought" to be, and express this in their interactions with each other. The importance of adult socialization cannot be underestimated (Becker, 1964). As little girls the women may have been socialized for dependent roles, just as when they first started to work they were socialized for temporary jobs, but their career experience has demonstrated how life trajectories are reshaped through significant continuing interaction. Much of the support for continuing to fly comes from their peers. Ginger often tells people

> I always said I wouldn't be a working mother. Well, today I would definitely work being a mother. Definitely. I know flight attendants who have quit—my best friend—and I know flight attendants who are mothers and who are still flying. In my opinion they are better mothers and have a better relationship with their children. My friend is home getting anxious and bored. I know that I have a better relationship with my husband because I work. If all I did was stay home and think about diapers, I'd be

> frustrated and nervous too. I'd become boring to my husband. I'm better off because I have my job. And It's a responsible job. It very definitely helps my marriage and I think it helps motherhood too (6).

Ginger's comment demonstrates the weight of peer support as she says she "doesn't mind telling anybody my high opinion of working mothers." This is a woman who has flown for 17 years and by most estimates could be called fairly conservative in her politics and in her lifestyle. Yet she, like most, is positively supportive of her colleagues who are mothers, and that support and the interaction in which it is embedded is an essential component of the forging of new patterns of being. Secondly, calling out the importance of the lateral role (woman as marital partner) is significant. As was shown in earlier chapters, in the women's early years of flying, the induction and becoming process was heavily influenced by their relationship to men. Olesen and Whittaker (1968) demonstrated the significant extent to which lateral socialization as a woman bore directly on the processes of becoming for young student nurses. Thinking of finding the right husband and fantasizing the future as married and "retired" from flying occupied the neophyte stewardesses similarly. It is apparent that laterality continues to play a part in later life socialization although its form is altered, even "liberalized." Note Ginger's argument regarding occupational role as it relates to the lateral married woman role: it is now to the husband's advantage to have a working wife, it "helps" him. Day-to-day conversations among the women in a variety of ways support the idea that their men are "better off" because the women have developed their careers, and this notion in turn becomes added social reinforcement for the new status quo.

Leisure Time, Second Careers and the Building of Futures

The relative lack of upward mobility in the flight attendant's work has been discussed in earlier chapters. It has also been noted that in lieu of a corporate ladder to climb there are other satisfactions, not the least of which is a non-hierarchical setting in which to work. It is one thing not to be able to become the boss, it is another not to have to work under one. This doesn't mean that there aren't further goals to attain with increasing tenure on the job. The goals that offer satisfaction and meaning, however, rather than being located on the job, are more apt to be off the job. But before taking up "second careers" or what Stebbens (1982) has termed "serious leisure," some additional comments on pathways within the job itself are in order.

Although the arrangement differs slightly from one airline to the next, on board the airplane there is often a position in which one flight attendant is designated to coordinate the service activities. She is not the line supervisor of the others, but rather functions as a team leader to see that nothing in the service is forgotten. The position, which may or may not go by seniority, is often known as "the Number One." Certain carriers have rather unique terminology for it, as this American Airlines' woman describes:

> They call it 'Premium.' I hate that word. I feel like a piece of meat. They used to call it 'First Lady' which was even worse. You have to interview for it, and you have to take a test. It's like taking charge of anything. Some people like to do it and some people don't. I don't mind....This job is less monotonous than serving the people. I find handling the trays, doing the entrees, and serving beverages very monotonous. This way, I get to talk to the passengers, handle the flight attendants....I'm not all that good with the paper work, but I'm good with the people, the personnel work. The pay is not that much more.

I think I get $160 more a month for it.

Another higher paid and more authoritative position on the airplane is the purser's job on international lines. For many years the purser jobs were only filled by men. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act women finally began to desegregate the position. They did not, however, do so in great numbers. For one thing, few positions opened up—men in the cabin flight service had long since been making careers for themselves and remaining for years. For another thing, to many of the younger women, joining the purser ranks occupied only by older men was more than a little intimidating. Michele described how she was encouraged to try for the position because she was well qualified—she spoke two foreign languages fluently—but she was afraid that she was too young and would not appear sufficiently authoritative. In addition, the inconsistency between maintaining socially approved femininity and undertaking successful competition presents a further "Catch-22" situation for women (Horner, 1970); this is especially true for flight attendants because of the basis on which they were selected in the first place. Another reason for hesitancy in applying for such a position was the potential conflict between home and childrearing responsibilities (cf., Coser and Rokoff, 1971; Dixon, 1978). Pursers bid for their monthly schedules from a pool of pursers, not from among all flight attendants. What would be adequate seniority to bid a schedule compatible with home life demands as a flight attendant would not be sufficient in the high-seniority purser group where the female newcomer would be on the bottom rung. Certainly not everyone who flies wants to become a purser, but for many of the married women the familiar conflict of allegiances entered in.

Outside of these two elevated cabin positions, there is, to quote

Nancy, "only one place for the cabin attendants to go, and that's mid-management, and that's not an easy position to be in." The job of the flight attendant supervisor is not a particularly enviable one for several reasons. Even if, as in some airlines, the supervisor does "part ground/part flying" she or he is no longer a union employee and therefore has no base of support or protection in the face of a dispute with higher management. Flight attendants agree that the supervisor's job is an insecure one: "You see new faces there all the time!" Many flight attendants also identify drawbacks to the job itself as this quote illustrates:

> I never wanted to be a supervisor. Lower management is the worst. You can't make any decisions, period....I mean, if you want to go in there and shuffle papers, make no decisions, harrass a couple flight attendants, and never get any changes, then sure, go in there and do it. My roommate was in the office and I saw how difficult it was. I don't think the supervisors are very happy with their own working conditions. Perhaps I have a different opinion because I've never been harrassed. I don't think they're all good guys, but I don't think they're all terrible either.

The above opinion would seem to be typical and is corroborated by Stuckey's survey finding that 79% of flight attendants felt that their supervisor's attitude was basically positive (Stuckey, 1977). Rather than holding the individual supervisor responsible, people often attribute the problems in dealing with them to the constraints of the job, to office rather than person. A number of the more senior flight attendants interviewed had at one time or another tried working in supervision for a short while. There is a time limit, usually six months, in which one can return to the line without loss of seniority. All returned to being flight attendants. In addition to being an extremely frustrating job, the final straw was that the majority of

the time it had to be done five days a week, nine to five, thereby eroding what flight attendants see as one of the most positive aspects of their job.

The End of Nine-to-Five. The scheduling of the job is also one of the sociologically significant aspects. The allocation of work time in relation to time off is uniquely different than in most other jobs. Work time is concentrated and intensified so that instead of working an eight-hour day, people work much more than that and may be "at work" for three days. The other side of this is coming home and having three or four days of free time away from work and in which to do something else. Work/leisure theorists have predicted that a problem for most workers in the future will be how to use sizable blocks of leisure time in rewarding and constructive ways as work weeks and months are reduced (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979). Interview data on flight attendants demonstrate that people are already looking outside of work to expand their occupational involvements and finding new ways to use non-work time.

A contrast exists between the jobs and lives of those who work at nine-to-five jobs and those who work in block time jobs: flight attendants, pilots, firefighters, forest rangers, emergency room physicians, artists and writers (although theirs is not an institutionally constructed schedule), tour leaders and guides, and many others. Certainly their work worlds differ from those of nine-to-fivers in that in addition to specific work that is done, a daily round of life is also conducted, eating, sleeping, getting along with colleagues in non-work pursuits and so forth. But as significant as the work worlds are, the life spaces in between are perhaps more so. A New York union official told of the difficulties that she was encountering after

12 years of flying now that she found herself in an office five days a week. Although obviously dedicated to her work, it was apparent as she described her life, she was having difficulty putting what she considered adequate emphasis on life outside of work. The now multiple short spans of outside time seem inadequate to sustain anything, even to the point of causing her to wonder "when office-types even manage to have furniture delivered?" But in addition to having time for household duties, the existence of significant time spans has provoked reconsideration and development of life pursuits. It has also taken on different meaning as careers have evolved.

Free time increases with seniority in that a more senior person can bid for the trips which provide for more accrued hours of flying time in one span, thereby increasing the span of uninterrupted time off. Or they can more likely bid for a trip with better layover time in which to pursue second interests (the people who spend time studying in art museums come to mind here). A less senior person is obliged to fly the short trips, the turn-arounds, and "the dog trips" all of which mean going out more frequently during the month and therefore having less time between trips (7).

The sixties' women in particular, the ones who unexpectedly stayed on the job, feel that they have "paid their dues" in flying these undesirable schedules (8). And although those with fourteen or more years in are most often able to "hold" a better "line of time" now, even today on any given flight they still pay a price for the time off to pursue those other interests. Alesha is an amateur painter, and her description gives a vivid impression of how the free time is used to advance one's "second career," and perhaps how it is even more personally valuable because one works so hard for it:

> Passengers say to me, 'How long have you been flying?' and I say, '12 years....' And the response is, 'God, you're kidding.' And when I said it was 10, it was the same thing, and when I said it was 8 they said, 'You're kidding.' And so I get a cute little pun in like, 'It beats working for a living.' And you know you're up there sweating over these hot entree carts and kids are kicking you and people are burning you with cigaretts....'It beats working for a living.' But my reward is, even though I'm on this New York flight with all these people screaming and hollering and tugging at my apron, 'Miss, Miss, I want this, I want that,' I know that when I get to New York I'm going to go to the deli, get what I want, I'm going to lay back, get a nice little rest, and the next day I'm going to go see the Picasso exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, I'm going to go to the Metropolitan, I'm going to go to Soho. If I'm in Washington, I'm going to the Smithsonian. I have gotten an education through this job, because I have done all the major galleries around the world. I catch all the new exhibits when they come out. So it has really helped my career as an artist. It has helped me to develop a great deal. It's just like anything, it's the bitter with the sweet.

Alesha uses her time off at home to paint, and uses her travel to study as a painter.

A Seattle-based woman who after 15 years of flying raises Arabian horses expresses the opinion that, "The job is great in the early years because of the opportunity for travel, and in the later years it's good in terms of giving you the blocks of time to develop other things you like to do." She adds, "Most of us have something else going."

The fact that almost everyone does have something else going is in some ways born out of social psychological necessity. At the point in the interviews where mental health was discussed, people talked about various problems flight attendants encounter such as loneliness and isolation, exhaustion and nervousness, but more often than not people attributed the occurrence of "depression" to "not using your free time well." Says Doug, "Before I had this (his investment in a real estate

venture and a regular physical fitness program), I was just sitting there until the next trip—it's scary—yes, you can get depressed." Nancy's similar assessment is, "You need outside stimuli—you've got to have as many worlds going for you as possible." What these and other flight personnel point to is the necessity for ventures that are meaningful. Free time in and of itself doesn't always deliver the promised fulfillment (Roberts, 1981:61), and passive leisure that is as alienated or anomic as much of work itself does little to improve the quality of life (Gunter and Gunter, 1980:369-372). Comments Gail,

> ...here you find yourself still working and saying, 'This job isn't as bad as all those others out there, because I still have my days off.' But it's what you do with that free time. Do you have the incentive to go on and fill your life?

A further impetus for the development of outside interests is that the responsibilities of the job do not carry over into personal life. As a Pan Am woman says, "No matter how hard a trip is, when it's over, it's over....You might have had all kinds of problems—the water froze half way to Hong Kong, you couldn't make coffee or flush the toilets, a real disaster...and there's always the next planeload of passengers, but there are no ongoing problems." A TWA flight attendant says, "Even if I had a bad trip, rough weather, horrible passengers, it's forgotten....I don't bring my work home."

It has recently been noted that people increasingly choose employment with clear-cut hours to enable them to do the things they want to do such as write poetry or take university courses (Brewer, 1979), but this is by no means confined to the so-called lower echelon jobs such as the male secretaries described by Brewer. The medical specialty of emergency room medicine has grown in popularity in recent years, and when queried as to the reason for their specialty preference,

clear-cut hours and available spans of uninterrupted time to pursue personal avocations is always given as one of the most desirable features. For people who are working at what would definitely be considered a second paid job, as in the case of a woman who sells real estate, the demarcation is seen as a plus. "Some people would be troubled by trying to do two things in an uninterrupted way, but not me...you don't have to juggle two things at once...it's done and then you do the other thing." The clear separation makes it easier for her to give her full concentration to either area.

Second careers for many of the flight attendants provide what Stebbins (1982) has argued is provided by serious leisure: "improvement over work as a way of finding personal fulfillment, identity enhancement, self-expression." Stebbins further describes three types of serious leisure--amateurism, hobbyist pursuits, and career volunteering--which he contrasts with unserious forms such as "sitting at a football game, riding a roller coaster, taking an afternoon nap, watching television, observing a fireworks display, going on a picnic, and so on" (Stebbins, 1982:253).

Stebbins and others (Dubin, 1979) reasonably argue that in the future increasing numbers of people are apt to shift their interests to other than their primary paid occupation. But Stebbins' contention that people will conceptualize these other activities as <u>leisure</u> misses the mark. Leisure may have been and may still continue to be a useful sociological concept, but one must always look to the view of the participants themselves and ask how they <u>describe</u> their activities. What Stebbins and other sociologists of leisure would see as the leisure domain, flight attendants see as "second careers." Virginia says,

> People appreciate the time off. They are planning and doing second careers. A lot more so now. Women my age, 35 or 40. They are reevaluating. A lot of my friends. It gives you time to do it. There are a great many things to be said for this job.

Second careers have emerged and have come to be defined in that way for a number of reasons. Historically, flying as a cabin attendant was a very short-term occupation, and women quit to marry and raise families. Certainly the latter was seen as another career but it was not a parallel one in the sense that second careers are now (including being a wife and mother). For those who didn't marry but stayed in the flight service corp, they had to look for another occupation, similar to workers in other relatively short-term jobs, for example those who retire after 20 years in the military or the police force. Although it should be noted that stewardesses' options were not nearly as good as in these and other male-dominated occupations; because of the societal expectation that they would marry and depend on someone else's income, retirement and other transitional benefits were scarce. Yet even when the flight attendant occupation was relatively short, the stage was always set for the consideration of a second career to follow.

In addition, holding a second job has a long tradition in the airlines. The 30-year people tell of working at second jobs in the forties: catering parties together in New York, babysitting, and even bringing home imported objets d'art to sell (9). For cabin attendants working a second job wasn't just for fun, it was financial necessity. Even by 1970 the pay was generally so low that in her book of advice to would-be stewardesses, Elizabeth Rich suggested various agencies which specialized in handling part-time employment for stewardesses, advising that, "something can be done about (your poverty) even if you

don't type, take shorthand, teach, or nurse" (Rich, 1970:112). She further noted that all the airlines except Delta allowed their flight attendants to hold outside jobs. Being steeped in the tradition of the South, "Delta views its stewardesses as ladies, first and foremost....It does not accept divorcees....Outside employment is not allowed, the implication perhaps being that a Delta stewardess with time on her hands would devote it to charitable endeavors," said Rich (1970:145). But ladylike or not, in the days before a livable wage became the norm, many flight attendants did various kinds of part-time work. Rich's reference to the range of sex-segregated occupations is instructive: put any two together and they might equal a decent income. As pay increased, the necessity for "picking up extra money" was reduced, but the fact of available time continued to present conditions for pursuing other interests.

In addition to historic occupational reasons, there is yet a more compelling and broadly applicable reason for defining second careers as "work" rather than as "leisure," even Stebbins' "serious leisure." And that is an ideological reason. A leisure definition may eventually evolve, but the characterizations of work tend to lag behind the actual structural reality (Berger, 1964). It is predictable that ideological notions that equate second career pursuits with work will predominate in much the same way that notions regarding one's lifetime occupation as the central source of satisfaction have persisted long after most jobs in industrial society became boring and meaningless (cf., Berger, 1964; Special Task Force, 1973; Braverman, 1974).

Berger makes a convincing case for a discrepancy between the present structural conditions of work and the leftover Protestant ethic/ old industrial capitalism ideology which, he maintains, still cloaks

western society. Structurally industrial work has become more and more fragmented. It has been subdivided into smaller and smaller categories. Industrial workers make increasingly specialized parts on the assembly line and office work is more parceled out just as flight attendants do increasingly fragmented object manipulation tasks. Berger cites the ever-growing lists of occupational titles as a symbol of the further splitting within occupations. To say, "I am an electrographic technician" and be met with puzzlement as to what the job even means indicates some of the problem in self-identity for the individual who fills it. Berger says that if there exists less work that is debasing and oppressing, at the other end of the continuum there exists less that provides the primary course of self-fulfillment. "In the vast middle ground consisting of work that is neither oppressing nor fulfilling is where most workers find themselves" (Berger, 1964).

On the other hand, society is still dominated by the ideology of emergent capitalism, the Calvinist notion that one's most important activity in the world is one's work, the idea that through work one expresses the self (Neff, 1968; Tilger, 1930). Putting the structural and ideological circumstances together one is confronted with an ironic situation. The structural developments make it less and less likely that a person will realize him or herself in work, and yet at the same time, the ideology that they should find work meaningful is institutionalized in the educational system and in the mass media. Berger's assessment is that contemporary society does little to prepare its members for meaningless, if painless, pursuits. Rather it inculcates in them evermore expectations for meaningfulness in everything they do (Berger, 1964).

What are people's options in the face of these expectations for

meaningfulness? One is undoubtedly to expend energy trying to make work yield more in the way of satisfaction and meaning. The press for professionalization is apparent in almost every type of work (Hughes, 1971), and can be seen in this case in flight attendant's efforts to gain national certification or licensure. The attempt has met with little success thus far, but is an indicator of the press for increased status and presumably meaning, much as in other occupations.

Another way in which Berger (1964) suggests that the ideology of work will adapt to structural reality is through increasing emphasis on "privatism," particularly focus on family life to provide meaning and identity. Yet this strategy seems to have met with mixed results. It is clear that the ideology of the family--the old notions of its nuclear structure and its functions--also lag far behind the present reality, making it an uncertain refuge for the disillusioned worker. Perhaps some of the reason for the "breakdown" of the family perceived in recent years can be laid to the disproportionate demands for meaning that are made on it by unfulfilled workers.

Finally, Berger's implied "suggestion," that young people be socialized for "meaningless if painless pursuits," can only be taken as a statement made to underscore a bizarre and ironic situation, hardly proposed as a solution. But if the answer is not to demand more from existing traditional institutions--work, the family--then what is it?

It would appear from these data and others (cf., Dubin, 1979; Unruh, 1980) that there is emerging in at least some arenas a focus on creative work which transcends occupational boundaries. This is a new concept in the definition of work and one which is already in evidence in the world of flight attendants. Listening to flight attendants talk it is noteworthy to hear <u>occupation</u> described in

cumulative terms:

> I fly with TWA and I have an import business in Georgetown.
>
> I'm a law student and a stewardess.
>
> I fly three days a week and I do volunteer work with the SPCA the other days.
>
> I fly and take one quarter leave each year to teach two travel courses at the local junior college.
>
> I have a marriage and family counseling license—I find I mostly counsel flight attendants, and of course I still fly.
>
> I fly international out of New York and I'm a docent in the Library of Congress at home in Washington, D.C.

Numerous other pursuits were represented and ranged from those requiring advanced university degrees to occupations that were learned in the course of traveling. For example, some of the very senior people had become astute, knowledgeable collectors of art and antiques over the years. With increasing numbers of individuals, the notion of occupation is encompassing <u>all</u> the organized, goal-directed activity undertaken, both paid and unpaid, primary and secondary.

Not all pursuits involve paid work. There are the volunteers. In occupations which are known to have free time, organizations often seek members out, as Bellevue Hospital in New York City once did with airline flight attendants asking them to take part in a "Person-to-Person" visiting program for patients (<u>New York Times</u>, March 5, 1972). Some pursuits are paid only on occasion and volunteered at other times. Two flight attendants interviewed from different airlines are both serious students of holistic health practices and sometimes give massages to other flight attendants or coach them in yoga for a fee. Sometimes they simply practice because they enjoy doing so.

Then there are people who are starting second careers for the express purpose of preparing for retirement from flying, and they see flying as the "springboard" to this because it allows for parallelism. They may arrange short leaves of absence in which to study more intensively and then schedule themselves to fly on weekends so that weekdays are left free for the second occupation. People planning to quit flying and take a second career plunge not infrequently take an extended leave of six or nine months, or, where it is available, go on a flex-time or job-sharing program consisting of fewer flying hours (Krier, 1980), to make sure they are very certain of this irreversible move (10).

But most flight attendants have no immediate plan to quit, and rather see the existence of second parallel careers as a personally enhancing opportunity symbiotic to the financial security of the airline job. As one married woman says of her flight job, her home life and her highly meaningful volunteer work, "There is more going on in my life now."

To place emphasis on unpaid work, second careers, or serious leisure as an equally important component of the total occupational equation is not to say that rational attempts cannot and should not be made at re-designing mainstream work itself. But in almost totally neglecting second careers, the solutions that policy makers have come up with so far often fall far short of the desired goal of improving work and work life. In Work in America, an important study carried out in 1973 by a Presidential Commission consisting of a number of social scientists and others, the authors assert that work has not changed, it is people that have changed, and that therefore the answer is to "redesign work" to provide job satisfaction. What they suggest

amounts to minor structural tinkering (i.e., job enrichment, putting back a circumscribed bit of problem solving, job enlargement, reassembling some of the fragments, and so forth). First of all, one wonders how they can assert that work has not changed—the slightest glimpse into the empirical world in studies such as this one and countless others demonstrate the fragmentation (Braverman, 1974). Secondly, they reveal the narrowness of their vision in predicting that the changes necessary to make work meaningful will come in the work place as we know it. Such changes may come, but not at this point in history, the Marxist disappointment notwithstanding. The Presidential Commission is probably correct in maintaining that "work" will continue to be a source of meaning, but what they do not see is that the definition of work is already broadening (11).

Work will confer meaning but will come to cover in people's consciousness a broader complex of activities in which personal energy is invested: personal health and sports pursuits (primarily with a health orientation), psychological growth programs, and opportunities for creative craftsmanship in addition to the volunteer, amateur, hobbyist, educational and formal retraining which have already been noted. The concept of "redefinition" is important here; in some areas that which was formerly defined as leisure (perhaps when formal work was more meaningful) is becoming defined as work. People who are pioneering in the broadened notion of occupation will not call it "leisure," because in the transition vestiges of the Protestant ethic pervade societal notions, making it uncomfortable for people to define their primary source of meaning in life as other than in "work." So it is quite enough of an initial leap to define meaning as coming from unpaid work or secondarily paid work (12).

Seltzer and Wilson found that males used more of their non-work time for self-development than did females (1980), scarcely a surprising finding since females' work usually extends into unpaid labor in the home which consumes large portions of time. The case of flight attendants, however, and their experience with an expanded definition of occupation, their immersion in "the new work," demonstrates that ability to transform one's working perspective is not gender specific, and again offers implications to be drawn from their occupation to the more general sociological analysis of contemporary work.

In combining both flying and second careers, most flight attendants are glad they didn't try to replace flying with something else, but rather expanded their outlook to encompass more. Melanie's words express it best:

> I always needed something else as well as flying, and I'm glad I never gave up flying trying to find the thing that made me happy. Because no one thing ever makes you happy. It's good I didn't try to change my whole career and say, 'X is going to do it for me'....I've continued my flying career and something else too, exploring other avenues. I know others who've quit flying and gone back to school—that's OK for them. I also know a lot of people who are flying and doing other things, other jobs as well....I think it's really terrific that we're now getting to a stage that when you get on the airplane and talk to each other you see how far we've come. When we first started flying it was, 'Who's your boyfriend?' and 'Where did you go for dinner last night.' And then it was 'Who did you marry?' Then, 'the kids.' Oh, then it was the divorce group, then the re-marriage group. But now it's people having other careers. Finally, it seems like in our thirties, my group especially, the women in their mid-thirties--the younger people are already hopefully gearing up for this—but my generation in the middle thirties are finally saying, 'I've got all this time and finally I've got the opportunity to do things with my life.

The increasing roles that the women have assumed in adulthood and

success in these roles--wives, mothers, and now second careers—all the while continuing to fly, have enabled them to construct a very different view of professional self than they ever anticipated. The occupational self-image is now by and large one of permanent worker: primarily in this career, often expanded by additional meaningful work, and accompanied by a vision of continuing in the future either in flying or in a second formal career now in the stages of parallel planning. In addition, the interrelationship of these spheres has resulted in alterations in existing divisions of labor both at home and in the work place, and as such has implications for all women in the work force; indeed, for all women and men in the work force.

CHAPTER VII

NOTES

1. A scale constructed to measure sexual stereotyping of occupations assigns a 1 to those occupations considered most "masculine" and a 7 to those considered most "feminine." Flight attendants were rated as 5.75 (Shinar, 1975).
2. The extent to which flight attendants have extramarital affairs was not of particular interest in the study, and in any case could better be determined by different methodology than face-to-face interviews. What was of interest was how women handle intimations of sexual availability implied by books like "Coffee, Tea or Me," "Taking Off," "The Fly Girls," and films such as "The Stewardesses," not to mention the history of airline company promotion. How the existence of what Moles and Friedman (1973) have termed "a popular cultural image" created by this media is understood and dealt with in the context of marriage is of social psychological interest. This is not to contend that flight attendants do not engage in extramarital sexual activity. Only one woman spoke freely about her own open marriage, several spoke about ways in which they avoid extramarital entanglements, and most said nothing specific about their own behavior while they characterized the behavior in general. The consensus seems to be that sexual liaisons exist to about the same extent that they do in any other social world. An interesting comment was made by Ralph, a purser for 35 years, who says he thinks sexual activity occurs much less than it formerly did because women now feel and act less vulnerable. They say "no" with much more self-assurance, and sometimes with even a verbal

counterpunch of their own, which Ralph illustrated with a few lively examples.

3. A number of the international flight attendants employed au pair housekeepers who wanted to live in this country and also learn English. Both because the international flight attendants speak a foreign language themselves and have access to potential household employees in their home countries, this was not an uncommon arrangement. Some mothers were also anxious to have their children learn a second language by having someone in the home who could converse with them, as in the case of a Swedish American flight attendant interviewed who employed a housekeeper/babysitter from Sweden for her young son.

4. In the course of my research I have encountered precisely the same attitude as the flight attendants describe in the passengers. Very recently the subject came up in a discussion with two married couples, one couple in their twenties and the other in their forties. The older woman friend was very interested in the fact that I was presently writing on flight attendant mothers because both her next door neighbor and her husband's cousin are married flight attendants with children. She told the group in very approving terms of her observations of the father "mowing the lawn with the little boy 'helping' him" and of the numbers of household activities that the fathers and children engage in together. The younger man behaved as though he were hearing an only partially intelligible foreign language, shaking his head and commenting repeatedly that he "just doesn't think it's right." She in turn could not understand his reactions when, after all, she was telling him about the parental satisfaction expressed by the fathers.

Flight attendants have to deal with encounters like this all the time, and it is sometimes only because of positive attitudes of their husbands toward parenting that they are able to do so.

5. The airline companies may see the woman as having "high replaceability," but from her own perspective she does not.
6. Mothers feel that their flying can provide much for their children as they grow older, not only benefits such as medical and dental care, but also the educational benefits that are uniquely available through travel. At this point when many have children in junior high school they are already beginning to plan for the expenses of higher education. In recent years with more leaves available a number of women have also taken three-month leaves of absence during children's vacations from school. One other point should be noted and that is that not every mother has children below the age of 14. Once all barriers to employment had been eliminated under Title VII, by the early seventies, people were hired who already had older children. In 1980 a flight atttendant told me, "I flew with a woman last week who has a 22-year-old son and who has only been flying two years!" Since such women constitute a very small minority of a work force which is by and large made up of long-term people.
7. People with outside interests to which they want to devote maximum time will sometimes bid a relatively undesirable schedule precisely to get the most possible free time. This too can mean bidding very full or demanding routes or working only weekends, but can result in working two or three fewer days a month in the process.
8. "Paying your dues" was a phrase heard repeatedly throughout the interviewing and fieldwork, and was used in reference to a range

of experiences related to being "junior" in seniority some years ago. For the sixties' women the pay was terrible, no one had anything so luxurious as her own car to get to work (so standing on freezing Chicago bus stops at 5:30 a.m. wasn't that unusual), and flying reserve meant being called out night and day ("In New York...going to Broadway shows was great...but being called out at some God-awful hour to fly....I was terrorized and scared the whole time.")

9. Ralph insists he sold Marie Antoinette's handmirror ("well, it could have been"). He purchased it in the Paris flea market for 25 cents and sold it somewhere over the Atlantic for 25 dollars. He also holds the distinction of having sold "two of the first French poodles" to Joan Crawford, reminiscing, "oh, what we didn't bring back on those trips!"
10. It is also a fact that to some degree flight attendants see their options beyond this job, unless they have trained specifically for something else, as blocked: "I don't bother about good passenger letters or bad passenger letters anymore, because I can't take 'em to another job and say, 'Look how nice I've been,'" says Irene. There is also some degree of fear that stewardess stereotypes will follow them out of the work, but with no supportive cohort to enable them to deal with that. A flight attendant who quit last year to marry, move to a small Midwestern town and begin work as a bank teller, chronicles such prejudicial treatment when in a letter she writes of the young bank president who "got drunk and made passes at me," and her feelings of rejection at the bank where "the girls resented me because I made a higher salary and because my sophisticated appearance and ways were so different from them." Problems

such as these two years ago prompted one union, The Association of Professional Flight Attendants, to study the problems encountered by flight attendants furloughed by the economic recession as they attempted to find other work.

11. Although he would point to the contradictions of its current economic base, Karl Marx could not have objected to a view of work as the totality of one's creative endeavors. For it was Marx who first suggested in Capital (Vol. III) a social organization in which one would be free to practice any number of self-actualizing endeavors in a parallel manner. Veblen if he were alive today would probably be horrified by such an idea, venerating anything that was "workmanlike" and went into supplying "the means of life," and distaining all else as the folly of "the leisure class" (Veblen, 1899).

12. An expanded use of the idea of work is apparent even in currently popular terminology. Consider for example the plethora of self-help books and the way in which they suggest, whatever their individual subject of concern, that one make it part of one's "work" (body work, grief work, intergenerational work, etc.). Talk of psychological problem solving likewise is more frequently than not phrased in terms of work—"working it through," "assertiveness work," going to EST and similar training programs to "work on one's self-image." Even in terms of the new concern with personal health, there are people who are "working" on getting their cholesterol down to low levels. I think we will continue to see a broadening of the definition of work well beyond strictly occupational boundaries and into a variety of planned and wide ranging endeavors intended to bring meaning into people's lives. Designating these

activities as work may simply be a transitional legacy of the Protestant ethic in that it dignifies and legitimates them as "worthwhile."

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The changes in the airline flight attendant's career have been, like the changes in the industry of which she is a part, rapid and dramatic. The aviation industry itself is only 75 years old; the occupation is but 50 years old, and the great reversal that has occurred in career consciousness has arisen in less than two decades. At the occupation's inception, like much of women's work in industrial society, it was conceived as an assistant's post. As nurse to doctor, secretary to executive, the stewardess' presence enabled the pilot to do his job better and more efficiently. But as much as to assist, she was also there to be seen, a visible reminder to the public that the new world of commercial aviation was safe for them to enter. In the early years of flying her presence conveyed stability to what many viewed as a daredevil undertaking; in later years other aspects of her womanliness would be used to recover glamous and excitement in an industry that was rapidly becoming routinized. But whether her changing image in the airplane represented maternal comfort or glamour girl excitement, it was always bounded by conceptions of woman's place, the assumed incompatibility of the domestic world and the work world. For women, flying was a limited excursion into mobility and adventure before they took their presumably rightful position in the home and family.

Women in the aviation industry, like the men who recorded its thrills and satisfactions in books with inspirational titles such as "Climb to Greatness" and "Wings Across the Sky," found much that was stimulating and rewarding in flying. And even if they had been

relegated to second place, second place in the aviation world could still offer more than many other areas of female occupational opportunity. As Botteri has observed, the themes and myths that developed around flying from the beginning related to pioneering work, even "a calling," that was different from that of other people and invested flight crews--including stewardesses--with charismatic qualities (Botteri, 1979:63-64). It was a "special opportunity occupation" (Moles and Friedman, 1973), always difficult to enter, and as became apparent in the 1960s, one that women didn't want to leave. During that decade what had begun as short-term privilege commenced its conversion into long-term career. Ironically, work that had been even more limited than other occupational roles for women—nurse, secretary, teacher—became, much more than these others, an uninterrupted career.

The conditions which made this possible were the occurrence of several far-reaching social movements which began in the decade of the 1960s: the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and later the occupational health movement. In addition, the women's experience of the ongoing labor movement in America had an impact on their view of their work and the vigor with which they addressed the conditions of work.

These movements were widespread, but they touched this occupation in a particularly crucial way, providing new concepts to describe the problems that flight attendants personally encountered. Sensitized by civil rights activity in the 1960s, under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, female cabin crew members successfully challenged the airline companies' claim that youthful age requirements and marriage prohibitions constituted bonafide occupational qualifications. When

civil rights barriers to tenure had been broken, allowing women to continue working, the feminist movement helped them to address the sexism they encountered as they grew older. And although stewardesses sometimes believed that even the feminists were "blaming the victim," i.e., in the allegation that stewardesses weren't forced to aspire to a job requiring sex-object status, the language and perspective of the movement provided a framework in which to reconsider their careers. In convincing society at large and even other feminists of the legitimacy of their work, they convinced themselves. Closely related to feminist interests was the issue of women's health, of maintaining health under the conditions of work. This movement even more than others touched the individual flight attendant, but in the process created awareness of the difference between personal troubles and social problems; health, by presenting a goal of collective interest was a cardinal issue in creating group consciousness. Finally, involvement in labor issues became possible as tenure increased. Workers generally assume initial union positions in the first few years of work, while women's exit from the work force at this time often prevents their participation (Koziara and Pierson, 1981), a situation that by the 1970s was <u>not</u> the case for flight attendants. As their knowledge and activity in the processes of labor negotiation grew, the women were able to substantially improve their wages and working conditions, another factor which contributed to making a short-term job into a life-time career.

Women today are attempting to break all manner of previously existing barriers that have prevented them from taking an equal place in the work world (Stromberg and Harkess, 1978). It is well documented that women are pursuing non-traditional training and employment in the

skilled trades and crafts (Blau, 1978:56) and are struggling to gain entry to upper echelon occupations and professions previously closed to them (cf., Epstein, 1970; Patterson and Engleberg, 1978). However, as Ellen Lewin has pointed out, fewer researchers, even those with a feminist perspective, have examined the occupations in which most women now work--sex-segregated, lower paid, unorganized, temporary--in order to take the measure of social change (Lewin, 1977). The researchers who have done so (cf., Roby, 1975; Ferree, 1976, Olesen and Katsuranis, 1978) constitute, much like women in the work world, the fainter voice. Yet such research, and this study is a part of that perspective, is vital to understanding the experience of the majority of working women. If women's modes of conceptualization were limited to only the two aforementioned, recently opened areas of employment, the activity in these two worlds alone would scarcely be enough to explain the widespread nature of the women's movement. Furthermore, not infrequently, investigation into devalued worlds can shake the taken-for-granted assumptions and reveal the structure of key social processes. For these reasons the study of women flight attendants and their career development is of significant interest.

The assumption that women do not want or cannot make careers for themselves (Laws, 1976) is challenged by the flight attendant data. There is a commonplace conception that a woman's paid work life will be short or at best interrupted by marriage and family responsibilities, e.g., more than once beginning anew on the bottom rungs of the occupational ladder as moves are made to accommodate a husband's career (Tatnall, et al, 1981), or ceasing or interrupting work for childbearing and rearing. However, there has always been a sense that women in the professions even though they were a minority, had a legitimate claim

to making a career for themselves. In fact, recent research has shown that their careers have been no less interrupted than those of their male counterparts when the totality of working life is taken into account (Quadagno, 1978). Furthermore there has existed a notion that professional women would want to work, since the motivations and rewards for doing so were perhaps more apparent. But it is clear that women in other than the traditional professions have an equal attachment to paid work. As Laws has argued, given certain conditions, the myth of "women's lack of career commitment" has defeated empirical inquiry into the "conditions that facilitate and the conditions that impede attachment to the labor force, to a particular job, or to a particular occupation" (1976:36). Women themselves may embrace such assumptions early in their lives, only to discover that given certain changes in external instrumentalities, their consciousness has changed. Thus, for example, better wages and the discovery that childrearing is compatible with a mother's periodic absence are two such features that have prompted flight attendants to give increased priority to careers.

The central social process in the creation of a career for women flight attendants where previously there was only temporary employment has been that of cohort formation. The term cohort, taken from demography, refers to a group that shares a central vital statistic, most commonly age or time of entry, or in this case, both. There is embodied in the definition the notion that the group moves through time together; in addition, the term is employed here in a further social psychological sense: as a peer and a reference group in addition. Beyond constituting merely a group of peers (for occupational peers may not necessarily have entered at approximately the same time nor

be of similar age) the cohort constitutes something of an unusually strongly-bounded reference group which exists to give confirming responses to a particular point of view (cf., Lindesmith, et al, 1977: 446-450, 550). Until intial age limitations to tenure had been removed, cohort formation was not possible; people entered and exited from the occupational world at a rapid rate. And while it could provide something of a reference and peer group for young unmarried working women, it could not relate to certain other key issues, the most important being the aging woman. Views of self are developed in a social context as individuals "take the role of the other" (Mead, 1934); until 1968 no community of like-situated others existed for the woman who (a) made a career of the job, and (b) therefore necessarily grew older in the role. In addition, as has been detailed in chapters III and IV, industry employers and even the public held to values which questioned the older career women's legitimacy on the job. The industry promoted only one image for the stewardess--young, attractive, and sexually available. Prior to the 1960s women who broke these norms had little except individual fortitude with which to counter such a view; they lacked a group of significant others who shared the same personal and social identities and therefore the same "universe of discourse" (cf., Shibutani, 1962). The formation of a collectivity capable of sustaining a collective point of view (in regard to aging and careers) was not possible until the decade of the 1960s.

In addition to what has been shown to be the interactional conception of reference group (cf., Lindesmith, et al, 1977; Shibutani, 1962), the idea of cohort is further needed to explain the ability of the group to deal with generational or life passage issues. While they could not characterize themselves so mournfully as did an earlier generation

in the 1920s who said, "We are the cohort of the damned" (Cowley, 1930), in terms of their future in aviation, prior to 1968 it was close to the truth. As the women knocked down barriers, both normative and legal, they stayed on and moved through time together. The fact of the women's unity as a generational cohort enabled them to deal successfully with issues of aging and self-image, of sexism and identity forcing. In so doing the flight attendants' experience highlights issues which arise to some extent in all women's worlds, and illustrate one significant process in building a countering and personally enhancing point of view.

Other insights have emerged from the study as well. In regard to on-the-job work tasks, it has been apparent that increasing rationalization of work may have the effect of diminishing creativity. When objectification of tasks is overwhelming it causes people to avoid the very tasks that would challenge them. In a related manner, it was discovered that women build ideological conceptions of their work that downplay its expressive elements; because these elements are devalued in the male world, they may become less valued and therefore denied by the women themselves.

In another area, the significance of health for occupational consciousness development and consciousness of collective interest and action has been observed. The growth of health awareness from personal trouble to social problem is clearly seen to be dialectical in nature; individual strategies are born, implemented, and eventually fall short of their intended goals. Yet in their failure is the seed of renewed collective effort. It is possible, because of the uninterrupted nature of this woman's career, to trace, much more than in others, the processual development of women's occupational health awareness.

Finally, insights have been gained into two of the ways in which personal life bears on occupational life, the first as it particularly concerns women, the second as it concerns women and men workers alike. As Joan Huber has related, desegregating the home world may be even more difficult than desegregating the work world in that the issue of childrearing is central to definitions of women's potential development. Interestingly enough, the structural impositions under which childcare might begin to be defined as a shared parental responsibility are revealed, not in the context of women's entry into male-dominated bastions of professional elites, but rather in connection with women's work in an exceedingly sex-stereotyped occupation. The reason for this is that the work embodies one essential instrumental feature—freedom of geographic mobility.

In the second area of personal life, the research reveals the way in which non-work time is presently being redefined. The way in which it is seen and the activities which people include in time outside work are of interest in regard to both research and policy. In the large blocks of free time which the structure and timing of the work makes possible, people are pursuing what they frequently refer to as second careers. This includes a range of what has been characterized as amateur, volunteer and hobbiest activities on the one extreme, to the other extreme of second paid jobs with all manner of further education and training, and partially paid pursuits in between. The point, however, is that people are defining the summation of total life interests as "occupation." This conception includes more than their paid work alone and therefore has implications for definitions of self as those definitions evolve vis-a-vis work.

Implications for future research. The scheduling, timing and

location of the flight attendant's work offers potential for the further study of work and leisure. Although researchers have investigated leisure activities related to usual work schedules (Gunter and Gunter, 1980) and the leisure patterns of four-day workers (Seltzer and Wilson, 1980), the nature of block-time jobs and their consequent leisure patterns has yet to be fully discovered. There are implications for adult personality development and for satisfaction at various life stages that have yet to be determined: How do people define their pursuits under these arrangements? Is there any sense of compulsion to engage in further "work" during extended free time in order to maintain self-esteem? What is the relation of this work/leisure time plan to mental health? Comparative studies are in order and could include others who do work in blocks of time such as firefighters, pilots, and those who do contracted work.

The time and place embeddedness of work itself is a significant issue, and much more comparison along a number of dimensions—attachment to work, relation with co-workers, friendship networks, community involvement—could be done between block-timers and nine-to-fivers.

"Divergent identities" was a cursory and sociologically unfinished concept coined in the study; the experiences of minorities, men and very senior women were used to illuminate identity-forcing as a primary social process in an image-centered occupation. Further study would focus on such groups in depth, comparing for example, the abrupt entrance of men into this occupation with the historical presence of men in other sex-segregated occupations such as nursing and clerical work. Earlier research has suggested that men who enter women's occupations are seen as deviant (Hesselbart, 1977), and the conditions under which this is the case remain to be fully determined. In the

tradition of some of the excellent work already done on black women in America specific to sex-object pressure (cf., Murray, 1970), the in-depth study of black women flight attendants in the context of pronounced occupational pressures might offer significant insights.

Finally, an extremely useful future research direction would be to examine parenting—the activity of both mothers and fathers—as it is practiced under structural conditions of the flight attendant's work. Parent-child intimacy, parental decision making, family networks, sex-role identification and a multitude of other dimensions could be investigated in a clear-cut manner with this particular group.

Taking an emergent approach to the study of airline flight attendants and their unanticipated careers has revealed many exciting findings that were themselves unanticipated prior to entry into the field. Undoubtedly the future research possibilities that are suggested by the findings of the study would prove to be similarly fruitful.

CHAPTER IX

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the preceding chapters, various aspects of the qualitative fieldwork methodology employed in the research have been apparent. It is the nature of participant observation to be reflexive; one can hardly immerse oneself in a new social world under investigation without being continuously aware of the ways in which one attends to that world—the questions one asks, the way in which they are received, what this implies regarding the researcher's role, and even how one's role as participant observer changes over time in the context of the world under investigation. In the following pages, the methodology employed will be made more explicit. Similar to the object of the study itself, the method is also a process because both are part of human interaction. Several aspects of the methodological process will be considered: the selection of the research area and the major research questions, the particular applicability of the emergent approach and symbolic interaction to the study of work and careers, the importance of organizing schemes and guiding theoretical perspectives, and finally, the appropriateness of the emergent interactionist approach to a feminist methodological stance.

Entering the flight attendant world. Sometimes one discovers a research area not so much by conscious design as by fortunate circumstances. This was the case for my initial entree into the occupational world of airline flight attendants. In 1977 there were two areas in which reading and reflection had piqued my interest. One was occupational health, and the other was the relatively new area of self-care/self-help, a research subject which was gaining prominence because of

the tremendous activity being generated in the self-care movement of that decade. During discussion of these newly discovered interest areas with a colleague he suggested that the two might be compatible investigated together (1). The logical combination was to locate a union or similar group of industrial workers who were engaged in self-care activities related to occupational health. The Labor Occupational Health Project at the University of California, Berkeley referred me to a representative of such a group--part of Local 533, the Air Transport Division of the Transport Workers of America (TWU). The Air Transport Division represented a number of different airline occupations at that time, but the one that was directly concerned with occupational health was the airline flight attendant group.

The flight attendant union representative to whom I was referred acted as a key informant in the manner that Campbell (1969) describes as the current anthropological mode, particularly as it concerns the study of social worlds within Western culture. There may not be a totally foreign tongue to be mastered, however, since every social world has a vocabulary somewhat unique to its universe of discourse (Lindesmith, et al, 1977), one can consider oneself fortunate to have an astute and sympathetic individual to build initial bridges. Campbell elaborates further:

> ...the technique of the informant means that the social scientist obtains information about the group under study through a member who occupies such a role as to be well informed but who at the same time speaks the social scientist's language. It is epitomized by the use of one or a few special persons who are extensively interviewed and upon whose responses exceptional reliance is placed and thus, is to be most clearly distinguished from randomly or representatively sampled interviews. The requirement that the informant speak the language of the social scientist epitomizes this difference...more often than not the informant is

> an amateur or self-developed social scientist with a genuine curiosity about cultural phenomena and the capacity to verbalize his observations (Campbell, 1969:290) (2).

My informant/colleague/guide introduced me to terminology and meanings that would later prove essential to conducting extensive interviews. She consented to be interviewed several times at length, and also assisted me in gaining entree to union committees and in establishing contacts with other flight attendants.

In addition to gaining access to flight attendants in her large unionized airline, I was also able to begin interviews in a smaller, non-union commuter airline. Since I was traveling weekly on intra-state flights due to circumstances in my own work and living arrangements, I began to schedule my flights to correspond with my research interests. For instance, I tried to fly during non-peak hours when the load was light and when the flight attendants would have a few minutes to talk. For nearly ten weeks, interviews were either held on board the airplane or were scheduled for a later convenient time.

During that first fieldwork and set of interviews of flight attendants I learned a great deal about self-care in occupational settings (3); however, I also learned a great deal about many aspects of the flight attendant's work and the unique problems and dilemmas she faces. As only face-to-face research can do, the experience swept away previously held taken-for-granted assumptions (Schutz, 1964). The central assumption was that the flight attendant's job is a limited and short-term one; I quickly began to realize that, although they never planned it that way, most of the women interviewed had been working for ten years or more, and that even in the commuter airline, five years was not at all unusual. Moreover, the women were indicating that they

had no intention of quitting.

Thus, three years later, this finding as well as a number of others prompted a return to the field. My former key informant, now friend and colleague, again introduced me to other flight attendants to interview. I also rather boldly took the initiative in seeking out flight attendants at their work. In fact, I can remember the precise moment that I decided to do dissertation research on flight attendants. During a red-eye special en route from New York to California, I sat on up-turned serving cart boxes in a galley of a DC-10 talking with four women who not only provided information but also the excitement in the subject area which prompted me to do the research. Two were later very helpful in giving lengthy personal history interviews, and the women referred other people, who in turn referred others in a snowball effect. I approached union officers, including the presidents, in several of the major flight attendant unions. All of those contacted agreed to personal interviews. It was through unions that I found other interviewees and also through the unions that I was able to do on-site participant observation in the flight attendant lounges where the "hangerettes," as they are called, wait for trips. This experience, and also the experience of participant observation in the division union offices in both New York and California was invaluable; I was able to see and hear the kinds of concerns and problems which brought a stream of flight attendants into talk to their "reps." In all, I conducted 45 interviews of up to three hours in length and countless other in-flight conversations of 10-15 minutes duration. Several women were interviewed more than once. I also followed up with telephone questions when an issue of importance came up; this was ascertained not only in the course of contacts in my developing network and in reading the news-

paper daily, but also by listening to the recorded messages on the various union hotlines at least every few days.

Random sampling of women flight attendants interviewed (or the men interviewed) was not done, but rather interviewees were chosen on the basis of a "selective principle" (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:41-42) designed to render theoretically significant categories. As Schatzman and Strauss observe, this procedure is valuable because in the course of the research one learns more about the world under investigation and one is led to new categories which did not appear before (1973:42). For example, I knew that it would be important to interview women who entered prior to civil rights legislation, including the very senior 30-year women, that the sample should include those coming in at the time the civil rights changes occurred and shortly after, and that it should include some relative newcomers. But until the research was well underway, it was not apparent that selective sampling should be done of people who were hired in 1972-73 as compared to those hired prior to 1970. The industry experienced an economic slump in 1971 during which almost no hiring at all occurred. When it later began to boom and many people were hired to staff the cabins of the jumbo jets, the sudden burgeoning in the seniority list created, as one woman observed, "a different job if you were hired before or after 1972." In a similar way, more sampling sometimes has to be done in the course of research in order to fill the theoretical "holes" or gaps that become apparent in one's emerging theory (Fagerhaugh and Strauss, 1977:310). Thus, in a manner consistent with the reality of everyday life and human experience, the research continues as a process, sometimes halting, sometimes rapid, always subject to change and revision.

This experience (of doing face-to-face interviewing of flight

attendants) illustrates one of the strongest arguments in favor of qualitative research. In 1975, just two years prior to my entry into the field, Givens conducted dissertation research concerning airline flight attendants, "Occupational Entry and Anticipatory Exiting Behavior Within a Limited-Duration Occupation: The Flight Attendant," and used as a data base (1) company application forms, and (2) a six-page questionnaire covering background data, occupational entry, occupational socialization, and anticipatory exiting behavior (Givens, 1975). What is significant is that well before 1974-75 the consciousness of flight attendants in regard to career length had already begun to change. This is not only clear from the histories and incidents that numerous women have related, but is further verified by union documents and even statistics available at that time (by 1971 the turnover rate was down to one out of nine per year). Although Givens was rigorous in his testing of Boles and Garbin's "equilibrium model of occupational choice," his application of it to a seemingly "limited-duration occupation" was misdirected. Had he gone into the field he would have found that things had changed indeed and he would not have allowed himself as a researcher to participate in the taken-for-granted public assumptions. As Robert Park long ago illustrated, a duty of the sociologist is to "bring in the news" (Park, 1940), something one can scarcely do without stepping out into the empirical world.

The early health study presented an introduction to the flight attendant world, prompted me to study that world at large, and produced a number of working hypotheses or "suggested relations among categories" which could be used to proceed in further investigation and the eventual generation of theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:39-40). For example, unanticipated longevity appeared to characterize the experience of other

women, notably those in sex-typed occupations such as nurses and secretaries; this was informal data gathered from numerous acquaintances on a day-to-day basis during the formulation of the research proposal. It also appeared that even if the flight attendants did not begin with a notion of career, they certainly had such a notion now. Thus, a further working hypothesis was that this emerging notion must have been built over a period of time, possibly in connection with significant events and under the auspices of identifiable structural conditions. Understanding consciousness development is a difficult process enough, and reconstructing it retrospectively at times seemed an awesome, if not prohibitive task. Yet two perspectives encouraged me to attempt to do so; one was a feminist approach to the conduct of social research, and the other was the guiding perspective of a symbolic interactionist view of society and social research.

The feminist approach to research will be taken up in more detail in a few pages, but one comment is in order at this point. From reading the feminist literature one becomes very aware that what is normal human social process, if it is unique to women, can appear to be, or be presented to be, a bizarre finding. This is due to normative categories of sociological inquiry (for instance, in this case "careers") having been generated excluding women (Acker, 1973). Moreover, women being interviewed could easily be made to feel that their experience was somehow an oddity. Laws describes it well when she characterizes a problem that may affect "both the researcher and the object of study," the woman being interviewed:

> This error...implies a retrospective strategy, though it can be found in concurrent and prospective studies as well. The researcher selects some marked outcome of interest (commonly, unusual attainment or even aspiration) and seeks to find

> the 'causes' of the exceptional or deviant event. The effects on the subject become apparent when the researcher enlists the subject's help in answering the question, 'Why are you different?' Deviance, rather than the phenomenon of interest, becomes the focus of the inquiry. One of the many regrettable effects of this mistaken focus is that control groups or comparison groups are not included, or are not comparable. The literature on 'achieving women' is rife with examples of this error (Laws, 1976:39-40).

Thus, a guiding premise or assumption was that while longevity might be sociological news to be reported, the way in which longevity came about was understood to be an integral part of the women's lives and experience. They understood it in that way and any researcher would need to understand it similarly. In this respect the symbolic interactionist paradigm (cf., Blumer, 1969) with its emergent or process study of careers (cf., Bucher and Strauss, 1961) offered appropriate methodology capable of transcending certain of the aforementioned difficulties.

Symbolic interaction and the emergent approach to the study of careers. The symbolic interactionist paradigm takes the view that societal organizations are arrangements of people who are interlinked in their actions; people construct and continually reconstruct their social reality by fitting their lines of action together (Blumer, 1969). There is no one way in which people do this; the fitting together of action can be characterized as consensual agreement, conflict, or even indifferent concern (Mead, 1934). Therefore, for the researcher to bring to the site of human action a preconceived notion precisely delimiting human action is a distortion of the social world. To bring a full-blown theory into the field, seeking merely to refute or deny it by quantified procedures, is, in the words of Robert Park, "a purely scholastic exercise in which the answers to all the questions

are already implicit in the conceptions and assumptions with which the inquiry started" (Turner, 1967:xviii). Thus, the methodology which extends out of symbolic interaction is a naturalistic or qualitative one which allows for the discovery of new constructions and meanings as they arise in situo (Lofland, 1971; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; McCall and Simmons, 1969).

The assertion that human action may take an immense variety of forms is not to say that the methodology of symbolic interaction is completely existential in nature. The theory and method embodies what Blumer has designated as certain "root images" or assumptions regarding the nature of the self, individual and collective action, and the historical linkages of action. The assumption most germane to a symbolic interactionist approach to research is in regard to the nature of meaning. Meaning is found in the context of action itself. It is not found in a psychological determinism of wishes, drives, or unconscious factors or in a sociological determinism of roles, values, cultural stresses, etc. (Blumer, 1969). Rather, people act individually and collectively on the basis of the meaning of objects for them. Objects can be physical, abstract or social, and people may even be objects to themselves as they reflect on their activity (Mead, 1934). In addition, meaning is not fixed or immutable—it is continually emerging. Human interaction is a process through which meaning is continually built up, transformed and negotiated (Strauss, 1978).

These assumptions have major implications for the construction of a research methodology consistent with the natural world, and further, were specifically of value when dealing with an occupational world in which distinct changes in consciousness had obviously taken place. For example, the women flight attendants who now describe the

seriousness of their work as safety agent, or their efforts in recent years at professional licensure, are the same women who 12 years ago "didn't think too much about being a sex symbol" or "enjoyed the attention." To a certain extent such an evaluation is age related, that is, they may have changed as they grew older in any case, but in the larger measure it is not. Flight attendants readily point to the attitudes and behavior of current junior flight attendants as much different from their own attitudes when they were junior in seniority, more akin to the attitudes that seniors hold now. In short, the women have changed.

In addition, this perspective recognizes that multiple constructions of reality may be found among even the participants in the same setting (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). A good example of this is the issue of the returning mothers, the women who years ago were fired when they became pregnant and who have legally won the right to return to work. One gets a completely different picture of the situation depending on whether one talks to a flight attendant who is not a mother and has been continuously on the line, a mother who has been continuously on the line, a returning mother, or a union official (and it even depends on which union). All the constructions represent a slice of a reality which the researcher must convey.

As the earlier example of the occupational health study (Lessor Rosen, 1980), contrasted to the Givens' study, illustrated, the stance of the interactionist researcher is one of suspending a priori assumptions about the nature of the social action under investigation. Instead the area must be approached open to the discovery of emerging categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Sometimes this necessitates shedding more general societal assumptions and ideologies, as above,

Paula Auburn illustrated this nicely when she prefaced her ethnography of flight attendant work with reflexive comments on her position as an interviewer. She interviewed her former roommate, a stewardess whose job she thought she knew quite well; yet once she bracketed former assumptions she found that a more exact description emerged. Says Auburn:

> My observations were not systematic, but I thought they were accurate. In fact, I suppose most people believe their views of others are accurate. What surprised me was that once the interviews began, she painted a picture of her work that, while recognizable, was different from mine. So I had to try to forget what I thought I knew about being a stewardess and let my informant paint her own picture of her world (Auburn, 1972:192-193).

Suspending a priori notions is difficult enough on the descriptive or ethnographic level, but is even more difficult on the level of analysis; having a procedure for coding and analyzing data of this type, however, is additionally of value in attempting to maintain this posture (cf., Glaser and Strauss, 1967). (The reader is referred to the Appendix on Qualitative Analysis.)

Further, the position of symbolic interaction urges direct examination of the area of social life under scrutiny. If one is concerned with the meaning of the object to the actors and the processual nature of their experience, it is important to get their view of it through participant observation and through attempting to "take their role" (Olesen and Whittaker, 1968:18-55); this is best done in face-to-face interaction in which participants are allowed to recount their activities and their thoughts in everyday language. In addition to this primary mode, Blumer notes that there are other ways to obtain "direct data" such as diaries and public records (1969). For this study such direct data was obtained in a wealth of newspaper accounts reaching

back over twenty years, as well as many union documents which chronicled developments over a period of time. These items and others such as seniority lists, provided not only macro context for the accounts that the women gave, but also further a more general validation of their highly personal recollections.

Finally, the elicitation in certain of the interviews, of a detailed occupational history, is in the tradition of Robert Park and of the roots of symbolic interaction. Park placed great emphasis on both participant observation and on the elicitation of "life histories" in order to reach the objectives of describing process and specifying meaning. The investigator becomes involved with the world of the participants in order to understand it; eliciting life histories face-to-face (or even in human documents) is a method for achieving sympathetic identification (Turner, 1967:xxi).

Guiding theoretical perspectives and organizing schemes. The symbolic interactionist approach to research described above is the perspective most prominently employed in the study of women flight attendants because the research begins on the micro level of interaction and searches out individualized meaning and personal change. But such change, as has been emphasized many times throughout the preceding chapters, does not occur in a vacuum. The occupation is also located in a larger structural order characteristic of many such organizations in industrialized society, and within a set of class relations. While a political economy investigation of the occupation was not the object of the study nor within its scope, certain concepts taken from this perspective were valuable in making sense of the first-hand observations and accounts. This was particularly true in respect to two social processes relevant to the flight attendant world.

The first important political economy concept concerned the nature of the labor process as it has evolved and is continuing to evolve in post-industrial capitalist society. Harry Braverman's conception of the increasing fragmentation of the labor process is an accurate analytic indicator of the task structure described by flight attendants. In the short history of the commercial airline industry one may trace a history of development akin to the rise of mom-and-pop-corner-store capitalism and its ever forward push toward, and eventual transformation into, impersonal corporate monopoly structures.

Second, just as symbolic interaction traces the transformations in consciousness that occur in the individual, recognizing that the seeds of future transformation lie within the complexity of the sentient person, historical materialism or political economy has as its essence the concept of the dialectic. That is, the condition itself generates its own antithesis. Such a perspective was helpful not only in understanding changing working conditions, but was perhaps most useful in the chapter on occupational health. Such a dialectical process was clearly apparent in the data. In this way, the perspectives of both symbolic interaction and historical materialism guided the inquiry.

On another level, the work was also guided by several of what Schatzman refers to as "organizing schemes" (4). Organizing schemes constitute procedures used in the field to rapidly elicit that which appears problematic to the participants about their situations. The sequence of this scheme is as follows: (1) what the person identifies as a problem, (2) how sensitive she is to the problem (or what are its implications for her), (3) what are her tolerance levels, and (4) what are her options as she sees them. In addition, what is her impression of the sensitivity and tolerance of other like-situated

individuals. Moving this scheme further into the realm of social process, it was also important to inquire whether she had formally labeled the problem (and as what), and how and to whom she communicated regarding it: where, when, how often, under what circumstances, and with what degree of emotional investment (5).

Organizing schemes also, in a slightly different way, enable one to handle substantive areas of concern. Thus, in the initial research proposal (its substantive areas of concern are roughly approximated in the introduction), certain areas were specified: family life, second careers, personal health, structure of work tasks, etc. Developing conceptual schemes, even as they became increasingly elaborated and dense as data collection proceeded, did not block the discovery of potentially new categories and formulations simply because continual exposure to the field and to people's accounts does not permit that. If there is something new to be heard, something one has not awakened to previously, then the work is not yet ready to be closed off. Similarly, when the emerging conceptual framework forms a systematic theory, data collection and analysis may be brought to a close.

Doing feminist research. In 1969, after conducting a year of field study among patients in a tuberculosis hospital, I wrote a chapter for my master's thesis entitled, "Positive Science as a Mortification of the Self." The thesis of the piece was essentially that if the goal of the research was to discover the ways in which the total institution objectified people and stripped them of personal identity, to employ a research methodology which did likewise was not only a contradiction in terms but also ethically indefensible. The chapter was rejected in toto by the committee. I understand now, in ways that I could not see at the time, many of the institutional pressures upon the faculty

to apply the principles of scientific rigor which it is often assumed are present only in positivistic verification research. If there had been a body of feminist research existing then, as there is now, although it probably would not have changed the outcome, it would perhaps have eased the pain of rejection. The knowledge that other researchers were approaching the world in a similar way would have been gratifying. What I now identify as a feminist approach to research taken in this study has much continuity with that earlier position.

This study directly concerned women, and therefore suggested that a feminist perspective was in order; in any case, the researcher needs to be aware, as is Helen Roberts, that "social processes are affected by sexual as well as class divisions" (1981). And as David Morgan points out, a method that takes gender into account is equally necessary when studying men (1981).

Over and above sensitizing one to the sexual divisions of social processes, a feminist perspective may sensitize one to ways of knowing about the world. Psychologist Carol Gilligan, following Nancy Chodorow's work (1973), argues that women's ways of thinking evolve in ways different from those of men (Gilligan, 1982). She makes the point that women are the primary caretakers of children; whereas male children must make a separation from the mother to achieve identity, female children do not. Women's lives, even as adults, are embedded in relationships. Gilligan's theory in contrast to traditional theories of psychological development, argues that this "embeddedness" is a sign of maturity, of being in touch with the reality that persons are interconnected and interdependent. She further contends that women think in non-linear, non-hierarchical terms leading them to consider ethical questions in terms of responsibility to other people and in terms of

"care" as opposed to the masculine model of holding to the highest abstract moral principle or of doing one's duty (6).

That gender-based ways of knowing may exist has implications for the selection of a research method. For example, a great deal of research on nurses has been conducted by the discipline itself since its entrance into the universities in the early part of this century. Most of that research has followed a model set out by experimental psychology: objective, detached, positivistic, and built on the assumption that if one's measurement tools are scientifically refined, then the behavior of nurses or nursing students can be interpreted in the light of those instruments. Virginia Olesen spots the central defect in such an approach when she states, "Lost in the sometimes uncritical allegiance to the experimental model has been the fact that the observer's tasks are the very skills in part central to nursing" (Olesen, forthcoming). She argues persuasively for a participant observation model which is attuned to the world to be investigated. A similar case could be made for studying many of the areas in which women typically work, for as Oppenheimer has noted, the tasks, such as care, that women are assigned in paid work are overwhelmingly those tasks that women do in the home, and are based on the traits that women are presumed to possess (1970) (7).

The existence of gender-based ways of knowing also has implications for the ethics of research. Ann Oakley details the unsuitability of much of the textbook advice given to social science interviewers in respect to detachment from the subject (1981). She says that for the feminist researcher talking with women, such a stance is a contradiction. For one thing, if one wishes to understand the meanings people attach to their everyday behavior it cannot be done through a

"pseudo-conversation" in which both interviewer and subject are treated as data-producing objects (1981:32-37). For another, it cannot be done if the interviewer assumes, as Oakley demonstrates much methodological literature does, that the interviewer is something of a non-directive psychoanalyst who stands in a hierarchical position above the interviewee: the non-directive questions are asked, questions asked back are parried or disregarded, and the researcher later interprets the spoken data in the light of proper scientific theory (Oakley, 1981: 37-38). If exploitation is the "normal" pattern of human behavior, it has also been seen as normal to continue in this mode in the conduct of social research (Laing, 1968). What Oakley points out is that when the feminist interviews women (whether they themselves are feminists or not), the connections of human experience are revealed; it becomes impossible to accept the caveats of "proper" scientific detachment. She expresses doubt that in actual practice most successful researchers--those who later convey a recognizable picture of human experience--actually employ such highly touted tactics. I would tend to agree.

Taking a non-hierarchical position which is fully cognizant of the embeddedness of people in the network of human relationships (including the researcher and person being interviewed) is not only the ethical position, it is also the most fruitful one. In the conduct of the flight attendant research, as in Oakley's research on motherhood, there were almost no refusals for interviews. In fact, the two that did occur were in effect postponements--the women declined due to other pressing activities at that time, and we simply never got to the scheduling of another interview.

Oakley writes extensively about how people "asked questions back,"

wanting to know about the research, what other people think, and about the researcher herself (1981). This is again what was encountered in this research. Such interaction need not bias the research; Schutz made the case that two-way communication strengthens the validity (1964). The interactional position in fact requires that the researcher continually disclose his impressions, observations, and developing conceptualizations to informed participants. This serves to both validate and to fine-tune the emerging theory.

In addition, the investigation of processes such as the relationship of structure to ideology in work, as was reported in Chapter V, is not antithetical to a method that assumes rational consciousness on the part of the participants. Because, as Mead says, people are capable of considering their own behavior, of being "objects to themselves" (1934). Participants in many cases distinguish between what they do and what they say about what they do, in spite of the fact that the consideration is not phrased in sociological terms such as "structure" or "ideology."

My experience in this study confirms the two-way nature of face-to-face research described by Schutz and more recently by Oakley. In many interviews where the women asked about my own background, nursing, it led to comparative discussions which enabled me to broaden the base of my thinking. The women were lay-colleagues in the research discovery process. Further, at the close of the interviews many expressed their pleasure at being able to think and talk about the progression of significant events in their working lives. And, although as researchers we may report the data in terms of theoretical constructs (Waxman, 1971), if it is a valid rendering of experience it will be recognizable to the inhabitants of the social world under study (Glaser and Strauss,

1967). In this regard a flight attendant friend who had read an early draft of a chapter wrote that, "I am always amazed when someone outside can capture an accurate picture of my work," a comment which I take as validation of the highest order.

APPENDIX ON QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The reader is referred to "The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis," Chapter V in Glaser and Strauss', Discovery of Grounded Theory, for a detailed description of the way in which qualitative data such as this is analyzed and a theory is built (1967). The methods followed in this study were similar in progression. First, field notes were written in great detail describing people, events, issues, conversations, and the settings in which they were observed. For example, union meetings and scenes on board the aircraft constituted early fieldwork observations. As the formal interviews began, these were tape recorded and transcribed. This initial body of data soon constituted a sufficiently large amount to begin coding, an early form of analysis in which named categories or properties can be indicated. For instance, the category "risk" evolved when the women spoke of "the health hazards of flying" or "what this might do to my health," or made disclaimers such as "it's more of a risk to drive in your car to the airport than it is to fly." Early categories such as "risk," "sixties' women," and "ideological statements" constituted an ever-growing list, and were noted in the wide margins of field notes and interview transcripts.

As these "codes" build up, the researcher continues to cast a wide net for new data, however, at the same time may choose to sample theoretically for other instances of the existing list of categories. For example, once "risk" is established as a category one may sample theoretically to determine its variations among the different age groups, or among flight attendants flying commuter routes vs. international routes.

In qualitative analysis, data gathering and searching the literature, and analysis and theory construction proceed somewhat concurrently. In any case, they never proceed in a linear fashion. Thus, although I already had done extensive literature searches in work and occupations and also in women's studies/women's work for earlier projects, new literature was constantly probed, much as one would conduct additional theoretical sampling of data. For example, "socialization for sex-segregated occupations" arose as a category that was immediately apparent in the data and needed further investigation in the literature.

As new data such as descriptions of incidents and specific portions of recorded conversations relevant to a code were assembled, they were constantly compared to other incidents under that code until a range of properties of the code could be noted. For example, participants' "conceptions of time" became "seeing time pass," "envisioning future time," and "having a sense of accelerated time."

In addition to making comparisons <u>within</u> categories or codes, comparisons are constantly made <u>among</u> categories. Here it is often helpful to think about potential "outside" comparative categories, or to read about them, or even to briefly interview people in those categories. Such comparisons clarify one's thinking regarding the target population and issues under investigation. For example, the reader will note throughout the study references to comparative groups in other sex-segregated occupations; comparative data was obtained by often asking teachers or nurses or secretaries specific questions, or even by "interviewing" myself, that is, reflexively considering past nursing experiences and observations.

The emergence of the increasingly dense codes begins to suggest

not only the most salient dimensions and properties of the research area, but also suggests something of its organization into sections and even later chapters for presentation. Certainly this plan (like the best-laid plans) is subject to revision. For example, early in the fieldwork I thought that flight attendant work in different types of airlines would be a highly relevant category and that perhaps one chapter would deal with work under one extreme of working conditions (flying international routes) while another would deal with the other extreme (flying short-hop, commuter routes). This turned out not to be the case when data from people in both areas was examined in terms of emerging properties. For instance, the property "freedom" (and its sub-property, "instrumental freedom/vis-a-vis home") is a relevant category for both sets of working conditions. Being away and unavailable for home responsibilities is the same thing whether a woman is away for two days or seven; there is a relative difference but certainly not a qualitative one which then changes the category.

On the other hand, categories sometimes became enlarged, with new and unforeseen ones emerging in the course of data collection and analysis. In this regard, in the earliest outlines I did not envision the importance of "divergent identities" and certainly did not envision an important chapter devoted to this subject. Yet the holders of divergent identities clearly demonstrate the common property "identity-forcing." Here I would add a cautionary note to the potential qualitative researcher. As these new categories emerge, one must always examine them in terms of the logic of the analysis as a whole. To do otherwise is to risk digressing into fascinating but unnecessary and time-consuming side trips rather than sticking to the main analytic road. Because I am constantly absorbed and stimulated by the discovery-

research process, I personally find this a rather recurring problem, and therefore have had to develop strategies to deal with it. One is to write a theoretical note or memo about the new "side trip," a very short memo, which is thoughtfully examined in terms of the research as a whole. Another, and better strategy, is to discuss this memo with another qualitative researcher, and discuss it in terms of the internal logic of the subject. Thus, I realized that divergent identities had bearing on this study in terms of the very important process of status-forcing, but that in spite of the fact that I wanted to write a book on men in a woman's job and another on 30-year women with uninterrupted careers, I could not include those two books in this one! The concern of this book is with the way in which the occupation as a whole was formed largely out of events beginning in the 1960s and occurring to women who began working in the 1960s. To allow myself to digress into other wonderfully stimulating areas would have weakened that central analysis.

The first consideration in delimiting theory is knowing when one has examined the empirical world under study sufficiently to state that the category is complete. For example, an important category mentioned earlier was "freedom." One asks questions of one's data: "What are the contexts in which it is mentioned?" "Who talks about it?" "Do the men mention it?" "Do they talk differently about it?" "Is it a new concept, an old one?" etc. One takes the concept back to the field as well. The researcher listens and, later, asks specifically about it. Finally, as Fred Davis has said, one asks oneself, "Have I heard anything new about it?" That is, is the category "saturated?"

The reader is again referred to Glaser and Strauss for further discussion of "delimiting theory." As they point out, one begins to

find underlying uniformities in the categories and finds that categories can be merged into higher level concepts. For instance, a number of codes and categories were eventually collapsed into the central conception of "the cohort."

As codes and categories become increasingly dense and as they are collapsed into higher level concepts, organization of the whole project, and the communication of the research begins to take place. I am indebted to my friend and colleague Carolyn Wiener for sharing the organizing suggestions which have served her so well in writing two recent excellent books. A large file folder is made for each major category (which often becomes a chapter). Into the folder go the memos and notes on the category, pertinent pages from interviews which may (or may not) later be quoted, newspaper clippings (especially true in this study), summaries of literature (on 5x8 cards), and <u>many</u> scribbled notes referring to additional books, interviews, ideas and so forth. I found that by assembling the folders in a desk top file where they were always visible, was a source of continuing stimulation and also gave me a feeling of being in control of the whole project. Looking at the file, I would often reconsider or add something, sometimes at unplanned moments just passing through the room. (I also sometimes joked that I knew exactly what to grab first in the event of a fire!) Organizing the book in this way was also an aid to the work process. At any time, one can "work on" a category contained in a file folder--writing, consolidating memos, adding, or simply reading and musing. Eventually the files evolve into chapters and the writing begins. I found that a great deal of the refinement of my analysis occurred in the writing itself. Spreading out the contents of a file and re-reading, I made a detailed chapter outline. As I wrote the first

draft of the chapter, I sometimes found that certain materials were more appropriate or would "read better" in another chapter, and I then filed them accordingly. Of course, a few things kept jumping into one file after another and eventually ended up in one marked, "Things I Don't Know What To Do With..." Short of that, however, the system works very well for me, and it is also satisfying to empty a file as bib cards are returned to their file box, news clippings to storage, memos to the cabinet, and scraps relegated to the wastebasket as in their place the ideas emerge in a written draft.

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