From Good Daughter to Respected Peer: Changing Influence Across the Career Lifecycle

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Let’s start with Molly.
Goals of power change over the career
Power is not an individual characteristic
At work, you’re embedded in multiple circles
Building credits: “Conformity”
## Career Lifecycle – Power/Influence/Credit Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Career</th>
<th>Middle Career</th>
<th>Senior Career</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be a good subordinate</td>
<td>Start shifting from protégé to peer</td>
<td>Internalize sense of your power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be a good protégé</td>
<td>Build matrix and relationship skills</td>
<td>Build a stable of supporters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take initiative</td>
<td>Start developing political skills</td>
<td>Mentor and sponsor others</td>
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<td>(but not too much)</td>
<td>Know when/how to code switch (and when not!)</td>
<td>Use influence strategically to achieve your goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start to act like a leader</td>
<td>Cultivate followers</td>
<td>Use alliances, resources to counter competitive challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>(but not too much)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Distinguish yourself through personal merit and task competence.</td>
<td>Establish yourself through strategic, outwardly-focused actions.</td>
<td>Embody organizational power while focusing energy outside yourself.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Where do women get stuck?
Largely in the middle.

• By the time we get to senior levels, only 20% of management positions are held by women.

• Ernst & Young found that there were fewer female board members among companies on the S&P1500 than there were men named John or Robert or James or William.

• Clearly, women are getting lost at this transition point.
Women’s behaviors?

- Often blamed
- Not adequate to explain the problem
Humanyze study

• Men and women showed equivalent interaction patterns, including exposure to senior people.

• Women are doing the right things.

• The right things aren’t leading to the same benefits for women.

https://hbr.org/2017/10/a-study-used-sensors-to-show-that-men-and-women-are-treated-differently-at-work
Key issues are social/organizational

- What kinds of interactions are women having?
- How are women’s behaviors interpreted?
What kinds of interactions

• Are you being mentored?
• Are you being SPONSORED?
ACTION POINT: Change your interactions

• Find a sponsor
• Help mentors become sponsors
• Educate them about the difference
• Articulate the value of investing in you and the specific actions you hope the sponsor will take
What if your mentor won’t sponsor?

• Peer sponsorship
• Amplification
• Recruiting followers to show deference
How women’s behaviors are interpreted

• ‘Leadership = extraversion, overconfidence’

ACTION POINTS:

• Highlight your actual competence and accomplishments.
• Enlist colleagues to note your achievements.
• Look for (or create) settings where the loudest doesn’t always win
How women’s behaviors are interpreted

- Top management makes poor attributions about behaviors linked to the middle-management role

ACTION POINTS:

- Remember your upward circles!
- Display your "power self" to superiors
  - Visible interactions with your team?
  - Step up in a critical situation?
- Discuss code-switching explicitly.
How organizations can do better

• Recognize the unique demands and skill set required at middle levels of management
• Develop evaluation and promotion criteria that recognize “hidden” skills in this domain
• Train and reward relationship building, not just self-promotion
Summary – Individual Strategies

• Find a sponsor or convert your mentor to a sponsor
• Use allies to advocate for your value
• Look outside the organization when necessary
• Deploy peer strategies such as peer sponsorship, amplification, showing deference, and advertising your achievements
• Educate your colleagues about what competence looks like
• Take a fearless inventory of your circles and assess how you’re doing at building credit with the ones you need
• Don’t neglect your upward circles!
• Engineer ways to display your powerful self upward
• Have conversations about middle-management code-switching to build awareness about it

Summary – Organizational Strategies

• Base hiring and promotion decisions on job analyses
• Recognize relationship-management skill in performance standards
• Ensure that women have access to sponsorship (train mentors if necessary)
• Be clear about the behaviors expected in upward and downward interactions
• Don’t be hypocritical: Don’t say, for example, that middle managers should be appropriately deferential with superiors and then reward only men for violating this expectation
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