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Promote Equal Opportunuity by Recognizing Gender Differences in the Experience of Work and Family

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Our meta-principle has two parts. First, men and women experience work and family roles differently, specifically with respect to career advancement, behavioral and psychological involvement in roles, role stress, and coping with the work–family interface. Second, in order to promote equal opportunity for men and women, people need to recognize that these differences exist.

We develop this meta-principle first by defining terms and presenting a model. We argue that gender differences in the experience of work and family stem from different opportunity structures for men and women that are manifest in work structures, sex typing of jobs, family structures, and gender role socialization. Our model of opportunity structures provides an explanation for why gender differences exist in men and women's experience of work and family and identifies levers for change, which over time may contribute to equal opportunities for men and women in work and family. We should point out however that some of these levers (for example, work structures) may be easier to change than others (for example, gender role socialization).

Our principle is directed to young men and women entering the workforce who seek to shape their own work and family opportunities. It is directed to managers who have the opportunity to make policy that affects work structures and sex-typing of jobs and to make decisions that affect individual employees. It is directed to representatives of government, social, and religious institutions that have the opportunity to make social policy that affects work structures, sex-typing of jobs, family structures, and gender role socialization. And it is directed to the men and women currently in the workforce who have the ambition to push the boundaries of societal expectations about the experience of work and family roles.

DEFINITIONS

Work is instrumental activity intended to provide material support for non-work pursuits (Piotrkowski, Rapoport, and Rapoport, 1987). Work generally involves a person contrib-

uting to the mission of an organization that in turn compensates the contributor financially (Burke and Greenglass, 1987; Kabanoff, 1980). Family is a group of people who are related by biological ties, marriage, social custom, or adoption (Burke and Greenglass, 1987; Piotrkowski et al., 1987). Both work and family roles are enacted in the context of a social organization (Zedeck, 1992). Work roles are all the parts played by an individual associated with gainful employment as defined above. Family roles are all the parts played by an individual associated with that individual's immediate or extended household. Experience refers to how roles are perceived, understood, remembered, and enacted. Gender refers to the biological sex of the individual. In using the term gender we recognize that biological sex differences that exist between men and women may account in part for the gender differences discussed here. However, following Rossi (1985) we suggest that biological, evolutionary arguments may explain the origins of certain gender role expectations. For example, the expectation that women are caregivers and nurturers may arise from the fact that biologically women are able to give birth and physically feed their infants. These biological differences may then be inputs to the evolving societal expectations and socialization about women's roles as caregivers, nurturers, and skillful purveyors of relational expertise. However, it is the societal expectations and socialization processes that men and women internalize and which are more proximal antecedents of experienced gender differences that we discuss here.

Model

We argue that gender differences in the experience of work and family roles stem from differential opportunity structures for men and women and are manifest in career success, role involvement, and coping with the stresses of work and family. Figure 27.1 presents our model. Opportunity structures are environments that provide men and women with chances for success, advancement, and progress. The term, "opportunity structure" is widely used in the employment literature. Here we extend the usage to include opportunities for involvement and identity development, and for a stress-free existence. Opportunity structures are determined by the confluence of many factors. Our analysis of the causes of our meta-principle focuses on four structural factors. The structure of work refers to the real or imagined skill requirements of the job and the position of the job within the organization. Sex-typing of jobs means the ascription of characteristics stereotypical of males or females to particular jobs. Family structure refers to the individual's status with respect to marriage, parenting, and dual employment. Gender role socialization refers to the expectations held by society about the appropriate roles of men and women. These four factors are conceptually distinct; however, they interrelate to provide opportunities for career advancement, behavioral and psychological involvement in roles, and to determine stress and coping at the interface of work and family roles.

Our perspective is distinctively structural. We recognize that not all people with a common structural profile are the same. Individual-level factors such as motivation and talent will contribute to individual differences in career advancement, behavioral and psychological involvement in roles, and stress. Yet the large gender differences in the experience of work and family roles lead us to focus on the structural barriers that despite motivation and talent are difficult to overcome for both men and women.

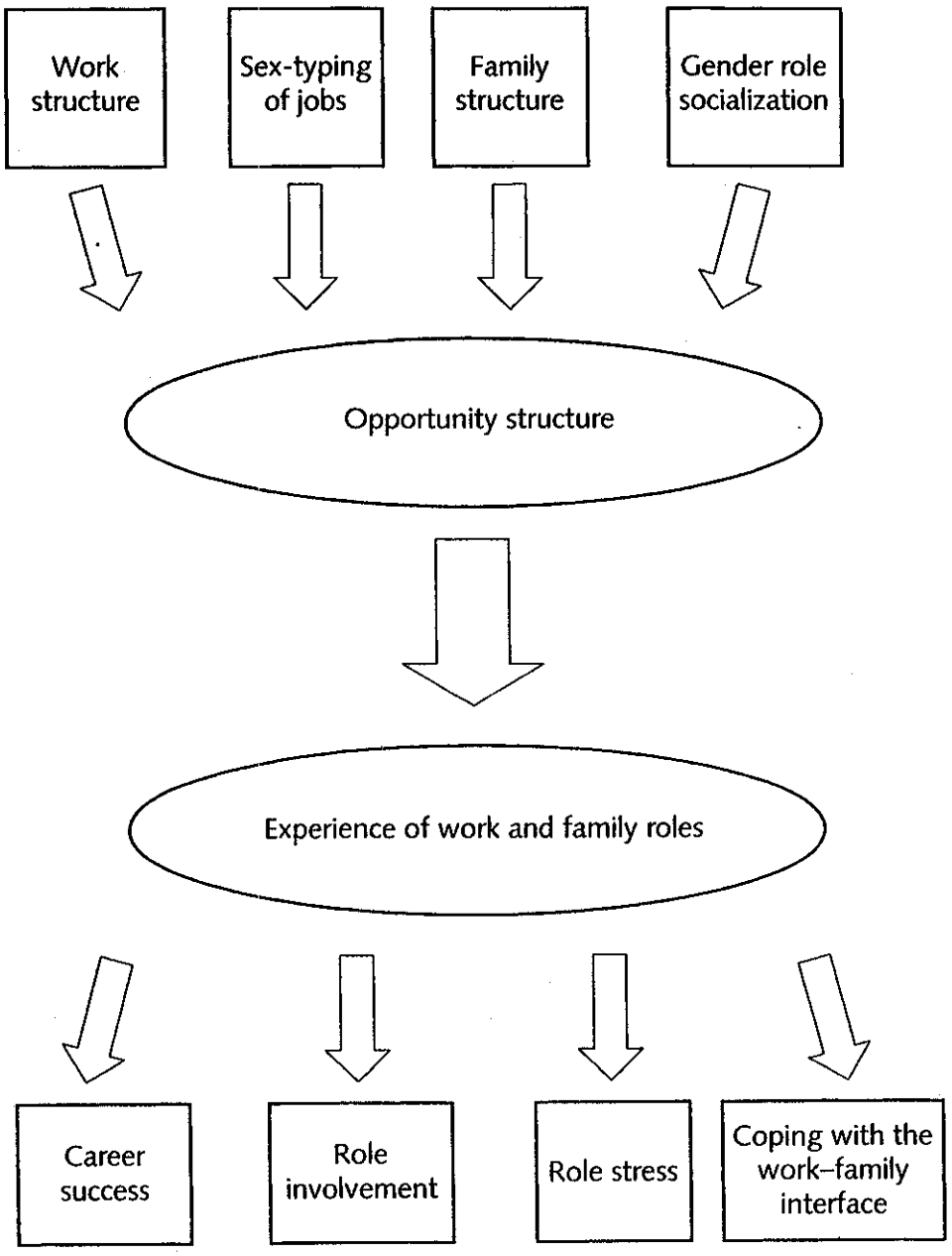

FIGURE 27.1 Model of opportunity structure and gender differences in the experience of work and family roles

Gender and Career Success

Men and women experience work differently because they do not realize the same degree of career success. In order to promote equal opportunities, it is important to first recognize that women lag men in career advancement, compensation, and networking opportunities.

Gender and career advancement

Men and women differ in their level of career advancement. According to 1998 US Labor Department statistics, women have become equally represented in the executive, managerial, and professional labor force, holding 49 percent of these positions. However, within this segment of the workforce, women overwhelmingly hold lower-level positions. The proportion of women who have attained elite positions in corporate offices and boardrooms is low. Women comprise 3.8 percent of corporate officers (i.e., those holding the title of chairman, vice chairman, CEO, president, COO, SEVP, or EVP) and 11 percent of directors in Fortune 500 companies (1998 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners). As of 1999, only three women head Fortune 500 companies.

The differences between men and women in managerial rank do not seem to be due to differences in number of promotions, rather, the differences appear with respect to level (Melamed, 1995; Haberfeld, 1992; Landau, 1995; Judge et al., 1995; Cox and Harquail, 1991; Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1992). Men's promotions apparently offer bigger career leaps than women's and the opportunity structure of employment explains why. Differences in opportunity structure start with sex-typing of jobs (Blau and Ferber, 1992). Some jobs have historically been staffed by women, others by men. Recruiters anticipate women will apply for some jobs and not for others, and women themselves self-select into gendered occupations. Persistent role stereotypes of men, of women, and of the managerial role result in a perceived lack of fit between the ascribed characteristics of women and assumed requirements of managerial jobs (Heilman, 1983; Davies-Netzley, 1998) and reduce opportunities for women.

Although human capital, such as education, also affects opportunity structures, when human capital is controlled there are still fewer women at higher ranks than would be expected given their strong presence within the category of managerial and professional workers. So there must be other factors beyond human capital that affect women's opportunity structures. Differential development opportunities, for example training or international experience, leave women with a real skill deficit. Behaviors, like career interruptions for family reasons (Lyness and Thompson, 1997), a history of changing employers (Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1996), and the desire to work part-time (Schneer and Reitman, 1995) are all more characteristic of managerial women than men and may affect future career opportunities. These behaviors may be interpreted as evidence that women are less psychologically committed to their careers than men are. However, as we explain in the section on exceptions, while there are clear-cut behavioral differences between men and women in job involvement, there are few documented differences in work commitment between male and female employees (see 'Exceptions' below).

Gender and compensation

Paid compensation is a second indicator of career success. The gender gap in wages is substantial and persistent. "For more than four decades, comparisons between the wages of men and women employed full time, year-round have shown an earnings differential of approximately 40 percent" (Wellington, 1994: 839). Women earn about three-quarters as much as men (Jacobs, 1995). At career entry women earn 84 cents for every dollar men earn (Marini and Fan, 1997). Among managers, women's compensation growth lags that of men by 11 percent (Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1992).

Researchers have offered a number of different explanations for the gap. Differences in occupational aspirations due to gender role socialization have several effects on opportunity structures that could contribute to the gender gap in wages (Marini and Fan, 1997). One effect is that women invest in less education and training than men, leaving them with less human capital than men have (Becker, 1975). Another effect is that women prefer jobs with different characteristics than men (Thacker, 1995). The theory of compensating differentials argues that job autonomy, or friendly co-workers, compensate for high wages. Presumably women are more willing and able to make this trade-off than men.

Family structure also appears to affect men and women's earnings differently. For example, the later women enter the workforce the lower their earnings, while the later men enter the workforce the higher their earnings (Marini and Fan, 1997). Being married and having children is negatively associated with women's earnings, but positively associated with men's earnings. For women these effects may be due to human capital, but the effect of marriage on men's earnings is direct, after other factors have been controlled (Stroh and Brett, 1996; Schneer and Reitman, 1993).

Sex-typing of jobs lowers pay for both men and women holding those jobs, because certain occupations and types of skills typically held by women are devalued (England, Herbert, Kilbourne, Reid, and Megdal, 1994). Based on 1990 census data, more than one-half of employed women would have to change occupations before women would be distributed in occupations in the same proportions as men (Jacobs, 1995). Furthermore, the status of an occupation is often beginning to decline before women are permitted to enter in large numbers (Jacobs, 1995).

Women and men's opportunity structures provide differential access to and benefit from influential decision makers (Dreher and Cox, 1996). These differential opportunity structures reflect differences in the nature of men and women's network and mentoring relationships. Mentors provide challenging assignments, exposure and upper-level visibility, protection and direct forms of coaching, and sponsorship. The average annual compensation advantage of MBA graduates who established mentoring relationships with white males was $16,840 (Dreher and Cox, 1996). Female graduates, however, were less likely to form such relationships than male graduates were.

Researchers can account for between 30 percent (Marini and Fan, 1997) and 50 percent (Jacobs, 1995) of the gender gap in wages and compensation growth with factors such as education and work experience. The gap that is left is usually attributed to discrimination. Of course, it is arguable that discrimination contributes to the gap itself, for example by causing differences in aspirations, differential meaning associated with family structure, the sex-typing of jobs, and differential opportunity structures for men and women.

Gender and networks

A third indicator of career success is network composition and networking strategies. Men and women's network relationships differ both within organizations and in broader social networks (Burt, 1992; Ibarra, 1992, 1993, 1997; Munch, McPherson, and Smith-Lovin, 1997). Within organizations, women's networks include both men and women and tend to be broader than men's networks that tend to be dominated by other men. Women's network ties linking them to others tend to be weak, that is, a tie tends to be either a friendship tie with another woman or an instrumental tie, typically with a man (Ibarra, 1992). Men's ties tend to be strong, that is, a tie tends to be both friendship and instrumental. Men's ties are also more likely than women's to link them to powerful coalitions in organizations (Brass, 1985).

These differences in network characteristics are related to differential career success for men and women. Women's career success is hampered by their lack of centrality in male networks and dominant coalitions (Brass, 1985). Moreover, differences in men and women's communication patterns as suggested by Deborah Tannen's (1990) work may further complicate this issue in that if women and men don't communicate in the same way, important advice conferred on women by men may be misconstrued. In addition, women's weak network ties do not confer the same promotion benefits as those accorded to men who have similarly weak ties (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1982). One explanation is that weak ties may be less useful for people, like women, who are in "insecure positions" or lack credibility than for people like men who are secure and credible without strong ties (Granovetter, 1982; Burt, 1992; Ibarra, 1992). Women who lack legitimacy within the inner circles of the organization may need strong ties to strategic players to signal their legitimacy and advance (Burt, 1992; Ibarra, 1992).

One powerful driver of gender differences in the nature of network relationships may be the opportunity structures provided by the organization (Ibarra, 1993). Women are often numerical minorities within organizational power elites, and consequently, they typically have a smaller set of "similar others" to draw on in developing professional relationships (Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977). A second cause of these differing network patterns may be gender role expectations. Men and women who have equivalent positions in organizations may operate in different social contexts because of different gender role expectations regarding appropriate work behavior. These different social contexts may require different network strategies to achieve similar career outcomes (Ibarra, 1997).

Gender and Role Involvement

There are gender differences in behavioral and psychological involvement in work and family roles. Behavioral involvement is the amount of time spent in work and family roles; psychological involvement is the degree of psychological identification with a role (Lobel, 1991).

Gender and time

Men and women spend different amounts of time in work and family roles (Leete and Schor, 1994). In 1989, fully employed men's work hours (all hours spent working as well

as paid leave from work) were 42.3 hours per week. Fully employed women's work hours were 36.1 hours per week. In 1989, fully employed men's family maintenance hours averaged 13.8; fully employed women's were on average 22.5. Research from the late 1990s confirms that this pattern continues to persist (Rothbard and Edwards, 1999).

For women, the factors predicting family maintenance hours include being married (increases by 200 hours per year), working in the paid labor market (reduces by 22 hours per year), having a child under the age of 3 (increases by 550 hours per year), having a child over the age of 3 (increases by 200 hours per year). For men, the factors predicting family maintenance hours include being married (increases by 100 hours per year), having a child under the age of 3 (increases by 161 hours per year), or child between 3 and 18 years (increases by 100 hours per year), and actual work hours (decreases by 20 hours per year). The variation in the household labor explained by these factors is substantially less for men than for women (Leete and Schor, 1994).

The reasons why women spend less time in the paid labor market and more time in family maintenance are social and structural. Women are continuing to enact their gendered role socialization by doing the majority of the work associated with maintaining home and family (Hochschild, 1989). At the same time the nature of work is changing toward a greater emphasis on knowledge work and hours at work are being used as indicators of both productivity and commitment (Perlow, 1998). Work structures, practices, and expectations associated with knowledge work assume that employees are willing and able to make work a priority over family (Perlow, 1998). Women who wish to compete with men in the world of knowledge work are expected to meet the same standards as the men. However, even as the norms for men and women in the workplace are the same, the norms for men and women in the family are not. Women cannot ignore the time demands of family maintenance, and given fixed resources of time and energy, the distribution of their time is balanced away from paid labor market work toward family maintenance activities.

Gender and identity

Men and women have different levels of work and family identity. Men tend to be more identified with work than women (see Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977 for a review). Conversely, women are generally more identified with family than men (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Bielby and Bielby, 1989; Parker and Aldwin, 1994). There are several explanations for gender differences in work identity, including labor market status and gender role socialization. When researchers control labor market status, work identity differences disappear (Mannheim, 1993; Mannheim, Baruch, and Tal, 1997; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977), suggesting that when women have similar work status, opportunities, and experiences as men they identify similarly with work (Bielby, 1992; Mannheim, 1993; Mannheim et al., 1997). Gender role socialization that causes men and women to treat a woman's function in the paid labor market as secondary to her function as a wife and mother may also cause gender differences in work identity (Bielby, 1992; Mannheim, 1993).

Both structural and gender role socialization explanations account for differences in family identity. Men and women face different family-related opportunities and constraints (Bielby, 1992). When men and women's household responsibilities are similar, they are equally identified with and committed to family (Bielby and Bielby, 1989).

Moreover, gender role socialization suggests that women should view family as more central to their identities than men, because norms about the division of labor regarding household and child-rearing activities place the bulk of these responsibilities on women (Bielby and Bielby, 1989; Bielby, 1992).

Gender and Role Stress

The evidence of differences between men and women in the experience of role stress and work–family conflict is mixed. First, women generally spend more cumulative time in work and family roles than men (Berk and Berk, 1979; Hochschild, 1989; Pleck, 1985). In some studies, accumulated role time (often called role overload) leads to greater stress and work–family conflict for women (e.g., Greenhaus, Bedeian, and Mossholder, 1987; Gutek, Searle, and Klepa, 1991). In other studies, the time spent in work and family roles, separately or combined has inconsistent effects on women's family stress and well-being (e.g., Pleck, 1985). Furthermore, women may experience greater family stress than men, and men may experience greater work stress than women (Gutek et al., 1991).

There are several explanations for these mixed findings. The rational explanation is that actual structural determinants such as time spent in a role are associated with increased stress and conflict in that role. The logic is that because women tend to spend more time on family and household activities than men do (Berk and Berk, 1979; Gutek et al., 1991; Pleck, 1985), women experience greater conflict and stress from the family than men. Likewise, because men tend to spend more time in work activities than women do (Pleck, 1985), they should experience greater conflict and stress from work than women. Although some support exists for the rational explanation, the findings are not consistent.

Although women do spend longer hours in family-related activities than men, they often report no greater conflict and stress, perhaps because of gender role expectations (Gutek et al., 1991). This explanation rests on the persistence of traditional gender role norms depicting work as the proper domain for men and family as the proper domain for women. It proposes that additional time spent in one's appropriate gendered domain will be less of an imposition and generate less role stress and conflict than additional time spent in one's opposite gender domain (Gutek et al., 1991).

A third explanation for gender differences in role stress and conflict relates to work and family structures and people's opportunities for control. Karasek's (1979) demands and control model explains that the degree of stress and conflict people perceive depends jointly on their role demands and the degree of control they have over those role demands. Work–family research reports that women's work and family role demands are higher than men's and that men have more control over their time than women (e.g., Duxbury, Higgins, and Lee, 1994; Pleck, 1985). That dual-earner women are less able to manage work and family than dual-career women is also evidence supporting Karasek's demands and control model (Duxbury and Higgins, 1994). Dual-career women spend more time in paid employment than dual-earner women, yet report less stress and conflict. Likewise, they spend the same amount of time in family activities as dual-earner women, but report less family stress and conflict. Consistent with the predictions of the demands and control model, dual-career women have more control over their work and family demands.

Gender and the Work–Family Interface

Men and women often use different strategies to manage the work–family interface. Men tend to compartmentalize and segment roles more than women do (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993; Crosby, 1991). More men use a segmented approach to dealing with work and family whereas more women use a synergistic mental model (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993). A segmented model is one where work and family roles are kept mentally separate, in contrast to a synergistic mental model where they are integrated. Women are more likely than men to manage multiple roles simultaneously, whether because of preference, need or both (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993). Women may be more facile with the interplay between multiple roles than men because women both have a greater need for and get more practice at juggling (Crosby, 1991). Women may find it easier to generate synergies between work and family, whereas men may view the two roles as separate and distinct.

A segmented versus synergistic mental model may reflect differences in the way men and women cope with the work–family interface. Coping by separating work and family roles may appear appropriate and natural to a person with a segmented mental model (Lambert, 1990; Piotrkowski, 1979). Because men generally have more segmented mental models of work and family than women do, they may naturally cope by segmenting work and family roles.

Differences in gender role expectations for men and women may explain why men and women have different mental models of work and family (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993; Eagly, 1987). Mental models are akin to the idea of gender schemas (Valian, 1998). Gender schemas are cognitive repositories of internalized societal expectations. Gender schemas affect attitudes and behaviors. Often what is imaginable (although subject to important limitations) for a female professional in terms of parental leave, reduced schedule, or flex time, is unthinkable for a male professional. Both men and women believe that it is more difficult for a male professional to maintain a positive impression in the organization while negotiating a reduced schedule than it is for a female professional (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993). As a result, societal expectations residing in our gender schemas may make it more difficult for men than women to think synergistically about work and family roles.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the first part of our meta-principle that men and women experience work and family differently may include affective responses to work and family roles, such as satisfaction and commitment. First, gender differences that occasionally appear in job attitudes such as job satisfaction disappear when researchers control for job characteristics, and other demographic factors such as tenure, age, education, income, and occupational level (Lefkowitz, 1994). Although men and women may achieve marital satisfaction in different ways (Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff, 1998), no gender differences are evident in the marital satisfaction research. Second, although there are differences in men and women's role involvement in terms of psychological identification and time devoted to a role, there is no consistent relationship between the affective commitment that men and women display towards their organizations or families (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

Social comparison processes may explain the lack of differences in satisfaction. Men may refer to other men and women to other women in making the social comparisons on which satisfaction is based. For example, women comparing themselves to other employed women in their acquaintance may evaluate their working conditions more positively than if they compared themselves to similarly employed men. The structural demands of work and family roles and people's opportunities for exit may explain why there are no differences in commitment for men and women. Role demands may require similar levels of commitment from men and women because role behaviors are often prescribed and limited. Likewise, the opportunities that men and women have for exiting a particular work or family situation may be similar. For example, in a relatively tight labor market and a society where exiting family situations is commonplace, men and women may both have opportunities to leave a job and find a new one, or to divorce and remarry.

There are also exceptions to the second part of our meta-principle that recognizing gender differences will help promote equal opportunity. Recognizing these differences is the first step in promoting equal opportunity. But recognition is not sufficient to promote equal opportunity, if people do not implement changes to work and family structures.

Levers for Change and Case Studies

The differences that men and women experience in work and family roles are likely to continue if the factors affecting the opportunity structure of men and women remain the same. In short, recognizing differences is not sufficient to equalize opportunities for men and women. In order to effect change, contribution must replace face time in the way work is evaluated. Moreover, while progress in socializing boys and girls to take non sex-role dictated family responsibilities has been made since the onset of the feminist revolution in the 1970s, acceptance of non-traditional role behaviors, especially for men, is holding back further progress that can be spurred by highlighting more non-traditional role models. So too has progress been made in the sex-typing of jobs, and so too is more progress necessary. Where will the pressure for continued progress come from? External factors, such as the tight labor market, are one source of pressure. The tight labor market may cause employers to re-evaluate work structures and redesign jobs to be more flexible and appealing to women, or to search more broadly and identify women who otherwise would not have been considered. As more and more women take jobs that were traditionally male, the sex-typing of those jobs will disappear, unless the job becomes seen as a feminine job. More dual-career families and more single-parent families will ultimately affect gender role socialization because these changes will produce more alternative models of family structure. Change is likely to be slow and occur in pockets where social environmental factors stimulate and reinforce men and women who are willing to push the boundaries of work and family structures.

Case study: change at Hewlett Packard

One pocket where change is evident is at Hewlett Packard (Abelson, 1999). Hewlett Packard's newly appointed CEO, Carleton Fiorina, is a woman, one of three female

CEOs among the Fortune 500. The groundwork for this appointment has been years in the making. Over the past seven years, Hewlett Packard has made work–life issues a priority. Nearly all employees determine their own work hours to some extent; a large number opt to work at home at least some of the time; about 12 percent have a formal telecommuting arrangement. Why did this happen? Talent in the electronics industry is a scarce commodity. Turnover of seasoned female managers in the early 1990s was significant and the chief executive in 1992, Lewis E. Platt, knew what managing work and family meant.

In 1981 when Platt was a rising general manager at HP, his wife Susan handled the child-rearing and housekeeping chores. When Susan died, all of her roles and responsibilities fell to Platt. He recalls that HP was a white male haven, and says, "here I was a white male, doing really well at HP and I was suddenly thrust into a different role." According to Platt, the sudden change in his family structure shattered his old assumptions that any difficulties women had in the workplace were of their own making. "I couldn't cope any better than they did," says Platt, comparing himself to female managers with families. Platt says he came to understand the ebb and flow of careers. He admits that in 1981 he was probably a marginal employee juggling grief over his wife's death, his responsibilities to his children, and his job, but he realized that one day he would be able to come back and give HP the time and energy to be a senior manager.

The opportunity structures depicted here at HP are rare. They came about because of labor market demands and the family experience of one key male manager who was willing to cut back at work for family, and then able to ramp back up his involvement at work when relieved of some family responsibilities. There are so few other examples of change in opportunity structure that it is impossible to know whether all four factors affecting opportunity structure must change for men and women to experience work and family roles similarly, or whether change in one factor is sufficient to bring about change to the system.

Case study: barriers to women in corporate leadership

The HP case described above is a positive example of how changing the opportunity structures for men and women can promote equal opportunity and pave the way for talented, motivated professionals to change their experiences of work and family. Such cases are few and far between. Catalyst's 1996 study of women in corporate leadership identifies many barriers to changing women's opportunity structures that still exist. Change has been slow. Catalyst's study reveals that only 23 percent of women executives believe that opportunities for women have improved greatly during the last five years. When asked to identify the three factors holding women back, 52 percent cite stereotyping and preconceptions about women, 49 percent cite exclusion from informal networks of communications, and 47 percent cite the lack of significant general management or line experience. These factors correspond closely to gender role socialization, sex-typing of jobs, and work structures, respectively. Regarding work–family balance, women executives reported that they employed several strategies including purchasing domestic and child-care services. Women executives also cited a supportive partner as critical for managing personal and professional commitments. These strategies for managing work and family balance entail changing family structures where women are typically in

charge of home maintenance activities, freeing up their time to take advantage of work-related opportunities. These strategies also reveal the importance of financial resources and personal support for changing family structures and overcoming barriers to opportunity.

Although women executives still face barriers to opportunity as shown by the Catalyst study, several levers for change do exist. In particular, senior women in the Catalyst study identified several company-initiated strategies that could help change existing opportunity structures, such as changing the structure of work and minimizing the sex-typing of jobs. In particular, 55 percent suggested the identification and development of high-potential employees, 50 percent cited giving women high-visibility assignments, and 33 percent argued that cross-functional job rotations would increase women's opportunities for career advancement. CEOs surveyed in the same study agreed that giving women high-visibility assignments was important (74 percent) and endorsed several other effectiveness strategies: 54 percent believed that succession planning should incorporate gender diversity, 44 percent believed in instituting formal mentoring programs, and 41 percent thought individual managers should be held accountable for women's advancement. Despite the promise of these strategies many are in the early stages or have not yet been initiated. Only time will tell how effective they will prove to be.

These two case studies illustrate the ways that gender differences can affect men and women's work and family experiences via different opportunity structures. In particular, with these cases we have illustrated how one element of men and women's work and family experiences, career success, is affected by both barriers and changes to opportunity structures as shown in our model.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our meta-principle – promote equal opportunity by recognizing that men and women face differing experiences of work and family – is critical for understanding how work and family issues play out in our organizations and our lives. Moreover, our model of opportunity structures and gender differences allows us to pinpoint several levers for change that may promote equal opportunity by helping us to recognize gender differences and change opportunity structures in the ways men and women experience work and family.

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