Women and career advancement:
Issues and opportunities☆

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We hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in.

— Sheryl Sandberg

Ladies if we want to rule the world — or even gain an equitable share of leadership positions — we need to stop leaning in. It's killing us. We need to fight for our right to lean back and put our feet up.

— Rosa Brooks

Rather than telling women to match men's behavior, we should be encouraging everyone to lean back, to emulate more feminine leadership style that is better correlated with society's well-being.

— Catherine Vaughan

The career advancement of women has been a subject of abundant research, discussion, and debate for decades. As more women began and continued to enter the workforce, organizations have been steadily implementing programs and policies to support women's advancement. In addition, governments have created laws, enacted regulations, set policies, and published guidelines to help individuals and organizations avoid unfair practices such as employment discrimination against women and to realize the benefits of a more diverse workforce. Research to date has examined the advancement of women in their careers from multiple angles — the individual characteristics that contribute to or detract from a woman's success, the impact of the work

environment, coworkers, and managers/leaders on women's advancement, the integration of work and non-work lives for women, and the interplay of social, gender role, and power structure dynamics on women's success.

Much research and popular literature has been produced on the topic and career advice for women has become a prominent and regular feature in the popular press. With the proliferation of research and practical advice available it would seem that we have ample information on women and careers. However, as illustrated in the contrasting opening quotes, much of the advice provided is conflicting or inconsistent, at times presenting a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" dilemma. For example, women are advised to show more assertiveness and initiative within the work environment, but do so at the risk of violating gender norms and others' expectations of how a female leader should and should not act. The oft-noted observation that the same qualities (e.g., assertiveness; ambition; outspokenness) that earn men descriptions of being leader-like, motivated, enthusiastic, high potential, and a "go-getter," stand a greater chance of labeling women as bossy, bitchy, opinionated, and too emotional, is an example of this inconsistency.

In recent years, Twitter and viral videos have raised consciousness about the challenges women face within the workplace and in society. For example, the public has been informed through a series of viral videos (e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TmscdapDHg) that it is not okay to ask women they do not know to "smile." At the same time, women must also be aware of the danger of *resting bitch face* (RBF), a term used to describe women whose regular facial features can make them appear unhappy or uninterested — a malady ascribed to women but not men. Being afflicted with RBF can have negative career repercussions for women because stereotypes and gender role expectations dictate that women are expected to be warm and caring at all times. Yet seemingly innocuous behavior such as saying "I am sorry"

has been identified as a potential career-killer for women. Said too often or in the wrong context, it can make women appear unfit for leadership by undermining their gravitas or perceived power. A popular Pantene ad (http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/ad-day-sequel-viral-smash-pantene-urges-women-stop-apologizing-158410) and a skit by comedian Amy Schumer (http://happyplace.someecards.com/really-sorry/amy-schumer-wrote-a-sketch-about-how-women-say-theyre-sorry-too-much-sorry/) further underscore the ramifications of women's tendency to often apologize (and the need to curb such behavior).

As a result of these inconsistent messages and expectations of women, navigating one's career can feel like walking through a minefield, with the direction one should be heading uncertain and the danger of career derailment lurking at every corner. On the positive side, several efforts have been launched to help change the conversation about women. The ''#AskHerMore'' campaign that started during the 2015 movie awards season and continues today was intended to coax reporters to ask women about their work and not just who designed the dresses they are wearing. A campaign to change the stock photos that are often used to depict women (think sexy librarian or a 1980s power suit with shoulder pads to represent career women; frazzled woman holding crying baby to represent working mothers) has also been waged. Still, much opportunity remains to help advance women's career success.

With the backdrop of recent popular discussions of women's career advancement in mind, we address three questions: (1) Are women advancing in the workforce at rates similar to that of men and is the rate of advancement changing? (2) What are some of the main issues that differentially affect the advancement of men and women, and how are they exerting influence? (3) Understanding this, what practical implications can be drawn and what can individuals, organizations, and society in general do to support women's advancement?

Our article unfolds as follows. We begin by setting the stage through a review of background information, highlighting employment statistics of women to establish the current status of women's advancement in the workforce. We then turn attention to five issues that shape women's careers. Our selection of issues is informed by the authors' collective experience as producers of knowledge concerning careers and as practitioners involved in the career coaching and development of others. We discuss how these issues come into play at different career and life stages and highlight some relevant research findings.

The issues or themes we discuss vary with regard to the degree that they involve primarily individual, organizational, or societal factors. As will be seen, often multiple factors interact to affect, influence, and determine implications for a particular issue or theme. Thus, we do not infer that the issues we have identified reside at any specific level and/or can be rectified through action at any one level. Rather, for each issue we provide a set of actions that individuals, organizations, or societal institutions such as government could take to address it. Building upon the notion that the themes and issues affecting women's advancement are complex, we took a ''design'' thinking approach to offering a multi-pronged set of actions at all points of influence. Design problems are like life in that they are made up of constraints that involve time, money, age, location, and circumstance. Design thinking encourages new ways of thinking and problem solving. We contend that by harnessing and harmonizing efforts that involve individuals, organizations, and society, we can derive integrated solutions to women's career advancement that involve and improve the whole system.

WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORKFORCE

Data from Catalyst tell a compelling story about the number of professional women in the workforce at different organizational levels. Within U.S. S&P 500 companies, women comprise 45.0% of the labor force, 36.8% of first/mid-level officials and managers, 25.1% of executive/senior-level officials and managers, hold 19.2% of board seats, and make up 4.6% of CEOs. Although the relative percentages vary, this pattern holds across a wide variety of occupations. Within the field of law, women constitute 47.2% of law school students, 45.4% of Associate positions, and 19.5% of Partner positions. Women account for 78.4% of the health care and social assistance labor force, but only 14.6% of executive officers and 12.4% of boards of directors. Across all fields of academics, although women held 43.4% of all tenure track positions in 2013, they held only 37.5% of tenured positions. Data from 2013−2014 show that within business schools women comprise 23.6% of tenured faculty and 19% of full professors. A 2010 U.S. National Research Council (NRC) report shows a significant decline in the representation of women in faculty positions at Research Intensive Institutions as one moves through the Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor ranks.

As the following examples illustrate, these patterns persist when looking beyond U.S. borders. Among developed nations, less than one-third of women are managers, with estimates that range from 35% (France, United States) to 21% (Luxembourg). In 2009, only 13 of the world's largest 500 corporations was led by a female CEO. In most regions, the percentage of women who served in government parliamentary seats in 2009 was below 20%, and women were consistently underrepresented as judges in regional and international courts. In 2013, a mere 12.7% of faculty positions were held by women within Japan's top universities, and only 22.4% of faculty positions were held by women within the U.K.'s top universities.

Although these statistics clearly demonstrate that the glass ceiling remains pervasive, there are also positive trends, beginning with substantial changes in educational attainment. Since 1970, women's enrollment in tertiary education has increased seven-fold, compared to four-fold for men. Statistics show that the educational attainment of women has steadily increased at both the undergraduate and graduate level. In fact, as far back as the mid-1990s women began earning more undergraduate degrees than men. In 2009−2010, women in the U.S. earned 57.4% of bachelor's degrees, 62.6% of master's degrees and 53.3% of doctoral degrees. Similar patterns are shown across the globe, with

the exception of less developed and impoverished nations. These are encouraging results, pointing to the advancement and progress that women have made in obtaining the educational requirements important for career advancement.

Labor force participation has also made some gains. A report from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development shows the gender gap in labor force participation has steadily declined from 1980 through 2010; only South-East Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa have a significant labor force participation gender gap of over 30%. However, the same report finds this change is due in part to increases in women's part-time employment, such that women now outnumber men in part-time positions around the world. These part-time positions are often less secure, provide less advancement and training opportunities, and provide less compensation, thus limiting opportunities for women's advancement.

Rates of change in high-status positions show slow, yet steady, progress. Over the last 20 years, the percentage of women in U.S. Fortune 500 board seats has increased from 9.6% in 1995 to 16.9% in 2013. Similarly, the representation of women on boards of large listed companies in the European Union have increased from 11.9% in 2010 to 17.8% in 2013. From 2009 to 2013, the percentage of Fortune 500 executive officer positions held by women increased from 13.5% to 14.6%. The percentage of women in CEO and executive positions in large listed companies in the European Union have similarly grown from 12% to 16%.

Overall, it is encouraging to note that progress has been made in terms of educational gains, labor force participation, and to some extent executive-level attainment. Still, the stark inverse relationship with regard to the total numbers of women (relative to men) in positions of increasing responsibility, rank, and/or leadership remains. We know a problem exists, but the reasons behind these differences are often controversial. Sheryl Sandberg's message is that women can succeed at the upper levels by "leaning in"; that is, behaving and working with confidence and a strong work ethic. The subtitle of *Lean In* is *Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (emphasis added). The existence of gender bias is acknowledged and viewed as an obstacle to overcome. Critics, who view the cultural and economic obstacles faced by women as ostensibly insurmountable represent the other side of the debate. Anne-Marie Slaughter, for instance, argues that Sandberg's approach assigns blame to the victim (i.e., women) and distracts attention away from the lack of institutional support that makes it extremely difficult for women to combine parenthood and high-level careers.

It is human nature to want to assign blame. We know from decades of research, however, that *both* the individual and the situation are accountable for women's stifled career advancement. We also know that the interplay between individuals and situations is complex, with each impacting the other in cause-and-effect relationships. Debates about individual versus institutional causes of gender inequity distract from the day-to-day realities that women face in making decisions that impact their careers. Thus, we now turn our attention to teasing out a select set of the factors that researchers and practitioners indicate are impacting the advancement of women in the workplace and identify action steps to address each.

ISSUES THAT IMPACT WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

Gender Roles, Self-concept, and Career Decision-making

Vocational decisions and subsequent career advancement are guided, in part, by expected gender roles and self-concept. Young children tend to have relatively high self-esteem, and we know that on average, boys and girls have the same self-esteem in childhood. However, self-esteem begins to decline during adolescence, particularly for girls. While self-esteem begins to increase again in adulthood, the gender gap persists, with women showing lower self-esteem than men on average until it narrows in old age.

Signals from society contribute to gendered differences in self-concept. The media bombards young girls with messages that convey their worth to society comes from their appearance and sexual appeal. Across many countries and forms of media, women more often than men are portrayed in revealing clothing, in ways that suggest sexual readiness, and as decorative objects rather than as whole persons. In a 2013 *Organizational Dynamics* article, Souha Ezzedeen provides a fascinating look at how women are portrayed in the movies. Women with successful careers are often depicted as not being fun or alternatively as promiscuous, nasty to others, neurotic, or as inept at mothering (think Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*).

Women are demeaned in other ways. For example, phrases such as "like a girl" (e.g., throws like a girl) when used as an insult, imply that doing something "like a girl" is ineffective. Insults that objectify women, even when levied against boys, further contribute to the denigration of the female persona. Such messages can send signals that erode the confidence of young women, set unrealistic (and often incorrect) expectations about the requirements for and implications of objective career success, and sway women away from career advancement pursuits.

Willingness to compete is another consideration that varies across gender. Access to resources in many domains of society is often regulated through competition. Thus the willingness to enter competition and to perform in competitive situations can inhibit or facilitate access to resources, opportunities, and decisions. Willingness to compete follows an inverted U shape across the lifespan, peaking in the 50s. Importantly, there are mean gender differences such that men are more willing to compete than women across all age groups, adding credence to the notion that women may be less likely to compete in the boardroom. With lower average levels of self-esteem or competitive drive, women may limit the reach of their career goals or make vocational decisions that limit potential advancement and growth options.

Vocational psychology has long informed us that when planning for their careers, women take into account how their work will fit with romantic relationships and with having children. Likely influenced by societal expectations, women are inclined to consider family and relationship goals and issues prior to starting their careers. Although this could be considered strategic from a broader "life planning"

perspective, the consequence of this forethought is that in anticipation of family considerations, women may limit their career options from the start.

Academic careers are an example. Consider the following statistics from the U.S.-based 2010 NRC report: ''In 95 percent of the tenure-track and 100 percent of the tenured positions where a man was the first choice for a position, a man was ultimately hired. In contrast, in cases where a woman was the first choice, a woman was ultimately hired in only 70 percent of the tenure-track and 77 percent of the tenured positions. That is, women are more likely to turn down positions for family-related reasons. Conversely, by not considering these family-related issues to the same degree as women, men as a group (realizing there are likely individual differences) may enter their careers or make early career decisions with a wider range of job opportunities with fewer limitations that, over the long-term, increase exponentially the advancement opportunities available to them. Young women's confidence and willingness to compete for early career opportunities are critical, given that early promotions and advancement beget long-term career attainment. Findings based on career tournament theory show individuals who have early career success are given special privileges (e.g., sponsorship from a high level mentor; participation in high potential developmental programs), which across time provide a cumulative advantage in subsequent tournament rounds. Recommended actions are shown in the box below.

Call to Action

To address issues associated with gender roles, self-concept, and early career decisions on advancement:
Women can...
- → study the profiles and tactics of leaders who have successfully integrated both family and career, and model their efforts.
- → surround yourself with people who support, believe in, and encourage you. Avoid naysayers who sap energy and motivation. Ignore negative messages suggesting women can't do something because of their gender.
- → seek out and create opportunities, such as mentoring and training that will provide you with opportunities to advance your skills, build self-confidence, accomplish career goals, and make unconstrained choices and opportunities.
- → reject the media's traditional portrayal of women. Recognize advertiser's job is usually to sell... not to empower. Take a critical and skeptical eye.

Men can...
- → serve as role models by refraining from using gender-laden terms and phrases (e.g., ''you throw like a girl'') as means of insulting or critiquing women or men. Even when used in a humorous context (as they often are), using these terms send imply that it is appropriate to judge or demean others based on their gender.
- → hold your peers, both male and female, accountable for not using terms or phrases that objectify or demean others based on their gender.

Organizations can...
- → re-consider promotion clocks that conflict with biological clocks (e.g., 7 years for partner status at law firms) that deter women from entering the field.
- → create learning and development opportunities (e.g., mentoring programs; leadership development courses) and make them equally available to both men and women, in order that women have equal opportunity to compete, grow confidence, and develop competence.
- → provide women with equal opportunity to compete and fair treatment when doing so.
- → have company outings where networking, resource sharing, and important company information exchange can occur based on activities in which both men and women tend to want to participate (versus activities that are typically gendered such as a golf game).

Government institutions, universities, and organizations can...
- → provide training and/or career planning services that enable both men and women with the resources they need to make informed early career choices.

The Media can...
- → re-examine its role and responsibilities in reinforcing gender stereotypes that negatively impact the way in which women are viewed, as well as what it is normal for them to do and achieve.
- → provide messages that encourage positive change. The #LikeAGirl campaign is one example (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/02/always-super-bowl-ad_n_6598328.html).

Threats to the Status Quo

Once in the workforce women face a myriad of issues. These issues, and the extent to which they are viewed as a threat, change across the span of women's careers. Kecia Thomas and her colleagues used the term ''from pet to threat'' to refer to the change in status that women (particularly those who are minorities) may face as they progress through different career stages. Early on, women may be welcomed into the workplace and be treated as ''pets.'' As described by Thomas and colleagues, this may include overprotection from dominant groups and other forms of seemingly benevolent treatment that serves to ensure that women remain in subordinate roles. As women progress in their career and begin to occupy positions of authority, they challenge the existing order and may be perceived as a threat. These threat perceptions can create anxiety and uncertainty among others, leading those in power to subvert and challenge high achieving women.

The pet-to-threat phenomenon may play out in multiple ways in the work environment. Research from Catalyst reveals that compared to the type of mentoring that men receive, women are more likely to receive mentoring that implies they are less capable. In their *Harvard Business Review* article, Herminia Ibarra, Nancy Carter, and Christine Silva discuss how women tend to be over-mentored and under-sponsored. Sponsorship involves going beyond feedback and advice. A sponsor advocates for the mentee with senior executives and lobbies

for their mentees to be promoted. Ibarra and colleagues find that women are more likely to be provided with seemingly benevolent advice about understanding themselves rather than guidance to move forward in their careers, while men are more likely to be engaged in strategic planning about taking charge in new roles.

Threat perceptions may impact judgments concerning the attributes and performance of women. Competence is incongruent with female gender norms and expectations, generating feelings of threat and negative evaluations. A fascinating study by Inesi and Cable published in *Personnel Psychology* in 2014 demonstrated that the accomplishments that enable both men and women job applicants to be hired (e.g., educational attainment) can result in a drop in the subsequent performance evaluations of women. Women with stronger competence signals were given worse performance evaluations than were women with weaker competence signals. These findings emerged particularly when the evaluator was male and high in social dominance and when the female's performance was depicted as high. As the authors explain, visible accomplishments by women disrupt the existing gender hierarchy and threaten male evaluators. Rigorous research also reveals that men are routinely rated more favorably than are women for male-dominated jobs, especially when men are the evaluators.

Other recent research shows that working for a woman who holds more status and/or power elicits a feeling of threat and assertive behavior from male subordinates. The effect is minimized when women emphasize their administrative agency (e.g., focus on getting the task done) versus ambition (e.g., aspiration to climb the corporate ladder). Ambitious behaviors are sometimes viewed as emasculating of men.

"Turf protection" was also evident in a recent econometric study. Researchers Cristian Dezsö and colleagues examined data from 1500 S&P firms from 1991 to 2011. They found that once a company had appointed a woman to an executive position, the chances of appointing a second woman dropped by about 50%. The researchers suggest that the mechanism underlying the findings is the enactment of social norms by men who see female advancement as a zero sum game. The authors considered the possibility of a "queen bee" effect (when a woman succeeds in her career and does not help other women do the same), but such an effect was ruled out given that companies with female CEOs had better records at hiring subsequent women into senior positions than did companies with male CEOs. Recommended actions are shown in the box below.

Call to Action

To address the issues associated with threats to the status quo:
Women can...
- → provide unequivocal, and where possible, quantifiable information about your performance to help counteract biased evaluations.
- → within the workplace, focus on administrative agency (e.g., focus on getting the task done) to avoid cuing male masculinity threats in contexts where this is likely.

- → look for organizational cultures, strive to work for managers, and seek out mentors, that appreciate your contributions and value the output of all individuals regardless of gender.
- → report incidents of behavior that potentially conflict with fair and equal treatment across gender (e.g., being asked about family duties, pregnancy timelines, or motherhood aspirations in a job interview) to the appropriate authorities.
- → proactively advocate for mentoring sponsorship, and other related learning and development activities, to be provided to women as often as men.

Men can...
- → be cognizant of your own potential biases and mindful of how those are translated into behavior that may seem innocuous but potentially detrimental to women's advancement (e.g., being overly protective or helpful early in a female's career).
- → support and sponsor women in the organization the same way you support and sponsor men.
- → evaluate the contributions, performance, and accomplishments of women against the same standards applied to men
- → be mindful and recognize when your evaluations may be driven by threat, rather than objective information about workplace behaviors and performance.

Organizations can...
- → provide managers with training on valid and non-discriminatory recruitment, screening, hiring, performance evaluation, promotion, and termination human resources practices.
- → provide managers tools shown to reduce reliance on heuristics and bias, such as empirically validated behaviorally anchored rating scales for evaluating job candidates and employees.
- → set voluntary minimum standards such as 30 or 40 percent for female leadership on boards. Such a goal could indirectly address threats to the status quo that hold women back from advancement.
- → investigate your cultural norms, policies, and practices that reflect male leadership and promote gender disparities.

Distribution of Unpaid Labor

Arguably, greater discussion and research attention has been geared toward ways to empower women within the workplace than toward ways to empower men within the home. Moreover, in many ways women's roles have changed more so than have men's roles in that women across the globe have taken on more workplace roles to a greater extent than men have taken on nonpaid caregiving and domestic responsibilities.

One explanation for why the prevailing division of unpaid labor remains entrenched is because the expected role of men in society is more circumscribed than is that of women. Social psychologists Vandello and Bosson have written about the notion of "manhood" and what it means to be a man. Their research suggests that manhood is thought to be pre-

carious in that it must be earned, once it is achieved it can be lost, and that it primarily relies on others to confirm it. Given these societal expectations, it is not surprising that men may feel threatened when power and social orders are challenged.

One way in which men attempt to avoid the loss of manhood is to avoid tasks and roles traditionally associated with femininity. This may be one explanation for why men contribute less than women do to household tasks thought to be within the woman's domain such as routine meal preparation and laundry. Minimizing contributions to childcare and routine household tasks is a way by which men reinforce the existing social order, avoid appearing weak to others, and eschew the feminine.

Complicating this dynamic are social stereotypes and cultural pressures levied upon both men and women. In their oft-portrayed role as "providers," men are traditionally expected to provide the financial resources necessary to ensure the family's access to food, shelter, medicine, material goods, etc. Being an equal (or more) partner in unpaid duties within the household risks violating this cultural expectation or perceived opportunity/time to provide in such a manner. Men may experience esteem and anxiety pressures when engaged in unpaid household work and fear how others will judge them. Interestingly, they may be even more inclined to perceive a threat and react likewise when they encounter an ambitious, successful female in the work environment (i.e., a female "more effective" in the role of provider). The traditional "nurturer" role assigned to women, prescribing that their "place is in the home," places similar pressures on them. A survey conducted in 2010 by Reuters/Ipsos suggests that, while the perception that women belong in the home differs substantially across different countries, this perception is still prevalent in many places. The importance of such perceptions can be seen when comparing this data to alternative rankings of country-level gender equity. Countries that less frequently endorsed the perception that women belong in the home (e.g., France, Sweden, Argentina) are ranked as having smaller gender gaps and more work-life balance than those that more frequently endorsed this perception (e.g., India, Turkey, Japan).

When people disparage the value of home-making and child-rearing, it demeans the people who do them, thereby potentially undermining both their self-esteem and effectiveness in the work place. Similarly, stereotypes of "women are nurturers" and "men are providers" can discourage and undermine the aspirations and advancement of women in the workplace and dissuade men from taking on the role of caregiver. Sharing unpaid work may provide men with a broader perspective as to the ways they can contribute to society. Recommended actions are shown in the box below.

Call to Action

To address the issues associated with the distribution of unpaid labor:
Women can...
  → actively negotiate and discuss home and work responsibilities with your partner; seek an agreed upon division of labor that facilitates both career and life goals as individuals and as a couple.

Men can...
  → share household and parenting responsibilities, conveying that this is worthy, meaningful work.
  → be mindful of situations where women are routinely placed within "caretaker" or nurturer roles more often than men, either in formal situations (e.g., taking notes during a meeting; preparing travel plans for a team; creating and distributing meeting minutes) or informal situations (e.g., picking up food and supplies for an office party; picking up office supplies).
Organizations can...
  → provide work arrangements that allow for greater flexibility for both men and women (e.g., flexible working arrangements; job sharing) in order that they both have opportunity to balance work and home responsibilities (see the papers in this special issue on work life balance by Ellen Kossek, as well as by Denise Rousseau and colleagues on idiosyncratic deals, for further details).

Combining Work and Caregiving

A perennial question seems to be whether or not women can be both high achieving professionals and caring mothers. In an analysis of media comments to Marissa Mayer being appointed as CEO of Yahoo while pregnant, Mayer was often judged with respect to her performance as a mother both in U.S. and non-U.S. news outlets. Bloggers and blog commenters assumed women could not "have it all," and viewed Mayer primarily as a workaholic, absentee mother who would abdicate her childcare responsibilities by hiring nannies. The same themes emerged again when Mayer recently announced she is pregnant with twins. For example, one commenter stated, "I wonder how well adjusted her kids will be with a woman who decides ahead of time and medical evaluation that she will work throughout her pregnant (sic)." When Loretta Rush was only the second woman to be named to the Indiana Supreme Court and then the first to be chosen as chief justice, Rush was asked if she would be able to balance her responsibilities as a parent and as a Supreme Court justice. The three men under consideration for the position were not asked that question.

Society exerts strong expectations for women, but particularly for mothers. Motherhood is expected to serve as the central element of a woman's identity. The unreasonable standard of parenting set by the "motherhood mandate" sends the implicit message that it is impossible for women to be successful both at home and at work. In contrast, societal expectations are less extreme and sometimes helpful for fathers, as their stereotypical primary role as *the provider* is congruent with success in the workplace.

In addition to caring for children, women in the family are also often expected to care for aging parents and relatives. Women make up an estimated 66% of caregivers; these women are typically middle-aged, married, and employed, and caring for their aging mother. Even though men provide assistance, female caregivers provide up to 50% more time providing care than their male counterparts.

Pitting caregiving against career creates pressures on women, implying one or the other must be shortchanged in the process. The data show that women give in to this pressure, sacrificing work for family (e.g., as described, even the anticipation of family relationships and issues can affect early career decision making). A study by Metlife finds women who serve as primary caretakers limit career opportunities, as 29% reported passing up promotion and training opportunities, 22% took leaves of absence, 20% switched to part-time employment, and 33% decreased their work hours.

Similar work trends are found when women become mothers. These sacrifices may be due in part to views of the primacy of a woman's role in caretaking, especially raising children. In response to a blog post on the unintended risks associated with family-friendly policies, a commentator stated: "Do today's little girls dream about the kind of daycare worker they want to raise their children (while they're at work) like they used to dream about the man they would marry someday. I hope she has a high school diploma…I hope she doesn't smoke too much…" Comments such as these serve as a stark reminder of the views held by a segment of society that believe the primary dream of a woman should be marriage and children. In a Forbes online article entitled, "Why Most Women Will Never Become CEO," writer Gene Mark states, "As much as women have achieved in earning their equality, there are still some age old cultural habits that won't die. Children need their mommies. And most moms I know, whether they have a full time job or not, want to be there for their child. I know plenty of women who admit they struggle with this instinctual tug on their gut." This illustrates the notion that women are not normal if they don't feel guilty for working. When men frame their primary role within the family as breadwinner, they may be less prone to experience this guilt.

More exemplars of men taking on familial roles can create a cultural shift that values participation in family by both men and women. Research from economists Dahl, Løken, and Mogstad, published in *The American Economic Review*, shows that when paid paternity leave is made available by law, fathers use it. This is not merely because the law exists, it is because when men begin taking leave it reduces the stigma associated with it, thereby encouraging other men to also take leave. Taking paid leave is also beneficial for father—child relationships, as men who take longer parental leave tend to participate more in childcare and are more satisfied with the relationship with their children. Men who take parental leave moreover spend more time in domestic work such as cooking, than do fathers who do not take leave. Early involvement by fathers in childrearing via parental leave essentially serves as an important gateway through which a more equitable division of unpaid labor within the home tends to occur. Recommended actions are shown in the box below.

Call to Action

To address the issues associated with combining work and caregiving:
Women can…
→ make time for yourselves and the things that bring you fulfillment (e.g., exercise, sleep, meditation, movies, socializing, hobbies); keeping yourself healthy and happy can help you stay focused and effective.

→ study and model best practices that other women leaders have used to successfully balance caregiving and work responsibilities.
Men can…
→ take a more active role in supporting and leveraging paternal leave policies in order to reduce any perceived stigma of doing so, develop stronger relationships with children, and facilitate women staying more engaged at work when they want to.
→ challenge colleagues who make decisions or comments that reinforce the destructive stereotype that *a woman's place is in the home*.
Organizations can…
→ provide and enforce policies that allow all workers to have equal opportunity to prioritize and contribute to both family and work (e.g., equal amounts of time for paternal and maternal leave).
→ recognize that home demands are not constant and that the needs of men and women in handling household and family responsibilities change over time as children develop into self-sufficient teenagers or elderly parents require more attention. Policies and practices ought to be flexible and broad to accommodate such changes.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

Across all countries and cultures, men hold greater status than do women. However, that gap is substantially smaller in some countries than in others. For example, data from the United Nations indicates that 22% of national parliamentarians were female as of January 2015. Regionally, the percentages range from 15.7% in the Pacific to 41.5% in the Nordic countries. Since 2006, the World Economic Forum has issued an annual Global Gender Gap Report, which provides information on how countries compare with regard to gender equality. Iceland has been ranked number one the last six years (2009—2014), due to a shift toward gender-focused policies. Following an economic collapse in October 2008, Iceland's government was forced to resign and Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir became Prime Minister. The crisis was viewed as an opportunity to promote gender equity and create opportunity for women. Several steps were taken to fight against the sex trade and human trafficking. In 2009, the purchasing of sexual services was made illegal, followed by a ban on strip clubs in 2010. In that year another law was passed that requires companies with over 50 employees and more than three board members to maintain a percentage of women or men on boards that cannot fall below 40%. Laws have also been passed that protect the victims of violence in close relationships.

The countries at the top of the gender equity index — which in 2014 were Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark — tend to share several features in common. These include that their economies support parents combining work and family. Policies such as mandatory paternal leave in combination with maternity leave are one example. Since 2003, Iceland has provided three months of nontransferable parental leave to both mothers and to fathers, with another three months that the couple can use as they wish. A very high

percentage of fathers take the leave. Sweden has had a nontransferable paternal leave policy since 1995. Such policies keep women in the workforce, encourage participation by both mothers and fathers in childcare, and facilitate a more equitable division of household labor. Importantly these countries also tend to rank highly in terms of the World Economic Forum Global Economic Competitiveness Index with Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark ranked as 4th, 10th, 11th, and 13th, respectively, in the 2014—2015 report.

Countries that have reduced the gender gap also have policies that promote women's leadership. For example, in the 1970s Denmark, Sweden, and Norway introduced voluntary gender quotas into political representative positions. As a result, Sweden's parliament, for example, is composed of 44.7% of women. More countries are recognizing the connection between economic growth and gender equity. As part of their plan to stimulate their economy, Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, announced a goal of having women fill 30% of public and private sector leadership positions by 2020. The prime minister also plans to expand childcare services. In March of 2015 Germany approved a quota system that requires private companies to have at least 30% of women on the supervisory board starting in 2016.

In the U.S., which ranked 20th on the gender equity index in 2014, there is no mandatory paid leave for mothers or for fathers at the federal level (three states currently have paid leave policies). Consistent with the U.S.'s more market-based economic system and culture of independence, leave is left up to market forces and individual companies to determine policy. Duration of paid leave is often gender specific and covered under medical leave policies for biological mothers. Thus, biological mothers tend to receive more time off than other new parents. For example, Google provides biological mothers with between 18 and 22 weeks of paid maternity leave while fathers, gay couples, and other parents who adopt are provided seven weeks. Other firms such as Facebook and Netflix provide all parents the same amount of leave. Such policies can enable both men and women to engage in parenting early, setting the stage for future equitable dependent caregiving. Recommended actions are shown in the box below.

Call to Action

To address the issues associated with government and societal factors:

Men and women can...
- → evaluate the policies of elected leaders for their support and advocacy of gender equity in career advancement. Support and campaign for government officials who advocate for public policies that create the conditions that foster gender equity.
- → communicate with your government representatives, at the local, state/regional, and federal level, to discuss these issues and advocate for policies that support change.

Organizations can...
- → include gender equity issues as standard content within learning and development programs in order for employees to become more aware of their prevalence, impact, and remedy.

Federal, state/regional, and local governments can...
- → model other governments that have closed the gender gap by enacting laws and regulations that encourage gender equity in the workplace and that provide equal access for men and women to resources that help them balance work and non-work responsibilities, while maintaining or increasing competitive advantage.

Educational and research institutions can...
- → continue to investigate issues impacting women's career advancement and the effectiveness of different actions to address challenges and obstacles.

Federal government and research foundations can...
- → increase the amount of funding provided to researchers and institutions that study gender inequity issues.

CONCLUSION

Based on our review of five issues impacting women's career advancement, there are a few fundamental conclusions that we suggest are important for facilitating women's career advancement. It is important to consider the related roles played individuals, organizations, and society. Women generally do well to *lean in*, especially early on in their careers. Early decisions that women make are important in that they impact the course of their career across the lifespan. In addition, men who take on a substantial role with regard to household responsibilities are helping to further break down stereotypical gender norms and expectations regarding the types of roles that men and women are "supposed" to fulfill. The messages conveyed from various media can be either a hindrance (e.g., reinforcing old stereotypes; conveying inconsistent guidance regarding career advancement) or a catalyst for changes in perceptions regarding women's career advancement (e.g., by normalizing women thriving in their careers). It is important to be aware of and to counter unconstructive implicit expectations, norms, and roles conveyed through the media.

Organizations have a role in facilitating women's career advancement, from increasing motivations of decision makers to make hiring, evaluation, and promotion choices based on gender-free, job- and performance-related criteria, to ensuring women have access to the same training, learning, and development opportunities, to creating policies that make it more possible for men and women to share equitably in both work and non-work responsibilities. This can be accomplished when organizations provide policies and guidelines, and when society provides the feedback that it is okay for men to prioritize and value family as much as work. From a macro point of view, as has been demonstrated within other countries, societal and government changes can help level the playing field. Related to this, as a society, we need to continue to work on the signals that are sent to young girls that undermine their confidence and limit their perceptions of their life choices.

Finally, and perhaps most important, while it is imperative to consider each of these factors, distinguishing cause

and effect in identifying what has led to the current state of affairs, as well as what will continue to drive change, is complicated. In all likelihood, intrapersonal (e.g., individual values and personality), interpersonal (e.g., dynamics in relationships between two or more people), perceptual (e.g., biases; prejudices), societal (e.g., cultural values such as power-distance and views on gender roles), and structural (e.g., economies; government policies) factors all interact to determine the progress of women in the workforce. This suggests that a combination of multiple integrated actions, generated and supported in collaboration by individuals and groups across a range of government, economic, behavioral science, and business disciplines, may be most efficacious in addressing the issues impacting women's career advancement. Efforts along these lines are an important endeavor and a worthwhile way to help create a more fair, equitable, and productive society.

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