

Systems of Work-Life Balance: Private And Public Investments

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ABSTRACT

We provide a retrospective of how the degree of values congruence between life domains affects women's career advancement. Values issues include the intensity with which the values are held relative to other values, how crystallized those values are across life domains, and the depth and breadth of the pivotal space created by values components. The broader the pivotal space (many values are shared) and the depth of pivotal space (number of domains in which values are jointly affirmed) are expected to improve career advancement and lead to a tidier lifestyle. Using the context of organizational contracts, and framing careers as a multiplicity of personal energy investments, allows career advancement to be broadly defined. The metric that measures the return on career investments can be expanded, leading to explicit public socio-emotional currencies in addition to the traditional economic monetized currencies.

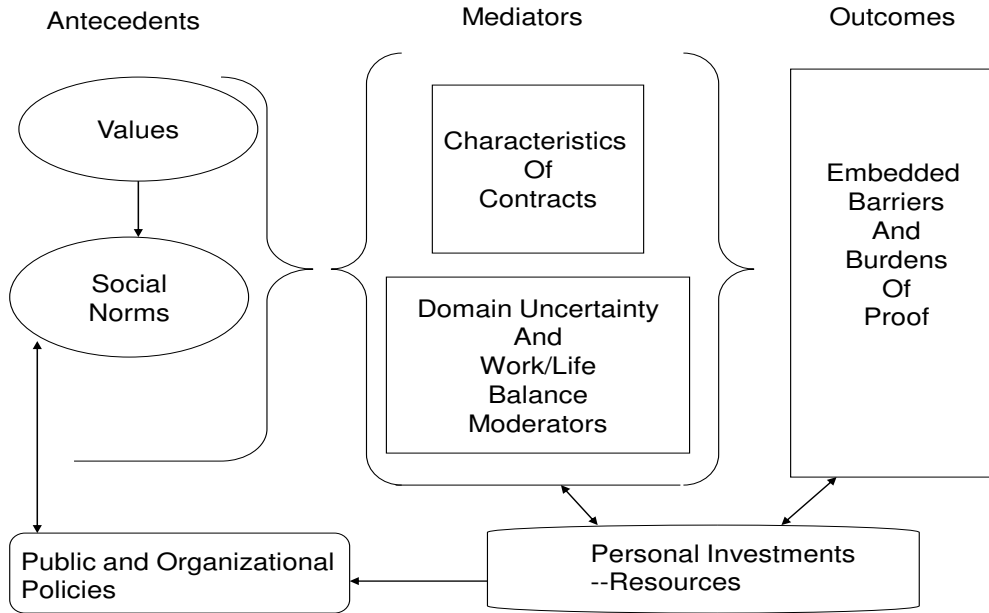
We develop a theoretical model in which values serve as antecedents and context for the characteristics of organizational contracts through which careers are manifested. Work-life balance requires investments of personal energy, time, and money from which women expect a positive rate of return, both economically (ROI - Return on Investment) and on their personal values (ROV – Return on Values). The system of values, social norms, organizational contracts, and work-life balance investments also includes embedded barriers and burdens of proof that stymie career advancement and success. From this systems perspective, the role of public and organizational policies becomes clearer.

“Sure [Fred Astaire] was great, but don't forget that Ginger Rogers did everything he did, backwards... and in high heels.” Bob Thaves, 1982

Although extant literature about the discriminatory barriers and burdens of proof that career women face is substantial (e.g., Reicht 1995), public and organizational policies tend to target a few of those barriers in isolation, rather than addressing them as a system of problems that are interconnected. Based on theoretical and empirical work in the field of organizational contracts, we propose a model (see Figure 1) that incorporates the congruence between the values held in different life domains that serve as a foundation for social norms regarding women's careers. These values serve as antecedents and context for the characteristics of organizational contracts through which careers are manifested. Further, work-life balance requires investments of personal resources (such as energy, time, and money) that are associated with expected rates of returns, both on economic dimensions and on personal values. The system of values, social norms, organizational contracts, and work-life balance investments also includes embedded barriers and burdens of proof that stymie career advancement and success. From this systems perspective, the role of public and organizational policies becomes clearer.

Figure 1

Model of Barriers and Burden of Proof for Career Women



Throughout our professional careers we have observed women juggling and balancing the myriad of commitments in their lives that are far more complex than those of their male counterparts. We begin with a comparative story about the role of “tidiness” in career endeavors in an academic setting related to us by colleagues. Two graduate students we observed were juggling their “untidy” personal lives along with graduate studies; one was living with long-distance joint custody responsibilities for her children, and the other was living a long-distance commuter marriage. One traveled hundreds of miles to visit a dying sibling’s bedside weekly, and one traveled hundreds of miles to attend to her husband during his life-extending surgery. Without a public whimper, each one attended her sibling’s and husband’s funerals. Although professors and graduate students expressed their sympathies, the students both knew that their personal lives must not interrupt their graduate studies for more than a few days.

Against this background of their untidy lives, a male professor was observed whose wife took a two-week “girls only” vacation each summer, leaving their home and children in his care. Even though his wife left a freezer of easy-to-fix meals, arrangements with neighboring women who would help with transportation to and from children’s activities, and lists of responsibilities that the older children should share, the male professor was disproportionately stressed each year during those two weeks. He came into work later in the morning and left earlier in the afternoon. He called home periodically during the day to check on the children. He worked from home several days. He let everyone around him know how tough life was. He was used to a “tidy life”, and did not adjust particularly well to the untidiness of his life during the annual sojourn.

Even with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) in the United States, another colleague related a comment made by a male professor in the late 1990s who was not in favor of letting female professors interrupt their tenure timetable for childbearing because it was his belief that then women would just have lots of babies to avoid the tenure decision. We have heard from many colleagues of women in academe who continue to be judged as professional failures during tenure-and-promotion discussions if they have given birth or adopted children, because even though the time provided by the FMLA is not legally included in their tenure clock, implicitly it is. When the total publications as a ratio of “total” months (including the FMLA months) are calculated, even informally, judgments of publication performance may be substantially less than accurate.

Malcolm Gladwell (2008) illustrates his “outlier” effect with a story about how successful ice hockey players are mostly born in the early months of a year, and that gives those players as much as eight months of growth advantage over those who were born later in the year; this birth month advantage accumulates throughout their hockey-playing years. Similarly, as one woman described her career path and her observations of other women’s career paths, she noted that when her husband faced a new opportunity, or door, along his career path, all he had to do was wave his arms to trigger the electronic eye, and the door would open. When she reached a new juncture, or door, it was like opening a bank vault – first she had to learn the combination, then she struggled to pull the heavy door open, and then she could move forward. By the time she had managed to open the door, her husband was out of sight along his path, and approaching his next opportunity. Or, as Murphy (2005:178) notes, even fair-minded men often fail to recognize that “some of their success is due to the fact that they have the wind at their backs, while women are facing into the driving wind.” It appears that being born male is an advantage that accumulates throughout men’s professional careers.

Eagly and Carli (2007) contend that the glass ceiling metaphor is not accurate, but rather, women navigate a labyrinth that is a complex journey toward a goal. For many professional women, this connotation of a maze-like context (intricate passageways and blind alleys) might be more accurate. With no straight-line alternatives, a woman who spends inordinate amounts of her scarce time attending to “life” interruptions (such as serving as an executor for an estate), the absence of any slack time resources to attend to “normal” career and life issues results in a compounding effect because the normal issues continue to accumulate, sometimes for years. Further, the metaphor of a labyrinth suggests that all the turns and passageways are navigated at one level, whereas a career is designed to advance from one level to higher levels. It may be, then, that our vision of a labyrinth should be filled with hills, and that many of the blind alleys do result in a series of glass ceilings. Perhaps the more accurate visual of a woman’s career path is the M. C. Escher lithograph of staircases (Escher 1953). When being born female is a professional disadvantage, and when each turn along a career path is accompanied by an expenditure of more energy, time, money, and associated discounting of success and values, how can we begin to modify the barriers and burdens of proof required to level the playing field?

Based on extant theoretical and empirical work (Crooker, Smith and Tabak 2002; McLean Parks 1990; McLean Parks, Kidder, and Gallagher 1998; McLean Parks and Smith 1993; 1998; 2000; 2006; Smith, Tabak, Showail, McLean Parks, and Kleist 2005), we explored the dynamic and complex circumstances within which women manage their careers. The management of their careers requires investments of resources, with opportunity costs accumulating for the paths not taken and energies expended while making one's way through the labyrinth. Just as financial investors try to optimize their portfolio of financial instruments to maximize wealth creation, we see women managing their careers similarly. Women assess the potential returns from a career investment (money, time, energy), yet experience costly reversals when they make the "wrong" investment of those resources. Even though alternative investments may have resulted in a smaller rate of return, depending on the salience of other metrics that are used to measure those returns, it is perceived by others as an investment error. For both women and men, many of the resources used in investing in one's career are finite, such as time and energy. As we will point out in this paper, other resources, such as money, often are more constrained for women than for men.

Framing the multiplicity of personal investments as a portfolio allows career advancement to be broadly defined to include home-based and volunteer-based careers in addition to the more traditional job-based or profession-based careers. Thus, the metric that is used to measure the return on investment can be expanded, which may lead to explicit socio-emotional currencies in addition to the traditional economic monetized currencies (McLean Parks and Smith 2006). For example, one metric may be to assess whether we are being "true" to our core values, such as our commitment to the joys of family obligations, while maintaining another core commitment to professional growth in our careers. Each set of values has its own type of currency for work-life balance, leading to values congruence, where values are jointly affirmed in multiple domains (McLean Parks and Smith 2000).

We assess the values associated with the domains of work/profession and family/community (Crooker, et al. 2002), and evaluate how investments in each domain complement or contradict investments in the other. In particular we focus on work-life balance issues associated with the intensity with which values are held relative to other values (Chatman 1989), how crystallized those values are across life domains, and the depth and breadth of the pivotal space created by values components (McLean Parks and Smith 2000; Crooker, et al. 2002). Pivotal space may be narrow when few values are shared, or broad when many values are shared. Further, the depth of the pivotal space, or the number of domains in which values are jointly affirmed (McLean Parks and Smith 2000), likely would improve career advancement and lead to a tidier lifestyle.

In the next section, we present seven characteristics of organizational contracts (reciprocity norms, types of resources, scope of the contract, the identity of the parties, power distribution, commensurability of the resources exchanged, and justice metrics used to measure the work of the contract), followed by a section presenting characteristics of a model of work/life balance. We illustrate how career women can adjust their portfolio of personal investment

resources (money, time, and personal energy) to optimize their returns in all life domains. We conclude with recommendations for public and organizational policy alternatives that we believe will target the core barriers and burdens of proof confronting women. Although much of our model (see Figure 1) can be applied to men as well as women, the focus of our paper is toward women's professional career development and advancement. As such, we will make gender comparisons from the perspective of the female voice.

CAREERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTRACTS

Careers, and employment relationships, are grounded in social contracting theory (Cosmides and Tooby 1987), which are composed of "normative expectations regarding the appropriateness of particular behaviors" (McLean Parks and Smith 1998:127). Social contracts imply the social norms and imperatives that govern the assumptions and interpretations that parties make about reciprocal obligations in the relationship. Social contracts are a function of particular geographic and ethnic cultures, such that norms that may be acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another. For the most part, however, we focus on norms that influence women's careers and that we feel are relatively universal. In addition, these norms consist of values that can be generalized from one culture to another.

Organizational (employment) contracts are promissory contracts, and can be characterized as transactional and relational (Macneil 1985; McLean Parks 1992; McLean Parks and Smith 1998; Rousseau and McLean Parks 1993). Characteristics of each type of contract consist of three categories: 1) content and terms, including the type of resource exchanged (Foa and Foa 1975), 2) context, including reciprocity norms and 3) the social nature of the contract, including its focus, scope, and the identity of the parties (McLean Parks and Smith 1998).

Types of Resources, Scope of Contract, and Party Identity

Transactional contracts are more-or-less closed ended and are in effect for a specific duration (e.g. temporary work), whereas relational contracts are open-ended and are in effect for an indefinite duration (e.g. long-term co-author relationships). In a transactional contract, the resource exchanged is likely to employ universalistic resources, such as money, whereas in a relational contract, the resources exchanged include those that are more particularistic, such as status or affiliation (Foa and Foa 1975; McLean Parks and Smith 1998; 2006). In an employment relationship, it is recognized that resources such as affiliation do not substitute for monetized resources, yet they are included in the contract through such terms as non-compete clauses, or the expectation of emotional work (e.g., pleasantries while serving others) (Hochschild 1979; Kimmel 2000). In a transactional contract, the identity of the parties is likely to be irrelevant, as long as the transaction is completed according to its terms. On the other hand, relational contracts such as mutual co-authorship, are quite particularistic since not everyone can work together on such a complex task.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity norms (Gouldner 1960) are universal and provide the basis for determining whether the intent of a career contract has been violated (McLean Parks 1997; McLean Parks and Smith 1998). Sahlins (1972) proposed that reciprocity may be generalized, balanced or negative. The first two of these apply in the current context. Balanced reciprocity is a quid pro quo exchange while generalized is more altruistic where one party acts for the good of another party without expectation of immediate or direct reward. Transactional contracts rely on balanced reciprocity norms and universalistic resources that are exchanged, whereas relational contracts rely on generalized reciprocity norms and particularistic resources, and the nature of the resources exchanged is especially important. With particularistic resources, the identity of a party matters, and if the resources are concrete third parties can interpret them unambiguously and they are much easier to monitor. In relational contracts, which include multiple points of reciprocity during their duration, the exchange may be so embedded in the context of the relationship that third parties may not easily identify the behaviors or their importance to the contract (McLean Parks and Smith 1998; 2006).

Commensurability of the Resources Exchanged

Commensurability, or the metric that parties use to determine the relative worth of a resource, is likely to differ depending on the type of organizational contract (McLean Parks and Smith 2006; Pruitt 1981; Sparrowe, Dirks, Bunderson, and McLean Parks 2004). Resources exchanged may be particularistic (identity of the party matters) as well as concrete (generally unambiguously interpreted by outsiders) (Foa and Foa 1971; 1975; McLean Parks and Smith 2006). Types of compensation include specific, homologous and substitute (Pruitt 1981) and isomorphic (Sparrowe, et al. 2004). Based on McLean Parks and Smith (2006), we describe each type of compensation and relate it to organizational contract characteristics. Specific compensation is non-concrete and non-particularistic, such as purchasing childcare services, and satisfies a specific need that differs from the compensation. Homologous compensation exchanges concrete and particularistic resources that are of a like kind, such as a novel for a cookbook. Substitute compensation is non-concrete and particularistic, such as teaching a class for a colleague in exchange for lawn care help at home, and is exchanged in different domains. Isomorphic compensation occurs when exact resources are exchanged that fulfill the same need in the same domain, such as coin currency for the equivalent in paper currency, and are concrete and non-particularistic.

When isomorphic commensurability is not possible, the non-quantitative aspects of the exchange are subjectively interpreted and socially constructed, and this often puts women at a disadvantage in the contractual relationship. Historically, Margaret Mead contended that in all early societies, no matter how trivial a task might be, it carries more prestige if done by males (Mead 1976). Whereas a British pound requires a currency exchange rate with a U.S. dollar in order to be judged “fair”, the U.S. dollar has equivalent monetary value to ten U.S. dimes. In a transactional contract, the U.S. dollar would have the same worth to both parties, regardless of

the identity of those parties, because it is isomorphic (Edwards and Bunderson 2003; Sparrowe, et al. 2004). In other words, all else equal, the monetary value of a woman's career contract in an organization "should" have the same monetary value as a man's career contract.

In a relational contract arrangement, the resources exchanged seldom enjoy a market-based exchange rate, are likely to be less commensurable, and will have different worth depending on the particular parties engaged in the contract. McLean Parks and Smith (2006) use the example of time off in exchange for extra time worked, illustrating that if it were only the number of hours that were being exchanged, there would be isomorphic compensation, but if the extra time worked interferes with a family obligation such as attending your daughter's soccer game, then it is much more difficult to calibrate the exchange rate.

Power Distribution and Justice Metrics

Another characteristic of contracts is the power distribution between parties. Power distribution in employment relationships affects the resolution potential for sex discrimination. According to Emerson (1962; 1972; 1981), power is a property of a relationship, and is not vested in an individual. Power is a function of the dependency of the parties on one another; if both parties share equal power, then it is balanced, but if power is asymmetric, then the less powerful party will be motivated to restore power balance (and the more powerful party may be motivated to maintain the imbalance).

Symmetric or asymmetric power distribution in organizational contracts helps us understand how parties will interact with one another (McLean Parks and Smith 1998). If the power distribution is symmetric, then the parties in the transactional contract have relatively equal prospects for moderating the contract, resulting in an instrumental contract that is characterized by a distributive justice metric that focuses on the fairness of the outcomes distribution (McLean Parks and Kidder 1994; McLean Parks and Smith 1998; Weisenfeld and Brockner 1993; 1998), and a relational contract becomes communitarian where distributive, procedural and interactional justice may prevail. Procedural justice metrics examine how the allocations were determined over time, regardless of the outcome distribution (Lind and Tyler 1988), and interactional justice attends to how the procedures were implemented so that each party's dignity was maintained (Bies and Moag 1986; Moorman 1991). When power is asymmetric, one party is a contract maker and the other is a contract taker (McLean Parks and Smith 1998). Under conditions of asymmetric power distribution, the instrumental contract is characterized as exploitive, and both the contract maker and the contract taker rely on distributive justice. In the case of a relational contract with asymmetric power distribution (a custodial contract), the contract maker engages an interactional justice metric and the contract taker expects distributive, procedural, and interactional justice metrics.

Table 1

Characteristics of Organizational Contracts

	Transactional Contract	Relational Contract
Types of Resources	Universalistic, concrete	Particularistic, non-concrete
Scope of Contract	More-or-less closed ended	More-or-less Open-ended
Identity of Parties	Mostly irrelevant	Mostly particularistic
Reciprocity Norms	Balanced reciprocity	Generalized reciprocity
Commensurability	Mostly isomorphic	Mostly substitute
Power Distribution	Symmetric or asymmetric	Symmetric or asymmetric
Justice Metrics	Mostly distributive	Mostly interactional

In summary (see Table 1), we have identified seven characteristics of organizational contracts (reciprocity norms, types of resources, scope of the contract, the identity of the parties, power distribution, commensurability of the resources exchanged, and justice metrics used to measure the worth of the contract). These characteristics of transactional and relational contracts provide a structural context from which we can examine work-life balance and career-related decisions. A career is developed and constructed over time, and the complexity and uncertainty of the context and process of achieving work-life balance (Crooker, et al. 2002) can inform us about additional avenues for diminishing barriers to successful careers. In particular, we focus on the context of overlapping values between domains of one's life, and the accessibility to venues and resources that have the potential to alleviate women's career injustices.

CAREERS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Much of the work-life balance literature focuses on work and families, where family is defined in terms of parent/child relationships, thus leaving silent other demographic groups in the family/community domain such as singles (Crooker, et al. 2002). Regardless of the family/community domain components, however, "work-life balance is the stability characterized by the balancing of an individual's life complexity and dynamism with environmental and personal resources...." (Crooker, et al. 2002:389). We address the uncertainty associated with issues in a career woman's life, the munificence of and accessibility to resources within her life, and the values congruency across her life domains. Life complexity and dynamism (uncertainty) have a direct effect on work-life balance, and munificence, accessibility, and values congruence moderate this relationship (Crooker, et al. 2002).

For career women, much of their work-life balance depends on how complicated their life domains are. Since careers are associated closely with professions, and non-work domains are centered in the home and community, we have organized life domains into two parsimonious clusters: work/profession and family/community. In addition to the theoretical model developed by Crooker et al. (2002), we overlay our discussion with gender-specific issues, and integrate

them with the organizational contracts concepts. This allows us to explicate the transactional and relational contract typology developed by McLean Parks and Smith (1998) and address gender issues related to contract makers and contract takers throughout a woman's career. First, however, we describe the key components of the work-life balance model (Crooker, et al. 2002).

As women juggle demands between their careers and their families, the number of factors contributing to those demands increases resulting in greater complexity. As the number of factors increases, the likelihood that there will be embedded interdependencies among those factors also increases, further exacerbating complexity (Dess and Beard 1984; Duncan 1972). Dynamism is increased when factors change frequently, the changes are large, and the changes are unpredictable (Castrogiovanni 1991; Yasai-Ardekani 1989). Together, complexity and dynamism contribute to the uncertainty that a career woman faces in her life-domains, and the greater the uncertainty, the more likely that work/life imbalance will occur (Crooker, et al. 2002).

Each life domain contains resources that may be accessed to attenuate the relationship between uncertainty and balance. The work/profession domain may offer resources such as flexible schedules, career development seminars, and telecommuting that help compensate for time allocations, professional development expenses, and personal energy devoted to commuting hassles. The family/community domain may offer resources such as a stay-at-home partner, multiple sources of income, or community elder care organizations and public transportation. The munificence or scarcity of those resources moderates their impact on work/life balance.

Further, the accessibility of those resources moderates the balance. Accessibility is not necessarily based on objective criteria, such as whether a career woman can afford to attend professional development conferences in other cities. It may also be a function of subjective criteria, such as whether accessing flexible schedule alternatives is viewed as "unbecoming" to a career woman, suggesting that she is not really devoted to her career if she requests a flexible schedule (Powell and Kotschessa 1995). Other resources may not be accessible because of economic barriers, such as household help or elder care that are too expensive, or unaffordable health insurance. Similarly, public transportation may not complement available family care alternatives (Crooker, et al. 2002).

In addition to the munificence and accessibility of resources from life domains, the congruence of one's values (McLean Parks and Smith 2000) across these domains affects one's degree of work/life balance (Crooker, et al. 2002). According to Rokeach (1973), people have a value system of beliefs about behaviors and outcomes that differ along a continuum of relative importance. Individual values may be more-or-less intense, depending on how strongly they are held relative to other values (Chatman, 1989), and Ravlin and Meglino (1987) found that achievement, concern for others, honesty, and fairness were the most salient values in the work domain. However, the intensity of values changed when they were rank-ordered in the work/profession domain relative to the family/community domain (Chusmir and Parker 1991).

The overlap of values between life domains provides some pivotal space (Crooker, et al. 2002; McLean Parks and Smith 2000) for career women. For example, if women value concern for others, honesty, and fairness in their professional domains (Ravlin and Meglino (1987) and

their family domains, their pivotal space is relatively broad (three of the four values exist in both domains). Similarly, if these three values are salient in both domains, their pivotal space is relatively deep because those values are jointly affirmed (McLean Parks and Smith 2000). Broader and deeper pivotal space provides values congruence for career women, and facilitates work/life balance as women juggle the uncertainty in their life domains (Crooker, et al. 2002).

Another dimension of values is how crystallized they are relative to values held by other members of these life domains (Crooker, et al. 2002). Whereas values intensity and pivotal space refer to one individual, values crystallization is a between-referent concept. Jackson (1966) suggested an index of crystallization relative to shared agreement about norms and roles, and Chatman (1989) suggested that crystallization of organizational value systems indicates how widely shared they are among individuals within the organization. Thus, when a career woman learns that the values she holds dear are not expressed in organization policies, or that decisions by superiors about her [non]promotability are tainted by her “inability to take a joke” (McKenna 1997:73) or “simply because she was Working While Female” (Murphy 2005:175), we would suggest that her crystallization has been shattered.

PORTFOLIO OF CAREER INVESTMENTS

We have presented parameters of how a woman’s investments in her career can be bounded by values embedded in social norms, types of organizational contracts, uncertainty within the context of her work/life balance decisions, and the potential for shared values among her life domains. Maneuvering among these parameters as she manages her career decisions requires substantial investments of resources, and yet for many career women, there are disappointing returns on those investments. We present some of the barriers and burdens of proof that women have encountered as illustrations of why intended rates of returns from investments of resources, such as equal pay, access to leadership opportunities, time to invest in social capital, and exhaustive personal energy, have not materialized.

One of the persistent social norms has to do with being “born” female. In the past 25 years women were thought to receive lower wages than men because women did not invest in enough human capital development, such as college education or relevant work experience, yet as recently as 2007 women in the U.S. received approximately \$800 for every \$1000 that their male counterparts received. Based on 1997 data when the salary gap was 23%, women college graduates lost approximately \$1.2 million during their 47-year adult life span (Murphy 2005). Although young adult women graduating today are likely to receive comparable starting salaries, the social and organizational cultures that favor promotions for men, and the continuing salary gap that ranges from 15-20%, continues to cause suffering from lost wages.

It may be that assuming young adult women will receive comparable starting salaries is overly optimistic. In an experimental study where human resource professionals were asked to make employment judgments based on identical resumes (except for the names of the applicants), salaries for women applicants were less than for male applicants (Smith, Tabak, Showail, McLean Parks, and Kleist 2005). The female discount was also revealed in judgments

about the riskiness of a fictional IPO (Initial Public Offering) associated with a fictional female CEO, who was judged less competent than her fictional male CEO counterpart despite identical financial and industry information (Bigelow and McLean Parks 2004). These studies follow the Goldberg paradigm which resulted from his experimental studies where identical essays (except for the male/female name of the writer) resulted in females receiving lower evaluations unless the essay was on a feminine topic (Goldberg 1968; Eagly and Carli 2007).

Another explanation for “accepting” wage disparities is that women remove themselves from a career ladder, and it is assumed that it is to add children to their families. As one woman pointed out, “In order to make sense of [leaving a prestigious and powerful position to pursue other interests], [men] had to estrogenize it.” (Murphy 2005:114). Historically, Apter (1993) indicated that women experience severe downgrading in position and income when they return from an employment gap, and the higher they are on the career ladder, the greater the downward step when they return. More recently, women refer to this as getting on the off ramp while they have children, but they still find it difficult to get back to the on-ramp (Shellenbarger 2009).

It appears that being “born” female has the reverse effect for career women as being born in January has for male hockey players (Gladwell 2008), and that after more than 40 years, gender bias remains in work settings. For some careers, such as the military in the United States, being born female restricts the types of assignments for which you are eligible. For example, women military personnel are not allowed to perform as front-line soldiers, and are relegated to positions of support. Since some sort of front-line duty is usually expected for officers to reach their top ranks, the outlier effect continues to serve men well and leave women behind.

For women, advancement to the top leadership positions in corporate America is at a dismal rate, representing only 6 percent of the most highly paid executives of *Fortune* 500 companies (Eagly and Carli 2007). Yet some authors (Dalton and Dalton 2009:23) laud the fact that “more than 80 percent of *Fortune* 500 boards include at least one woman” [in 2007] ... and “those with three [women] more than tripled [between 2001 and 2007] (from 25 to 76 companies)”. It appears that the social norms may be shifting. It may also be that exposure and calls from powerful women’s advocates, such as Catalyst which publishes such data, has provoked a response from 15 percent of the companies listed in the *Fortune* 500 in 2007 compared to only 5 percent in 2001.

Executive leadership styles are presented as “causes” for women’s failure to reach top leadership positions, once again identifying flaws in women rather than flaws in extant social norms. For example, a recent study by Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) identified the leadership components that differed between women and men. Women in that study of executives determined that women lacked, or were perceived to lack based on 360-degree feedback assessments, the ability to be visionary. When asked to explain the results, women executives indicated that their organic leadership style was less directive than a man’s style. Another study found similar results based on more than 1000 executives from nine countries (Ibarra and Obodaru 2009), and also found that the “male” behaviors, particularly inspiring others which is a component of the envisioning dimension, ranked highest in overall leadership effectiveness,

whereas women's strengths in the skills of supporting others was ranked lowest. Women can't be too communal (exhibiting compassionate treatment of others) nor too agentic (exhibiting assertion and control) (Eagly and Carli 2007). In a Catalyst study of *Fortune* 1000 female executives, 96% of them indicated that it was critical or fairly important to develop "a style with which male managers are comfortable." (Eagly and Carlie 2007:67).

Hundreds of scientific studies indicate that women and men do not have different leadership styles (Ibarra and Obodaru 2009), yet the common response to this question is "yes" from both men and women. However, using three types of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire), a meta-analysis of 45 studies found that female leaders were somewhat more transformational than male leaders, and a separate meta-analysis found that women use a more participative and collaborative style than men typically favor (Eagly and Carli 2007). Even though leadership research suggests that the transformational style is more suited for the modern organization, and women exhibit more of this style, there is no evidence that they are being matched with leadership opportunities given the slow pace of advancement to executive offices.

Unless social norms become more accepting of women's leadership styles that are not isomorphic with men's styles, future women leaders are likely to confront similar barriers based on a recent study by the Girl Scout Research Institute (Schoenberg, Salmond, Fleshman 2008:10) in which 72% of the girls described a leader as someone who "brings people together to get things done." According to this report, however, a girl's lack of self-confidence in her own skills and competencies, and her sense that opportunities to develop leadership skills are limited, were the primary barriers to leadership. For women, then, investments of personal energy to "improve" their human capital seem to result in severely discounted rates of return in terms of monetary wealth and leadership opportunities.

Another finite resource for career women is time, and the opportunity costs of investing time in one life domain versus another. For example, a study of employment gaps suggests that corporate human resource professionals will judge women with three employment gaps less harshly than men with identical employment histories (Smith, et al. 2005). The results suggest that professionals infer that women have completed their child-bearing decisions, and will return to the workforce as a stable and loyal worker once their family life is no longer a time distraction. However, according to Eagly and Carli (2007), in the U.S. married women contributed an average of 19 hours per week to housework compared to men's 11 hours, or only 58% of women's average contribution. Similarly, married mothers contributed 12.9 hours per week to parenting in 2000 compared to 6.5 hours per week for fathers. If these were married couples in the same household, the man's total contribution would be approximately 55% of the woman's total contribution. Put another way, the net difference in time invested in family and home is approximately 750 hours per year.

One of the opportunity costs of investing 45% more time to the household is that women do not have time to invest in social capital by socializing with colleagues and developing professional networks (Eagly and Carli 2007). Compounding this barrier is the fact that many

informal networking venues are designed around masculine activities such as golf outings, hunting and fishing, or sports. Although many women also enjoy these types of venues, sometimes they are excluded from invitations to join because they are not welcome or it is assumed that they will not be interested (Murphy 2005). One woman in sales reported that she expected to go on an annual golf outing with potential clients at her new company, but her manager told her explicitly the outing was “just for the guys.” (Murphy 2005:183).

It appears that the “chilly climate” of academe has not gotten much warmer during the past two decades either (The Chilly Collective 1995). In a recent situation at one university that hired a new male dean, the new dean invited male faculty members to join him in his office each week for conversation. No such venue was created for women faculty. Further, other male faculty members were invited to play golf with him, an invitation that did not include women faculty. When a decision needed to be made about who might chair a particular department, the negative “insights” that the dean gained from his social pool of male faculty about a female candidate for the position were not offset by any first-hand social capital information. Even more accurately, there was a complete absence of information about her capabilities, given that she had had no formal or informal venues to demonstrate her abilities. As Murphy (2005:183) states, “Over time, being left out means being left behind – in real dollars and cents.”

In the world of work, a subtle form of negative reciprocity occurs when one person takes credit for the work that someone else has done. Story after story told by women indicates that more often than not, males behave instrumentally toward women (use them), and that this results in the diminishment of women’s available resources, especially recognition for work well done. For example, the same dean described above announced at a meeting of all the deans that a female dean had not really generated the multi-million dollar gift to her school, because a male faculty member had talked with the donor ten years earlier. The entire story was untrue, but the female dean clearly out-performed any of the other male deans in terms of raising money, and they had to find some “acceptable” explanation for her success. Although the male dean did not take credit directly for her fund raising accomplishments, he did have to offer a severe discount by announcing that a male faculty had courted the donor years earlier.

Similar diminishment occurs when faculty or administrators judge a male author’s contribution to a published article as more valuable than the female author who is the first author, or when a senior faculty member revises the title page and lists himself as first author just as the manuscript is being submitted for review. In a profession where author-order signals the degree of contribution to an article, and when professional reputations are based on citations, being a first author conveys a wealth of information about a person’s career accomplishments. Diminishment is not only manifested through visibly usurping credit from women, such as revising a title page at the last minute, but also through invisible methods of not giving credit where credit is due, such as devaluing the contribution of a first author.

Career women often have to monitor their visibility. By being “too” visible, women risk the label of being “too” aggressive or “too” much like a man. More frequently, they are treated as though they were invisible or as a token. As one career woman reflected on her view of

herself at work, she reported: “But in the end, the joke was on me...One day I saw the bonus grid in my boss’s office. Right on the other side of my box the guys above me were making a fortune. I saw that they were only stringing along the appropriate number of females to keep the field diverse. It wasn’t that I was valuable or important to the team. They had been blowing smoke in my face.” (McKenna 1997:65).

Given a career woman’s scarce resources of money, time, and personal energy, the remedies available to correct discrimination barriers and burdens of proof may not provide a high enough rate of return to be worth the investment. For example, when tenure is denied to a member of a university’s faculty or partnership is denied for an accountant or attorney, in the U.S. the “fight” alternative is to file a lawsuit charging discriminatory decision making. However, women will need to hire an attorney to represent them, and the university or firm will likely have an attorney in-house (or on retainer) who can represent the firm in the case. The organization is the contract maker in this exploitive type of contract, and power is asymmetric between the organization’s resources and the employee’s resources. Because of some of the subtle forms of judgments described above that represent diminishment, it may be difficult for the plaintiff to substantiate evidence to support her claims, especially since members of the university or firms may not “remember” the specific incidents accurately. Further, as Murphy (2005:186) points out, the slights along the pink track are unlikely to be “egregious enough to trigger a lawsuit,” or as we contend, even to trigger internal documentation of the events. Yet in the aggregate, these small slights have a disproportionate impact on the careers of women.

The risk associated with the legal path is that should a woman lose the case, she will be responsible for all her attorney fees, plus she may be labeled as an “undesirable” hire for any other organization. The risk of immediate damage to scarce resources is high, and the risk to long-term professional reputations may be even higher. Together, these risks require a very high rate of return in order to be a worthwhile investment. The subtle forms of “insidious sex discrimination” where men are promoted on their potential while women have to prove themselves first rarely hits the headlines, but cumulatively over one’s career, it becomes very costly (Murphy 2005).

For organizations, the economic costs (and perhaps reputational costs) of sex discrimination are substantial also. In 2002, a fairly typical year, Murphy (2005) assembled evidence of employer payouts that totaled at least \$263 million. Yet, if an organization’s sex discrimination is conducted beneath the radar of visibility, and if no documentation of it exists, then perhaps it is not a risky choice and the collective \$263 million is relatively inexpensive. If organizations pay women only 80% of what they pay men, and given that more and more women are working full-time, then an organization has an economic incentive to maintain the status quo. For example, if an organization pays an average salary to male employees of \$100,000 and \$80,000 to female employees, and assuming that 50% of its workforce of 100 employees is women, then the annual “savings” to the organization is \$1,000,000, a substantial economic incentive to cheat.

Women's pursuit of equal pay continues to be onerous, even as recently as 2007. A recent U.S. Supreme Court Case in 2007 (*Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*) concluded in a 5-to-4 decision against the plaintiff, holding that employers cannot be sued over gender pay discrimination if the claims are based on decisions made by the employer more than 180 days prior to the claim. The Supreme Court said that "she [Ledbetter] could have, and should have, sued" when the pay decisions were made, instead of waiting beyond the 180-day statutory charging period. As Liz Gilchrist states (National Organization for Women; May 30, 2007) "Their majority opinion ignores the realities of the workplace where disparities in pay are often undiscovered or difficult to determine, especially since so many employers keep salary and pay information confidential." Although this 180-day statute of limitations was corrected by the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, many U.S. organizations have policies that punish anyone who discusses salary, putting a person's employment at risk should they choose to do so.

CONCLUSION

The framework of social and organizational contracts (McLean Parks and Smith 1998; 2006; McLean Parks et al. 1998), along with the model of work/life balance (Crooker et al. 2002) provide a structure for addressing, and understanding, the barriers and proofs of burden that career women face (See Figure 1). By positioning careers in an organizational contracts context, we can isolate specific factors of an employment relationship that serve as barriers to career advancement. In particular we have identified reciprocity norms, types of resources exchanged, the commensurability of those resources, contract party identity, symmetric or asymmetric power distribution, and the metrics of justice applied to different types of contracts. Further, we position contracts within their context of values systems and social norms, especially the pivotal space provided by congruent values across multiple life domains, and how crystallized those values are among other members of the contracts. We do not treat careers as a mutually exclusive endeavor, but rather place careers adjacent to and intertwined with family obligations, as well as other obligations such as community involvement. This provides a more wholesome approach to understanding the complexities of work/life balance, and the processes to achieve it. The process that we frame in this paper is to treat careers as a portfolio of personal investments of money, time, and personal energy, and to re-define the worth of those investments by identifying one's own return on values (ROV), rather than limiting the measurement of worth to the more traditional return on [economic] investment (ROI).

Social norms reflect values that are held dear to a particular collective or culture, and as such, these values form the underlying root cause for the barriers to women's career advancement. Values are also manifested in legislation and organizational policies, as well as individual decisions made by anyone associated with a woman's career (e.g., superiors, peers, family, associates, children, communities). Existing efforts to correct or eliminate sex discrimination treat the components of sex discrimination as mutually exclusive, or at least isolated from one another, and thus, whenever a solution is proposed or implemented to "fix" one problem, sex discrimination merely evolves through a different component. Some solutions

target women as the problem, and if women would just “fix” themselves, sex discrimination would evaporate. But in reality, decades of research indicates that sex discrimination is a system of symptoms, causes, and results. The constraints arise from interlocking systems and the persistent links between them (Apter 1993).

As Apter (1993:152) points out, “The idea of equal pay for equal work never survives different jobs for men and women. ...repeatedly women’s jobs are downgraded in relation to men’s. This happens in country after country ... the criteria that are used to downgrade women’s jobs differ widely from country to country – but the result is always the same.” Similarly, for individual career women, the cumulative effect of realizing that each possible response to discrimination is blocked repeatedly, the result is exhaustion (Apter 1993). Career women strive to be successful as measured by their work as well as their ability to be women, yet the value systems embedded in each “sets up a kind of slow-release schizophrenia.” (McKenna 1997:55).

For career women, there may be a perpetual disconnect between the expectations of the male model of organizational career decisions, and the female model which is much more fluid and integrative between the transactional and relational forms of contracts. Whereas the male career model emphasizes separate life domains (work/profession OR family/community), the female career model is more holistic, and emphasizes conjoined life domains (work/profession AND family/community). The types of resources that are exchanged (universalistic versus particularistic) are blurred for women. For example, money is a universalistic resource (McLean Parks and Smith 2006) and falls into the isomorphic category (bills for coin; concrete and non-particularistic), yet when money becomes a symbol of sex discrimination, it becomes particularistic - in other words, it *matters* that the organization hierarchy and salary system is so offensive. When equal work does not result in equal pay, it is *personal*.

We suggest two approaches to eliminating (or at least reducing) the barriers and burdens of proof that career women confront. First, public-type policy solutions must focus on collective voices. Academic voices, such as the Oxford Round Table, must continue to address and understand the complexities and nuances embedded in the barriers. Gender-advocate voices, such as Catalyst and the National Organization for Women, must continue to publish the data and social commentary in order to keep the issues from being buried in benign neglect. Political voices require support in the form of training and development for women who are willing to seek public office and shape legislation that is gender-friendly. Legislative voices must address sex discrimination, particularly pay discrimination, because money is a fungible asset that facilitates expanding career women’s time and personal energy investments. Finally, all of us must help young girls prepare for careers by 1) nurturing them in value systems that embrace gender equality and self-confidence (and hands-on experience) to make tough decisions, 2) helping them analyze the long-term unintended consequences and opportunity costs of their choices, 3) establishing summer camps to teach negotiation skills so they can overcome women’s tendencies to “not ask” (Babcock and Laschever 2003), 4) serving as role models, and 5) expecting young girls to achieve. This last point is not intended to suggest that girls need to be “fixed”, but rather, that the value systems they have to navigate need to be fixed.

Second, organizational gender-friendly policies must be implemented and every member of the organization must be held accountable for that implementation. Instead of bemoaning the fact that women's biological role in family-creation "subtracts" from organizational career advancement, act proactively to facilitate re-entry onto career paths. Implement policies that facilitate family off-ramp and on-ramp processes, just as off-ramp and on-ramp processes are facilitated for employees who fulfill military obligations. Stop thinking that sex discrimination doesn't exist in your organization – set up a discrimination hotline so you facilitate hearing the stories. Think of pay discrimination as a poor economic decision, not because you may lose a law suit, but because annually you are paying males 20% more than they earn. Make it a policy to refuse to pay for any social networking activities that are not gender neutral.

Our approach is meant to reveal the complexity of the components of the path of a woman's career, and in some cases to compare it to the simpler set of components that men face. We are not, however, suggesting that more complexity has greater personal value, or that a simpler work/life balance will result in less personal value. Because we are using values as our metric, we create a model through which each individual can "manage" her portfolio to optimize personal returns on monetary, time, and personal energy investments. Just like a professional financial investment manager determines what each client's financial goals are before recommending a portfolio of stocks and bonds, this model is meant to help women determine their professional career goals, relative to investments in other domains of their lives, through the metric of values alignment. If the metrics of existing values, especially the metric of economic returns, were to be expanded, then public policies can facilitate the acceptance of those values such that career decisions (and advancement) would retain their ability to provide a return on values (ROV) that optimizes in the form of values and in the form of monetary currencies.

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