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The author, an experienced researcher of work/family issues, analyzes the furor over Felice Schwartz's identification of a "mommy track" and shows how promoting work/family balance really means examining some of the organization's basic assumptions about career advancement.

Promoting Work/Family Balance: An Organization-Change Approach

DOUGLAS T. HALL

Work/family balance is fast becoming the hot career issue of the new decade. With baby boomers well into their 30s and 40s and confronted with a now-or-never situation regarding children, the management ranks are swelling in a new way. Recently I visited a *Fortune* 100 firm's headquarters, where a female executive exclaimed to me, "It seems as if half of my department is either pregnant or out on maternity leave!" In another large company I was told, "Executive row has become maternity row!" Since many of these new two-career parents (both mothers and fathers) are now in quite senior positions, old familiar questions about whether and how one can balance family and career are being reexamined, but with a greater urgency and higher stakes than ever before – for both the individual and the organization.

The depth of corporate and personal concern about this issue was crystallized in an article by Felice Schwartz that appeared in the

Harvard Business Review (January-February, 1989, pp. 65-76), with the provocative title "Management Women and the New Facts of Life." Two major points in her article drew powerful reactions from a variety of sources: (1) The cost of employing women is greater than that of employing men (because of turnover related to maternity), and (2) to reduce this cost, corporations should provide more flexible employment arrangements for women who want to combine career and family.

On the second point, Schwartz identified two groups of corporate women: "career-primary women" (who put career first and are willing to make sacrifices in their personal lives, such as forgoing children, to reach for the top) and "career-and-family women" (who are "willing to trade some career growth and compensation for freedom from the constant pressure to work long hours and weekends" [p.70]).

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