

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Equity Imperative

This book is about advancing gender equity in work organizations and enabling men and women to resolve the often painful conflict, endemic in industrialized societies, between work and personal life. And it is about doing so in a way that enhances workplace performance. Our goal is to move the discourse on these issues beyond the simple work-family (or work-life) dichotomy by reaching deeper and focusing attention on the underlying assumptions about men's and women's roles in family, community, and paid work, assumptions that shape our workplaces as they shape all our social institutions. Family-friendly policies in progressive companies have brought us part of the way toward making organizations hospitable to people who want both to work and to "have a life." But even the most advanced workplaces have not probed the assumptions that give rise to the basic problems of gender equity. Only by establishing the link between current work practices and gendered assumptions about the role and organization of work will it be

possible to identify major leverage points for significant, constructive change. This is true, we believe, in all industrialized and industrializing societies, but none more so than in the United States, where most of our research has taken place.

The Equity Imperative

By our definition, advancing gender equity in the workplace involves, first, challenging organizational norms that assume the primacy of paid work in working people's lives and that limit the career choices and opportunities of those who seek fulfillment through commitments in *both* work and personal life. Second, it means valuing diverse ways of working, recognizing and rewarding the full range of skills and contributions that people bring to an organization's success. Our definition, we realize, is culture-bound. It has emerged in response to conditions in Western, capitalist, corporate work organizations that have, historically, been directed and shaped by white, married, middle-class men—people for whom paid work *has* been primary and whose characteristic strengths and skills have been enshrined in corporate cultures and reward systems. But in twenty-first-century workplaces, these established norms are problematic, not just for women, but for many men who do not fit the traditional mold. As a result, there is mounting pressure on work organizations to deal more effectively with gender equity and work–personal life issues.

External Pressures for Change

It has been clear for some time now that organizations in the United States have responded inadequately to the twin chal-

lenges of the late twentieth century: greater diversity of the workforce—in particular the large influx of women—and globalization. Although diversity is greater at entry levels, we have come up short on the promise of equal opportunity. Positions of power are still primarily held by a largely homogeneous group of white men, despite antidiscrimination legislation and the establishment of “family-friendly” policies in many leading corporations. At the same time, women, men, and the society as a whole are suffering from the steady increase of working hours for most employees that has been an unfortunate by-product of the way organizations have adapted to globalization.

U.S. corporations justify demanding more and more from their workforce by pointing to the threat from Japanese and western European competitors, while companies in those countries cite the threat from the United States and each other. Few have had the courage to step off this destructive path or the vision to see that doing so might offer a competitive advantage.¹ The U.S. workforce now logs more time on the job each year than workers in any other industrialized nation, and stress from overwork is widespread. Here again, legislative and policy solutions—like the 1993 Medical and Family Leave Act and progressive company programs offering employees leaves and flexible work arrangements—though necessary, have proved insufficient.

The shortfall of these well-intended policy-level approaches has left many people feeling disillusioned and angry about persistent workplace inequities and overwork. Companies that have been leaders in adopting policies on leaves and flexible hours are coming under attack for the “gap” between these formal policies and “actual practices.” Critics dismiss their efforts to be family-friendly as “just a public relations or recruiting tool.”²

Political polling in the United States in the 2000 presidential election year indicated that equal pay, benefits, and flexibility in managing work and family are high-priority issues for women and that a majority of women believe government can and should play a role in helping them achieve those objectives.³ Coincidentally, the August 2000 edition of *Good Housekeeping* magazine reported survey results showing 86 percent of women frequently feeling tired and stressed by the competing demands of work and personal life and revealing high levels of alcohol use, overeating, lack of time for regular medical checkups, lack of interest in sex, and suicidal feelings. A 2001 poll by the National Sleep Foundation corroborated those findings and expanded them to include men as well as women, finding that 38 percent of adults spend fifty hours or more per week at work and all adults “spend less time involved in leisure and social activities, having sex, and sleeping compared to five years ago.”⁴

These data capture problematic trends that could translate into political will if politicians were to take up this issue as Mona Harrington, for example, suggests they should. In *Care and Equality*, Harrington notes the social costs of the failure to find an adequate “equality-respecting” system for care, particularly child care, to replace the one that existed when most women worked full time at home. A political agenda to deal with the problem, she suggests, should focus on changes in the workplace, “because it is hours of work and wage levels that have the most direct effect on the way families can organize their lives. . . . The reigning idea that the sole corporate responsibility is to create value for shareholders must be replaced by one that expands corporate obligation to include social health—and that means an obligation to support families and care.”⁵

Governments in Europe are already more engaged in these issues. Sweden and Norway have long had legislated parental leave policies, which they continue to refine and expand. Legislation proposed in Great Britain and the Netherlands to guarantee a universal right to part-time work aims at a political remedy for work–personal life conflicts. France is experimenting with a thirty-five-hour workweek. These are potential models for legislative initiatives in the United States. Alternatively, civil rights lawyer Joan Williams maps out a plausible litigation strategy for using the provisions of existing U.S. antidiscrimination laws to force changes in workplace norms that penalize people who do not fit the traditional mold of the “ideal” worker—someone who is willing and able to put work above all other considerations.⁶

There is also external pressure from the changing business environment in which all work organizations must operate. On the one hand, there is the need to work more openly and more collaboratively with outsiders, such as customers, suppliers, merger partners, joint-venture partners, and sometimes even competitors. On the other hand, increased competition necessitates communication and collaboration inside the organization—across functions, between divisions, within teams. To develop these essential capabilities, organizations need employees with relational skills, skills that have traditionally been cultivated in the “feminine” sphere of caring relationships and neglected in the “masculine” sphere of paid work. This means, at the very least, that organizations must get better at recognizing and rewarding those skills. Beyond that, we believe they should look at ways in which workplace norms of overwork undermine the development of relational skills by making it difficult or impossible for employees to invest significant time in

activities that help them do so, such as participation in family and community life.

Internal Pressures for Change

Quite apart from these external pressures is the imperative from within organizations to enable all of their employees to perform up to their potential. The persistence of the “glass ceiling” despite efforts to recruit, retain, and advance women in professional and managerial ranks represents significant costs to organizations—both the measurable cost of developing individuals who then choose to forgo or abandon ambitious career paths and the immeasurable cost of the loss of talent their choices entail. Moreover, despite the myth to the contrary, it is not only women who are feeling the conflict between work and personal life. A key finding of the Families and Work Institute’s Fatherhood Project, for example, is that many men are suffering in silence, afraid to talk about the stress of being a parent in a two-career family.⁷

We have seen some high-profile rejections of the ideal worker norm, such as Fidelity Investments’ Peter Lynch stepping off the fast track to devote more time to family and community. In a 2000 commencement address, William Rehnquist, chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, urged graduating law students to consider the drawbacks of high-flying legal careers, such as “the relentless demand for billable hours, which may leave less time than one would like for a personal life.”⁸ And Robert Reich, in *The Future of Success*, explains that family was the prime reason he left what he called the best job he ever had—U.S. secretary of labor in the Clinton administration.⁹

These examples suggest it may soon become much more acceptable for men, too, to opt out of unyielding, overly demanding jobs.

There are also significant costs to organizations associated with employees who stay in their jobs and meet all the demands of work in our globalized, downsized economy. In 1997, the World Bank held a symposium on stress, the business traveler, and corporate health in order “to make employers think more responsibly about the effect of ever-increasing travel . . . on employees and the people closest to them.”¹⁰ A clinical study sponsored for this symposium found higher rates of insurance claims among frequent travelers, particularly those who thought of themselves as tough and resilient. A study published in July 2000 by the Analysis Group and MIT’s Sloan School of Management on the monetary impact of employee stress indicated that each employee suffering from stress-related depression cost his or her employer \$3,000 a year.¹¹ A 2001 survey by the Families and Work Institute showed that nearly half of all U.S. workers felt overworked and that work-related stress was associated with increased mistakes on the job, as well as higher health care costs and the costs of training new people to replace those who leave because of burnout.¹²

Finally, we predict that an increasing source of competitive pressure will come from pioneering companies that, like SAS Institute, Inc., are responding in creative ways to these realities. Heralded by *Fast Company* magazine as “Sanity Inc.,” SAS has demonstrated that work–personal life integration can be a corporate priority coexisting with high levels of performance, as well as employee loyalty.¹³ Even more encouraging, recent research done by Marian Ruderman and Patricia Ohlott at the Center

for Creative Leadership indicates that having multiple roles is significantly correlated with high performance. In their book *Standing at the Crossroads*, they describe the specific skills and capabilities people acquire from these multiple roles, especially their roles as caregivers in family and community.¹⁴

Global Considerations

With the end of the Cold War and the triumph of capitalism, the corporate model of operational effectiveness is without significant challengers. In the United States, it has moved across boundaries, for example, into health care and education. It has become even more prominent with the ascent to power of President George W. Bush, who holds a master's degree in business administration and has set out to govern in the mode of a corporate chief executive officer.¹⁵

The corporate model is also spreading internationally as part of globalization, and there is grave danger in the rapid, uncritical adoption of this model, which, from the perspective of working men and women, has serious defects as well as significant advantages. We do not wish to see the inequitable and un-family-friendly aspects of the corporate model spread across human society. Yet this is already occurring. For example, the 1999 World Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme describes how the crisis of care is spreading to developing countries, threatening traditional cultures and exacerbating problems of poverty.¹⁶ As globalization continues apace, it is more important than ever to challenge the organizational norms that create these patterns. We believe that an effective way to do so is through the pursuit of gender equity.

Beyond Work-Family to Gender Equity

As our framing of the equity imperative suggests, our thinking about equity and our approach to achieving it are intimately bound up with work-family concerns. At the same time, those concerns are inextricably linked to underlying issues of gender and gender equity. A central message of this book is that the greatest opportunity for change at this point in time lies in going to those deeper issues of how people perceive men's and women's roles in both the work and domestic spheres. Those perceptions largely determine what is possible in each, in part because they are embedded in established structures, relationships, and ways of doing things and in part because they exert powerful influence over people's sense of identity and self-esteem. Finding a way to bring to the surface and to work constructively with those underlying patterns is thus one of the surest—though also one of the most challenging—routes to making some of the changes that have so far eluded work-family initiatives.

Defining Gender and Gender Equity

Gender used to be a grammatical term. There are old manuals on English usage that specifically say to use *gender* only to refer to nouns, not people. But as the research on women began to build up over the second half of the twentieth century, theorists began to differentiate *gender* from *sex*: both were applicable to human beings but signified different things. *Sex* was to refer to the biological difference between men and women, whereas *gender* referred to the socially constructed understanding of what

it meant to be a man or a woman. Thus gender dealt with masculine and feminine stereotypes—for example, men are strong, active, aggressive, rational, and calculating; women are weak, passive, supportive, emotional, and impulsive.

Lately, gender theorists have come to see gender as an organizing principle of society. But in the public domain, *gender* has almost completely replaced *sex* in common usage and too often is seen as synonymous with *female*. Indeed, we have heard that in one country trying to accommodate its English-speaking visitors, one bathroom was labeled “men” and the other one “gender”! Just as white people often do not see themselves as having a race, so men often do not see themselves as having a gender.

We use the term quite differently. We use it to apply to both men and women and to refer to the socially constructed categories of masculinity and femininity. However, in discussing masculine and feminine norms, we do not mean to imply that all men and women conform to those stereotypes or act in stereotypical ways. Our meaning is simply that these norms dictate *expectations* of male and female characteristics and of how men and women will act in various situations and settings. In pointing out the need to challenge masculine gendered norms in the workplace, we do not envision their being supplanted by feminine ones. Rather, our aim is to promote the creation of new and more innovative work practices in both spheres of life that are based on the needs of the work and not on gender stereotypes and gender expectations, masculine or feminine.¹⁷

Gender equity, as we use the term, means a fair allocation of opportunities and constraints for men and women in all spheres. We emphasize fairness rather than equality partly to honor the reality that different life goals and priorities, as well as differing

capabilities, shape individuals' wants and needs at work, as in life as a whole. In addition, we have seen how a focus on equality can promote sameness in ways that lead inadvertently to unfair outcomes. An example is women gaining equal access to jobs that require long hours at work without complementary changes in social norms around the sharing of household responsibilities—a phenomenon that has made home life into an onerous “second shift” for many working women. Another example is policies that supposedly give all employees the opportunity to negotiate parental leave and flexible schedules but, in the absence of changes in expectations for male behavior at work, have been largely off-limits to men.¹⁸

We also do not mean to say that gender is the only equity issue in the workplace or necessarily the most important. Nor do we mean to imply that workplaces are the only social institutions that need to change in order to achieve it. Yet we have found that looking at work practices and organizational cultures through a gender lens is a powerful lever for opening up the question of whether work as currently organized is as it has to be.

Connections to the Work-Family Field

Using a gender lens brings many issues to the fore, but none more frequently than work patterns that create painful conflicts between work and personal life for both men and women. As a result, our efforts are strongly aligned with—and have contributed to—the now well-established field of work and family.

An early statement on “work and family in contemporary society” came in the 1960s from Rhona and Robert Rapoport. They later coined the term *dual-career families* in their 1971 book by that name, which examined issues of gender equity and

work–personal life conflict from the perspective of professional couples in Britain.¹⁹ This was in an era when work and family were separate fields in sociology and psychology, and there was little conceptual linkage between them. The Rapoportes were part of a small group of researchers—including some in the United States and some in Sweden—who were beginning to look at gender roles across this work-family divide.²⁰

In 1977, Rosabeth Moss Kanter provided the first full-scale review of work-family interactions in her book *Work and Family in the United States*, contributing to “work and family” as an emerging field of study and concern. Her *Men and Women of the Corporation*, published the same year, was an early exploration of gender issues in the workplace, a topic taken up by a few feminist scholars in the 1980s. Subsequently, Arlie Hochschild’s *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (1989), Juliet Schor’s *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (1991), and Lotte Bailyn’s *Breaking the Mold: Women, Men, and Time in the New Corporate World* (1993) moved the field forward conceptually by looking more deeply at the way cultural norms in families and workplaces contributed to work–personal life conflicts and gender inequity.²¹ More recently, a number of significant additions to our understanding of the gender issues in family and work have come from Mona Harrington’s *Care and Equality: Inventing a New Family Politics* (1999), Joyce K. Fletcher’s *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work* (1999), and Joan Williams’s *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do About It* (2000).²²

In the realm of policy, work-family issues became an area of focus in the 1980s as people began to realize that the enactment of equal-opportunity legislation, in the 1970s, was not by itself

sufficient to secure a place for women in the workforce. A number of institutions have played a central role in this field. The Ford Foundation was an early, major supporter of policy development and research. The Families and Work Institute, with substantial Ford Foundation funding, has been a leader in developing and evaluating family-friendly policies and has conducted essential research, including studies of the changing role of fathers and, more recently, of children's attitudes toward their parents' work. Catalyst and the Conference Board are other nonprofit organizations that early on started collecting data on these issues and are still important contributors to the field. A pioneering consulting firm, Work/Family Directions, still continues its work and has now been joined by many others.

More recently, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has provided additional impetus to work-family research. Its Working Families Area, led by Kathleen Christensen, has established Alfred P. Sloan Centers for Working Families at the University of California, Berkeley, for the examination of the culture of care, working parents, and childhood; at the University of Michigan for the ethnography of everyday life; at the University of Chicago for the study, by means of experience sampling, of parents, children, and work; at Cornell for the study of employment and family careers across the life course; at Emory for the study of rituals and myths in working families; and at the University of California, Los Angeles, for video ethnographies of the everyday life of working families. The Sloan Foundation also supports the Sloan Work and Family Research Network at Boston College (<http://www.bc.edu/wfnetwork>), which provides on-line resources and opportunities for researchers and others interested in work and family issues, as well as many individual research efforts in a number of different institutions.²³

These are just a few examples of activities in a field that continues to expand steadily. Other universities, nonprofit organizations, consulting firms, government agencies, unions, and professional organizations, as well as numerous publications, both electronic and print, deal with work-family issues.²⁴ Collectively, all of this effort has created a supportive context for addressing issues of gender equity and work–personal life conflict, both within organizations and in society at large. And it is within that context that our ideas and approach have emerged.

The immediate impetus to the research reported here grew out of the Ford Foundation's Women's Program and its Women's Program Forum, established in 1986. In 1989, the Forum provided an opportunity to examine the current debates and possible responses to the growing needs of men and women for "balancing" their work and family responsibilities. This effort reaffirmed that women were not being treated equitably with men in the workplace. Not only were there issues of unequal pay and unequal access to career mobility, but there seemed to be continued gender stereotyping and—important for our purposes—disincentives to using work-family programs and policies in ways that could decrease inequities. Even in organizations that had well-developed work-family policies and benefits, men and women fared differently. Such organizations were also losing the women they wanted to keep and thus had begun to realize that the work-family programs they had developed were not achieving the intended results.²⁵

These conclusions set the stage for a new Ford Foundation initiative in the early 1990s, a multiyear research collaboration with three large U.S. corporations: Corning, Inc.; Xerox Corporation; and Tandem Corporation. Its goal was to find an explanation for the disappointing results of work-family policies

by taking a critical look at work structure and practices and at the culture surrounding them. The formative research behind the conceptual framework and organizational change method presented here took place within the Xerox project. Informed by the evolving understanding of gender issues in the work-family field, as we have just described, the research team members and their organizational partners jointly framed this project as an effort to use work-family issues as a catalyst for innovation in work practices. They aimed to test the hypothesis that such innovations could serve multiple ends—enhancing productivity as well as ensuring gender equity and easing the conflict between work and personal life.

The final report on this initiative, *Relinking Life and Work: Toward a Better Future*, published by the Ford Foundation in 1996, was the first public statement of the positive results emerging from this research. It laid the foundation for moving beyond the work-family frame and, in particular, beyond the concept of balance.²⁶

Beyond Balance

Clearly, our focus on gender equity in the workplace is connected to the work-family field, and our concerns certainly embrace the issues traditionally included in it. Protecting families and legitimating the claims of family responsibilities are critical objectives we share. Yet we eschew the term *work-family balance*—as well as the related and currently more popular *work-life balance*—in order to emphasize some key principles.

As a matter of principle, our concept of equity suggests the need to honor the full diversity of personal-life arrangements in the workplace. We want to be explicit about pursuing changes

in organizations that will address the concerns of single people and couples with no children, as well as those of working parents. Only by challenging underlying assumptions about the totally work-involved ideal worker in the broadest possible terms will it be possible to avoid the danger of simply shifting the burden of meeting unreasonable expectations from parents to non-parents. At the level of changing work practices, where we focus our attention, success comes when everyone is engaged in making changes aimed at providing some benefits to all. In contrast, we have observed that defining work-personal life dilemmas as family issues, and by implication as women's issues, has tended in the past to marginalize them—a phenomenon that has limited the effect of family-friendly policies and created inequities. Thinking and speaking in terms of work-personal life issues, instead of work and family, has helped us keep these distinctions clearly in view.

We also wanted to develop an alternative to the phrase *work-life balance*, which implies that work is not part of life and that everyone's time should be split equally between the two. On the contrary, paid work is a part of life—a necessary one for most adults and often a meaningful and rewarding one as well. Indeed, the essence of strategies widely adopted in U.S. companies in the 1980s and 1990s to increase their competitiveness has been to make work more meaningful for more people through employee empowerment and alignment with organizational goals. The implications of this shift for workers is captured in the contrast drawn by a shop-floor employee in a manufacturing plant that had implemented self-directed teams. "I hired into the machine shop and came in and did the same thing every day. I had no responsibilities. I just did the job and

went home. Today I've changed dramatically, and the reason is that they laid a lot of responsibility on me. Now I see a problem and I try to do something about it. I've become a lot smarter because of that responsibility."

Yet changes such as this individual experienced have also tended to mean more stress and more time on the job. *Fast Company*, a popular new magazine of the late 1990s, exudes the complex reality of the so-called New Economy, of which the empowered worker is the foundation. In virtually every issue, there are versions of dueling mantras: "You are your work!" and "Get a life!" *Fast Company* makes no effort to resolve the tension between the two. But individuals—and organizations—must.

The fact is that not everyone wants to give equal weight to work and personal life, but this should not mean that choosing one requires sacrificing the other. Accepting that individual priorities differ, our goal is that men and women should be able to experience these two parts of their lives as not in conflict, or separate and in need of balance, but *integrated*. By this we mean that they should be able to function and find satisfaction in *both* work and personal life, independent of the amount of time they actually spend in each domain at different stages of their lives.

In Chapter Two, we describe more fully what we see when we look at work through a gender lens and further develop our vision of work–personal life integration. We believe that this vision is attainable because, as it turns out, the assumptions and norms that block gender equity in the workplace also undermine people's productivity. Thus one of the most surprising and heartening results of our research has been the discovery of the link between gender equity and organizational effectiveness.

Linking Gender Equity and Workplace Performance: The Dual Agenda

Our approach differs from other gender equity and work-family initiatives in that it focuses on the way work is done and links the goal of increasing gender equity and work–personal life integration to the goal of improved workplace performance in what we call the Dual Agenda. In part, our method resides within the body of organizational change work—including, for example, organizational learning—that connects humanistic values with the goal of helping people learn how to work more effectively.²⁷ Our approach differs from these in significant ways, however, because of our explicit focus on gender and the way gendered assumptions about ideal workers, ideal work, and ideal leaders may be powerfully—albeit invisibly—inhibiting such positive connections.²⁸

The Dual Agenda

The concept of the Dual Agenda is based on the finding that working on gender equity issues by challenging entrenched organizational norms opens up consideration of the ways in which those norms undermine the work as well as the people who do it. Questioning the assumption that time spent at work is a good measure of commitment, for example, can get people thinking about how much time really *is* required to accomplish a particular job. They may then see how much time they may be wasting with inefficient practices developed in the context of seemingly unlimited available time—a context dependent on the norm of an ideal worker who is both willing and able to give priority to workplace demands above all others. Likewise, a frank examination of how formal and informal defini-

tions of job requirements tacitly favor stereotypical masculine ways of working—say, in a mode of heroic individualism—can uncover ways in which jobs might be done better if a broader range of capabilities and approaches were considered.

In short, looking at work through a lens of gender equity or work–personal life integration can bring into focus obstacles to effectiveness that usually remain hidden because they are unquestioned—they are simply “the way it is.” Far from undermining performance, taking up these issues can go a long way toward improving it. In Chapter Three, we examine this surprising and significant finding and its implications.

The idea of the Dual Agenda emerged in the Ford Foundation–funded Xerox project of the early 1990s. Since then, numerous other projects have confirmed its validity. The Gender Staffing Program of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Graduate Management School of Simmons College; the Public Policy Center of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University; LUME International, LLP, a consulting partnership that for a few years carried out Dual Agenda projects; and Artemis Management Consultants, a research partner with Tandem Corporation in the original Ford Foundation initiative, have all carried out such projects, in a number of cases with further support from the Ford Foundation. Their organizational partners have included for-profit corporations such as The Body Shop International, Fleet Financial Group, DTE Energy, and HP/Agilent, as well as nonprofits and nongovernmental development organizations such as CIMMYT and BRAC.²⁹

These projects provide the case material presented in this book, and collectively they have also furthered the development

of the method used to achieve Dual Agenda results—Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR). We offer a brief introduction of this approach here and present it more fully in the three central chapters of the book. Although the results of Dual Agenda projects have been reported in many places, and some of the publications have described the method used, this book represents the first attempt to present it in detail and to share what we have learned so far.

Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR)

The method we have evolved is a combination of interactive collaboration and action research. This method works because it lets us uncover and work with underlying assumptions and feelings about gender, work, and success that impede both equity and performance in the workplace. Although it is not easy to keep the equity and work effectiveness goals on the table at all times, it is essential for the kind of change we aim to produce. In that sense, our method and our Dual Agenda mission are inextricable.

Briefly, the CIAR approach starts out with an inquiry phase, in which the action researchers become acquainted with the organization's culture, work, and work practices and begin to understand individual employees' equity and work–personal life issues. Inquiry activities include individual interviews across levels and functions, small group discussions, and observation of work practices. Throughout these interactions, the researchers work collaboratively with people in the organization to identify themes, underlying assumptions, and potential leverage points for change. An analysis of Dual Agenda issues (those with implications for both equity and effectiveness) emerges iteratively

as researchers share preliminary findings, test ideas, and develop them further with input from the organization.

The process culminates in a feedback session, the purpose of which is to highlight underlying assumptions, making the connection between work practices and equity issues as they are experienced in the organizational system. Taboo topics—concerns that individuals had not previously been able to raise publicly—become explicit during the feedback session and legitimately discussable. This formal presentation of the researchers' analysis to the group as a whole is also another point of collaborative interaction, and a critical one, as people in the organization discuss the researchers' findings and interpretation and together reach an understanding of what they mean. From feedback and collective interpretation, this session, ideally, moves directly into defining Dual Agenda change in work practices. For example, at one site, a product development team decided to restructure the rhythm of its daily activities to allow a period of uninterrupted concentration on core tasks. At another site, a financial unit decided to shift the allocation of tasks between professionals and support staff in order to give the professionals more time to work with customers and the support staff an opportunity for career development. In both cases, the work groups aimed explicitly to improve their performance while enabling both men and women to do their jobs with less stress and more control over their time and the conditions of their work.

Such seemingly simple adjustments in work practices can be surprisingly effective for both sides of the Dual Agenda. Yet implementing such changes typically uncovers new layers of underlying assumptions, which crop up to reassert established work patterns even though they might be suboptimal. An important part of CIAR thus involves continuing to work toward

understanding those assumptions better, getting the experience of bringing them to explicit awareness and making concrete changes that challenge them, and working with the feelings they invoke.

Conclusion

This book is about increasing gender equity and work–personal life integration in work organizations through the use of Collaborative Interactive Action Research. Drawing on case material from projects in more than a dozen different organizational settings, we show that it is possible to restructure work in ways that enhance organizational effectiveness while making the workplace more equitable. That is the Dual Agenda.

The concepts and method we present here have emerged from a long stream of research in the work-family field and embrace work-family concerns. But we also look beyond those concerns to the underlying assumptions about work that create often painful work–personal life conflicts for parents and non-parents alike. Because of the way work organizations have evolved in Western industrialized societies (in the social context of rigid separation between the masculine sphere of paid work and the feminine domestic sphere), those underlying assumptions are gendered. It is for this reason that focusing on gender equity, as we do in CIAR, provides significant leverage on problems that family-friendly policies and benefits have inadequately addressed. In Chapter Two, we look more closely at key gendered assumptions, where they come from, and how they affect both equity and organizational effectiveness.