ABSTRACT

This paper describes an experiential exercise that enables participants to identify and describe in personal and concrete terms those sex role (and other) socialization factors believed to influence women’s occupational choices, aspirations and successes. The development of this exercise was influenced by Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s discussion of the roles of managers, secretaries and wives in large contemporary organizations in *Men and Women of the Corporation* and by Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim’s discussion of the socialization of female executives in *The Managerial Woman*.

Small groups of participants are charged with raising a baby girl named Elizabeth for 21 years, preparing her for success and fulfillment as (1) a manager, (2) a secretary or (3) a corporate wife in a large, multi-national organization. Participants are to determine the experiences Elizabeth should have during early childhood (0-5), childhood (6-11), early adolescence (12-15) and late adolescence (17-21). Participants are to specify the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes these experiences should impart to Elizabeth.

The exercise might be useful in the following courses in business colleges: Organizational Behavior, Men and Women in Management, Personnel Management, Problems in Personnel Relations, or Career Planning. In addition, the exercise might be useful in courses which focus on sex roles in sociology, psychology, communications and human relations.

INTRODUCTION

The exercise requires 1½-2 hours to complete. Any number of people can participate, divided into groups of five to seven members. The exercise requires a room with adequate size and furnishings to accommodate all groups comfortably.

Each participant will need: paper and pencils and a copy of “Worksheet for Raising Elizabeth (Appendix A).” Envelopes containing the instructions Raise Elizabeth to be a “(manager, secretary, corporate wife) should be prepared in sufficient quantity so that each small group receives one. The roles should be divided as equally among groups as possible.

Prior to the session, participants should do reading in the area of sex role socialization and occupational choices and status. A brief lecture summarizing important points is desirable. Appendix B suggests readings specific to this topic.

In addition, a review of sex role socialization in this culture might be desirable in some classes. The films *Men’s Lives* and *Growing Up Female* serve as excellent resources for reviewing differences in the socialization of women and men. (Appendix B describes these films and provides a rental/purchase source.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Introduce the exercise by explaining that each small group will be presented with a baby girl named Elizabeth and that each group will be charged with Raising Elizabeth. Some groups will raise Elizabeth to be a successful manager, others will raise her to be a successful secretary, and still others will raise her to be a successful corporate wife.

2. Divide the large group into small groups of five to seven members in any way that is convenient.

3. Distribute Worksheet for Raising Elizabeth (Appendix A) to each person. Explain that the worksheet is to be used to guide discussion and summarize ideas.

4. Tell the entire group, Each group now has a baby girl and her name is Elizabeth. The charge of each small group is to raise Elizabeth for the next 21 years. Plan her life. Determine what her experiences will be, what skills, knowledge and attitudes she will need to fulfill her role successfully.

5. Then, distribute one envelope per group to assign the role into which the group is to socialize Elizabeth.

6. Announce that the groups have 45 minutes to plan Elizabeth’s life and that at the end of that time, groups will report out their plans.

7. After 45 minutes, call the large group to order. Ask for reports from the groups which raised Elizabeth to be a secretary, working through family data for all groups, then proceeding through early childhood, childhood, “early adolescence and late adolescence” then differences of opinion arise, ask for individuals to explain their thinking.

8. Next, consider reports from the group that raised Elizabeth to be a corporate wife.

9. Finally, ask for reports from those who raised Elizabeth to be a manager. (It is likely that these groups will be least certain and most in conflict about suggested experiences and essential learnings.)
10. If time allows, spend 10-15 minutes as a large group brainstorming Raising Robert, a baby boy, to be a manager. Work quickly to gather a maximum of ideas from the group, using the format from the worksheet to organize data. (Participants are likely to feel more certain about plans for Roberts experiences and essential learnings than they were about Elizabeth’s, due to sex role socialization.)

11. Ask female participants to consider their own socialization and male participants to consider their sisters socialization in light of the data presented in this exercise. Ask for a show of hands in response to the following questions. How many were socialized to be secretaries? corporate wives? managers? teachers? nurses? engineers? physicians? what else?

12. Conclude the exercise by acknowledging the many popular books and articles of the past decade which provide advice to women in management. Such literature has arisen to meet the adult learning needs of women who have been socialized to assume sex-typed roles (secretary, corporate wife, teacher, nurse, etc.) but who find themselves in managerial/professional roles. (Appendix C provides a list of such books.)

**APPENDIX A**

**WORKSHEET FOR RAISING ELIZABETH**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD (0-5 years)**

- Equipment
- Toys
- Clothes
- Pre-school education
- Play activities encouraged
- Peer relations
- Important family activities
- Other

**CHILDHOOD (5-10 years)**

- Equipment
- Toys
- Clothes
- Gifts
- Room
- School
- Lessons outside school
- Play activities encouraged
- Peer relations
- Important family activities
- Responsibilities at home
- Pets
- Vacations, travel
- Camp
- Other

**FAMILY DATA**

- Socio-economic class
- Ethnic origins
- Religious preference
- Church membership
- Father’s occupation
- Mother’s occupation
- Location of the home
- Elizabeth’s nickname
- Elizabeth’s birth order
- Siblings
- Elizabeth’s role with siblings
- Extended family
- Power relation between parents
- Fathers role with Elizabeth
- Mothers role with Elizabeth
- Other
APPENDIX A (continued)

WORKSHEET FOR RAISING ELIZABETH
EARLY ADOLESCENCE (12-16 years)

Equipment
Toys
Clothes
Gifts
Room
School
Lessons
Activities encouraged
Peers-girls
Peers-boys
Dating
Sex education
Important family activities
Responsibilities at home
Car
Vacations, Travel
Work experience
Other

APPENDIX A (continued)

WORKSHEET FOR RAISING ELIZABETH
LATE ADOLESCENCE (17-21 years)

Equipment
Toys
Clothes
Gifts
Room
Education
College or Training Program
Where?
Major
Activities
Lessons
Friendships with girls, boys
Dating
Romance
Marriage
Children
Work experience
Vacations, travel
Important family activities
Responsibilities to family
Car
Other

APPENDIX B
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Readings

Films

The filmmakers journey back to their boyhood in the midwest to look at the demands and expectations on the American male. Filmed at a football game, an amusement park, a fraternity party, in a high school locker room, a barber shop and at suburban homes, the film listens to men of all ages evaluate their lives in terms of how they have dealt with the ideal American man as aggressive, emotionless, physically fit, sexually powerful, and financially successful.

The film shows the socialization of the American female through a personal look into the lives of six females. Their ages range from 4-35, and their backgrounds vary from poor black to upper-middle class white. We see in action how many forces shape them: Their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, the media and advertising, popular music, and the institution of marriage. It is a compelling film.

APPENDIX C

POPULAR AND SCHOLARLY BOOKS ON WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

18. Hennig, Margaret and Jardim, Anne, The Managerial Woman. NY: Pocket Books, 1 g 76.