DIVERSITY DIALOGUE

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Women Triumph in Times of Recession—Really?

American women are finally in a position to surpass men in the workforce, but it took an economic recession for them to do it. The layoffs and plant closures experienced in the manufacturing and construction industries have hit working men terribly hard. Some estimate that 82 percent of the job losses during the recession have occurred for men. Why the difference? Women tend to hold jobs in "safer" recession-proof industries, like health care and education.

Women's increased representation in the workforce should be cause for celebration. However, several issues loom beneath the surface that may dampen the festivities. First, good benefits came with those good jobs in manufacturing and construction. This allowed men to support their families at much higher levels than women have been able to do with their "safe" jobs. Women tend to work in part-time jobs with little or no health or unemployment insurance. And while the proportion of women in the workforce may be on pace to surpass that of men, their positions and salaries have not. The average salary of full-time women remains a fraction (between 77 and 80 percent) of men. Men continue to hold the majority of executive-level jobs. Finally, economists have found that even when both spouses work, working women devote much more time to child care and housework than men. Many agree that the job for laid-off spouses—husbands especially—is not to settle into a new support role in which they help with cooking, cleaning, and running errands. His primary job is to find another job.

1. Do you believe an extended recession could completely change gender roles in the United States? Explain.
2. Do companies have a responsibility to raise women's salaries to accommodate their roles as primary breadwinners? Why or why not?

SOURCE: C. Rampell, "As Layoffs Surge, Women May Pass Men in Job Force," *New York Times* (February 6, 2009): A1; D. Cauchon, "Women gain as men lose jobs," *USA Today* (September 3, 2009), http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-09-02-womenwork_N.htm

LOOKING BACK: NETFLIX

Challenging the Competition

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Reed Hastings worries a lot about Netflix being caught off guard by services that have not yet been conceived or deployed. One approach to the competition is to challenge them, to catch them off guard, and to take the offense. Netflix challenges the film studios who are among their competitors. The studios would rather sell their films than rent them. In 2010, film downloads were at the top of Warner Bros.' list of business transactions and high-margin sales for the studio. Netflix terrifies Warner Bros. because they send DVDs through the mail to their rapidly growing customer base who pay a monthly fee.[79] In addition to the regular film deliveries, Netflix allows their subscribers to stream films and TV shows at no extra charge. For Warner Bros., that is scary.

Netflix aims to stay ahead of the curve and has a big head start over the competition that is taking aim at the access on demand market sector. How can the company stay