Written submission from Jasmine Kelland (GPG0059)

**Brief Author Biography**

Jasmine Kelland is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Plymouth University. She is the Programme Leader of the Masters in Human Resource Management and BA (Hons) Human Resource Management.

Jasmine has 15 years of experience as a HR Manager, in organisations such as NHS, ITV and Boots the Chemist. She joined Plymouth University 5 years ago and is currently completing her Phd in the area of Gender Role Stereotypes in Recruitment. She has attended international conferences such as Academy of Management (Vancouver) and Work Family Researchers Network (New York/Washington) discussing the issues surrounding gender role stereotyping.

She is a fellow of the Higher Education Authority, Associate Member of the CIPD, holds a Masters in Personnel and Development and Post Graduate Certificates in Research Methodology and Academic Practice.

**Introduction**

Demographics indicate that traditional patterns of employment and parenting are in decline, with an increasing number of fathers working fewer hours to accommodate family life and mothers increasingly working full time. As a consequence, traditional gender roles are arguably in a state of flux and can be considered to be out of synch with modern society. It is within this climate that it is proposed gender role stereotyping could be a key factor in the maintenance of the gender pay gap and that by tackling this issue of gender role stereotyping some of the disparities may be reduced. The key points outlined in this document have been derived through extensive secondary research and some preliminary primary research.

**Key Points:**

- Gender role stereotypes are cultivated in childhood and can be seen to have a pivotal role in the maintenance of traditional gender norms which are arguably incongruent with modern society.
- Understanding the ramifications of the ‘Motherhood Penalty’ and Fatherhood Benefit can help mitigate against their impact in the workplace and ultimately minimise the gender pay disparity.
- Wider exploration into the existence and impact of the “Fatherhood Penalty” and ‘Motherhood Benefit’ in the UK is necessary to fully understand

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1 Office for National Statistics (2013), Women in the Labour Market


organisational responses to parents who behave contrary to gender role stereotypes.

Proposed Actions to Reduce the Gender Pay Gap:

- Wider education in the workplace regarding the implications of gender role stereotyping of parents, with specific focus on the concepts of benefits and penalties for mothers and fathers.
- Wider education of teachers and school governors regarding the implications of gender role stereotyping to minimising the implications of the effects of gender role stereotyping. This may include inclusion of this issue as part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum.
- Wider discussion of the possibilities of an amendment to the Equality Act (2010) to include “Parental Status” as a protected characteristic.

Evidence- Secondary Research

There is much evidence that young children use gender role stereotypes to navigate their world in relation to activities, objects, and occupations. Early gender role attitudes are significantly affected by exposure to gendered behaviour of parents and the extent to which desired behaviours are reinforced with approval or deviation is sanctioned. Manifestations of this may include gender specific toys, encouraging play behavior that is gender stereotyped such as playing with dolls and housekeeping in girls and playing with trucks, tools and engaging in sports activities in boys.

When making judgements about individuals there is a tendency to categorise individuals based on stereotypes and decision makers will often rely upon them when required to make sense of incomplete information. However, gender role stereotyping can be seen to be instrumental in the gendered segregation which exists with regard to occupational positioning. Such segregation sees men and women dominating the labour market in different sectors of the economy and many professions remaining gendered. Research is largely consistent that women continue to be over represented in low paid jobs, often referred to as ‘cleaning,
caring, cashiering and catering’ and under-represented in senior roles within organisations. Thus, it can be argued that as a consequence of gender role stereotyping women can find it particularly difficult to both obtain and succeed in organisational roles and they may be subject to workplace discrimination. Such stereotyping might provoke inequality and create situations whereby power and status remain with men thereby perpetuating the gender pay gap.

The societal view on the father’s role remains predominantly that of the father as ‘breadwinner’. This role is considered to be intrinsically linked to masculinity, with contribution to the household finances being viewed as the actions of ‘real men’ and perceptions of ‘good fathering’ remaining intrinsically linked to financial contribution. Fathers are more likely than mothers to be criticised for doing too little paid work and masculine norms and expectations become more involved in family life then engagement in full-time paid work is necessary to establish themselves as ‘successful’ and ‘proper’ men, so their masculinity will not be affected. This view is perpetuated in the media which widely represents fathers as having the main attachment to the workplace and mothers as the ‘main parent’ through comedy movies such as “Daddy Day-care” and “What to Expect When You’re Expecting” where fathers who are the primary caregivers to children are ridiculed.

With regard to mothers, research indicates that it is expected that women will be less committed than men to the workplace therefore when women take family leave; the perception of their commitment is not affected in the way a father’s is. Similarly, ridge in the media which widely represents fathers as having the main attachment to the workplace and mothers as the ‘main parent’ through comedy movies such as “Daddy Day-care” and “What to Expect When You’re Expecting” where fathers who are the primary caregivers to children are ridiculed.

Regarding mothers, research indicates that it is expected that women will be less committed than men to the workplace therefore when women take family leave; the perception of their commitment is not affected in the way a father’s is. Similarly,
there is an expectation that a ‘good mother’ puts her children first, whereas for ‘good fathers’ this is not expected. Mothers are expected to exhibit more parenting behaviours than fathers and are criticised more than fathers for perceived lack of involvement in the home. Literature is indicative that working mothers need to continually ‘pass the test of manhood’ at work, while at the same time engaging in intensively devoted forms of maternal care-giving and if they prioritise work commitments over family commitments are likely to be seen as bad mothers and bad women.

The notions of penalties and benefits, more specifically, mothers being seen to face a “Motherhood Penalty” whereas fathers receive a ‘Fatherhood Benefit’ are key in the academic discussions surrounding gender role stereotyping for parents in the workplace.

As intimated earlier, research illustrates that working mothers are penalised in the workplace for their motherhood status, stereotyped as incompetent and at the point of selection are evaluated as less competent and worthy of hiring than working fathers with the same qualifications and performance. Professional women with children face drastic career penalties, including being “mommy tracked”, stereotyped as incompetent, not promoted regardless of qualifications or performance with many reluctantly opting out of their careers due to a belief of marginalization and stigmatism. Mothers are less likely to be fully respected as workers because they are mothers and likely to experience high levels of mistreatment. It is proposed that working mothers are viewed as less communal than stay-at-home mothers and face more disapproval than mothers who did not work or took maternity leave.

A large body of literature advocates that fathers have a very different experience in the workplace and reap rewards due to fatherhood status, as fatherhood is linked to increased dedication, work effort and increased focus on the job role. However, some research suggests that the ‘fatherhood benefit’ is more complex and alters when fathers demonstrate a high level of involvement in family life, contradicting stereotypical gender norms. Such fathers may face penalties in the workplace such as harassment and mistreatment, stigmatisation as not conforming to expectations.

46 Halford, Savage and Witz, 1997; Kugelberg, 2006.
47 Berdahl and Moon, 2013.
prejudice and backlash and judgements being less masculine, having lower status and entitled to less respect than men who do not reduce work time in this way.

Evidence – Primary Research

My research aims to generate knowledge regarding the prevalence, nature and impact of penalties and benefits in relation to parenthood during the selection process. The purpose of the research is to inform management practice in the UK with a view to minimising gender stereotyping and discrimination in the work place. Gender role stereotypes of UK managers are explored through both individual and group methods. Participants are asked to individually rate fictitious applicant suitability (full time and part time) through utilisation of vignettes, followed by a focus group discussion exploring the rationale behind the recruitment decision making.

It is hypothesised that when applicants who are fathers act in line with gender role stereotypes (applying for a full time role) a ‘fatherhood benefit’ will be evident in the recruitment decisions made by managers, however, when they act contrary (applying for a part time role) a “fatherhood penalty” will occur. Similarly, it is hypothesised that when applicants who are mothers behave in a way that is contrary to gender role stereotypes (applying for a full time role) a ‘Motherhood Penalty’ will be evident in the recruitment decisions made by managers, but when they conform to the gender role stereotypes a “motherhood benefit” will occur.

An initial focus group has been completed with eighteen post graduate students, the majority of whom had management experience and early findings point to existence of the ‘fatherhood penalty’ and ‘motherhood benefit’ when parents act contrary to gender role stereotypes. An otherwise equal mother applicant was rated more highly than a father applicant for a part time role and a potential explanation for this outcome, as previous literature has explored, is that the applicant father was penalised for violating gender role stereotypes by applying for a part time role, whereas the mother applicant, who was conforming, was rewarded.

Focus groups are taking place currently in organisations from a wide range of sectors (public, private, non-profit) and full findings will be available in due course.

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