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An Outside-Inside Evolution in Gender and Professional Work

by [Lakshmi Ramarajan](#), [Kathleen McGinn](#) and Deborah Kolb

Abstract

We study the process by which a professional service firm reshaped its activities and beliefs over nearly two decades as it adapted to shifts in the social discourse regarding gender and work. Analyzing archival data from the firm over eighteen years and representations of gender and work from the business press over the corresponding two decades, we find that the firm internalized the broader social discourse through iterated cycles of analysis and action, punctuated by evolving beliefs about gender and work. Outside experts and shifting social understandings played pivotal roles in changing beliefs and activities inside the firm. We conclude with an internalization model depicting organizational adaptation to evolving social institutions.

Keywords: [gender](#); [professional service firms](#); [social institutions](#); [organizational learning](#); [Organizational Change and Adaptation](#); [Employment](#); [Gender](#); [Society](#); [Service Industry](#);

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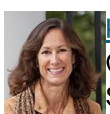


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