No More One Way: Redesigning Work to Promote Gender Equality and Life Quality

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September 25, 2014
Matt Lauer Asked Mary Barra If She Can Be a Good Mom and Run GM

Just months after Sen. Barbara Boxer said she was disappointed in Barra "woman to woman."

In an exclusive TODAY show interview with Mary Barra, Matt Lauer asked the General Motors CEO if it was possible for her to run a major automaker and be a good mom at the same time.

Here's a transcript of that part of the interview:

LAUER: You're a mom, I mentioned, two kids. You said in an interview not long ago that your kids told you they're going to hold you accountable for one job and that is being a mom.
Gender Inequality and Life Quality – (Re)Produced at Multiple Levels over the Life Course

- **State-Level** Gendered Institutions
  - Labor Market Policies, Regulations
  - Policies Setting Temporal Organization of Work/Careers
  - Family Care Work

- **Organizational-Level** Gendered Institutions
  - Lock-Step Occupational/Organizational Career Paths
  - Rigid Job Routines, Clocks, and Calendars
  - Inflexibility, Little Support, Culture, Stereotypes, Discrimination

- **Couple/Individual-Level** Strategic Selections
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No More One Way....

1. The BIG Question
2. Research on Changing Organizations
3. The Way Forward

Increasing gender equality and life quality
No More One Way....

The BIG Question

Increasing gender equality and life quality
Why does gender inequality persist when most Americans and Europeans now endorse and believe in gender equality?

Key Question.....
1950s Breadwinner-Homemaker (Career Mystique/Feminine Mystique)

- **Men**: Breadwinner
- **Women**: Homemaker
Replaced **Feminine Mystique** with **Career Mystique**

- Education (Preparation)
- Continuous Work, Status Attainment
- Retire or Die
Coupled Careers: Double Interface over the Life Course

Men

Career A/B ↔

Career B/A ↔

Women

Work

Family

$t$
1970s – 2000s
Social Organization of Work – An Uneasy Career Mystique

- Women as well as Men
- Intensification (Do more with less)
- Extensification (24/7)
- Uncertainty, Insecurity
- Mirage: Approaching Gender Equality
- KEY: No Replacement for Career Mystique
Women Embraced the Career Mystique... Plus
Challenge: How to Remove Time Constraints and Open up Possibilities for Women and Men at all Stages of the Life Course?

How to Institutionalize Alternative Work-Time and Career Path Options that Promote Life Quality and Gender Equality?
No More One Way....

The BIG Question

Research on Changing Organizations

Increasing gender equality and life quality
Supporting Partners

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)
Regina Bures, Program Official
Rosalind Berkowitz King, Project Scientist

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)/National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH)
Casey Chosewood,
Senior Medical Officer for Total Worker Health

National Institute on Aging
Lis Nielsen, Program Official

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)
Tisha Wiley, Program Official

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
Michael Twery, Program Official

Grants from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the William T. Grant Foundation and the Administration for Children and Families have provided additional funding.
Organizational Contexts: Key Settings
Shaping Gender Equality and Life Quality

- Theory and research:
  - Importance of social institutions/environments reproducing gender disparities and poor life quality

- **Work:** key social environment
  - Most adults spend most waking hours on the job
Traditional Work Patterns
Traditional Work Patterns

Flexibility as Accommodation

**What?** Flextime, telecommuting, part-time options (in jobs considered full-time)

**Why?** Help a more diverse workforce manager work-family challenges.

**How?** Individual employee requests an arrangement. Manager decides whether to allow, sometimes with guidance from policy and/or HR.

**Benefits** – Some employees get to change their work arrangements.

**Challenges** – Uneven access (even in same workplace, job). Users worry about “flex stigma” → career consequences, job at risk. Others avoid.
**Traditional Work Patterns**

**Flexibility for Business Needs**

**What?** Highly variable hours, with difficulty “bounding” work as well as downsizing, layoffs, contract work.

**Why?** Pressure to be more “nimble” + new technologies

**How?** (1) Professionals and managers – take work home, high technology use, “blurring” of work and non-work time and space due to pressure to be constantly available & instantly responsive. (2) Hourly service workers – hours vary week to week, report but sent home, software vs. local managers determine schedules.

**Benefits** – Employers get hours they need, without extra labor costs.

**Challenges** – Employees and families absorbing high and variable work loads and insecurities (and unpredictable, varying income for hourly workers).
Going by the

Wayside -

Traditional Work Patterns
(Replaced with Rigidity PLUS)

Flexibility as Accommodation (Employee Initiated)

Wary

Flexibility for Business Needs (Management Initiated)

Weary
Work Teams Differ in Work-to-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction, and Emotional Exhaustion (Baseline)

- Work-to-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction, and Emotional Exhaustion correlate highly within teams

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<td>Work-to-Family Conflict</td>
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<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
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<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
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<td>Psychological Distress</td>
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Traditional Work Patterns
(Replaced with Rigidity PLUS)

Flexibility as Accommodation (Employee Initiated)

Flexibility for Business Needs (Management Initiated)

Work Redesign (Changing Clocks and Calendars of Work)
Work Redesign as a Way of Promoting Life Quality and Gender Equality….

- **What?** Reconsider when, where, how, and what work is done, as a team, work group, or organization.
  - Aims for structural and cultural change – affects what we do, how we understand it, what we expect of ourselves and others.

- **Why?** Need to make work more effective, efficient, equitable, and sustainable.

- **How?** Teams or department work with facilitator to look at work practices, processes, communication routines, then experiment and adjust, keeping work and life goals both in mind.
The Work, Family & Health Network’s (WFHN) STAR Initiative

- Designed to:
  - Promote greater **temporal flexibility**
  - Provide greater **supervisor support** for family and personal issues
  - Reduce low value work and emphasize outcomes, not time at work:

- Method: Randomized field trial

- **NOT** explicitly about gender or work-family issues…rather, “new ways of working”
Experimental Study of STAR

- Information technology (IT) division of Fortune 500 firm
- Group-randomized trial
  - 27 groups received STAR
  - 29 groups continued with “business as usual” practices
  - Same survey so examine changes for 694 employees over time

STAR Overview

- Participatory workshops – look at current culture, change work practices, team processes. Hope to meet business needs and increase employees’ control over when & where they work, and increase employees’ support for personal lives
- Training supervisors – identify supportive behaviors (personal support, professional support), track own behaviors over a week using iPod Touch, compare with own goals and with peers
- 8 hours for employees, 12 hours for managers
Our Research Questions

- We investigate whether STAR...
  1. Increases employees’ control over when and where they work and sense that their supervisors support their family and personal lives?
  2. Reduces work-life conflicts and the “time squeeze”?
  3. Unintentionally increases work hours or perceived job demands (through permeability of work over time and space)?
  4. Promotes Health and Life Quality
But Where is Gender?
Gender Deliberately Downplayed –

- STAR is not a “woman-friendly,” or “family-friendly” initiative
- But a work redesign affecting all workers
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: STAR increases Schedule Control for Women and Men

Change in Schedule Control: STAR vs. Control groups

Pre-intervention | Post-intervention
--- | ---
STAR | Control
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: STAR increases Schedule Control for Women and Men

Change in Schedule Control: STAR vs. Control groups

Hypothetical path for STAR group if not "treated"
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: Evidence of Benefits of STAR for Women and Men

- **Increased**
  - Control over work time
  - Supervisor support for personal and family life
  - Saying have “enough time” with family

- **Decreased**
  - Work-to-family conflict
  - Family-to-work conflict

- **No Effect** on work hours or work intensity

Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: STAR reduces burnout, increases job satisfaction over 12 months

**Predicted Burnout by Wave 3 (with 95% CIs)**

**Predicted Job Satisfaction by Wave 3**
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: STAR Reduces Women’s Stress
STAR Reduces Psychological Distress for Women without Children at Home

Predicted Psychological Distress by Wave 3 with 95% CIs

- Women with kids at home
- Women w/o kids at home
- Men with kids at home
- Men w/o kids at home
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: Health Benefits for Women and Men (ROWE Study)

Best Buy Co., Inc. headquarters (2006-08)
Quasi-experimental study: compare employees in departments moving to ROWE with employees in later-adopting departments

- ROWE increased sleep on nights before work
- ROWE reduced smoking
- ROWE increased exercise, especially among single adults

Moen, Kelly, et al. 2011 *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*
Moen, Kelly, et al. 2013 *Social Science & Medicine*
Improving Life Quality and Gender Equality: ROWE Encourages Healthier Behaviors when Sick for Women and Men

**Working When Sick**

- Wave 1: ROWE Group (N=299) vs. Comparison Group (N=308)
- Wave 2**: (p<.001)

**Not Going to the Doctor When Sick**

- Wave 1: ROWE Group (N=302) vs. Comparison Group (N=309)
- Wave 2*: (p<.05)

No More One Way....

The BIG Question

Research on Changing Organizations

The Way Forward

Increasing gender equality and life quality
Implications for Life Quality and Gender Equality?

Most Working Women and Men Can’t Lean In to Careers and Caring…Result?

• Women Accommodating Occupational Careers to Family and Personal Care (& Husband’s Career)
Dual-Earner Couples’ Constrained Career Strategies

- Dual Occupational Career Strategies
  - Compensatory Strategies
  - Synchronic Strategies
  - Independent Strategies
    - Neo-traditional Commit.
      - Crossover Commit.
      - Dual Commit.
      - Alternative Commit.
      - Bounded Commit.
Implications for Life Quality and Gender Equality?

Most Working Women and Men Can’t Lean In to Careers and Caring…Result?

• Accommodating Occupational Careers to Family and Personal Care

• Accommodating Family and Personal Care to Occupational Careers
“Work-Friendly” Career Development Strategies

Dual Occupational Career Strategies

Compensatory Strategies
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Independent Strategies
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“Egalitarian” Career Strategies

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“Egalitarian” and “Family Friendly” Career Strategies? Need Work Redesign

NEEDED: WORK REDESIGN

Dual Occupational Career Strategies

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Synchronic Strategies
- Alternative Commit.

Independent Strategies
- Bounded Commit.
Key to Equality and Life Quality?

Control over…

- sufficient earnings and other resources
- Including resource of time

But also… a Sustainable Model beyond Career Mystique

- alternative paths, possibilities for the future
- more equitable sharing of paid work, family care work, risks, stresses, and health

No More One Way!
Conclusions: Key Challenges to Organizations

1. Updating Outdated Concepts, Categories, and Cultures around Temporal Organization of Work

2. Opening up Gendered Life Course (Cumulative Inequalities) – Alternative Career Pathways for Men and Women

3. Seeking Transformation, not Assimilation or Accommodation

4. Focusing on Prevention of Inequality & Poor Life Quality
Thank you!

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