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From 'Work-Family' to the 'Gendered Life Course' and 'Fit': Five Challenges to the Field

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Abstract

This paper* introduces the concepts of the 'gendered life course' and 'life-course fit' in order to provide a broader, dynamic, and contextual perspective on the match or mismatch characterizing the social environments confronting workers, their families, and their communities. It summarizes five challenges confronting scholars of community, work, family, and policy: (1) updating outdated concepts and categories; (2) incorporating the gendered life course and family strategies to improve fit; (3) recognizing social change; (4) seeking work-time policy transformation, not simply assimilation or accommodation; and (5) focusing on prevention. In doing so, it provides a very brief history of the work-family intersection from a US vantage point, along with an overview of organizational response by employers to the 'work-family' conundrum. There is a growing recognition that a sense of fit or misfit in terms of rising temporal demands, limited temporal resources and outdated work-hour constraints on workers and families has become a public health issue. The next step is for employers and policy makers to break open the time clocks around paid work – the tacit, taken-for-granted beliefs, rules and regulations about the time and timing of work days, work weeks, work years, and work lives.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag stellt die Konzepte des „geschlechtsspezifischen Lebenslaufs" und der „Lebenslaufanpassung" vor. Hiermit soll ein breiterer, dynamischer und kontextbezogener Blick geworfen werden auf das Zusammenspiel bzw. Ungleichgewicht des jeweiligen sozialen Umfelds der Arbeitnehmer/innen, ihrer Familien und Gemeinschaften. Fünf Herausforderungen, mit denen Sozialwissenschaftler/innen konfrontiert sind, werden in diesem Beitrag zusammengefasst: (1) Aktualisierung überholter Konzepte und Kategorien, (2) bessere Vereinbarkeit des geschlechtsspezifischen Lebenslaufs mit Familienstrategien, (3) Anerkennung des sozialen Wandels, (4) Suche nach Arbeitszeittransformation im Sinne von Weiterentwicklung und (5) Fokus auf Prävention. Hiermit soll – aus US-amerikanischer Perspektive – ein knapper Überblick über die historische Entwicklung der Schnittstellen zwischen Arbeit und Familie gegeben wer-

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den. Ebenfalls wird ein Überblick über die Resonanz der Unternehmensseite hinsichtlich der Organisation des „Arbeit-Familien-Komplexes“ geboten. Es gibt ein gestiegenes Bewusstsein dafür, dass das (Nicht-)Passen aufgrund erhöhter Zeitanforderungen bei gleichzeitig begrenzten Zeitressourcen und überholten Arbeitszeitzwängen der Arbeitnehmer/innen und Familien zunehmend auch eine Frage der Gesundheit der Bevölkerung ist. Der nächste Schritt für Unternehmen und Politik wird sein, die rigiden Zeitkorsetts der bezahlten Arbeit aufzubrechen. Dies bedeutet, die stillschweigenden, für selbstverständlich erachteten Haltungen, Regeln und Regulierungen bezüglich Zeit und ihrer Bemessung für Arbeitstage, -wochen, -jahre und das ganze Arbeitsleben auf den Prüfstand zu stellen.

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Introduction

'Work-Family' connotes a lot of things: balance, spillover, conflict, enrichment, integration, enhancement, overload, stress. The work-family construct also leaves a lot out. I propose that the 'work-family' *adjective* be replaced by a *noun*, a cognitive assessment of 'fit' that can be usefully applied to all employees at all life stages living in all types of households. I also argue that the gendered life course should become an explicit component in theorizing the strains produced by the absence of fit. Interdisciplinary, cross-national scholars of community, work, family, and policy confront five challenges: (1) updating outdated concepts and categories; (2) incorporating the gendered life course and family strategies enhance a sense of fit; (3) recognizing social change; (4) seeking policy transformation, not assimilation or accommodation; and (5) focusing on prevention. I discuss each in turn, but begin by providing a very brief history of the work-family intersection from a US vantage point, along with an overview of the organizational response by employers to the 'work-family' conundrum. I conclude with discussion of life-course fit, which provides a broader, dynamic, and contextual perspective on the gendered lives of individuals and families.

A brief history of work, family and gender

Issues around the work-family connection have been framed in different ways at different times and places. Table 1 provides a brief history of work, family, policy and gender as it played out in the United States, some of which parallels experiences in other countries, some of which does not. From the 1930s through the 1950s, the focus was on families under stress (e.g., Hill, 1949). Family quality of life was seen as at risk because of men's unemployment in the Great Depression as well as the absence of husbands and fathers during the Second World War. The *family economy*, the jobs of breadwinners in particular, was a key scholarly and public concern. Solutions in the US came to be defined as the need for new public policies to promote economic security. Many such policies were legislated during this period: Unemployment Insurance; Social Security; social assistance in the form of Aid to Dependent Children; the Fair Labor Standards Act; and the GI Bill (offering low-rate housing loans and educational benefits to veterans).

In the early 1960s, the 'work-family' issue turned to the 'problem' of *maternal employment*. Articles were written on the (potentially negative) impacts on children of their mothers' employment, as well as the plight of single mothers. Solutions were defined in terms of family wages, that is, income sufficient for men so that their wives would not 'have' to work for pay. Another policy solution: Aid to *Families* with Dependent Children (AFDC) to enable poor single mothers to stay home with their children.

Table 1. A Brief History of Work, Family, Policy and Gender in the US

Period	Topics/Models	Issues	Solutions
1930s-1950s	Families Under Stress Family Life Quality	Men's Unemployment; Family Economy; Breadwinners; War Separation	Unemployment Insurance; Social Security; Fair Labor Standards Act, GI Bill Housing Loans;
1960s-1970s	Maternal Employment Women's Movement	Homemakers' Isolation Women's Two Roles Effects on *children* of mother's employment Welfare mothers	Homemaking Wives/Mothers AFDC Women get Men's Education, Men's Jobs, Hire a Wife
1980s	Inequality Women's Movement Work-Family	Women's Equal Opportunity *Women's* Balancing of Roles Women's Glass Ceiling, Child-care	Job Share, Part Time Title 9, Tax Credits Men's Share at Home, Flex-time
1990s	Work-Life Downsizing Caregiving Welfare Reform	Men *and* Women Balance Business Impacts and Politics	Family & Medical Leave Technologies Communication, Flextime Welfare time limits
2000s	Workers and Working Families in Globalized Labor Market, Opting Out	Burnout, Overload, Uncertainty, Older Workers, Time Pressures, Economic Insecurity	Living Wage, Containing Social Assistance Programs, Flextime, Flexplace, Family Friendly Policies

By the middle of the 1960s and especially throughout the 1970s, the 'work-family' issue expanded into challenging the feminine mystique: the belief that women could achieve total fulfillment by caring for their children, husbands and homes. Betty Friedan's (1963) book by that name sparked a second wave of the Women's Movement. Concerns for civil rights for Blacks spilled over into concerns for the rights of women. Solutions were couched in the language of inequality: women should be able to get men's education, men's jobs, men's salaries. Social policies soon followed, expanding educational and occupational opportunities for women. But the *career* mystique, the belief that men's total fulfillment should come from full-time, full-year, full-life careers of paid work (Moen & Roehling, 2005), was neither named nor challenged.

In the early years of the second wave of the Women's Movement, the domestic side of the 'work-family' issue was given short shift. Private solutions for those who could afford it included hiring a 'wife,' that is hiring someone else – another, less advantaged women – to do the domestic and family care work. Importantly, 1975 was the UN Decade for Women, moving women's rights to an international stage.

The greatest increase in married women's labor force participation in the US occurred throughout the 1970s. By 1980, half of married women were in the American workforce, a change that came later in the Netherlands and Germany, earlier in Sweden and other Nordic countries. The Women's Movement challenged the feminine mystique – that full-time domesticity is the only path to women's fulfillment – as a false myth. However, almost unawares what Moen and Roehling (2005) term the *career* mystique – that continuous full-time paid work is the path to fulfillment – came to be accepted by women as well as men. The career mystique replaced the feminine mystique, as women sought gender equity through educational and career attainment (Moen & Roehling, 2005). 'Equality' meant moving into men's jobs, replete with taken-for-granted rules, regulations, and expectations about the temporal organization of work – the time clocks and calendars predicated on a largely male workforce with no family-care responsibilities, or else on poor women workers who relied on their networks of kin and friends to look after their children. Paid work became the normative path to women's *and* men's success and fulfillment; US feminists in the 1980s did not question the social organization of work days, work weeks, work years, and career paths based on a breadwinner/homemaker type household. (However, these were challenged in Sweden – see Moen, 1989.)

Buying into the career mystique meant embracing full-time or more hours, continuous employment, whole-hearted dedication, and investment in one's job. Harold Wilensky (1961, p. 523) defined career as "a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence." Neither women nor men questioned the lock-step time clocks and calendars shaping the life course – first education, then paid work, then retirement (Kohli, 1986). Neither did they question the social structuring of work days, work weeks, work years. And yet the

strains for households in which all adults were in the workforce became telling. Moreover, it was at this time that 'balance' became the watchword. Only, it seemed, just *women* were to do the balancing. Women found it increasingly difficult to achieve occupational success, given that family care obligations remained institutionalized as 'women's' work. It was difficult for men to be actively engaged as fathers given their (full-time, continuous) breadwinner obligations and the way 'good' white-collar and unionized blue-collar jobs demanded time and energy.

The 1980s were a weak economic period – replete with economic downturns (17% of the Dutch were unemployed in 1984). Work-family issues became knifed off from inequality issues (women's equal opportunity, women's wages, women's glass ceiling, yet) remained too often *women's* issues: women's balancing of roles; women's need for childcare and flexibility. However, it was in the 1980s that the pendulum swung toward looking also at men. If women were to be equal at work, then men had to do their equal share on the home front. By this time women had embraced the career mystique *plus:* they wanted men's jobs *and* wanted to be successful mothers. This was a time of challenging gender inequality in wages and status *and* in the domestic division of labor. Solutions included private strategies – having husbands/fathers do more at home, having a wife/mother share a job with another woman, women moving to less desirable and lower paying part-time jobs. But there were also calls for more flexibility and childcare. In the US, Title 9 passed increasing women's rights, as did tax credits for child care. But, except for shifts around the edges (such as flextime and a few job share arrangements), there was no challenge to the fundamental temporal organization of work – the clockworks and calendars as framed by the career mystique. What is key is that these widely-accepted career mystique beliefs, policies, and practices constituting the clockworks of paid work *remain barriers to real gender equality across the life course.*

The period of the 1990s included a focus on work-*life* (recognizing that not all workers had families of their own), downsizing, caregiving, welfare reform, and a sustainable welfare state. The issues were still framed in the language of 'balance' – but now for men *and* women. Other policy issues emerging in the 1990s were the business impacts of family-friendly policies and the spiraling costs of social protections. Solutions in the US included the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1992, the idea that new communication technologies might enable people to better juggle work and home, and lower payouts and shorter time limits in US welfare. Changing business policies and practices to offer some form of flextime was also high on the list of solutions. By the 1990s there was a growing legitimacy around the idea of *working families*, that is, that all adults in a household are expected to work for pay. The 'work-family' topic became more inclusive, still about mothers with children, but also including fathers, as well as men and women at different life stages, including those caring for infirm relatives.

The first decade of the 21st century saw considerable attention paid to workers and working families in a globalized, turbulent labor market, as well as the inability of women to 'do it all.' Given the absence of fit between time demands and time resources, some women, in fact, are exiting from demanding jobs, a process caught in the popular phrase of "opting out," even though they are, in fact, "pushed out" by the intransigent clockworks of work (Moen, 2008; Stone, 2008). Common issues in the second decade of this century are now moving the 'work-family problem' to include a focus on the *demands and conditions of work*: time pressures, benefits, job insecurity, burnout, overload. here is also an emerging focus on older workers. Solutions are increasingly framed in terms of real employee flexibility and family-friendly policies, as well as on some types of security safety net.

From the 1970s, when the "work-family" topic area appeared in earnest, to the second decade of the 21st century, there has been insufficient reflection on the nature of the work-family concept (but see Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). I believe it is, basically, out of date, and should be replaced by the concept of *life-course fit*, or at least *work-family fit*, with fit or misfit placed within the context of the gendered and unequal life course. The next several decades constitute a perfect storm of conditions setting the stage for transformation of global labor markets and social risk management (Schmid, 2005), including the social organization of working time. In the midst of this perfect storm, as workers and working families navigate within globalized and risk-laden labor markets, scholars of community, work and family face five challenges.

1. Updating outdated concepts and categories

1.1 'Work-Family' frame too narrow

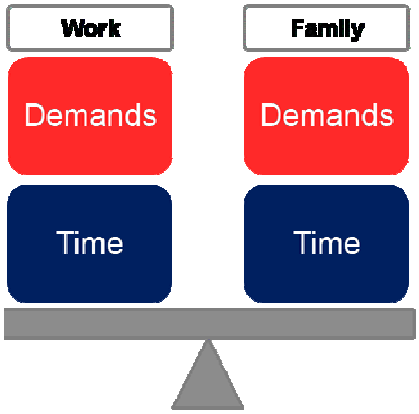
It is time to move beyond the 'work-family' frame that now constrains research and theory (see also recent reviews by Crane and Hill, 2009; Crouter and Booth, 2009; Greenhaus and Allen, 2010; Korabik, Lero, and Whitehead, 2008; Kossek and Lambert, 2005; Owens and Suitor, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet, 2006; Rusconi and Solga, 2008; Smith, 2009 – where some of these issues are raised). First, it *excludes other contexts*: community, culture, economy, policy, biography, region, neighborhood, workplace. Second, 'work-family' scholarship often ignores *selection into* particular work or family contexts. For example, employees (especially women) may choose to "opt out" of some jobs or of marriage/parenthood because of the strains of managing their multiple obligations or achieving their goals (Moen, 2008; Moen and Huang, 2010; Moen, Kelly, and Hill, 2009; Stone, 2008). Individuals and couples may 'choose' to have no or fewer children, or to have them earlier or later in light of demanding jobs, the absence of family-friendly supports, or other barriers (Altucher and Williams, 2003, Hank, 2004; Nitsche and Brueckner, 2009). Studies simply looking at the effects of employment status, or of work hours, or of family size, or of dual-earner status -- miss the fact that people are *not randomly distributed* along these dimensions (Moen and Hernandez, 2009), but instead select themselves or are selected by external forces into or out of certain social conditions. Third, the concept 'work-family' masks the *heterogeneity* around working conditions and the changing life course. It is not enough to know that a parent is employed, for example. What are the conditions of their work or their home life, and how are both changing over time? Fourth, 'work-family' *leaves out too many people*: singles, same-sex couples, 'fictive' families of close co-residential friends, older individuals whose partners and children are no longer around. Most people equate the 'work-family' issue with the difficulties faced by employees raising children. But high performance jobs that leave young adults no time to date or search for partners are also a work-family issue. So too are dual-earner couples (or singles) who decide they are too time-pressured or whose jobs are too insecure for them to even think about having a(nother) child. And there are burgeoning issues around empty-nester couples or singles who are caring for aging relatives and/or thinking about and moving into retirement (Keck and Saraceno, 2009; Saraceno, 2008).

1.2 Poor framing: The 'balance' and 'career mystique' myths

Two master frames shape the way scholars theorize the work-family interface, limiting its conceptual utility. First is the *'balance' myth* (managing work de-

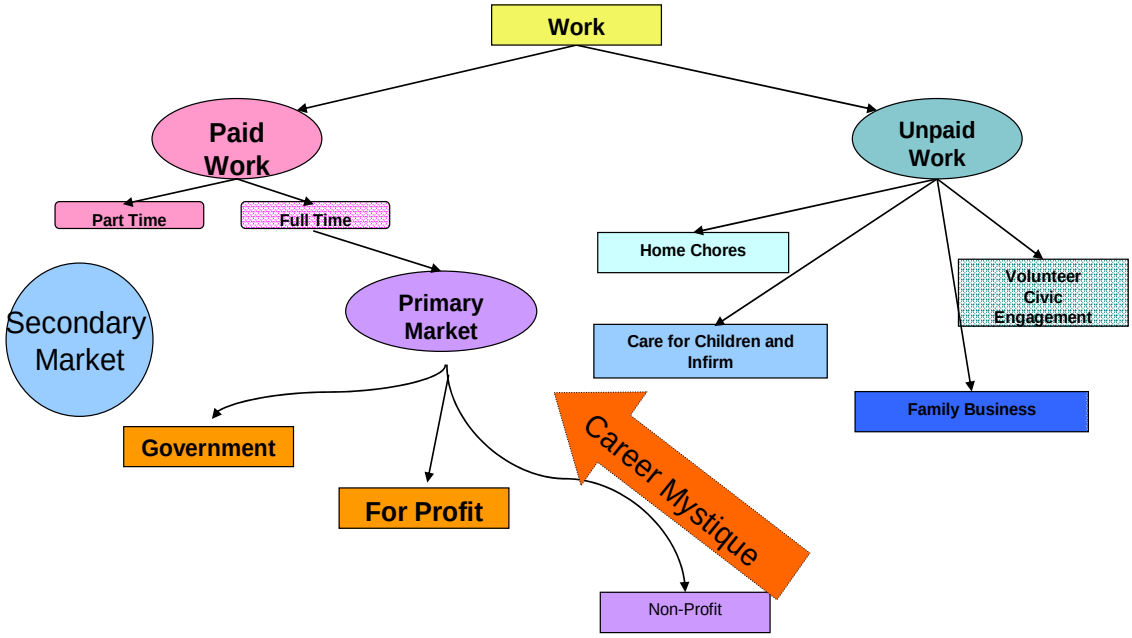
mands/work time against family demands/family time – see Rapoport et al., 2002). Balance is a good goal, but has many different definitions (see Greenhaus and Allen, 2010; Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; Halpern and Murphy, 2005) and has been used to focus on *individuals' private troubles* (e.g. "I'm not balancing") rather than with *public issues* of social structure and culture (see Figure 1). Also, the focus is on *individuals* not couples or families (see also Rusconi and Solga, 2008; Moen and Hernandez, 2009), with women disproportionately doing the 'balancing.' This reifies the tendency of societies, states, employers, and scholars to think about, develop policies around, and study workers as individuals, not as family members. And yet most workers are married (or partnered), and most in the US and Europe are part of dual-earner households. It may matter less if one member of a couple has an optimal environment and feels 'balanced' if the other is experiencing time pressures and strains, or if their child, is sick (see also Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007).

Figure 1. Work-Family 'Balance' as Poor Framing



The second master framing is the *career mystique* (Moen and Roehling, 2005), the taken-for-granted life-course lock-step of first preparation (schooling) then continuous employment/status attainment, then retirement or death, whichever comes first (see also Kohli, 1986). The career mystique incorporates the idea of intensive commitment to employment – of full-time, continuous paid work as the only path to success and fulfillment. But the career mystique defined the real experiences of only a small segment of the workforce – in the US, middle-class and unionized blue-collar men in the middle of the 20th century – and not even all of those (see Figure 2). This male model of the life course is about individuals, not families, and is increasingly out of date for men as well as for women, an example of *structural lag* (Riley, Kahn, and Foner, 1994). It has never captured the experiences of women's lives, even though many women embraced the career mystique as the only path to gender equality.

Figure 2. The Career Mystique as Poor Framing: Leaves Out Much of the 'Work' of Society



2. Incorporating the gendered life course and family strategies

The gendered life course is a relatively new framing (Moen, 2001; Moen and Spencer, 2006). The fact is, labor market policies as well as the culture around the career mystique created not only the tripartite life course of education, employment, retirement (see Kohli, 1986) but also the *gendered* life course, with the male breadwinner model ingrained in both state and business policies and practices, as well as taken-for-granted expectations and assumptions about paid work. The social organization of paid work and unpaid family work, along with the full-time/part-time division of primary versus secondary paid work, are based on the gendered breadwinner/homemaker model of the life course. As can be seen in Figure 2, the career mystique legitimated only one small part of the work of society. Nevertheless, it became a social 'given' – the taken-for-granted beliefs about the ways work – and the life course – *are* organized and *should* be organized.

Sewell (1992) points out that the word structure is always a verb, *structuring* lives and relations as individuals move through institutions. The 'balance' metaphor has become the key lens through which the pressures and strains of working and raising a family are defined. And it has promoted understanding of the time strains of workers' lives, especially in the family- and career- building life course stages. However, it ignores *family adaptive strategies*: individuals and families making *strategic selections,* such as prioritizing men's careers – not women's; having fewer children, having them later in life or remaining childfree; moving ailing parents to live closer; shifting caregiving burdens, changing jobs, working part time, opting out (Becker and Moen, 1999; Chesley and Moen, 2006; Flood, 2009; Garey, 1999; Gerson, 2002; Moen, 2003; Moen and Yu, 2000; Pixley, 2008, Stone, 2008; Wotschack, 2009; Wotschack and Wittek, 2007). Strategic actions are an important theoretical and methodological issue around selection mechanisms that put people into the 'states' we study – those who are parents versus those who are not, those who are married versus those who are not, those who are employed in some jobs and not others, those who work long hours versus those who work part time.

A gendered life course framing (Moen, 2001; Moen & Spencer, 2006) emphasizes the dynamics and complexity of lives – and especially that *men's and women's life paths are distinctly different* as a result of pre-existing cultural schema reproduced in the process of doing gender along with doing race and class (Fenstermaker & West, 2002) in the light of existing labor market and career policies -- policies and practices producing/reproducing gender inequality at home and at work (see also Moen, 2003; Moen and Roehling, 2005; Sweet and Moen, 2006). In particular, women's and men's strategic choices are limited by the social organization of working time based on the institutionalized career mystique of continuous, full-time employment throughout 'prime' adulthood

as optimal, even though this is the period of the life course when families as well as careers are developed and are nurtured (Moen, 1992). This fosters a widening disparity between women and men with age; women find it easy to get off the career mystique train, but *hard to get back on*.

3. Recognizing social change

Much of the work-family literature focuses on antecedents or consequences of positive or negative work-to-family or family-to-work spillover (see reviews by Crane and Hill, 2009; Crouter and Booth, 2009; Greenhaus and Allen, 2010; Korabik, Lero, and Whitehead, 2008; Kossek and Lambert, 2005; Lewis and Cooper, 1999; Owens and Suitor, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet, 2006; Smith, 2009), often ignoring the remarkable changes transforming both "work" and "family," as well as outdated institutionalized asymmetries in the ability of people to modify their situations (but see Crane and Hill, 2009; Crouter and Booth, 2009; Greenhaus and Allen, 2010; Korabik, Lero, and Whitehead, 2008; Kossek and Lambert, 2005; Lewis and Cooper, 1999; Owens and Suitor, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet, 2006; Smith, 2009). The fact is, contemporary working families confront a host of transformations: demographic, cultural, economic, technological; behavioral. Transnational labor markets, organizational structures and new information technologies are increasing the pace and pressures of work, even as global economic dislocations foster rising uncertainty about the future. Commitment and productivity are too often equated with 'face time,' that is, time spent being visible at the workplace. Workers today confront rising time demands and productivity expectations. Job and economic insecurity are a fact of life for those engaged in contract or temporary work, and even for those in previously what were secure jobs. This real-world complexity means that stressed workers and their time-starved, stressed families are caught within a web of uncertainties and risks. Workers and working families are living and working on a moving platform of multilayered changes without clear guidelines. What *is* clear is that old, taken-for-granted gendered life course scripts and schemas are out of date, for both men and women. In light of the new longevity – along with the large baby boomer cohort moving into and through their 50s, 60s, and 70s, and their parents live much longer than did their grandparents – the outdatedness of temporalities around work, working conditions, caregiving and retirement are further underscored. And yet much of the extant work-family literature is presented as if free of the forces changing work and family, as well as if free of the social, economic, policy, and community contexts in which lives play out.

4. Seeking transformation, not assimilation or accommodation

Organizational responses to the time pressures and strains confronting the growing portion of the workforce without the backup of a full-time homemaker can be depicted along three dimensions: changes in organizational culture, changes in organizational policy, and changes in policies and practices around working time and career paths (see Table 2). As middle-class married women and mothers entered the US workforce in ever larger numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, the first response by organizations as well as government policy makers was – nothing. Massive numbers of women in the workforce problematized family care and the work-family interface – but this was basically ignored - the goal was assimilation of women into prevailing workplace arrangements. Women who wanted equal opportunity were expected to follow the male career mystique template; those who could not were relegated to tangential part-time, temporary or low-wage service jobs. In 1980, a senior US governmental official told me that "women simply have to decide whether to be workers or mothers, that they can't be both," ignoring the fact that men of course can successfully be fathers/breadwinners and workers. Women were expected to *assimilate* into existing (male) occupational and organizational arrangements, policies and practices.

*Table 2. From Private Troubles to Public Issues: Government and Organizational Response to the Time Squeeze**

	Organizational Changes in:		
	Culture	Policy	Time/Paths
Assimilation	-	-	-
Accommodation 1	-	+	-
Accommodation 2	+	+	-
Transformation/ Restructuring	+	+	+

* Time pressures and strains in managing multiple obligations, expectations and goals, including occupational and personal careers and calendars.

Over time, however, businesses adopted some '*family-friendly' policies* as a way of *accommodating* the changing gender composition of the work force (Column 2, Table 2). As more of their workforces had family responsibilities, corporations placed innovations such as job shares and flextime 'on the books,' but as special accommodations meant primarily for working mothers, to be requested by them as needed and requiring supervisor approval (Kelly and Moen, 2007).

Eventually came actual *culture change*, as employers accepted the reality of the changing workforce and the fact that their male workers as well as female

workers no longer had an adult family member at home to care for all the non-work aspects of their lives. Flextime, some telework, help in locating child care, and other 'family-friendly' policies became institutionalized as part of the culture of many leading corporations. These are not well advertized or used by employees (see den Dulk and Peper, 2007; Kelly and Kalev, 2006; Still and Strang, 2003), but the language of 'family-friendliness' and 'best corporations for working mothers' means that family obligations became a salient human resource issue.

What has *not* changed is the fundamental temporal organization of work. Flextime and telework remain restricted to changes around the edges of work (see Kelly and Moen, 2007), leaving intact the norms and expectations of (in the US) 8 hour or more work days, 5 day or more work weeks, 48 or more weeks work years, and a lifetime of continuous work until death or retirement, which ever comes first. The challenge remains to restructure and legitimate new, more truly flexible clockworks and calendars that truly enable women and men to successfully manage and integrate the multiple strands of their lives in the form of multiple occupational and personal obligations, expectations, goals, and calendars. While accommodation in the form of the development of work-life or family friendly cultures and policies was useful, there was low take up as den Dulk and Peper (2007) have shown, given fear of long-term career costs. In fact, change in the culture of workplace to be more family supportive produced a further bifurcation of the gendered life course, as family came to equal "women." Different cultures, policies, and practices around work produced different couple work strategies (Barnett and Brennan, 1997; Barnett, Gareis, and Brennan, 2009; Bianchi et al, 2007; Blossfeld and Hofmeister, 2006; Moen, 2003). Sweet and Moen (2004), for example, found most (38%) middle-class working couples in the US follow a *neotraditional* strategy, with husbands having the "main" career job and wives working in less demanding, shorter-hours jobs (see also Sweet and Moen, 2007). Similarly in the Netherlands, most dual earners have 1.5-earner families. Different cultures, policies, and practices around work also shape the experiences of older workers (see Moen, 2007; Moen and Peterson, 2009). Different rates of disability provisions also have had different employment consequences.

What is required, I believe, is a complete transformation in the form of a fundamental reorganization of the temporal rhythms of work. Some exciting transformations are beginning on the European front – the Right to Ask legislation, for example, and 30-hour work weeks. And there are pockets of innovation as seen in the work redesign. Rhona Rapoport, Lottie Bailyn, and others (2002) describe and as Erin Kelly and I are now investigating (Moen, Kelly, and Chermack, 2009), efforts seeking to change the clockworks of work by giving employees more control over where and when they work (see also Bailyn, 2006).

5. Focusing on prevention and 'fit'

How can we foster health and sustain well-being along with productivity and performance? It is possible if scholars, policy makers, and advocates focus on *transformation*, recognizing the global economic forces that are dismantling the lock-step career mystique (including the job security it provided) and increasing work-time intensiveness and pressures. Rather than seeking change in work-family strains around the edges, the issue is how to *prevent it in the first place*. This leads to the usefulness of concepts of 'fit,' including the defining of balance in the language of fit (see Greenhaus & Allen, 2010). I define 'life-course fit' as *the cognitive assessments by workers or family members of the congruence (or incongruence) between the claims on them and their needs and goals, on the one hand, and available resources on the other* (see Moen and Chesley, 2008; Moen and Huang, 2010; Moen and Kelly, 2009; Moen, Kelly, and Q. Huang, 2008; Moen, Kelly, and R. Huang, 2008; Swisher, Sweet, and Moen 2004). The concept of 'fit' also leads to the recognition of toxic psychosocial work conditions as hazardous to health, in the same way exposure to harmful chemicals is (see Benach, Muntaner, Benavides, Amable and Jodar. 2002; Moen and Chesley, 2008; Moen and Kelly, 2009; Moen, Kelly, and Q. Huang, 2008).

Bandura (1982) has pointed to a sense of mastery as key to optimal personal and family development. The ability to determine *when* you work, *how long* you work, and perhaps *where* you work (similar to employee-driven flexibility) has been shown to promote more work-time control and less work-family conflict in cross-sectional studies (including Moen, Kelly, and Q. Huang, 2008; Thomas and Ganster, 1995). Can policy shifts promote greater work-time control and life-course fit? While job autonomy and control over how work is done are important for those facing high job demands (Karasek and Theorell, 1990) work-time control may matter for workers with either high family/personal, or job demands, or both.

The concept of 'fit' broadens the focus from traditional work-family measures to include a wide range of outcomes, such as employees' sense of time and income adequacy, psychological distress, job security, and retirement satisfaction. Scholars tend to study the work to family interface, the family to work interface, job insecurity, and resource adequacy separately, but lives are lived *holistically*. The concept of 'fit' is an umbrella term that can include all of these things. What is key is that inflexible organizational and labor market bureaucratic regimes of policies, practices, rules and regulations around work time can be *socially toxic*, leading to misalignment within different dimensions of experience over the life course, producing an often chronic sense of misfit.

There is a growing recognition that a sense of fit or misfit on the part of workers and families is a public health issue. Can we break open the time clocks around work – the tacit, taken-for-granted beliefs, rules and regulations about the time and timing of work days, work weeks, work years, and work lives? To

do so require *mainstreaming alternatives,* such that paid work time is redesigned to be compatible with caregiving. To do so would enable the alignment of jobs with values, needs and other priorities over the life course and community and policy supports for individuals and families at all life stages, and it would also provide more opportunity for 'second chances' and 'second acts' of employment at every stage of the life course.

Someone once described dance as art in time and space. Similarly, lives are lived in time and space – scholars can't simply isolate and measure one component of the human experience without considering the multilayered contexts and bureaucratic time cages (see also Sennett, 1998) in which lives unfold. The challenge is not simply to chart outdated framings and taken-for-granted institutional scripts – but to recognize the need for change and to embrace the possibilities of transformation.

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