

Challenges for Work and Family in the Twenty-First Century

EDITORS

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CHALLENGES FOR WORK AND FAMILY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Dana Vannoy and Paula J. Dubeck
Editors



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"Downsizing the American Dream: Work and Family at Century's End"

Michael Wallace is professor of sociology at Indiana University. His research has centered on the organization of work, technological change in the workplace, and the consequences of workplace change for workers. He is currently investigating the political economy of industrial restructuring as it is reflected in state economic development policy and outcomes. He has served as editor of *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* and has coauthored a book with Y. Bradshaw, entitled *Global Inequalities* (1996).

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"Being a Part-Time Manager: One Way to Combine Family and Career"

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"Working Mothers, Welfare Mothers: Implications for Children in the Twenty-First Century"

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"All Children Can Read at Grade-Level by the End of Third Grade. Is It Possible?"

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"Employee-Paid Health Insurance in a Changing Economy"

Lisa A. Cubbins is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Cincinnati. She has worked as a research associate at Battelle Research Center in Seattle studying various health issues in the United States. Recent publications include "Gender Race, Class and Self-Reported STD Incidence," with T. Koray and J. Billy, *Family Planning Perspectives* (1995), and "Coital Frequency among Never-Married Women in the U.S.," with T. Koray, *Journal of Sex Research* (1992). Professor Cubbins's interests are labor market processes, gender inequalities, and health concerns, and she is now studying the effects of family and work upon alcohol use.

"The Impact of Family Care-Giving to the Elderly on the American Workplace"

Judy Singleton has an M.A. in Social Work and is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cincinnati. She is also an adjunct instructor at Antioch University and in the School of Social Work at Raymond Walters College of the University of Cincinnati. She has directed community-based care programs for the elderly, and she has presented numerous workshops and seminars for social work and long-term care professionals.

"Problems and Prospects for More Effective Integration of Work and Family in the Twenty-First Century"

Dana Vannoy is professor of sociology at the University of Cincinnati, where her teaching and research interests are family, work, gender, and identity development. During her career she has served as the founding director of Women's Studies and director of the Kunz Center for the Study of Work & Family at the University. She has published several articles and the book

Equal Partners (1989) with W. Philliber on the effects of high achievements of women for marriage relationships. Presently she is completing a study of Russian families: *A Window to Russian Private Life: Russian Couples in 1996*, which will appear in 1998.

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The Need and Challenge to Better Integrate Work and Family Life in the Twenty-First Century

1

Paula J. Dubeck

As the 1990s have progressed, increasing attention has been given to the unprecedented changes that have transformed the nation's social landscape over the past three decades and that hold profound implications for twenty-first-century America: the decline in high-paying manufacturing jobs, the emergence of a service economy, women's taking advantage of higher education opportunities, the rapid entry and continuous full-time participation of married women with children in the labor force, corporate "downsizing," escalating divorce rates, changing perspectives on the welfare system, and "the squeeze" for middle-aged women between child care and eldercare. In this context, the long-standing assumption that work (economy) and family are distinct spheres has been challenged, as these competing forces disrupt and question the legitimacy of what was perceived to be the "normal" or "usual" ways of doing things.

Among the many societal changes, the dramatic increase in women's employment has had pivotal effects. Not only have women entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, they also have *stayed* there. With increases in educational attainment combined with legal changes and the enforcement of new laws, women have sought and attained positions that have been unavailable to them in the past. Further, gender-based barriers to opportunities have been challenged as the labor force experience of women has increased while positions associated with such experience have not appeared to open up. Other characteristics have distinguished the more recent pattern of women's employment from the past. For example, having young children has not resulted in women abandoning employment. Indeed, in 1990, nearly 59 percent of married women with children under the age of six were employed, compared to only 19 percent in 1960; similarly, nearly 74 percent of married women with school-age children were employed in 1990, compared to 39 percent in 1960 (Mandelson 1996).

The changing patterns of women's labor force participation have been central in drawing attention to institutional arrangements as a focus of

research. Our social institutions, as Bellah and colleagues note in *The Good Society* (1991), give meaning and place to the individual. They link individuals to the larger society and provide the framework for interpreting how individual actions combine to serve the broader social good or need. Yet with the changing patterns of employment for women, traditional institutional arrangements are proving unworkable. The rules and norms that governed traditional family arrangements often appear not to “make sense.” As Bellah et al. (1991) repeatedly point out, the narrow specifications of roles can not respond to the complexity of issues that have emerged within the new social context.

Equally important, in the 1990s it has become clear that the institutional patterns that characterize the changing economy are playing an increasing role in framing the issues families face. As a result, scholarly inquiry, which traditionally has posed questions that imply separation of these two spheres, is recast in terms of the *explicit interdependence* between work and family.

Finally, scholars are being challenged to examine a number of work and family issues through a lens that incorporates the intersection of gender, race, and class. These analyses bring to the forefront the complexity of our current society and the context in which emerging institutional arrangements must respond in the future. Not only are “traditional family visions” no longer effectively meeting the needs of individuals and families in society, but their “idealization” also hinders a careful examination of the alternative forms of family life that have emerged in response to the needs of various subgroups. To the extent that these forms are responses to competing work and family pressures, they serve as possible ways for restructuring institutional arrangements in society. An investigation into and discussion about their functioning is essential for understanding the needs of a complex and changing society.

It was with these issues in mind that the Kunz Center for the Study of Work and Family organized the conference, *Agenda for the 21st Century Labor Force*, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, in November 1996. There were a number of premises underlying the focus of the conference. First, *we, as a society, cannot “go back”* to embrace the family arrangements of the past, but neither do we have an effective set of institutional arrangements that will serve us well in the future. Second, *there is a need for a shift in the frameworks* we use to address current issues relating to work and family. Third, it is not just the family that must respond to change; rather, the economy—in this case, *employers—must be cognizant that significant labor force changes*, particularly the role of women and the work and family interface, *will affect their fortunes* as they define their place in a global economy. Finally, *policymakers in government and corporations have a responsibility to grapple with these issues* in order to develop informed policy affecting work and family.

A number of distinguished authors were invited to participate in the conference to address issues that emerged from changes mentioned above and

to set the stage for a discussion of what we as a society must consider from this point forward. Others presented research on alternative strategies that seek to respond to the changing relationship between work and family. Except for the piece by Daly and Dienhart, all of the chapters included in this volume were selected from presentations at that conference.

ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

We have organized the chapters in this volume into three parts. In Part II, *Present Realities: Setting the Stage*, authors provide an overview of the current context in which a dialogue about the family, work, and their interdependence take place. Chapter 2, by Kathleen Gerson, provides an overview of the current state and future prospects for family structure and gender relations. She argues that the lack of change in structures in work and other public institutions has created difficult dilemmas for both men and women and that solutions to these personal dilemmas will require fundamental changes in the structure of the twenty-first-century work place.

In Chapter 3, Michael Wallace grapples with issues associated with corporate “downsizing,” including constraints on the corporation and costs imposed upon the worker. In discussing job creation he examines the contingent labor force and the changing value of a college degree. In looking toward the future, he discusses “growth” occupations over the next decade in terms of the working conditions and standard of living they are likely to provide American workers.

Drawing on a similar theme, Harriet Presser, in Chapter 4, discusses the demand for nonstandard work schedules that can be expected at the turn of the century. Pressures for this demand include the growth of the service economy, the employment of women, and the aging of the population. Presser then addresses the implications of nonstandard work schedules for family life.

In the final chapter in this section, Maxine Baca-Zinn critiques the family values debate. She asserts that in ignoring the changing economic and social conditions that today’s families encounter, the “traditional family values” approach also limits our understanding of the structure of today’s family. Using three current perspectives—feminist, political economy, and family demography—Baca-Zinn incorporates elements of each to bring a better understanding of the structure of today’s family. The Latino family serves as an example to illustrate the issues that emerge in the family today.

Part III, Work and Family Adaptations in a Changing Context, explores approaches to work and family that reflect the complexity of today’s society. In Chapter 6, Marilyn Fernandez and Kwang Chung Kim analyze employment and income for minority and white dual-earner couples. In document-

ing different patterns in employment and earnings for different minority groups, they argue the need to broaden the scope of discussion about minorities in American society beyond the traditional biracial (black/white) framework. Rather, a multiracial framework is needed so that attention can be paid to the variations in minority family adaptation in the current economy.

A different form of adaptation is discussed in Chapter 7 by Phyllis H. Raabe in her research on part-time managers as a strategy to combine family and career. Her research on part-time managers in the Federal Civil Service examines both the advantages and costs, which represent competing "tugs" of career and family experienced by persons in such positions. The need for a supportive supervisor underscores the social dynamic needed to provide the underpinnings of a successful structural change.

A different approach to the changing nature of the economy is provided in Chapter 8, Andrew Perrin's study of the social impact of downsizing for a community. While the number of jobs lost is regularly reported in accounts of downsizing, a neglected concern is the loss of "social capital" for a community. Perrin elaborates on the loss of social capital in terms of community leadership, the emotional costs on workers, and the narrowing perceptions of "political possibility" for change.

Chapter 9 presents the complexity of work and family changes by exploring the social and contingent nature of fathers' involvement with children. Kerry Daly and Anna Dienhart extend the framework for examining father involvement in parenting to one that is co-constructed with mother involvement. Further, time emerges as the medium through which parenting is constructed and negotiated. In approaching father involvement with children as a negotiated phenomenon, the authors lay ground for a framework that incorporates the internal dynamics and external constraints on parenting.

In Part IV, the final section of the book, *New Considerations for the Twenty-First Century*, authors examine timely issues that have important implications for employment and family well-being in the coming decade. In Chapter 10, Toby Parcel explores the implications of the new (1997) welfare reform for women and families. By carefully examining the transition from welfare to work for women over time, she highlights the complexity of both the transition and the implications for child well-being. In addition, she recommends steps states might take to assist families in making the transition from welfare to work.

Chapter 11, by George Farkas and colleagues, focuses on the preparation of future members of the work force. Examining the essential need for the *ability to read* for someone to become a productive member of society, Farkas et al. present the challenge of bringing elementary school students to grade-level reading by third grade. The authors discuss the present four ele-

ments that add incrementally to bringing students up to grade-level reading by the third grade.

A different work force issue—women's entry into management and promotion opportunities—is addressed by David Maume in Chapter 12. Using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), Maume examines the promotion opportunities for college-educated women. He is exploring factors that could account for the "glass ceiling" effect in management. His findings suggest that women managers in traditionally female jobs have appreciably fewer chances to move up in the organization, compared to those in traditionally male jobs, and that women have not benefited from employment in the public sector. The results provide thought-provoking considerations for career choices by women in managerial ranks.

A related issue, availability of employee health benefits, is examined in Chapter 13 by Lisa Cubbins. In particular, Cubbins examines how women and minorities have fared given changes in labor market conditions that affect employer-paid health insurance. Both race and gender have significant effects on the receipt of such benefits. Further, the same effects are found in 1989 and 1995, suggesting stable patterns of difference in employer-paid health insurance for men and women, and for whites and for minorities.

The final chapter in Part IV, Chapter 14 by Judy Singleton, focuses on an increasingly urgent issue for middle-aged adults: the need to care for dependent elderly family members. Singleton summarizes a number of the job-related problems of employed caregivers, as well as the related strains and conflicts that are felt at home. The situation poses a significant issue for employers because of their need to retain an experienced work force. In light of this increasing need, policies and services that are present today or needed in the future are reviewed.

In Part V, Dana Vannoy offers some thoughtful conclusions related to the chapters included here and challenges us to search for new institutional arrangements promoting good family relationships as well as high productivity.

A FINAL COMMENT

The Agenda for the 21st Century Labor Force Conference proved to be a fertile ground for the exchange of information and ideas concerning the work and family interface in the coming decades. The premises associated with the need for new institutional arrangements for and between work and family provided a stimulating and challenging format from which to start the discussion. It is our hope that the selections included in this book provide the reader with information and ideas to help in the process of rethinking and