

Navigating Transitions: Work, Family, and Community

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Working moms/working families

"I don't believe in juggling. What you have to do is create a life that is a web of work and home, community, family, friends, teachers, and neighbors. *Webs are strong.*"



Susan B. Thistlethwaite, President,
Chicago Theological Seminary
Married, mother of 3 sons

Working Mother, Dec./Jan. 1999

Working moms/working families

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”



Shirley Ann Jackson, President,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
(RPI)
Former Chair, U.S. Nuclear
Regulatory Commission
Married, mother of 1 son

Working Mother, Dec./Jan. 1999

Community engagement

- Alice Rossi: “rich array of associational affiliations that mediate between individuals and the larger society. . . — what sociologists from the earliest days called ‘secondary groups’”



Community engagement

- Robert Putnam: “sum total of countless acts of concern and solidarity”
- “[volunteering, giving, and joining are] mutually reinforcing and habit-forming—as Tocqueville put it, ‘habits of the heart’”



Community engagement

- Robert Wuthnow: “social activities that either mediate between citizens and government or provide ways for citizens to pursue common objectives with or without the help of government. These activities are purposive . . . [and] most require people to work together”



Decline, or change?

- Robert Wuthnow: “. . . [Americans are turning to] looser, more sporadic, ad hoc connections. . . Busy men and women do the best they can, giving a little of their time, seeking to be responsible citizens in small ways, and being creative in the ways they relate to their neighbors and the nation.”



Decline, or change?

- Theda Skocpol:
Putnam's individualism
and localism
- No zero-sum
relationship between
voluntarism and
government
- “doing for” rather than
“doing with”



Changing structural context: women's LFP

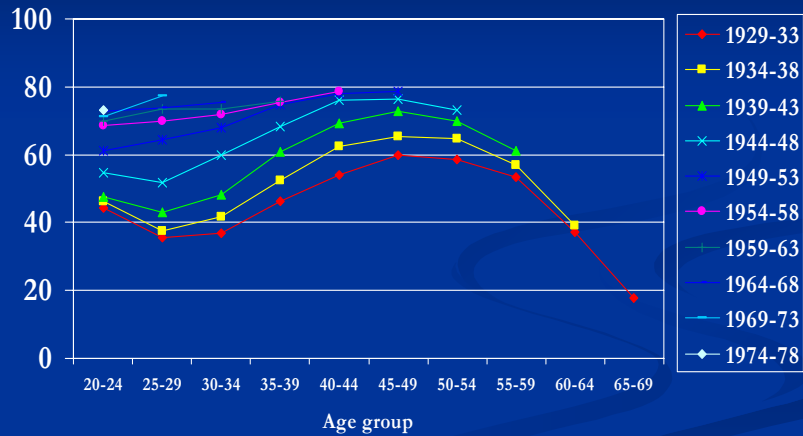
- Women as percent of labor force (16+):
 - 1950: 30%
 - 2000: 47%
- Women's labor force participation (16+):
 - 1950: 34%
 - 2000: 60%

Changing structural context: women's LFP

- Women's labor force participation (w/children 6-17):
 - 1980: 64%
 - 2000: 79%
- Women's labor force participation (w/children < 3):
 - 1980: 42%
 - 2000: 61%

Changing structural context

Labor Force Participation by Birth Cohort, 1998



Source: Costello and Stone, 2001, The American Woman 2001-2002

Changing structural context: women's entry into traditionally male occupations

- Financial managers:
1970: 21%
2001: 52%
- Personnel and labor rels mgrs:
1970: 24%
2001: 68%
- Marketing, advertising, and public rels mgrs:
1970: 8%
2001: 39%

Changing structural context: changing workplace

- More international, flexible, high tech, service-oriented
- Widening inequalities
- High performance vs. “lean and mean”
- Declining loyalty: employer and employees
- “Organization man” → boundaryless careers

Core research questions

- defining communities?
- community support in navigating work, family, and community lives?
- engaging in community?

Expectations: defining communities

- Organizations absorbing civil society?
- Work: opportunities for personal connections, locus for civic engagement
- Time spent with children
- Thus: family and work-related communities

Expectations: support structures

- “Gender system of domesticity”
- Negotiating networks of care
- Developing children’s individual talents and skills
- Thus: lack of institutionalized support structures; dependence on patchwork of support

Expectations: community involvement

- Women's community work changed
- Women working 60+ hours: most likely to volunteer
- Volunteer work: increased for working women, declined for nonemployed women
- Thus: nontraditional community engagement

Expectations: whence community?

- Community decline? (Putnam)
- Revival/continuation of community, in different form? (Wuthnow, Skocpol, Wolfe, Rossi, and others)

Data and methods

- snowball sample of 31 N.J. managerial women in dual-earner marriages, in IT, financial services, or pharmaceuticals
- 3 data sources:
 - pre-interview questionnaires for 31 women
 - interviews with 31 women
 - interviews with 6 husbands

Who are these women?

- 22 whites, 7 blacks, 2 Asians
- Mean age: 43 years; range 30 to 52
- 77% kids at home
- 48% top level of organization, 52% middle
- 71% flexible hours
- Mean hrs./day worked: 9.9; range 7 to 12
- Mean min./day commute (roundtrip): 57; range 0 to 165

Defining communities: rich, fluid, expanding

- “[I define community] in a multitude of ways. The biggest definition: the environment you live in and not necessarily where your house is. I live in [town], I work in [small city], part of my business is in Europe and I have commitments in all of these places.” (White, Pharm, 3 children)



- “Family is first (and that includes my extended family); my town; my daughter’s school; my neighborhood; the black community; the women’s community; and professional communities.” (Black, Fin, 2 kids)

Defining communities: religious institutions

- 52 percent participated in a church or temple in the past three years
- “. . . being that I’m religious, my community centers around the synagogue that I belong to, and the Jewish community is large in town. . . . my neighborhood is also my community” (White, IT, 3 children)

Defining communities: different from mothers

- Nearly half had stay-at-home mothers
- “I think my mother’s generation was much more around the people that you live next to, and the town that you’re in...because the men were always going off to work and the women were left at home to solve the problems. ... Now my neighbor goes one place . . . and I’m going another . . . I am part of a number of different communities, whereas I think that my mother and her generation were much more limited – because they were not off joining clubs or talking to people in California. She was talking to the woman down the street.” (White, IT, 2 children)

Defining communities: family and work

- Family is primary
- “First in my home. . . . I expect to be with my husband and kids through it all, the rest will change. My family will be the constant. . . . Second, at work. I’m fortunate that I have some very strong relationships at work. I have a real sense of affection for the company that I work for. I’ve been there ten years. It was a start-up when I started It’s like my child that has grown up. I have a lot of connections through my company that are very important to me (my best friend I met through work). . . . other communities are a very distant third.” (White, IT, 2 children)

Defining communities: family and work

- Vagaries of the workplace
- “[I find my most meaningful relationships in] the home. Those are the people who will impact your life forever. Work ties are important but not like family, who are there for good and bad. Those at work are there only for as long as you’re at work—it’s amazing to watch how people at work aren’t there for one another when someone is downsized. You realize when you watch that, it’s the family that matters.” (White, Fin, 2 children)

Defining communities: summary

- Reference family first
- Workplace hasn’t replaced home
- Work as critical component of identity, and rich source of friendships
- Lives seen as richer and more rewarding than mothers

Support structures: husbands

- A few had traditional husbands
- “Family responsibilities are divided up between my husband and me – but not equally. 70% of the responsibilities are mine now, though when our commutes were equal, I had 90 percent. I always cook. I call myself “the dispatcher”—he follows some of my directions. His commute is ten minutes. His work hours are not that long. My commute is one and a half hours. When I travel: he’s stressed, they eat fast food even though I leave food for them, the house is a wreck when I return. . . (Black, Pharm, 2 children)

Support structures: supportive husbands

- But, most had supportive husbands
- “In the last three years, his career is really very much [taking] a back seat to keeping the family stable and happy, and supporting me in what’s been a very demanding time. Even before that when we had equal demands, we’ve always had a very good give and take. . . . we were always able to almost instantaneously prioritize “who’s got the biggest demand or commitment right now?” and the other one picks up the slack. . . . So, whether it’s from many years of being married or whatever, the sort of natural give and take happened pretty easily for us.” (White, Fin, 2 children)

Support structures: supportive husbands

- Wife with primary career
 - “When he was in hospitality, we were two ships passing in the night. . . . And, I was always going to everything alone. That was okay, but I knew it would be more fun if he was there, and he wanted to come. . . . So he quit at the age of forty and went on a mission to figure out what to do next. During that period I felt really badly for him because he wouldn’t tell people he wasn’t working. . . . He’s now doing better, but it’s still a problem for him.”
(White, Fin, no children)

Support structures: supportive husbands

- Husband’s take on his career change
 - “It wasn’t a difficult choice to make. At that time she had just been made President of [company]. Ever since she got her MBA from [college], her career just blossomed (nine years ago). It was a huge power shift. When we got together, I was making three times as much as her, then it became equal, and then she started making more money than me. I remember that year because she loved to rub it in my face. She was just taking certain steps, and I was enjoying those steps with her. And then she kept going past me in earnings.” (White, Financial planner, 1 son from earlier marriage, not living at home)

Support structures: seeking balance

- **Wife:**
“I think in a nontraditional way it’s balanced. My husband does a lot more than most men. He drops off and picks up the kids from school, he prepares dinner for them every night.” (Asian, Phar, 2 children)
- **Husband:**
“I think at the time before we got married, my wife’s job offered more growth opportunities...[hers] were far greater than mine, and her earning potential as well. There were periods when she would travel quite a bit and work long hours . . . There were times I wished she was home more for [the children], but I never felt cheated or that my career was suffering. I don’t know that we ever had discussions about it... it was a natural decision. Her career path was more open and clearer . . .” (White, Fin, 2 children)

Support structures: extended family

- “My parents live close. My son goes to my parents’ house every day after school. I see them every day. My [80-year old] mother is very helpful with my older [dyslexic] son’s school work. I don’t know what we would do without her. . . . My mom gives him a snack when he gets home and then he’s fresh to do school work.” (Husband, White, Fin, 2 children)
- “My mother is a help – she moved here recently. She lives in a development close to me, so my sons can ride their bikes to her house. She helps with the boys and even picks up my dry cleaning if I need her to.” (Black, Pharm, 2 children)
- “My mother is a tremendous cook, so we go to my mother’s house for dinner on Sundays and she sends me home with food for the entire week.” (White, Fin, no children)

Support structures: work and community

- Flexible work hours (>70%)
- On-site childcare
- On-site fitness center, dry cleaners, convenience stores
- YMCA, summer camps, children's schools, churches/temples
- Network of support, including stay-at-home moms

Support structures: summary

- Gender system of domesticity
- Precarious support networks:
supportive husbands, extended family, few institutionalized supports in work or community
- Failed supports → crises:
“My husband started traveling too when he took a new job. Our secretaries had to coordinate with one another. Once my plane was late (circling overhead) and my husband had left on a plane that afternoon—I didn't know who picked up my child. We would even exchange our son in the airport.” (Black, IT, 1 child)

Community engagement: family

- >75% w/children at home
- Connect volunteer service with children: neighborhoods, schools, sports teams, churches/temples
- Need kids to connect to local community

Community engagement: family

- but not the PTA!
- “I tried to be involved in the school system—esp. the PTA. . . . The PTA machine is so big that it does not necessarily allow for models that don’t fit. . . . with the PTA you either have to be fully in or fully out. I was even turned away from being a class mother because the model they used . . . involved having the same people at every event. . . . I told the assistant principal that this model . . . excludes dual-earner families and doesn’t take advantage of people’s skills gained through working, such as team-building skills. (White, Pharm, 3 children)

Community engagement: loose ties

- Life cycle transitions
- “As your role in life changes, a student, a mom, a leader at work,...your communities change. You meet new people. Some communities go away. Some people you keep *loose ties* with...But communities change according to your needs and your roles.” (White, Pharm, 2 children)

Community engagement: work

- 52% engaged in professional service
- 3 types:
 - 1) work-sponsored
 - 2) work-linked
 - 3) interest-based

Community engagement: work-sponsored

- Traditional charities: volunteer days, reading programs, building homes



Habitat for Humanity

- “[The bank] wanted to construct a house just for a woman, a single mother and they wanted the women to build the whole house. So they . . . put together a group and I volunteered to do this. We . . . put on our working duds and we went out and . . . two women were supervisors . . . and we worked all day. It was really wonderful. . . . we were putting up walls, we were framing out walls, we were putting in windows, . . . you know, the whole thing.” (White, Fin, no children)

Community engagement: work-linked

- Nonprofit volunteering: implicit requirement of job
- “There’s a different kind of support at the executive level and above. The officers spend a lot of time on boards. In the lower ranks, the community involvement is more through connections outside of work. . . . Executives are expected to contribute in a larger way: it’s part of being seen as more of a public person. It’s seen as [the company] being involved in the community.” (Black, IT, 1 child)

Community engagement: interest-based

- “Blurred opportunities” for leadership
- “I think you have to align the bank and personal interests. Not everyone is interested in sitting on a not-for-profit board. I would rather sit on a Girl Scouts of America board than a Boy Scouts of America board.”
(White, Fin, 1 child)
- “I asked them for some support for a community organization for autistic children, and they ended up donating \$5000. They didn’t give it automatically.... I had to explain how many people there are at my company who have autistic children.” (White, Pharm, 2 children)

Civic engagement: summary

- Links to community through children
- Civic engagement primarily through family and work
- Leadership opportunities through workplace
- Influence organizations: aligning personal and organizational interests
- >90% donate: tertiary organizations

Conclusion:

decline vs. resurgence of community?

- Resurgence/continuity
- Disquietude: narrowing of definitions of community over time
- Whence civic community, secondary groups?

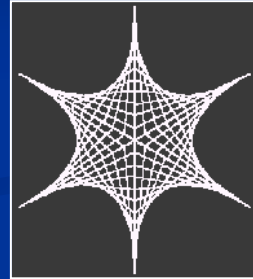
Conclusion:

looking ahead

- Structural mismatch between changing family demographics and customs, norms, and workplace practices
- “A half-changed world”
- Move beyond gender equity: to “dual-earner/dual carer”

Conclusion: making change

- Think beyond individual
- Looser connections and life cycle variation
- Move beyond privatized/instrumental
- Engage political process
- Unbend gender system (social, economic, legal, political institutions)
- Broaden web of support:
 - workplace
 - government/communities



THE END

Data and methods

- snowball sample of 31 N.J. managerial women in dual-earner marriages:
 - married and living with working husband
 - worked in decision-making position, w/at least 10 years of experience
 - worked in IT, financial services, or pharmaceuticals
- secondary sample of 6 husbands

Data and methods

- Over-sampled nonwhites
- Primarily women with children (n=26), several without children (n=5) for comparison
- 3 data sources:
 - pre-interview questionnaires for 31 women
 - interviews with 31 women
 - interviews with 6 husbands

Sample characteristics personal

- 100% married (selection criteria)
- 100% husbands in labor force (selection criteria)
- 22 whites, 7 blacks, 2 Asians
- Mean age: 43 years; range 30 to 52
- 55% advanced education beyond A/BS
- 77% kids at home
- 67% small town
- Mean times per week family eats out: 2.2; range 0 to 5

Sample characteristics work-related

- 11 financial services, 10 IT, 10 pharmaceutical (selection criteria)
- 100% in managerial job (selection criteria)
- 52% hired as manager, current job
- 48% top level of organization, 52% middle
- 71% flexible hours
- Mean hrs./day worked: 9.9; range 7 to 12
- Mean min./day commute (roundtrip): 57; range 0 to 165
- Mean nights/month away on business: 2; range 0 to 10
- 61% continuous labor force attachment

Job titles (n=38)

CEO	3
President	3
Worldwide President	1
Executive Vice President	2
Senior Vice President	3
Vice President (various)	9
Partner	1
Senior Operations	1

Mobility Solutions Officer	1
Technical Manager	1
Managing Director	1
Regional Director-Small Business	1
Director (various)	8
Associate Director (various)	2
Department Leader	1

Job Level by Sector (frequencies)

<u>Job level</u>	<u>Information technology</u>	<u>Financial services</u>	<u>Pharmaceuticals</u>	<u>Row totals</u>
Top level	9	3	3	15
Middle level	1	8	7	16
Column totals	10	11	10	31

Creative approaches: organizations

- Increase # of jobs with flexibility
- PT work among professionals, w/pro-rated benefits (Williams)
- Flexible benefits packages (health insurance, pension plans, paid vacation days)
- Creative evaluation/assessment (output, not hours)
- Greater flexibility in child care/elder care arrangements
- Establish high performance workplaces (participatory, informal training, pay-for-performance, and good promotion oppors; intrinsically rewarding jobs) (Appelbaum et al.)
- Support community service
- Reduce hours worked

Creative approaches: community/government(s)

- All-day kindergartens
- ECEC (early childhood education and care)
- Change laws w/"ideal worker" assumption (Williams)
- Guarantee health care
- Rethink PTA's (access to schools)
- Solidify bonds between working and stay-at-home parents
- Establish dual-earner/dual-carer families
- Increase paid/unpaid family leave
- Guarantee economic security for families