Men, Women, & the Future: Forging New Paths in Work and Life:

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Changing Lives at Work and at Home: A New Generation Faces Uncharted Territory

- Understanding the New Social Landscape of Work and Life:
  - Old options are disappearing, but new paths yet to emerge
  - Young adults are engine of social change

- How are men & women who grew up during “the gender revolution” responding to work & family shifts?
  - The view from below: What are experiences growing up in era of changing families & uncertain work options?
  - Crafting the future: As young men – and women -- enter adulthood,
    - What are the options?
    - How are they negotiating new work realities & deepening work-family dilemmas?
  - Lessons for 21st century: What do lives of new generation reveal about how institutions can help workers & families thrive in new era?
Work & Family on a Collision Course?
The New Realities for 21st Century Workers

- What is the context of change?
  - Rising family diversity
  - Rising economic & workplace uncertainty
  - Blurring gender boundaries between breadwinning & caretaking
  - Decline of predictable adult pathways & transitions

- What are the Persisting Obstacles?
  - Structure & culture of workplace: persistence of “ideal worker” ethic
  - Structure & culture of caretaking: persistence of “intensive parent” ethic

- What Do Men -- and Women -- Want?
  - How are tensions playing out in individual lives & public institutions?
  - What are prospects for transcending the impasse?
“Children of the Gender Revolution” as a Lens for Mapping Change

- How are those who grew up during the gender revolution responding to new dilemmas & opportunities?
  - 120 in-depth interviews (urban & suburban locations)
  - Age 18 to 32, average age of 25
  - Equal numbers of women & men, including 5% lesbian or gay
  - Diverse racial, ethnic, & class backgrounds
  - Diverse family experiences, including traditional, dual-earner, & single-parent homes

- What are young people’s experiences growing up & current outlooks on their parents’ choices?
- As they reach adulthood, how negotiating a new gender terrain & deepening work-family conflicts?
- What do their experiences, outlooks, & strategies tell us about the future?
What are Millennials’ views on growing up in diverse and changing families?
Which group is most satisfied with the kind of household they grew up in?

Those who lived in homes that stayed or became:

A. Traditional
B. Dual-Earner
C. Single Parent
**Children’s Views of Parents’ Work-Family Arrangements**

- **Traditional Division**
  - Was Best Option: 50
  - Preferred Another: 40

- **Shared Breadwinning**
  - Was Best Option: 80
  - Preferred Another: 30

- **Single Parents**
  - Was Best Option: 40
  - Preferred Another: 60
Children’s Views of Mothers’ Employment & Parents’ Marriages

- Work-Committed Mother: Awas Best Option)
- Domestic Mother: Preferred Another
- Parents Separated: Was Best Option
- Parents Stayed Together: Preferred Another
What makes a family supportive?

Across family contexts, work & family flexibility provides support:

- Increased sharing in two-parent homes
  - Kevin’s dual-earner parents took turns at breadwinning
  - Justin’s single-breadwinner parents became dual-earners

- Higher morale & enhanced economic stability in single-parent & remarried homes
  - Swinda’s mother went to work when her parents separated
  - Lynette’s father remarried, adding a “better” mother & another breadwinner

- Wider financial & care networks
  - Ray’s single, working mother relied on grandparents as caretakers & extra earners

- Work & caretaking flexibility provides support by:
  - Enhancing equality in lasting marriages
  - Helping single parents after a breakup (or re-marriage)
  - Providing wider care network for working parents
What makes a family insecure?

Across family contexts, work & domestic **rigidity** erodes support:

- Resistance to change in traditional homes
  - Eric’s parents “stuck” in unhappy traditional marriage
  - Lisa’s mother became depressed after giving up career

- Stressed & overwhelmed in dual-earning homes
  - Genevieve’s mother insisted on career, but got little help at home
  - Arianna’s mother “did it all,” while also being the main breadwinner

- Unprepared in single-parent homes
  - Adam’s involved father withdrew after a breakup
  - James’ mother not prepared to work when father “walked out”

- Rigidity erodes support by:
  - Creating marital struggles when parents stuck in “roles”
  - Pushing fathers away & leaving mothers unprepared when marriages breakup
• Flexible work-family strategies are key to secure family paths

• New pressures & options create unpredictable challenges
  • Rise of economic uncertainty
  • Decline of men’s ability to support families alone
  • Expansion of “choice” & higher standards in relationships
  • Rising work aspirations of women

• When faced with unexpected economic & interpersonal contingencies
  • Gender flexibility helps families cope
  • Gender inflexibility leaves families ill-prepared
Facing the future: What do young men – & women – want?

- Contradictory views on new generation:
  - Millennials are returning to tradition
  - VS.
  - Millennials are refusing to grow up & rejecting commitments to both work & family

  - Women are “opting out” of work & careers to return home
  - VS.
  - Men feel threatened by women’s rising aspirations, power, & earnings
What Are the Perceived Options?

- **Re-fashion Tradition**
  - Create lasting bond with intimate partner
  - One partner specializes in breadwinning & other in caretaking

- **Rely on Self**
  - Find autonomy through work, whether single or married
  - Don’t count on a partner

- **Find Balance & Equality**
  - Create lasting bond with intimate partner
  - Seek personal balance between work & family
  - Share earning & caretaking
Which option is most desired by men?

A. Traditional Division
B. Egalitarian Division
C. Self-Reliant
Which option is most desired by women?

A. Traditional Division
B. Egalitarian Division
C. Self-Reliant
**Work & Family Aspirations, by Family Background & Gender**

- Traditional Division
- Egalitarian Division
- Self-Reliant
Which option do men expect in their future?

A. Traditional Division
B. Egalitarian Division
C. Self-Reliant
Which option do women expect in their future?

A. Traditional Division
B. Egalitarian Division
C. Self-Reliant
If Not Equality?
Ideals vs. Fallback Positions of Women & Men

- Women's Ideals
- Men's Ideals
- Women's Fallback Position
- Men's Fallback Position

Graph showing the distribution of ideals and fallback positions for women and men, categorized by egalitarian, neo-traditional, and self-reliant.
Caught Between a Rock & a Hard Place: Young Men & Neo-Traditionalism (70%)

- Perceived perils of equal sharing
  - High time demands of the “ideal worker”
  - High time demands of an “intensive parent”
  - Persistence of a “market standard” for successful manhood

- Falling back on “neo-traditional” strategies
  - Since men must maintain a “breadwinning identity,” work must come first
  - Since “work first” leaves no room for intensive fathering, “balance” is a state of mind
  - Since “being a man” means giving women a “choice,” equality means that women’s work is “extra” -- even when her earnings are essential
On Their Own: Young Women’s Search for Self-Reliance (73%)

- Jobs & careers offer
  - Economic independence, whether married or single
  - Insurance in case of a breakup
  - Source of self-esteem, respect, & social integration

- Self-reliant strategies include:
  - Seeking an economic base & personal identity at work
  - Refashioning relationships
    - Postpone commitment & apply high standard for a mate
    - Marriage is desirable, but also optional & reversible
  - Redesigning motherhood
    - Postpone motherhood (class dimension)
    - Good mothering includes breadwinning
    - Create a care network (whether married or not)
Craft a “personal career”
- Add “balance” to the definition of an “ideal worker”
- Manage own career, don’t climb an organizational ladder

Build a shared “work-family career”
- An ideal partner shares earning & caring
- Good parenting includes both time & money
- Good workplaces have flexible spatial & temporal boundaries

Refashion “family values” & “the work ethic”
- No “one size fits all” work-family arrangement
- Emotional & economic support matters, not family form
- Everyone needs to balance self-development & care of others
Lessons for Refashioning Work & Life

- Millennials will travel unpredictable work-family pathways
  - Economic & relationship uncertainties create unpredictable challenges
  - Flexibility is essential in face of change

- They face a clash between changing lives & resistant institutions
  - Neither a “return to tradition” nor a “decline of commitment”
  - Instead, clash between new egalitarian aspirations & old ways of organizing work & care

- We need to help new generation achieve ideals & avoid “second best” options
  - Obstacles to flexibility & equality foster frustrated workers & fragile families
  - 21st century economy requires new strategies that blur work-family boundaries for everyone
Where Do We Go from Here? Transcending the Work-Family Divide

- From Individual to Institutional Responsibility
  - Rigid institutions, not individual values, pose threat
  - Create flexible workplaces & child-supportive communities that fit new needs & aspirations:
    - balance earning & caretaking
    - flexible, egalitarian relationships
    - shared responsibility for children & families

- Institutional Flexibility is Key
  - Gender flexibility & equality do not threaten workplaces or families
  - Amid 21st century realities, institutional support for balance & flexibility is essential for thriving workplaces & family well-being
Men, Women, & the Future

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