ROSABETH MOSS KANTER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH

Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, Director
Center for Families at Purdue University
Brad Harrington, Director
Boston College Center for Work and Family
BACKGROUND

- Begun in 2000
- Named for Rosabeth Moss Kanter because of her leadership in framing the modern work-family research agenda

Work-family community is:
- Interdisciplinary (good) & fragmented (bad)

Corporate practitioners:
- interested in research but ...
- hard to find / access
- hard to wade through
**GOALS**

- To find and promote the “best of the best”
- To increase and extend the impact of the research
- To foster discussions about quality – of research and of programs
PROCESS

- International jury
  
  56 scholars, 10 countries, many fields

- Round #1: Journals reviewed
  
  79 journals, over 2500 articles

- Round #2: Nominees selected
  
  34 nominees, each rated by 3-4 reviewers

- Round #3
  
  Top 5 papers rated by all reviewers
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OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSLATION WITH TRACTION

- Ammunition for persuading leaders
- Ideas for creating or improving programs
- Content for educating and equipping supervisors or workers to prevent or deal with challenges
- Poking holes in stereotypes, assumptions and misconceptions
- Adding nuance to existing knowledge, and expanding boundaries with new knowledge
Graduate student author

Same-sex couples offer really useful opportunities to think about dynamics in couples – what if our theories are making incorrect predictions based on gender?

Relationship quality and stability in same-sex vs. heterosexual couples

3,000 couples, 471 of whom were same-sex

“Knowledge Networks” panel
Earnings Equality and Relationship Stability for Same-Sex and Heterosexual Couples
Katherine Weisshaar

- Contribution of relative earnings to relationship stability
  - Economic theory: Specialization is efficient and promotes stability – income differences are expected.
  - Gender model: Income differences are not expected; equality is better

- Prediction: Equal earnings should be bad for heterosexual couples and good for same-sex couples
Earnings Equality and Relationship Stability for Same-Sex and Heterosexual Couples
Katherine Weisshaar

- Dissatisfaction is higher when:
  - Same sex couples are different
  - Heterosexual couples – no differences

- Instability is higher when:
  - Heterosexual couples are equal,
  - Same-sex couples are unequal.

- Our theories need to be adapted to account for same-sex couples; the Nobel prize-winning economist may not have been correct
**Job Displacement among Single Mothers: Effects on Children’s Outcomes in Young Adulthood**

Jennie E. Brand and Juli Simon Thomas

- Job displacement is involuntary loss of the job through downsizing or restructuring (vs. firing or voluntary departure).
- 1 in 7 children in 2010 had an unemployed parent, but even more had a parent who had been displaced.
- We don’t know much about effects of displacement on children – any different from unemployment?
- Focus is on children’s outcomes in young adulthood.
- Use NLSY – 12,686 who were 14-22 years old when first surveyed in 1979, focusing on children whose mothers were not continuously married.
- Displaced mothers have more disadvantaged family backgrounds, lower ability, fewer years of education, less employer tenure.
Children whose mothers were displaced:
- Were 22% less likely to complete high school and
- Were 41% less likely to complete college
- Effects were worse among LESS disadvantaged mothers
- Had higher levels of depressive symptoms

Disadvantage begets displacement
The effects cross generations
Worse for more privileged children
Just because it wasn’t a firing for cause doesn’t make it better
WORK–FAMILY ENRICHMENT, WORK–FAMILY CONFLICT, AND MARITAL SATISFACTION: A DYADIC ANALYSIS

ELIANNE F. VAN STEENBERGEN  ESTHER S. KLUWER, & BENJAMIN R. KARNEY

- WF enrichment: Work makes it easier to fulfill nonwork roles
- Conservation of Resources theory – stress is the result of actual or threatened loss of resources.

Predictions:
- Conflict leads to anger and withdrawal
- Enrichment leads to positivity

Dutch study of 215 couples
Enrichment was important for marital satisfaction even when there was conflict.

Husbands who experienced more enrichment showed more marital positivity (according to their wives), which related to increased marital satisfaction in their wives. No crossover from wives to husbands.

Positivity was more strongly related to marital satisfaction than anger or withdrawal.

Positive and negative spillover should both be considered.

Spill- and crossover processes are similar for time and energy, but energy may be more important.
CLASS ADVANTAGE & THE GENDER DIVIDE: FLEXIBILITY ON THE JOB & AT HOME
NAOMI GERSTEL AND DAN CLAWSON

- Clever study

- Class-advantaged and class-disadvantaged groups of male and female workers: doctors ($155k) and EMTs ($33k); nurses ($67k) and CNAs ($24k)

- Surveys (800), observations (600 hours), interviews (200)
CLASS ADVANTAGE & THE GENDER DIVIDE: FLEXIBILITY ON THE JOB & AT HOME
NAOMI GERSTEL AND DAN CLAWSON

- CNA’s – most constrained sick leave. Come in while ill, get terminated even if emergency room letters. No vacation flexibility. More than half are single mothers and sole breadwinners AND caregivers – even if they wanted to be traditional in terms of gender, they can’t.

- Nurses – have class advantage partly because it is a seller’s market. Lots of different shift options, rarely mandatory overtime, considerable access to time off. They use flexibility to tend to family, take on domestic work, and adapt to husbands’ schedules – even though they often earn more. They use their flexibility to create a gender divide.
EMT’s – receive full schedule at the beginning of the year. Often work second jobs AND overtime, but pursue flexibility in doing so in order to attend to family. Use ‘seller’s market’ to take sick leave, choose vacation time. Participate in family life more than might be expected under traditional norms – weakening the divide.

Physicians – Use flexibility NOT to reduce work hours, but to do more paid and less unpaid work. They construct a gender divide. Don’t mention taking sick leave to care for family; only in context of not taking it for themselves.
Conclusions:

- Gender is not fixed, but constructed and negotiated.
- Class advantage contributes to ‘doing gender,’ while class disadvantage contributes to ‘UNdoing gender.’
- By looking across class and gender, we see the multiple meanings of flexibility and the operation of an important distinction between employer-driven and employee-driven flexibility. CNA’s experience double-barrelled inflexibility while their employers get a flexible workforce;
- Class privilege reinforces gender divides: physicians use their flexibility to privilege work. Nurses use their flexibility to take on traditional gender responsibilities
THE COSTS OF THINKING ABOUT WORK AND FAMILY: MENTAL LABOR, WORK–FAMILY SPILLOVER, AND GENDER INEQUALITY AMONG PARENTS IN DUAL-EARNER FAMILIES

SHIRA OFFER

- Fathers are doing more, but still gender inequality in domestic work
- “Mental labor” – planning, organization, and management of everyday activities
- Mothers and fathers
- 500-family study: middle class parents in dual-earner families
- Experience-sampling method – 27,000 signals (8 signals per day for 7 days)
Pretty similar levels for mothers and fathers
Fathers thought more about job, but did not spill into other roles; mothers’ job-related thoughts did intrude
Mothers and fathers equally likely to think about family, but these were detrimental to emotional well-being only for mothers
For both, paid work was insulated from thoughts about family
Gender inequality may be partially a function of mental labor
Do options for job flexibility diminish in times of economic uncertainty?

Stephen Sweet, Elyssa Besen, Marcie Pitt-Catsoughes, & Tay K McNamara

- Contrast between institutional and adaptation perspectives
  - Companies will offer AS MUCH OR MORE flexibility during downturn; vs.
  - Companies will offer LESS flexibility during downturn

- Compared responses from two national surveys of employers in six sectors

- Human resources challenge index

- No relationship to direct economic pressure – several aspects of flexibility – but overall a downward trend. So, impressions of economy rather than specific pressure
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