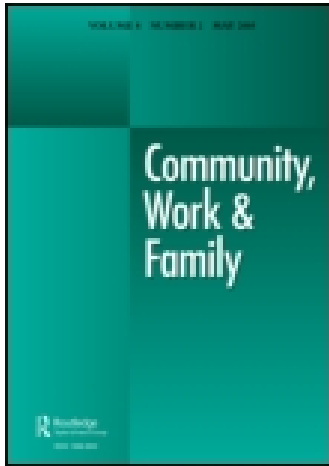


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### Redesigning work for gender equity and work-personal life integration

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## Redesigning work for gender equity and work–personal life integration

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This paper describes a series of intervention projects in the conditions and design of work geared to increasing gender equity in organizations and the ability of employees to integrate their working lives with their personal lives. It shows that approaching work with a work–family lens tends to lead to changes in the temporal conditions of work, in what has come to be known as flexibility in the workplace. With a gender lens, more nuanced aspects of the institutions governing the workplace come into sight allowing the possibility of greater actual change in the way that work is designed and accomplished, thus leading to a better fit between the current workforce and the workplace. Although such intervention projects are being done in multiple countries, the discussion is most relevant to the USA, with its limited – almost non-existent – national support for the reconciliation of work and family needs.

**Keywords:** gender; work–family; work–life; action research; institutional change

Ce papier décrit une série de projets d'intervention sur les conditions et la structure du travail visant à accroître l'équité homme-femme dans les organisations ainsi que la capacité des employés à intégrer leur vie professionnelle et leur vie privée. Ces études démontrent que l'appréhension du travail à travers une *perspective vie professionnelle/vie privée* [work–family lens], tend à faire évoluer les conditions liées à la durée du travail, ce que nous appelons maintenant la flexibilité au travail. Une *perspective focalisée sur l'équité homme-femme* fait apparaître des aspects plus nuancés des institutions qui gouvernent le monde du travail, rendant possible un changement réel plus important dans la définition et l'accomplissement du travail et permettant ainsi une meilleure adaptation entre la force de travail actuelle et le monde du travail. Bien que de tels projets d'intervention soient accomplis dans de nombreux pays, la conversation est plus pertinente aux Etats-Unis, pays dont le soutien national pour la réconciliation des besoins professionnels et personnels est limité – voire presque inexistant.

**Mots-clés:** genre; équité homme-femme; équilibre vie professionnelle-vie privée; recherche-action; changement institutionnel

How to reconcile the demands of employment and domestic responsibilities has been on the research and policy agenda for some time now – particularly for women (see Moen, this issue, for a brief history). A dominant research emphasis on work–family conflict has been augmented by an enrichment approach that documents the positive effect on individuals of multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks, 1977). Much is known about the conditions that affect work to home and home to work conflict as

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well as, more recently, work to home and home to work facilitation (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Going along with this increased knowledge has been an attempt to design policies that reduce the work–home conflict, with a particular emphasis on flexibility in the time and timing of work (Christensen & Schneider, 2010). The unit of analysis has generally been the individual worker, sometimes the individual couple or family/household unit, and the policy-maker – at least in the USA – has been primarily the employer.

From a different perspective, and generally quite separated from this literature, is the analysis of organizations as gendered (Acker, 1990), as based on an ideal worker without any responsibilities outside those of employment (Bailyn, 2006/1993; Fletcher, 1999; Kanter, 1977; Williams, 2000). Here the emphasis is on the institutions – the ‘regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life’ (Scott, 2008, p. 48) – that underlie the way work is practiced and accomplished. Existing work practices, embedded as they are in this institutional context which is consensually taken for granted as the appropriate way to accomplish organizational goals, are highly resistant to change (Zucker, 1977). But new ways can be legitimized (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006) and de-institutionalization is possible (Oliver, 1992). This article describes a series of attempts to change such institutionalized work practices by explicitly linking organizational goals to gender equity and the ability of employees to integrate their employment with their other responsibilities.

This approach started with a project in the early 1990s at the Xerox Corporation, funded by the Ford Foundation.<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, also with Ford funding, Deborah Kolb founded the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO) at the Simmons Graduate School of Management which continued and elaborated these projects.<sup>2</sup> Later in that decade, Bailyn’s time as visiting professor at the Radcliffe Public Policy Institute (PPI) brought the approach there,<sup>3</sup> and for a while Maureen Harvey was managing partner of a group – including Bailyn, Kolb, and Fletcher – that worked on such projects without external funding (much of this work as well as the method used are detailed in Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). Ten years after the Xerox project, the MIT Workplace Center – funded by the Sloan Foundation – included in its portfolio projects that used this method. And Leslie Perlow, professor at the Harvard Business School, has expanded on this work with a recent, highly successful intervention in a management-consulting firm. In the meantime, others – both in and outside the USA – were working on such projects (see Casner-Lotto, 2000; Lewis & Cooper, 2005, for descriptions of many of these projects).

The article starts by giving a short description of how this work got started, and then proceeds to provide examples of intervention attempts to redesign work toward this end. The examples are categorized by the particular approach used and by the types of interventions that resulted. In the end, the lessons learned are pulled together and discussed in relation to other attempts and approaches to organizational change.

### **The problem**

The basic problem that all these projects were trying to solve is that work practices established when the workforce was more homogeneous were creating problems for new entrants, particularly women. As more and more women entered the workforce during the second half of the twentieth century, they hit a number of impediments.

At first, they had to fight the barriers to entry – particularly at the professional level. This represents what Sturm (2001, p. 465) calls first order discrimination, i.e. the fight to prevent ‘overt exclusion, segregation of job opportunity, and conscious stereotyping,’ which led to sexual harassment and other forms of anti-woman behavior. Though these are still concerns, much of first order discrimination, largely due to legislation, is now more controlled – at least in the developed world. But in its wake has come what Sturm (2001, p. 458) calls second-order discrimination, issues that arise after inclusion. These are what she calls ‘a subtle and complex form of bias’ that is based on unrecognized assumptions and habits of mind that disadvantage women without conscious intent.

The projects I will be detailing concern mainly this second-order discrimination. They deal with the gendered assumptions – the institutions – that underlie current work practices, which favor men and their life experiences and thus disadvantage women. These assumptions explain why even when progressive companies introduced accommodations for women and began greater efforts to value their contributions, they still did not create gender equity, and women were still not moving to the top. The family policies and flexible work arrangements put into place by these companies were either under-used by the most ambitious women employees, or, if used, were seen as part of a ‘mommy track’ and relegated their users to second-tier status.<sup>4</sup>

It was this dilemma that motivated the Ford Foundation, in a program directed by June Zeitlin and advised by Rhona Rapoport, to sponsor three teams of researchers, each involved with a different company, to work on these issues. This was 1990 and they wanted to get beyond policies and benefits which, though critically important for certain employees, were not getting women up the corporate ladder and not giving either women or men the possibility to better integrate their work and personal lives. They wanted, rather, to see what was preventing these policies from having the desired effect, and what could be done to change the barriers. In particular, they wanted to know if it was the institutionalized structure of work and the cultural context in which it took place that needed to be changed.

### **The Xerox project**

Our team worked with the Xerox Corporation and experimented with different work redesigns in three different units (this work and the method used are fully described in Rapoport et al., 2002). The problem we agreed to work on was that women at Xerox were not moving up in the company. But, at this early stage of public awareness (early 1990s), we were specifically asked not to talk about gender equity, which was seen as too provocative, even in a company that had successfully moved African-Americans (mainly men) into top positions. So we entered that first site by defining the goal of our interventions as redesigning work to make it easier for employees to integrate their work with their personal lives. We worked with a committee at Xerox headed by one of their women managers<sup>5</sup> who understood our goal and astutely guided the HR people on the committee to think beyond policies and benefits. In a long meeting that followed Xerox’s quality process, we came up with the following description of the desired state: ‘the Xerox culture capitalizes on work/“family”<sup>6</sup> issues as an opportunity to create innovative and productive work practices.’ This was in contrast to the current state which was described as: ‘the

Xerox culture unnecessarily creates conflict between work and “family,” which has negative consequences for the business and for the equitable treatment of employees.’

As it turned out, in the early 1990s, putting work and family together like this was alien to the company’s discourse. The term ‘work–family’ had entered the vocabulary, but it did not mean integrating these two domains. On the contrary, work and family were seen as quite distinct, with family an individual concern of a few ‘problematic’ employees, which could be dealt with by ‘work–family’ people in the HR department. Hence, when we started asking people about their work in some detail, we got the response ‘you’re the work–family people, why are you asking us about our work?’

But the work was critical, though with a twist. Whereas previous attempts at the redesign of work were concerned primarily with the effectiveness and efficiency of work, we wanted to add a second goal: the change in work practices we sought were ones that could help employees with their personal lives and family responsibilities, and help women gain equity in the workplace, but not at the expense of the effectiveness of work. We wanted to look at work through a work–family lens – to see what it was about the arrangements of work that was making people’s lives difficult – and a gender lens, to discover whether existing work practices had any unexpected differential impact on men and women. And when we did this – and it was a key finding of that early work – we found that such a perspective on work identifies problematic work practices and assumptions that *also* turn out not to be effective.<sup>7</sup> And the reason for this was that work as well as the workforce were changing (Christensen, 2005). Work was becoming more team oriented and less constricted by place and time. And not only were there more women in the workforce, but also more men were seeking better integrated lives (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2009). The trouble was that despite the changes in both work and the workforce, basic practices were still anchored to traditional assumptions, especially the assumption of an ideal worker who had no responsibilities or interests outside his occupational career. Our approach at Xerox was to bring these assumptions and practices to the surface, and to show how they also had become ineffective and detrimental to the goals of the work itself.

## Method

The method we developed and continue to use is a form of action research that we call Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR), which is fully described in Bailyn and Fletcher (2007) and in Part 2 of Rapoport et al. (2002). It shares many aspects of other modes of research based on participation and intervention (see e.g. Reason & Bradbury, 2001), but differs in its specific goal. It seeks the redesign of work not only for the effectiveness of that work – though that is included – and not only to enhance the overall humaneness of the workplace.<sup>8</sup> Its specific agenda is to ensure gender equity and to make the workplace and all its rewards equally available to people with or without caring responsibilities. As such, it seeks to legitimate care and to include the acceptance of workers’ personal lives as important input to the overall business equation (Bailyn, 2006/1993).

A summary of the elements of the method is given in Table 1. In this article, the emphasis is particularly on the kinds of interventions done and what was learned from them. I begin with interventions that deal with time and timing – usually

Table 1. Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR): methods used.

Data collection	
Individual interviews	On people's work and personal lives – get people to reflect on this connection and on differential impact of current work practices on men and women
Round tables	Continue emphasis on connection and differential impact – now as shared understanding, beyond level of individual
Analysis	By researchers – identification of underlying assumptions guiding work practices that make work–personal life integration difficult and/or have differential impact on men and women
Feedback sessions	To whole unit, feedback on assumptions: what keeps them in place and unexpected negative consequences for employee lives and gender equity as well as effectiveness of work
Interventions	Jointly decided by researchers and employees in organizational site of intervention
Assessment	Is it successful, meets both personal/equity and effectiveness goals? Is it sustained? Does it diffuse?

referred to as flexibility and flexible work arrangements. The emphasis here is on collective decision-making. This is followed by interventions that emphasize the control over time and its predictability. Here one sees how collective decision-making necessitates a systemic view of flexibility.<sup>9</sup> In both of these cases, the entry is typically the integration of work and personal life. Then follow interventions that have an explicit emphasis on gender, where gender equity is the specific goal to be achieved. These sections allow one to compare a work–family or work–personal life lens with a gender lens. A final section emphasizes cross-functional teams as the intervention, which allows one to see how introducing employees' personal lives enhances this common form of organizational change.

## Interventions

### *Collective decisions on time and timing*

One of our Xerox interventions was to allow anyone (whether male or female and parent or not) to take any of the flexibilities available *as long as the work got done* (see Bailyn, 2005; Bailyn, 2006/1993, pp. 139–141; Bailyn, Fletcher, & Kolb, 1997). This permission – awarded as a 3-month experiment – came from a fairly controlling division head in response to our feedback which showed that requests for flexibility were decreasing not because people did not need them but because the response of the supervisors to whom the requests were made created a self-defeating negative feedback loop. Since supervisors, mimicking the controlling division head, believed they had to be present to make sure their people were working, they either neglected to respond or denied these requests, which, over time, led to fewer and fewer requests, and hence allowed management to conclude that flexibilities were not really needed.

To the credit of the executive, this feedback made him aware that his division may be creating such self-reinforcing negative cycles in other aspects of work as well – hence he proclaimed the experiment. And when the experiment led to a 30% decrease in absenteeism, its future was assured. This one seemingly superficial change actually

led to more profound changes in the underlying assumptions about how to accomplish the work of the division. No longer was it possible for employees to negotiate for flexibilities one-on-one with their supervisors – since everyone now wanted some change – and the resulting necessity for collective negotiations at the work unit level led supervisors away from continuous surveillance of their employees. It moved the division head toward a more open and innovative style of managing, and led to viewing flexibility as a collective opportunity for rethinking work effectiveness, rather than as a problem for individual employees and their supervisors. It also empowered the work groups, which soon led them to make local, collective decisions in other areas besides scheduling. And it significantly eased the lives of employees and reached division goals that had not been previously attained. It is important to note that one of the reasons this intervention was successful was that the decisions about scheduling and time were made collectively – not one-on-one with a supervisor, as had previously been the case.

This collective way of integrating work demands with people's personal needs was evident also in a project from the Radcliffe PPI with a portfolio group in a large bank with which we worked (Rayman et al., 1999). This group was responsible for preparing financial reports for the Board at regular intervals, as well as ad hoc for top management. There was one manager of five separate groups, each with a supervisor. Each group had responsibility for a particular part of the report, which then had to be coordinated. Also, within each group, every person had to collect information for his or her part and work with the others in the group before that part could be put together to make a final report. It was the manager's duty to coordinate all these different efforts and to make sure that the timetable was being met. At the time we were introduced to this group they had a lot of problems. Individual people had long commutes, and they had actually asked for the possibility of working at home on occasion, but were refused. The work entailed long hours and we heard reports of stress and that the group was pretty frantic. There were also problems in getting the work done. The manager very much wanted the group to establish a template so she could easily oversee the stage at which every part of every report was currently at – but the group was so busy that they never had the time to develop this.

On the basis of our work with this group, the head of the division reversed the earlier decision and gave permission, as part of a pilot experiment, for members of this group to work 2 days a week from home and flextime was also introduced for the first time. For those who wanted to telecommute, the company helped them set up their computers and provided connections to the database that was needed for their work. Of course they had to mesh their schedules with each other but this turned out not to be a problem. Employees reported that for the first time they were able to participate in family events, because they had more control over when they worked. Their colleagues reported how much less frantic everyone was. And now, because they both were under less stress and the need was more obvious, the template the manager had long wanted was quickly developed. The situation improved so much, that the manager felt comfortable working one day a week from home herself.

A seemingly similar situation in the financial analysis group of a large manufacturer floundered when the employees became so engrossed in their newly found flexibilities that they began to treat them individually, instead of collectively, and lost sight of the relation of their schedules to the needs of the work. In fact, there

was danger of this also in the PPI example, but the continued presence of the researchers kept the dual focus continuously in the forefront. In the failed case, however, this was not possible because financial arrangements with the company involved did not allow it. This shows how difficult it is to keep the dual agenda always in mind and how necessary it is for someone – outside researchers or insiders who have been well trained in these methods – to keep a close eye on the process.

### *Systemic flexibility: control and predictability*

In both of the above cases, there was a reversal in the way flexibility is usually granted. Typically, an employee asks for different hours or to be able to work from home, the supervisor gauges whether the employee is a good worker and can be trusted and grants permission on an individual basis based on an assessment of the employee's need for the arrangement. Here, in contrast, the flexibility was made available to everyone, regardless of need, and it was given not in response to good work but up front. Decisions were made collectively and employees' personal needs were seen as legitimate input into how the group accomplished its work (Bailyn, 2006/1993).

Both of these principles – personal needs for flexibility as input rather than output and collective decision-making on schedules – are evident in an experiment that started at the corporate headquarters of Best Buy (Conlin, 2006; Thottam, 2005). It is called Results Only Work Environment (ROWE), and started when a manager at Best Buy was having problems with his group: morale was low; they were not meeting their goals. He went to a HR representative for help, who looked at the situation and advised him to let his people solve the problems on their own. With some hesitation, but having tried everything else, he agreed. His group got together and invented ROWE. With the manager's help they defined the goals of the group and got him to agree to let them meet those goals wherever and whenever they wanted to work, and to judge them strictly on the results. They were aware of course that this was very counter-cultural, and to combat nasty comments like 'hmm, 10 o'clock and just coming to work?' they invented a word – Sludge – that anyone could call out to highlight this reversion to the old culture of measuring time put in, rather than the new culture of emphasis only on results. The unit did so well that Best Buy extended ROWE to other units, but only if everyone in the unit agreed to do it. This was a collective endeavor, not an individual one.

An academic group evaluating the experiment found that employees in ROWE groups when compared to those who did not participate had better work–personal life harmony: less time commuting, less work–family conflict, less negative work to family spillover, more sleep and energy. On the business side, there were average productivity gains of 35% in ROWE groups as well as gains in employee engagement and reductions in turnover (Moen, Kelly, & Chermack, 2009).

These examples show how employees' collective control over the where and when of work can disrupt institutionalized work practices to the benefit of both employees and the effectiveness of their work.

A particularly striking intervention on another aspect of temporal control is the work of Leslie Perlow of the Harvard Business School. She worked at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), and introduced into the frantic, always available life of



their consultants, mandated predictable time off (PTO) for each member of a client-centered team (Perlow & Porter, 2009). Her original forays into the experience of BCG consultants in the Boston office confirmed the long hours, always accessible, client-comes-first workplace that a consulting firm typically provides. But what was most interesting was that it was not the long hours per se that were bothering these consultants and leading them to consider leaving the firm; it was the unpredictability of these hours. None of them could ever plan anything in the middle of the week. Not only were they often on client sites away from Boston, but also something was always bound to come up late in the day to prevent realizing any plans made for the evening.

The managing partner, concerned about attrition, agreed to an experiment that might ease this problem. They chose an initial case team on which they imposed three conditions: first, every member of the team had to take a predictable night off, from 6 pm to 9 am the next morning. This schedule was created at the beginning of the project, and could only be changed for personal, not work reasons. Being 'off' meant not only doing no work, but also being off all connection devices such as phone, email, or BlackBerries. And this applied wherever they were, even if on site in another city. Since typically the teams worked by allocating a specific assignment to each member of the team, two other conditions were instituted. First, each member of the case team had a teaming partner, who also knew about the work assigned to the person they were partnering, and who was responsible for dealing with client demands that happened on that person's night off. A final condition was to set up a weekly meeting of the team, where they discussed how the previous week had gone, whether there had been any problems with keeping to the schedule, and to plan for the following week – all designed to ensure that consultants could take their assigned night off. In this meeting, they also checked how they were feeling personally and whether they felt they were giving value to the client.

The results were gratifying. The consultants really began to enjoy their nights off and found they were able to plan for personal activities that had not been possible before. They also felt more refreshed the following morning. At the end of the assignment, each consultant wanted to participate in another PTO team.

Ten more teams immediately volunteered to join the experiment, and 34 followed soon after. A survey of these team members, compared to consultants who had not participated in the experiments, found that participants were more satisfied with their jobs, more likely to believe that they could spend their careers at the firm (which was of particular importance to the managing partner), more comfortable taking time for personal needs even beyond the one night off, and felt more respected for setting boundaries on their work. Compared to the non-participants, they also felt they were learning more, that there was better communication, and that they were delivering more value to their clients. BCG is now diffusing this experiment globally, despite the economic recession (Perlow & Herman, 2010).

To summarize this section: what turns out to be particularly important is the collective/systemic approach to flexibility and the continuous attention to both the personal and the work side by all involved. The importance of this latter point is highlighted by a failed endeavor from the MIT Workplace Center, which concerned a self-scheduling experiment with hospital nurses (Bailyn, Collins, & Song, 2007). Here the nurses – who welcomed the greater control over their time and felt it allowed them to give better patient care – began to see this as an individual entitlement and

started to ignore, when signing up, that a certain number of nurses had to be available at each particular time. Thus the experiment, despite its good results for the nurses, had to be stopped. Again, the work and employees' personal lives must both be continuously attended to.<sup>10</sup>

### *Using a gender lens*

None of these examples dealt specifically with gender. But there are others where gender was the explicit lens through which work practices that disadvantaged women were identified. And there are interesting differences between these and those like the ones above that came in with a work–family or work–personal life lens.

An early gender lens example is a project at the Body Shop (Kolb & Meyerson, 1999) done at the CGO of Simmons College's School of Management. It was also supported by the Ford Foundation and was led by Deborah Kolb and Debra Meyerson and the focus was openly and explicitly on gender. There, it was not time or schedules that came into view, but less obvious aspects of work. For example, one of the reasons, they discovered, that women were not promoted into supervisory positions was because the job description emphasized technical competence whereas the actual work as practiced centered much more on relational skills. This disconnect hurt women employees as well as the effectiveness of the supervisory job.

So, looking at work through an explicit gender lens led to a more nuanced understanding of the work situation, a clearer view of why women were disadvantaged in this otherwise progressive company. But, as it turned out, the CGO group was unable to carry out any intervention.<sup>11</sup> What happened was that gender was hard to keep on people's minds. It was hard because the theoretical meaning of gender does not refer to a person's sex as an individual characteristic, but rather to a systemic and structural principle (Ridgeway, 2009).

A subsequent CGO project, also explicitly based on gender, did produce some constructive interventions not based on the where or when of work. They worked in a high-tech company which employed scientists and engineers and was concerned that their women were not moving into leadership positions (Fletcher, Bailyn, & Blake Beard, 2009). The analysis showed that institutionalized norms around leadership were that you didn't ask to be promoted, rather that 'leadership will seek you' (Fletcher et al., 2009, p. 87). This was particularly difficult for women, because they tended to be overlooked in this masculine environment and pointing this out, or inquiring about promotion went against this institutionalized norm. It turned out that promotions were primarily decided on the basis of participation in what they called brainstorming meetings, to which very few women were invited. When the gender analysis pointed out these dynamics, management understood how they were systematically undermining the leadership chances of their female employees, despite the opposite intent. They therefore appointed one person to take up a 'conscience role' (Fletcher et al., 2009, p. 89) at each meeting where brainstorming team membership was decided, to see if certain people and certain skills were missing, and this increased the female representation.

Compared to a gender lens, a work–family lens on work identifies those aspects that make life difficult for employees, and tends to bring out issues that derive from organizational expectations for an *ideal worker* who has no other responsibilities except to his employing organization. It tends to lead to interventions around

scheduling and time. In contrast, a gender lens identifies seemingly gender-neutral but actually masculinized aspects of work that have a differential impact on men and women. It is more likely to reveal gendered conceptions of competence and commitment, and of *ideal work*; for example, the emphasis on technical as opposed to relational skills (Fletcher, 2005). Interventions here, when successful, are more likely to seriously challenge the gendered nature of the workplace.

### ***Cross-occupational teams***

Another non-temporal intervention that has worked in a number of cases is a cross-occupational team. Here we see the importance of bringing people's personal lives into the process of setting up such teams. A first example comes from a sales-service center that had not been doing well.<sup>12</sup> Sales people were stressed by long hours caused by ever increasing sales goals. Service employees were caught in the uncertainty of their work times by the promise of the company for a maximum 2-hour response time to any service call. The two groups did not have good relations with each other; they came from different backgrounds and their compensation was based on different criteria. When we brought them together to work on these personal concerns, it became clear that they could actually help each other. If service heard from sales when a new machine was being delivered, they could plan ahead as to when they had to be available to install it. And, if sales knew from service which machines required repeated attention, they could focus their selling attempts in a more constructive way. And so they began to talk. And when service alerted sales to a new possibility which put the unit near the top of its goals, the cross-functional team became institutionalized. What was particularly telling about this example is that management had previously tried to put such a team into operation with no good results, so they asked us what was different about what we did. And the answer is clear: we legitimated their personal concerns as important up-front input to their deliberations, and this provided the motivation to make the team work (Fletcher & Bailyn, 1996).

In another case, from the MIT Workplace Center, we worked at a Women's Health Center (Johnson, Bookman, Bailyn, Harrington, & Orton, in press), an all female workplace, where there was no immediate differential disadvantage to women employees relative to men. Further, most physicians – and some nurses – were on flexible part time schedules, and clinical assistants and support staff were able to leave when a personal situation warranted it; all it took was a request to the practice manager, which was routinely given. In other words, in contrast to other sites where we and others had worked, this was a workplace where the need of women to deal with responsibilities unrelated to their jobs was acknowledged and accommodated.

Nonetheless, we found that physicians felt they were not well supported and had no voice with top management when decisions about the Center were made. We found that support staff were overwhelmed by demands from patients needing access to multiple specialties and from doctors with different desires on how their patients should be treated. We found that medical assistants were concerned about being asked to shift to areas they did not feel they knew enough about to be effective. In other words, we found a workplace where it was difficult for the members to do their jobs in the best possible way.

The intervention that worked here was the introduction of cross-occupational teams – we called them care teams – in each medical area of the Center. Problems in the Center were typically dealt with by individuals complaining to the practice manager or the medical/administrative leaders, often with few results. And, in the case of individually granted flexibilities, there were detrimental effects for both patients and employees. Previously, when employees were granted flexibilities individually, their absence not only interfered with the flow of patient care and made the staff who remained feel unfairly burdened, but it also made the very employees who left feel dissatisfied and guilty about work undone and lack of provision to ensure its satisfactory accomplishment. The goal was to create care teams that would shift complaints from individual requests to the practice manager to collective airing of the issues involved and a team-based collaborative form of problem solving.

The most successful care team was in the area of gynecology. This team was co-lead by a physician and a support person. When we sat in on its meetings it was quite a change to hear the doctors – previously known as complainers – listen to their staff and actually change their behavior in order to make the coordination of work around patients more effective. It also made every member of the team feel that her contributions were effective and valued – that together they were providing the best care to patients that they could.

Both of these examples show how teams across function and hierarchy can create constructive change when both work and personal concerns are legitimated and collectively dealt with (see Kellogg, in press, chapter six, for another example in a different context).

### Discussion

To summarize the learning across all the examples: the control of time is a clear first concern. Given that most households have all adults in the workforce, people need more time for care – of their children, their elders, their communities, and even of themselves. Hence assumptions about an ideal worker that link time at work and continuous availability with productivity need to be questioned and challenged. But such changes will only help gender equity if they also legitimate the personal responsibilities of *all* employees and acknowledge that skills learned in the family and the community can enhance people's work effectiveness. Further, changes that ease employees' lives must be integrally connected to work effectiveness; they neither can be seen as individual entitlements nor can the organization's needs dominate. There must be integration of the occupational and domestic domains.

Moreover, it is clear that significant work-practice change is not something that individuals can do on their own. It clearly depends on the collective action of all the people involved in creating a product or a service, and everyone – across all levels and functions – has to be able to contribute to decisions on how the unit accomplishes its work. For both work effectiveness and employee's equitable and satisfying lives, there needs to be a work environment where collaborative problem solving can provide the conditions that allow everyone to contribute up to their potential to the overall goals of the work unit. But accepting the legitimacy of family and personal life for business decisions is also critical, and this is perhaps what

differentiates this approach from a more general desire to create healthy and humane organizations.

Much work on healthy organizations (e.g. Cox & Howarth, 1990; McHugh & Brotherton, 2000; Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004) takes a very individual approach, defining the health of an organization through the well-being of its individual employees. But one can readily imagine a workplace where the necessary autonomy, participation, self-esteem, and even flexible work arrangements exist without dealing with any of the structural and cultural institutions that prevent the domestic arena from playing a significant role in the design of work. Perhaps the best example of that is Hochschild's (1997) *The time bind: When work becomes home and home becomes work*. Work becomes home, according to her analysis, because it provides the 'healthy' environment that people desire (good interpersonal connections, good support, and a sense of achievement) without any recognition that the practices underlying this environment are exactly the ones that are making home life so frenetic and complicated – making it feel like unrewarding work. More recent reports on healthy organizations, typically European, have a more institutional and societal perspective (Lewis, 2008), and organizational innovations identified (Lewis, van Doorne-Huiskes, Redai, & Barroso, forthcoming) are more akin to the approach in this article. This more recent work includes gender and work–family integration in its considerations, but spreads a wider net, including also sustainability. I would like to suggest, however, that a more narrow focus, particularly a gender lens, may nonetheless identify important constraining workplace institutions and point to productive leverage points for change that might otherwise be missed.

The problem dealt with in this article is that the current workforce and the existing workplace do not match (Christensen, 2005). It could be considered a case of cultural lag (Brinkman & Brinkman, 1997; Ogburn, 1957), a situation where a particular aspect of culture (the demography of the workforce in this case) has moved ahead of a correlated aspect (the institutions of the workplace) and thus creates maladjustment in the system. In the middle of the last century, before this lag became a burning issue, there was concern about de-institutionalization, the slow disappearance of social institutions that for centuries had provided guidance and certainty for a species without built-in instincts to play this role (Gehlen, 1980/1957). Building on this concern, Deetz (1979, p. 51) suggests that organizations can provide some redress for this condition through 'small task-oriented work groups composed of members from all levels of the organization connected by a cellular rather than hierarchical structure.' But even this cannot create gender equity or a constructive integration of the domestic and economic spheres, if the underlying gendered assumptions about ideal workers and ideal work are not challenged. And it is this challenge that CIAR is designed to meet.

### Concluding note

Before ending, I would like to deal briefly with two caveats. First, we will not achieve gender equity in the workplace if we do not also challenge gender roles in the family. The two must go together; they must reflect each other. For example, when we consider choices that women may have about how to allocate their time between employment and community and family, we ignore not only that economic considerations may be a primary constraint on this so-called choice, but also that

this choice for women means that the men in their lives have no choice. And that is not gender equity. What we need is to question gendered practices both in the workplace and in the family. Redesign is needed in both arenas.<sup>13</sup>

Second, what I have been arguing comes very much from an American context, where there are few social supports for families. We know that the situation for women is different – often better – in many other developed countries, and completely different and significantly worse in parts of the developing world (Gambles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006).

In summary, the CIAR method and the projects that result allow one to look critically at the work practices of a given workplace and thus surface institutionalized, often gendered assumptions that are detrimental to anyone with outside interests and responsibilities, as well as to the work itself. The ultimate aim is to use such understanding in order to redesign work arrangements so that they better meet the multiple goals of effectiveness, equity, and healthy, satisfying, and caring environments at work, in the family, and in the community.

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### Notes

1. This research team was led by Lotte Bailyn and Deborah Kolb, and included Susan Eaton, Joyce K. Fletcher, Maureen Harvey, Robin Johnson, Leslie Perlow, and occasional participation by Amy Andrews. Rhona Rapoport served as consultant to the team.
2. Joyce Fletcher is now a distinguished senior fellow at CGO.
3. Bailyn was Matina S. Horner distinguished visiting professor 1995–1997. PPI was founded and led by Paula Rayman.
4. Phyllis Moen (this issue) explains this lack of fit by a career myth that ignores the gendered life course.
5. Anne Mulcahy, who later became CEO and is now Chairman at Xerox.
6. The quotation marks around family were meant to indicate that we were referring to more than just the nuclear family, but rather to people's entire non-work lives.
7. We came to call this a 'dual agenda': our double goal was to enhance equity and people's lives as well as work effectiveness.
8. This issue is taken up again in the Discussion section.
9. Included in this section is an example from outside our work – that of Best Buy's Results Oriented Work Environment (ROWE).
10. As will be seen in the next section, there are also examples where the work side becomes singularly dominant. Indeed, that was our main concern when we started and we were actually surprised to find examples where the personal side dominated.
11. Various perspectives on how they 'lost gender' are available in the November 2000 (Volume 7, Number 4) issue of *Organization*.
12. One of the original Xerox interventions (see Rapoport et al., 1998, pp. 7–10; Rapoport et al., 2002).
13. Jessica DeGroot's work at the Third Path Institute in Philadelphia (<http://www.thirdpath.org>) helps couples dedicated to fully sharing the care of their children redesign their work to make this possible. Though this is still an individual approach to the redesign of work, it begins to address both arenas together.

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