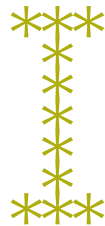




the hard work *by* FRANCENE RODGERS left to do



GRADUATED FROM Barnard College of Columbia University in 1967. If you'd asked me back then, at the beginning of the women's movement, where working women would be today, I would have said we'd be much farther along. The sixties were a time when change accelerated rapidly, and we all thought that rate of change was going to continue for the rest of our lives. So naturally I feel frustrated when I look at the situation today, with women participating much more fully in the labor market but still not moving into leadership positions.

Does this mean the women's movement was unsuccessful? Hardly. When I started working, men did not believe that women were capable of being in business. Sexual harassment was commonplace, if not a daily occurrence, for many working women. And as Claudia Goldin and Joyce Jacobsen indicate elsewhere in this issue, women's educational and occupational options were far more limited. All of that has changed dramatically.

But still, the women's movement hasn't completely fulfilled its promise and its mission, and the reason is that the world is more complicated than it seemed back then. We thought all we needed to do was to pass antidiscrimination laws, get women a seat at the table, and have a few role models at the top. We didn't realize that work hours would increase to the point that work time and family time have almost become antonyms, or that the lack of power and pay associated with women's jobs would be so unyielding, or that the power structure of corporate America was so deep and enduring. We made the easy changes, but they weren't enough. We still have a lot of hard work left to do.

One thing we didn't realize back in the sixties was that women's problems in the workplace are not only about family and children. Clearly, family choices have a significant impact on women's work lives, but that's not the only factor that keeps women from being successful. Women without children report many of the same problems with alienation, exclusion, and stereotyping—no surprise given Barbara Reskin's research. And the problems only get worse as they move up the ladder. Many women leaders tell me that when they got to what they thought

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was the top, they discovered there was another level they didn't know about until they arrived. They can provide numerous examples of being left out. This is not necessarily due to conscious behavior by men, but it continues to exclude even women who by every standard are incredibly successful.

We also didn't realize how hard it would be to change how people think about men's and women's work. As Nancy Folbre points out, we still see large differences in what men and women choose to do. There's nothing wrong with people making different choices. But there's a deeper issue, which is that the things women choose to do are less paid, less powerful, and less valued. Girls still don't feel comfortable wanting power, influence, or money, and they don't seek out the jobs that will lead to those outcomes. And when women do enter occupations that were previously male-dominated, the occupation's salary and prestige decline; medicine and middle management are just two examples. The solution isn't to make all women into business executives. Instead, we need to look at how we value occupations so that pay and power are less associated with our gender stereotypes.

We thought that giving women more control over their work schedules would solve much of the work-family problem. Indeed, my consulting firm, and others like it, have spent the last 30 years helping employers to learn how to do this, and we have seen major improvements in this regard. Flex time, executive-level part-time jobs, and compressed workweeks are commonplace today but were all but unheard of even two decades ago. But unfortunately, all the positives of becoming more flexible have been trumped by the increase in working hours. What's the point of compressing or moving around 70 hours of work per week? It's too much work, no matter how it's arranged. One problem is our wage and hour laws. While most nonmanagerial and nonprofessional employees must be paid overtime for any work over 40 hours per week, for managers and professionals all work above 40 hours per week is essentially free to the employer. This inevitably leads to abuse. Ironically, these rules were implemented in order to give nonunionized women some protection against unreasonable work practices. Today, the laws have backfired against working women, who increasingly work in professional jobs and therefore are exempt from overtime protections.

This dovetails with another issue, which is that employers are incredibly sloppy in the way they use time. Time is the only finite thing there is, and yet employers treat it as if it were infinite. I talk frequently with employees about their work lives, and they tell me that they resent not one iota of the time they have to spend serving customers or clearly adding value to the company. But what they resent is the time their employers waste. They hate unnecessary bureaucracy and rework and endless memos. They hate people who call meetings without an agenda or let the meetings run too long because they start late. In short, they resent the time they spend at work that seems wasteful, when they don't understand what value is being added to the business. I think it's practically criminal for bosses to encroach on employees' time because of poor planning. But right now, there are no consequences for doing just that. We simply culturally

accept that we're a country that works all the time, and we don't hold employers accountable.

Women should be the ones holding employers' feet to the fire, but we have been too timid in stating our needs and in helping our companies change. Somehow we thought that if we were at the table, that was going to be the change in itself. But we can't just be at the table; we have to speak up. Men don't even see the problem, by and large, because they're not the ones who are having the problem. And they won't fix what they can't see.

Speaking up is difficult, however, when women and men communicate in different ways. Thirty-five years ago we resisted the idea that men and women differed in any substantial way. But the more I have worked in this field, the more I think that there are important differences between us. These differences don't mean that one sex or the other is less productive or less valuable, but they do mean that people's behavior can be interpreted negatively even when it wasn't intended that way. For example, women say "I'm sorry" to mean that they empathize with another person, whereas men tend to use it when they think they did something wrong. Similarly, men tend not to make eye contact with speakers during presentations, which women interpret as rude. Women might want more time to think over a decision than a man would, which a hiring manager might interpret as "hesitation in battle." The list goes on. These kinds of misinterpretations are very hard to fix, especially because the problem is not that one gender is wrong and the other is right. It's that we're different in this respect.

FINALLY, IN THE HALCYON DAYS of the women's movement, we didn't realize how much of the problem would need to be solved not by individuals or employers, but by the community. We had this incredible revolution of women's work. But we did absolutely nothing to support it, and now we're surprised that women are struggling. To move forward, sooner or later we will have to invest in more public support for the policies and structures that allow both men and women to work—for example, more accessible child care and school schedules and events that are set with working parents in mind.

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson writes, "Freud was once asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well. The questioner probably expected a complicated, 'deep' answer. But Freud simply said, 'Lieben und arbeiten' (to love and to work). It pays to ponder on this simple formula; it grows deeper as you think about it." We should all have the right both to have work that gives us meaning and to have families that we can care for. Giving up on women's ability to do both is giving up on fundamental human rights for women. We know that women start out as ambitious as men. We know that women want to both work and have families. The question is, how? This is our revolution to finish. *

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