

Title

Work, Gender, and Family: A Pedagogical Trifecta

Abstract

The intent of this Roundtable is to engage participants in an active discussion regarding the author's recent development of a course entitled "Work, Gender, and Family". The intent is to address the career, organizational, and societal considerations inherent at the intersection of these interrelated domains. In so doing, the course addresses a unique pedagogical need in many Management departments: Despite the increased popularity of work-family and gender considerations within the fields of Management and Organizational Behavior, few institutions offer such a course. The session reinforces the conference theme of 'Bridges,' as it effectively bridges these interrelated topics in management pedagogy.

Keywords

Work, Gender, Family

Session Format

Roundtable Discussion

60 minutes

Introduction

This 60-minute Roundtable session will engage participants in an active discussion regarding the author's recent development of a course entitled "Work, Gender, and Family". The intent of the course is to address the career, organizational, and societal considerations inherent at the intersection of these three interrelated domains. This includes considerations of issues such as: work-family conflict, the stereotypical image of the 'ideal' worker, family-friendly organizational policies and benefits, among others – all viewed through an intersectional gender and work-family lens. In this way, the proposed session also reinforces the conference theme of 'Bridges,' as it strives to explicitly and proactively bridge these three interrelated fields of relevance in today's management education standards.

The course is structured around the edited book, *Gender and the Work-Family Experience: An Intersection of Two Domains*, which is designed to serve as a foundational text for a course of this nature. The course addresses a unique pedagogical need in many business

schools broadly – and many Management departments specifically – as few institutions currently offer such a course. Moreover, for those few that do, it is often disproportionately likely to be housed within a social sciences department (e.g., sociology) or a school of arts and sciences as opposed to a business school or a Management department. This is despite the increased popularity of work-family and gender considerations within individual organizations and industries, as well as the business field writ large. As such, the development of a course such as this has the potential to fill an existing need in management education. That is, it stands to further management education’s proactive responsiveness to the demands, expectations, and challenges of the diversified modern workforce, aligning with recommendations by entities such as AACSB, The White House, and Harvard Business Review.

The roundtable will include discussion of relevant texts and supplemental readings, as well as the nuances of the recommended activities, projects, discussion and debate topics, and other such pedagogical techniques used in the course. The intended audience is current (and future) professors either interested in integrating a course such as this into their institution’s course offerings, as well as those simply looking to incorporate such topics into preexisting courses. Active participant engagement is encouraged, and the intent is for the roundtable to yield an engaging and fruitful discussion for all involved, with key tangible takeaways that participants can promptly incorporate into their own ongoing courses, as well as ideas for developing new such courses in the future.

Theoretical Foundation & Teaching Implications

The course is based on a solid but also comparatively nascent body of research examining the intersection of work, family, and gender. Interest in the intersection of these topics has grown exponentially in the last two decades. This is true of both scholarly research (e.g., Acker, 2006;

Correll et al., 2007; Hodges & Budig, 2010; Kossek et al., 2011; Mills et al., 2018; Shockley et al., 2017) as well as popular recognition and interest (e.g., Kossek et al., 2020). This includes significant media coverage surrounding events such as Yahoo! CEO Melissa Mayer's controversial announcement regarding the company's work-life policy changes, in addition to the publication of *Lean In* by Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg (Sandberg, 2015) and several other such popular press books that followed, as well as increasing recognition of such issues by the professional world writ large (Gerson, 2009; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Moe, 2003; Williams, 2010). Thus, the inclusion of such courses in management education is critical.

As such, the focal course of this roundtable is intended to explore various aspects of work-family conflict for all genders, as well as offering comparisons in terms of career and gender perceptions, the conflict experience itself, and the consequences of such conflict, among other considerations. This is crucial because with gender-stereotypical ideologies shifting, women are taking on more demanding work roles, and men are taking on increased home responsibilities. As such, work-life conflict becomes increasingly a challenge for male employees as it has traditionally been for female employees (Mills, 2015).

Nevertheless, although some organizations are adapting, many management approaches and policies fall short of creating an ideal environment for employees of any gender to optimally manage the work-family interface. For instance, male employees with substantial home responsibilities may not be receiving the support they need from their organizations, and likewise female employees – who are increasing participation in paid work, but also still absorb the majority of household duties (Schiebinger & Gilmartin, 2010) – may not be receiving sufficient support either (Mills, 2015). Courses such as the one at the focus of this roundtable are critical in rectifying this issue in years to come, as they help to ensure that the future managers of

tomorrow have a solid foundation of understanding, and are well-equipped to handle, such challenges and to manage them in such a way so as to be family-supportive supervisors for *all* employees. It likewise aligns with recommendations by an expert panel convened by The White House to address gender diversity in business education (The White House, 2015).

Such a course also stands to offer practical benefits for business schools and management departments. In particular, the inclusion of this course in management department course offerings may a) capture a unique portion of the ‘market’ of students who may otherwise lack the option for such a course (or, alternatively, who may pursue a non-management degree from a different college or department), and b) giving those business schools who opt to offer such a course an edge for accreditation bodies such as AACSB, which have emphasized the desire to see more gender diversification of the curriculum in business schools (e.g., Fraser & Watson, 2020). As such, offering a course such as the one discussed during this roundtable is an excellent way for business schools broadly – and management departments specifically – to highlight to AACSB the extent to which they are proactively and meaningfully investing in such efforts.

However, arguably most important impact is the potential for the course to contribute to effective teaching and learning in the field of management. I address this next by discussing the course in regard to pedagogical innovation and student impact.

Pedagogical Innovation. The course at the center of this roundtable draws upon a variety of innovative pedagogical strategies so as to engage students and meet varied student needs. In addition to standard and nonstandard assessments (e.g., exams, reflection papers), the course also rotates a series of innovative pedagogical activities throughout the semester. Of course, precisely how each is enacted in the course depends to some extent on enrollment numbers, but in general they include small group activities and debates, as well as presentations, case studies, and role

plays that serve as discussion stimulants about how course topics map onto real-world organizational practices and employee challenges related to gender and work-family. I personally also supplement these strategies by drawing on my professional network to bring in a diverse set of guest speakers who can provide added nuance and expertise relating to the covered intersectional topics. While it is certainly not expected that all such professors will have similar networks, I am happy to share my network linkages and the names of willing guest speakers – myself included – during the roundtable. We will also discuss particular relevant podcasts (e.g., Harvard Business Review’s Women at Work and IdeaCast; Have a Seat; The Indicator; The Dad Edge) that can either serve to function in place of guest speakers, and/or to spur debate and discussion in class.

Student Impact. At the individual level, the course has the potential to have a positive impact on broadening student awareness of the various intersectional work-family issues that inherently impact businesses, industries, and employees of today. Its intersectional and nuanced look at the systems underlying the intersection of work, family, and gender will help students – who will inevitably become the managers and business leaders of tomorrow – gain a greater understanding of systemic processes, and how they can proactively and positively account for them as they move forward in their careers as both employees and employers.

At the institutional and college level, this course has the potential to positively impact student retention and even attraction to business schools (broadly) and management departments (specifically). Specifically, due to the nature of the course, it may have the potential to attract students from other colleges (e.g., Arts & Sciences) and departments (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology) who previously had not considered the business school as an attractive path for them or one that aligned with their interests or goals. This course will provide a

welcome introduction to those students – as well as current management students – connecting the value of business studies to broader social issues and considerations. Finally, as aforementioned, the course also has the potential for positive impact at the broader college level due to its responsiveness to calls in the broader business field (e.g., Symons, 2016; Fraser & Watson, 2020) for improved gender diversification of business curricula.

Societal Impact. Finally – but certainly not the least of these – is the societal importance of incorporating gender-salient perspectives into business school curricula – a consideration that has been emphasized by leading entities, including Harvard Business Review (Krishna & Orhun, 2020), The White House (2015), and AACSB (Fraser & Watson, 2020). In keeping with the espoused recommendations from these entities, the discussed course topics have inherent potential to have a positive societal impact. Namely, incorporating into business and management curricula a course that explicitly and thoroughly addresses gender and work-family issues in the workplace is an important step in overcoming some of the long-standing gender-equity challenges in business education. In turn, such a course better prepares students of all genders to be more responsive and more adept leaders insofar as how they understand, manage, and engage with their workforce, as well as how to best go about gender-equitable work-family policy-making. Indeed, Miller and Sisk (2012) summarize an increasingly common sentiment in the field that “if business schools are to create leaders, they must provide them with knowledge of how gender shapes the workplace and modify the...curriculum to incorporate gender awareness”. The course discussed during the proposed roundtable is an important step in that direction, with a particular focus on work-family issues, which – as we have seen highlighted on a grand scale over the past two years during the pandemic (e.g., Shockley et al., 2021) – has massively gendered implications for workforce participation and success.

Session Description

The session will begin with an overview of the course, including sharing of text and supplemental reading information, and a discussion of the various module topics and weekly sub-topics. Text examples will be provided and tangible resources will be brought to distribute to interested attendees. That said, this is intended to be an dynamic discussion with significant space for reciprocal engagement with the material, and active sharing of ideas and questions.

The flow of the roundtable is expected to adapt according to audience topical interests and participation, thus the following is a guide only; participant interest and engagement will determine the flow and direction of the session:

- *~5 minutes:* Background information, theoretical and practical foundation
- *~10 minutes:* Introduction of the course, distribution of information and resources
- *~15 minutes:* Discussion of course text and supplemental readings alongside how they fit within the course modules and weekly topics
- *~15 minutes:* Participative discussion of the nuances of the course activities and pedagogical techniques, including a book project, case presentation, game simulation, discussion and debate topics, TedTalk and academic podcast episode recommendations
- *~5 minutes:* Participative discussion of the value that such a course brings to business schools and management department curricula, and r
- *~5 minutes:* Wrap-up, and recommendations for outcome and value assessment, as well as opportunities for parceling out portions of the course a la carte for incorporation into existing courses (to accommodate departments that may not have the bandwidth to spare an entire course offering).

- *~5 minutes:* Closing; Opportunity for participants to connect and network individually with one another, trade contact information for potential guest speakers, etc.

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