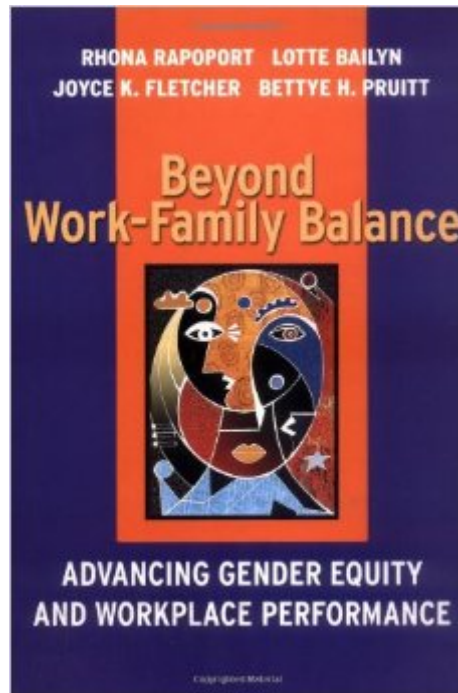


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# Beyond Work-Family Balance: Advancing Gender Equity And Workplace Performance



## Synopsis

Everyone who struggles to meet the demands of work and personal-life responsibilities knows how tough it is to do so. This bold new book shows that it is the deeply engrained separation of work and personal life that has limited our ability to deal effectively with the conflict between them. Beyond Work-Family Balance demonstrates why the image of "balance" is outmoded and why a new approach -- work-personal life integration -- offers greater promise for meaningful change.

Providing many examples from action research projects in more than a dozen organizations of different kinds, the authors show how using their method of integrating rather than separating personal-life considerations from the workplace can achieve positive outcomes, not only for workers but also for the work. The method offers a way of looking deeply into the work culture to find inequitable and ineffective work practices that are so embedded and routine that no one thinks to question them -- they are just the way things get done. Once identified, these work practices can be changed to achieve what the authors call a Dual Agenda: a more equitable workplace where both men and women can achieve their full potential and a more effective workplace where the needs of the work, rather than gendered and outmoded assumptions, determine what gets done and how.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The long-awaited, "Beyond Work-Family Balance," is finally out! Many of us have been waiting for the better part of a decade for a full treatment of the work/life integration experiments at Xerox and elsewhere, and this is it! If you are looking for a book to get you charged up about the business case for work/life programs, go elsewhere. If you want the most honest, detailed account of attempts to

make the business case successful in practice, this is the book for you. The basic argument starts with integration: we cannot improve things unless and until we are willing to bring the public sphere of employment and the private sphere of home together, a process that can range from embarrassing to painful. The second ingredient is the dual agenda of improving business performance and gender equity. The tightrope involved in carrying this dual agenda into the workplace is what makes the book interesting, powerful, and realistic. The authors argue that an interactive research approach is required to make the dual agenda work, with the researchers listening and learning almost as much as the participants in the business world, a process that requires constant feedback, reflection, and communication. Indeed, an entire chapter is devoted to lessons for research teams wishing to pursue research while applying a dual agenda to themselves. Sometimes the dual agenda succeeds, and employees and managers learn how to improve the functioning of workplaces for all participants (yes, stockholders even benefit). But the fundamental honesty of the authors leaves us wondering: is it worth it?

This is a book we have all been waiting for. After decades of reflection and debate about how best to develop innovative, high performance organisations, on the one hand, and how to enhance gender equity and work-personal life integration on the other hand, this book tells us that the two are not only compatible, but mutually dependent. Written in a non technical and thoroughly engaging style, the book argues that work practices and norms which are inequitable are also ineffective. The authors have the rare knack of presenting a deep and thoughtful analysis in such a clear way that their argument seems simple and obvious. The heart of the problem lies in the gendered assumptions that underpin many everyday working practices. The authors point out that assumptions based on traditional masculine values and life situations include the defining of commitment in terms of long working hours that preclude time for family or personal life, and the valuing of stereotypical male competencies, such as heroic action and firefighting, above interpersonal and other competencies regarded as more 'feminine'. Drawing on action research in a range of organisations they demonstrate how these assumptions and the practices that follow from them, undermine effective performance, but are so taken-for-granted that we rarely question them. What really distinguishes this book is that the authors go beyond identifying problems to provide a well tried method for bringing about meaningful change. It does not offer one size fits all solutions but does provide a process for reaching tailor made solutions.

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