

## Views of Work and motherhood must change, MIT speakers say

Americans must develop new beliefs about work, mothers, children and child-bearing if they are to achieve equality between men and women and support family well being, two MIT researchers said recently.

“The big dilemmas women face in having children are embedded in the structures of work. We treat those structures as if they were God-given. It’s time to change them,” said Lotte Bailyn, the T Wilson (1953) Professor in Management at the Sloan School and co-director of the MIT Workplace Center.

Bailyn and Mona Harrington, program director of the MIT Workplace Center, co-presented the session titled “The Politics and Work of Motherhood,” on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>.

Bailyn, an internationally known scholar on work and gender equity, described current workplace “advances” such as assertiveness training for women as “masculine [techniques], designed as if people had no responsibilities outside work.”

At MIT, a new policy focuses on motherhood. “We provided a one-year extension on the tenure clock for women who bear children. There’s no negotiation with the department head, either; it just happens automatically,” she said.

Both Harrington and Bailyn noted the difference in public support for children between the United States and Europe, where generous governmental and employment policies reflect the accepted idea that children are a social good.

“In the U.S., the idea prevails that individuals are responsible for supporting families out of their own resources. But most families have too little money or time or both. We need a far broader sense of social responsibility for children and families,” said Harrington.

Bailyn is the co-author of “Beyond Work-Family Balance: Advancing Gender Equity and Workplace Performance” (Jossey-Bass, 2002). Harrington’s latest book is “Care and Equality: Inventing a New Family Politics” (Routledge, 2000).

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