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THE BLOG

From the 'Mommy Wars' to a Caring Economy

Little attention has been given to Slaughter's main point: that our country's business and government policies give hardly any value to caring for children and other family members.

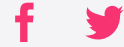
By Riane Eisler, Contributor

President of the Center for Partnership Studies

06/28/2012 02:58pm EDT | **Updated** August 28, 2012

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Anne-Marie Slaughter's Atlantic article "[Why Women Still Can't Have it All](#)" set off another firestorm about whether mothers can, or should, have careers. Some pitted Slaughter, who for family care reasons resigned as the first female director of Policy Planning at the State Department, against [Facebook](#) executive Sheryl Sandberg, who argued that women can have it all. Some lamented that such a role model of female success abdicated her powerful government position. Still others just saw Slaughter's piece as proof that a woman's place is in the home.

In the midst of all this back and forth, little attention has been given to Slaughter's main point: that our country's business and government policies give hardly any value to caring for children and other family members -- whether done by women or by men.

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The shocking truth is that the United States lags way behind every other developed nation in helping parents care for their children. We're also way behind in helping families care for their elderly and sick. In fact, the U.S. is the only developed nation on earth that does not guarantee [paid sick days](#) or paid [parental leave](#). Even more shocking is that more than [one of every five children](#) in the US lives in poverty and our [infant mortality rate](#) is higher than all other industrialized countries, as well as those with significantly weaker economies, such as Greece, Cuba, and Slovenia.

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All of which takes us back to the urgent need for giving more visibility, value and support to the work still done primarily by women in homes: caring for children and other family



understanding the enormous value of care work - and changing business practices and government policies accordingly -- deprives us of talented and caring people our nation sorely needs in leadership and policy-making positions. For women who lack Slaughter's financial and professional security (she is a tenured professor at Princeton), failing to adequately support those who care for children adds to our already huge poverty rates and exacerbates the suffering and misery that result.

And there is more. Not investing in caring for our children also deprives our nation of our most important asset: the high quality human capital economists tell us is key to economic competitiveness as we shift from manufacturing to the knowledge service economic era. We know from neuroscience that whether people's capacities are or are not developed largely hinges on the [quality of care and education they receive as children](#).

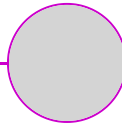
In sum, that our economic system does not recognize the value of caring for people is terrible, not only for women and families, but for any realistic hope of sustainable economic recovery in this age of massive technological change.

A major step toward a [caring economy](#) is the development of more inclusive and accurate economic indicators than GDP -- [Social Wealth indicators](#) that assess the real state of our nation. We must show the general public and policymakers both the enormous "back-end" financial costs of failing to invest in people, such as more unemployment, poverty, crime, and despair, and the enormous social and economic benefits of investing in human capacity building so that our nation can

about.

Suggest a correction

MORE: PARENTS PAID SICK LEAVE MOMMY WARS



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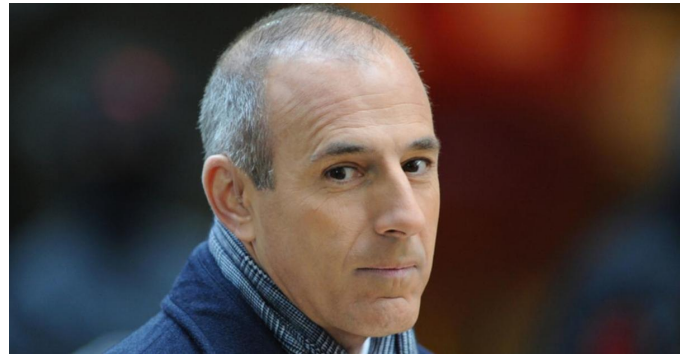
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