CHAPTER 10

Changing the Structure and Culture of Work

Work and Family Conflict, Work Flexibility, and Gender Equity in the Modern Workplace

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Once considered "separate spheres," the domains of work and family can no longer be so easily divided. As women, and especially mothers, have joined the workplace, the notion of distinct but complementary spheres has been replaced by a growing concern that the demands of work are increasingly at odds with the needs of families. Most families now depend on either two earners or one (female) parent. Yet the organization of work remains based on the principle that commitment means uninterrupted, full-time, and even overtime attention for a span of decades. This clash between family needs and workplace demands has produced a new dominant image based not on separate spheres, but on "work-family conflict."

Debate about the rise of work-family conflict has centered on the issue of working time.[1] Analysts such as Schor (1991) argue that Americans today are putting in more time at work than did earlier generations. Hochschild adds that increasing working time reflects basic cultural shifts in which home has become work and work has become home (1997, 38). Others, however, have disputed these claims, pointing to time-use studies that suggest leisure time has actually increased in recent decades (Robinson and Godbey 1997).

1. To distinguish clearly between public and private responsibilities, this chapter will use the terms "work" and "worker" to refer to paid work and paid workers only, even though unpaid domestic tasks surely qualify as "work" broadly conceived.

We offer a more complicated picture. Our analysis suggests that while average time at work has not increased substantially in the last several decades, this average masks a new dispersion among workers (Jacobs and Gerson 1998, 1999; see also Bluestone and Rose 1997; Rones, Ilg, and Gardner 1997). The labor force appears to be increasingly divided, with a growing group of workers putting in very long workweeks (well beyond the 40-hour standard) and another sizable group unable to find enough work to meet their needs. When the focus shifts from individuals to households, moreover, long workweeks appear to be concentrated among families with two earners (or one parent). These families are experiencing the greatest time crunch, not because they are working more as individuals but rather because their joint working time has become so large.

Working hours are fundamental, but taken alone they cannot tell the whole story of how workers' lives are changing. We also need to understand how in the context of growing work commitments people are coping with new conflicts between family and work. How are workers balancing their multiple obligations, what kinds of balance would they prefer, and what conflicts do they experience? Given the time that most must devote to work, what kind of workplace arrangements make a difference in workers' abilities to resolve the conflicts they face? And, finally, do workers perceive that serious costs and risks are associated with options that are ostensibly designed to ease their plight?

To answer these questions, we draw on the National Study of the Changing Workforce, a survey of the American labor force conducted in 1992.[2] Unique in the range of questions asked about workers' values and preferences and in its focus on the links, conflicts, and tensions between work and family, this survey also asked unusually detailed questions about workplace policies, organization, and culture. For these reasons, the Changing Workforce study makes it possible to untangle how work structures and processes—crucial factors that are usually hidden or overlooked in census and economic surveys—shape and constrain worker outlooks and strategies.

We use this rich material to examine the links between work and

2. Conducted by the Families and Work Institute, this study involved hour-long telephone interviews with a national probability sample of 3,381 employed men and women aged 18 through 64. For a general report on the findings, see Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman (1993).

family life, paying special attention to the role of workplace structure and culture in mediating conflicts between the home and the workplace. First, we examine workers' views about how they would like to balance family, work, and personal commitments. Who experiences conflict, and how and why does the perception of conflict vary across different groups of workers? Then we turn our attention to the kinds of work arrangements that might help alleviate such difficulties. Indeed, we argue that the current focus on hours spent working neglects an equally important aspect of work-family conflict—the actual conditions of work. Especially for workers who must put in long hours, aspects of the job such as flexibility, autonomy, and control over when one works are as likely to matter as working time. We thus investigate how the structure and culture of the workplace can either exacerbate or alleviate the conflicts workers face.

Finally, we consider a central but typically overlooked aspect of work-family conflict: Even when family-friendly policies are formally available, workers may conclude that taking advantage of them entails unspoken but very real costs. We thus complete our analysis by examining worker perceptions about potential conflicts between family-friendly and high-opportunity work environments. Do workers perceive that having and using policies that provide for family support are at odds with long-term career prospects?

In a social and economic context in which most workers simply cannot choose to work the amount of time they prefer, it is critical to discover if other circumstances at work can alleviate work-family conflicts. For workers in high-demand jobs, flexibility and autonomy are likely to be as or more important than working hours. Although we cannot investigate the innumerable and subtle ways that job conditions influence workers' options, we are able to explore one important aspect of job structure: the degree of flexibility and control a worker possesses in scheduling her or his work hours. Not only is control over scheduling important in its own right, especially for those who put in long hours, but it is also likely to be linked to other workplace circumstances, such as having a sense of personal autonomy and support.

If work arrangements that offer flexibility, autonomy, and control help workers resolve conflicts between family and work, we need to understand how such arrangements can be implemented fairly. The challenge is to develop social and economic policies that alleviate current dilemmas without sacrificing the principles of gender equity and

responsible parenthood. Otherwise, new policies run the risk of reinstituting old inequalities in a new form. First, however, we need to know who is experiencing conflict and why.

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL AND IDEAL ALLOCATIONS

Although most workers do not experience extreme levels of work-family conflict, the Changing Workforce survey suggests that close to half experience some.[3] These figures, however, may underestimate the scope of the problem because, taken alone, they do not tell us how workers would prefer to allocate their time. Do workers wish to spend more time with their families, more time working, or more time pursuing personal avocations beyond the bounds of either family or work?

The answer to this question is not obvious. If workers now perceive that work offers the pleasures once sought at home while home now poses the problems once posed by work, then most would prefer allocating more time to the job. Yet there is good reason to expect that those experiencing conflicts would, if given an opportunity, devote more time to family and personal pursuits. To understand how work-family conflict is experienced by workers, we need to know not only how they are currently balancing the various aspects of their lives but also how they would do so if they had more choice.

Table 10.1, which compares the actual and desired balance between family, self, and work for women and men, offers some insight.[4] It shows that both women and men would prefer, on average, to devote a larger percentage of their time to family and personal pursuits than they currently do. Similarly, each group would prefer to spend a smaller percentage of time at work. In considering their ideal balance between family, work, and self, women say they wish to spend 13 percent less time at work and 4 percent more time with their families. Men display a similar outlook, wishing for 14 percent less time on the job and 7 percent more time on family activities. Both groups, on average, would also like to have considerably more time available for pursuing individual and

3. We discuss the data on the extent of work-family conflict elsewhere (Jacobs and Gerson 1997).

4. Unfortunately, the Changing Workforce survey asked only a third of respondents about their ideal balance between family, self, and work or career. Thus, the percentages for actual and ideal time allocations are not strictly comparable. Since the smaller group is a random subset of the entire sample, there is good reason to have confidence in the comparisons.

TABLE 10.1
IDEAL VERSUS ACTUAL BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY

	Women		Men	
	Actual	*Desired*	*Actual*	*Desired*
Total				
Percentage time for:				
Family	44.9	49.2	40.9	47.5
Self	19.5	39.8	21.0	37.5
Work	35.9	22.9	38.5	24.8
Like division	60.2		64.8	
Workweek of 1–34 hours				
Percentage time for:				
Family	50.3	49.3	41.0	47.0
Self	20.5	42.4	26.1	37.1
Work	29.6	23.8	32.8	26.8
Like division	65.8		70.2	
Workweek of 35–49 hours				
Percentage time for:				
Family	44.0	49.1	42.7	48.5
Self	19.5	40.1	21.6	38.9
Work	36.7	22.6	36.3	24.4
Like division	60.1		69.2	
Workweek of 50+ hours				
Percentage time for:				
Family	39.6	49.4	37.1	46.2
Self	17.9	32.8	18.4	34.7
Work	43.5	22.5	44.5	24.8
Like division	50.9		54.4	

SOURCE: National Study of the Changing Workforce.

personal activities, with women wishing for 20 percent more time and men hoping for 15 percent more.

The gap between the actual and desired balance grows as workers' hours increase. Those who work 50 hours per week or more are most likely to report that their actual distribution of time to work is too high and to family is too low. For both men and women, these are the workers most likely to report that their ideal balance is far from their actual balance. These preferences, moreover, are consistent with other findings, which also show that those men and women who put in the longest hours on the job are most likely to report a preference for working less (Jacobs and Gerson 1999).

It thus appears that if workers could act on their fondest wishes, they

would create a new balance in which work would occupy less time and family life would get more attention. While there are surely exceptions, most workers are not working long hours in order to escape their homes and families. Rather, in the competition among work, family, and self, the self appears to be losing. The costs of work-family conflicts appear to have settled on the employed women and men themselves, who in their desire to meet work demands and family needs have less personal time.

FLEXIBILITY AT THE WORKPLACE

Are there social conditions and factors that can help alleviate work-family conflicts? For many workers, flexibility in scheduling work hours and increased control in work conditions may matter as much as actual time spent working. For full-time workers in particular, 45 flexible hours may seem less onerous than 35 rigidly scheduled ones. Indeed, many workers may be willing to work more hours in exchange for greater flexibility.

Flexibility gives workers some sense of control over when (and in some cases, where) they work. It also provides workers with greater discretion over how they meet their family responsibilities and balance the public and private aspects of their lives. Despite the often-criticized notion of "quality time," there are good reasons to believe that workers with flexibility and control over their working conditions will derive greater pleasure from work and also be happier, more supportive family members. Indeed, decades of research have consistently shown that satisfaction with work and good child care arrangements are the critical factors affecting the welfare of employed parents and their children.[5]

It is thus important to know who has flexible schedules and whether flexibility makes a difference. To find out, we examine answers to the question "Overall, how much control would you say you have in scheduling your work hours—none, very little, some, a lot, or complete flexibility?" Surprisingly, the overall perception of personal control is remarkably similar for women and men. Forty-four percent of women and 42 percent of men respond that they have "none" or "very little,"

5. The voluminous literature on comparisons between employed mothers and mothers who do not have a paid job has shown that working, taken alone, has no effect on the well-being of children. What matters are the mother's level of satisfaction with her choices, the involvement of the father, and the degree of satisfaction with child care arrangements. See, for example, Harvey (1999), Hoffman (1987), and Nye (1988).

while another 26 percent of women and 27 percent of men say they have "some." At the other end of the spectrum, 30 percent of women and men report having "a lot" or "complete flexibility." At this general level, gender does not appear to be linked to job flexibility, as some have suggested (e.g., Glass and Camarigg 1992).

Despite the commonsense expectation that flexible schedules might represent an adaptation or accommodation to long work hours, there appears to be no strong or significant link between working time and flexibility. Among men, no relationship emerges between control over scheduling and hours worked.[6] Women who work long hours do report less flexibility than those with less demanding jobs, but the relationship is not strong ($r = -.13$). Work flexibility is thus not simply a reflection of overall hours worked; it deserves attention in its own right.

A closer look reveals some hidden effects of gender beneath the apparently similar and generally weak link between working time and control over scheduling. Figure 10.1 shows a curvilinear relationship between workers' perceptions of flexibility and the number of hours they usually work in their main job, but the extent of the curve differs by gender. It is not surprising that a high percentage of both women and men with relatively short workweeks report more flexibility. Nor is it surprising that the percentage who enjoy a sense of control declines steadily for both women and men until they reach a level of 40 to 49 working hours. Part-time work, almost by definition, is more flexible. While flexibility may be an unintended by-product of shorter working hours, many may opt for shorter hours as a strategy for obtaining flexibility.

Among workers who work very long hours, however, men and women diverge in unanticipated ways. While men who work 50 or more hours per week report substantial increases in flexibility, women in this situation experience this rebound to a much smaller degree. For men, working relatively short or long hours bestows flexibility, leaving those in the middle relatively squeezed. For women, however, there is no such counterbalancing reward for working longer hours. Women at the high end of the spectrum lack the autonomy and control that similarly situated men enjoy.

6. For men, the correlation between working hours at one's main job and control over scheduling is .05, and the correlation between total hours worked and control over one's schedule is .04. Neither correlation is significant. For women, the respective correlations are −.13 and .10.

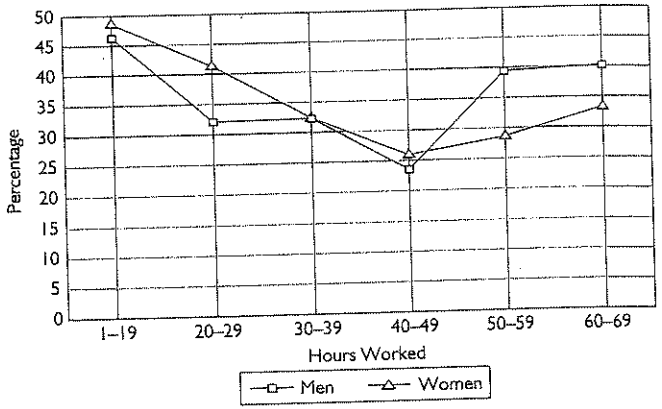

Figure 10.1. Scheduling flexibility, by sex and hours, 1993: Percentage reporting jobs with "a lot of" or "complete" flexibility. *Source:* National Survey of the Changing Workforce.

The lack of flexibility available to highly committed women workers signals difficulties for women (and their families) on several fronts. Most obviously, it implies that those workers most likely to be shouldering heavy burdens at work and at home are the least likely to have the flexibility they need. Equally problematic, the lack of control at work is also likely to reflect a hidden consequence of the "glass ceiling," which limits women's upward mobility despite their strong work commitment. While men who put in long hours at work may enjoy the rewards of achieving positions of authority, women who do the same are less likely to attain sufficient status to control their schedules.[7]

Since supportive job and workplace conditions appear as consequential as amount of working time in shaping workers' experiences, it is important to ascertain what structural and personal factors either enhance or diminish perceptions of control over work scheduling. Most important, do work conditions remain consequential even when personal attributes, such as family situation, are taken into account? Economists, especially those who emphasize the role of "human capital" in labor market processes, argue that men and women make contrasting

7. Although the Changing Workforce survey lacks specific information on men's and women's structural positions at work, it is clear from other studies that male managers and professionals are more likely than their female counterparts to occupy high-level positions in organizational and occupational hierarchies.

work choices because they prefer a different balance between family and work (e.g., Becker 1981). This perspective contends that men prefer to maximize earnings and job success to support their families, while women are willing to sacrifice economic reward and upward mobility in order to invest more time in family pursuits. This argument implies that women, especially married mothers, are more likely to choose more flexible jobs, while men, especially married fathers, are more likely to make work choices based on other criteria.

GENDER AND FAMILY SITUATION

Is work flexibility linked to gender and family situation? The answer appears to be no. For women, flexibility at work is not related to family responsibilities, such as being married and having children in the household.[8] For men, this family situation is actually linked to having less flexibility at work. Men with family obligations may feel an increased pressure to work at inflexible jobs, but there is no evidence that women are trading off other job benefits for flexible work. Moreover, having an employed spouse has no influence on either women's or men's own work flexibility, and neither do the work hours of a spouse. For women, there is also no connection between placing a higher importance on a husband's job and choosing flexible work. And men who place more importance on a wife's job are more rather than less likely to experience less flexibility in their own jobs.

There is thus no support for the contention that women choose and men eschew flexible work in order to reproduce a gendered division of labor in the home. Family obligations may increase the pressures on working parents, but neither mothers nor fathers enjoy more flexibility to meet these demands.

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, AND WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

Since few have the power to choose the conditions of their work based on their private needs, it should come as no surprise that family situation is not linked to flexible work. Despite the rise of dual-earner and

8. Due to space constraints, the results for the bivariate relationships between workplace flexibility and all the variables included in table 10.2 are not shown. They may be found in Jacobs and Gerson (1997).

single-parent homes, employers, far more than workers, set the conditions under which parents balance work and family obligations.

The crucial importance of work conditions becomes especially clear in table 10.2, which presents the multivariate relationships between workplace flexibility and a range of individual, family, and workplace factors. Even after such personal attributes as age, education, job experience, and family situation are taken into account, work structure and culture remain the most consistently important factors linked to job flexibility.

Among men, education enhances flexibility, while children in the household, a long commute, and feeling insecure in a job dampens it. For women, white-collar positions enhance flexibility, while public sector and union jobs dampen it. Most important, work conditions remain influential for men and women alike. Those who have supportive supervisors and workplace cultures are more likely to have flexibility as well. Moreover, autonomy provides the most powerful link with workplace flexibility. Job autonomy increases the explained variance from 13 to 18 percent for men and from 11 to 18 percent for women. When autonomy is taken into account, the relative importance of such factors as workplace culture and supervisor support appears to diminish. However, all of these contextual factors are highly intertwined and tend to occur together. They are actually different aspects of the overall work environment, and they have similar consequences for men and women in similar situations.

Workplace structure and culture make an important difference in workers' lives. Employers' support for flexible work arrangements, especially in the form of understanding supervisors and a supportive work culture, give both women and men more control over how to balance work and family. While similar work conditions affect female and male workers in similar ways, it remains clear that men are more likely than women to obtain privileges that give them more felicitous work circumstances.

THE AVAILABILITY, USE, AND DESIRABILITY OF FLEXIBILITY AT WORK

There can be little doubt that workers, especially parents with young children and employed partners, benefit from family-supportive arrangements such as work flexibility, autonomy, and control over scheduling. Yet how widely available are such arrangements? Are workers with

TABLE 10.2
MULTIVARIATE ASSOCIATIONS WITH WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

	Men		Women	
Demographic Variables	*Beta*	*S.E.*	*Beta*	*S.E.*
Intercept	0.55	(.49)	0.31	(.44)
Age groups:				
Age 25 or under (reference)	—	—	—	—
Age 26–35	−0.27*	(.14)	−0.37*	(.13)
Age 36–45	−0.07	(.16)	−0.32*	(.14)
Age 46–55	−0.22	(.17)	−0.43*	(.15)
Age 56–65	−0.08	(.21)	−0.39*	(.18)
Tenure:				
Firm	−0.003	(.007)	−0.002	(.008)
Job	−0.006	(.009)	0.003	(.010)
Education:				
College graduate	0.42*	(.16)	0.05	(.18)
Some college	0.29*	(.15)	0.12	(.17)
High school graduate	0.17	(.14)	0.08	(.16)
High school dropout	—	—	—	—
Family situation:				
Kids in home under age 18	−0.16	(.12)	−0.12	(.17)
Kids in home under age 6	−0.04	(.13)	0.08	(.12)
Married	0.04	(.12)	0.25	(.14)
Spouse works	−0.58*	(.23)	−0.37	(.26)
Spouse's hours	0.01*	(.005)	0.001	(.004)
Spouse's job importance	−0.01	(.06)	0.02	(.05)
Workplace culture:				
Demands	−0.06	(.08)	−0.06	(.08)
Autonomy	0.53*	(.07)	0.62*	(.06)
Initiate	0.05	(.04)	0.05	(.04)
Culture	0.18*	(.08)	0.18*	(.07)
Insecure	−0.04	(.05)	−0.02	(.04)
Supervisor support	0.08	(.08)	0.06	(.07)
Job attributes:				
Supervisor	0.13	(.09)	0.22	(.09)
Eligible for overtime	−0.23*	(.10)	0.16	(.08)
Union	−0.25	(.10)	−0.42	(.10)
Commute	−0.03*	(.01)	0.01	(.01)
Annual earnings (in thousands)	−0.002	(.002)	0.004	(.002)
Total hours worked	0.002	(.004)	−0.01	(.003)
Occupation:				
Professional/technical worker	0.13	(.12)	0.45	(.16)
Manager	0.08	(.14)	0.70	(.19)
Clerical	0.30	(.20)	0.62	(.15)
Sales/service	0.08	(.12)	0.59	(.16)
Blue-collar (reference)	—	—	—	—
Industry:				
Manufacturing (reference)	—	—	—	—
Retail trade	0.18	(.12)	0.09	(.14)
Business services	0.25	(.13)	−0.05	(.13)
Social services	−0.24	(.13)	−0.07	(.12)
Personal services	0.28	(.16)	0.20	(.18)
Public sector	−0.33*	(.16)	−0.40	(.20)
R^2	0.18		0.18	

SOURCE: National Study of the Changing Workforce.
*$p < .05$

access to them willing to use them? Among those without access to such options, how strong is the desire to obtain them? The answers to these questions shed additional light on the larger question of whether the growing time squeezes between work and family reflect workplace constraints or worker preferences. To answer these questions we briefly consider to what extent family-friendly options that provide more flexibility and control at work are available, used, or desired in modern workplaces.[9]

AVAILABILITY AND USE OF FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

While a large proportion of the workforce (almost 86%) has the discretion to change their working hours "as needed," far fewer can set their own hours (29%) or change them daily (40%). Professional men, including those with preschool-age children, are the most likely to be able to set their own working hours (about 40%), but professional men with young children are the least likely to be able to change their hours daily (23%) or to change their hours as needed (74%). Among women, professionals with preschool-age children are the least likely (26%) to be able to set their hours and are also less likely than other employed women to be able to change their hours daily (38%). Again we find that, at least among professional and managerial workers, those most likely to need flexible scheduling face greater obstacles in obtaining it.

There is some good news for some employed parents. Professionals with young children have comparatively more access to such benefits as extended breaks, working at home, and working more one day in order to work less the next. It appears, however, that these benefits accrue to professional status and, to a lesser extent, to gender rather than to family status. In general, professional men fare better than either professional women or nonprofessional workers. Among professional men, 63 percent can take extended breaks at work (compared to 41% for nonprofessional workers), 50 percent can vary the length of the workday (compared to 41% for nonprofessionals), 39 percent can work at home regularly (compared to 13% for nonprofessionals), and 25 percent can do so occasionally (compared to 8% for nonprofessionals). Women professionals fare better than nonprofessionals, but not as well as their male

9. A more detailed analysis of the availability, use, and desire for a wide range of family-supportive workplace options and benefits can be found in Gerson and Jacobs (1999).

counterparts, who are more likely to be able to take extended breaks and work at home occasionally.

Among those who have the option to shift their work hours and location, a very high proportion of workers choose to do so. When, for example, the option to work more one day and less the next is available, 75 percent of workers take advantage of it (including 81% of professional women and 74% of professional men with preschool-age children). Similarly, among those who are allowed to work at home occasionally, 79 percent choose to do so (including 88% of professional women and 84% of professional men with preschool-age children). It is instructive that women professionals with young children are much less likely to take extended breaks (63%) than to work at home. When given a choice, both women and men with young children seem to prefer more time at home and less time socializing at the office. While this may not seem surprising, it casts additional doubt on the argument that parents are trading time at home to socialize at work. Indeed, the high proportion of workers who take advantage of the options to work at home and to vary the length of their working day suggests a large demand for work arrangements that allow people to integrate work and family life more thoroughly and flexibly.

THE DEMAND FOR FLEXIBILITY AMONG THOSE WHO LACK IT

The majority of workers do not enjoy options such as flexible scheduling or working at home. Among these workers we find that many not only desire these benefits but would be willing to trade other benefits and even change their jobs to get them.

Among workers who do not have flexible schedules, about 28 percent would be willing to trade other benefits and 26 percent would be willing to change jobs to get such control. The desire among professional women with young children is especially high, with 49 percent of those with preschool-age children stating that they would trade other benefits for flexibility at work and 32 percent saying they would even change jobs. Professional men with young children agree, albeit to a lesser extent. While only 12 percent would be willing to change jobs, 29 percent would trade other benefits for flexibility in scheduling.

The chance to work at home is also in high demand. Among all workers, 21 percent would trade other benefits to obtain such an option, and 22 percent would change jobs. For professional mothers, the percentages

rise to 48 percent and 32 percent. For fathers, 18 percent would trade another benefit, and 24 percent would change jobs.

AVAILABILITY AND DESIRABILITY OF PART-TIME WORK

The option to work part-time is substantially less popular than flexible scheduling or working at home. While about 55 percent of workers claim the option, among those without it only 16 percent would be willing to trade other benefits and only 11 percent would be willing to change jobs to obtain it. Among professionals with young children, the part-time option remains equally unattractive. Professional women, especially those with young children, are the most likely to have this option (59%), but only 45 percent of professional men with young children can choose to work part-time. More noteworthy, however, is the lack of desire to obtain the part-time option when it is not available. While 32 percent of professional women with young children would be willing to give up another benefit, only 15 percent would be willing to change jobs. Among professional fathers, only 9 percent would trade away other benefits and only 5 percent would be willing to change jobs. Women may be more able and willing than men to cut back on their careers, but this difference does not bode well for gender equality in professional careers. As important, the general reluctance to cut back from work, even temporarily when the children are young, suggests that women and men alike perceive that such a choice might exact a high price in the long run.

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF FAMILY-SUPPORTIVE POLICIES: ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES ALSO WOMAN-FRIENDLY?

If given a genuine choice, both women and men, especially those with young children, appear to prefer more flexibility at work and more time at home. When available, a high proportion of workers take advantage of the chances to work at home and to vary the length of their working day. Similarly, when flexible scheduling is not available, a remarkable number of women and men appear willing to make other work sacrifices to obtain it. In contrast to the growing concern that workers are pursuing personal gratification at work over the needs of their families and children, this picture suggests instead that they are striving for more

flexible and fluid options for integrating these once separate spheres.

Yet despite the large and often unmet desire for family-supportive work arrangements, many workers may be fearful that choosing to use family-friendly policies can be costly to their long-term prospects at work. The relatively low desire for part-time work, for example, suggests that workers are reluctant to take advantage of options that might threaten economic and career opportunities. It is thus crucial to understand whether workers perceive that hidden penalties are attached to making use of family-friendly policies that may be formally available but informally stigmatized. Only by understanding how workers perceive these trade-offs can we gain a clearer picture of not only what workers need but also what obstacles prevent them from meeting these needs or even expressing their concerns to those in a position to help them.

In theory, family-friendly policies are built on the principles of family support and gender equity. Many workers, moreover, appear prepared to make substantial sacrifices in order to obtain them. Yet if such policies target only women and penalize those who use them, they threaten to re-create earlier forms of gender inequality in a new form. "Mommy tracks," for example, ask mothers to forgo upward mobility and thus confront women with an unfair choice between motherhood and a work career (Schwartz 1989). They also exclude men from the responsibilities and opportunities of parental involvement. Although "gender-neutral" family policies may appear less pernicious, stigmatizing parental involvement in general simply shifts the penalties to both involved mothers *and* involved fathers. It is a dubious social policy that rewards parents of either sex for subordinating family needs to work and career.

In the best of all possible worlds, neither mothers nor fathers would be penalized at work for taking care of their children. And such a world would clearly not exact a higher price from women than from men. Yet in today's world there are good reasons to be concerned that "family-friendly" does not necessarily mean either woman-friendly or parent-friendly. Despite the heralding of policies to ease the plight of employed mothers, options that provide family support at the expense of work advancement exact significant costs to anyone who might choose them. In contrast, policies that not only provide for a fluid balance between family and work but also safeguard the work opportunities of the person who uses them would be more than just family-friendly. By protecting the rights of employed women and acknowledging the needs of work-committed parents of either sex, such policies would be genuinely

woman-friendly and parent-friendly. Family-supportive policies, however, have more often been conceived and enacted in ways that reinforce and reproduce both public and private gender inequality by penalizing employed mothers and excluding fathers altogether.

Since employers are reluctant to admit that their policies come with costs attached for those who choose them, it is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the risks workers take when they seek or use family-supportive options. It is possible, however, to ascertain whether workers perceive that formally available policies contain informal but heavy sanctions. Moreover, the perception of risk, regardless of its objective validity, is crucial to how workers weigh their options and make their choices. We thus examine the relationship between workers' perceptions of whether their workplace culture is family-supportive and their perceptions about whether their work environments offer advancement opportunities.

As table 10.3 reveals, workers with supportive workplace cultures typically report having supportive supervisors as well, and for women, the link is especially strong ($r = .44$). Yet family-friendly workplaces do not appear to provide the best opportunities to advance. Cultural support is thus negatively related to women's perceptions of women's chances for advancement, whether they are white or minority. Equally noteworthy, these women also report that such workplaces do not necessarily provide good opportunities for white or minority men either. Perhaps most significant, women's perceptions of their *own* chances for advancement are negatively related to their perceptions that their workplaces are family-supportive.

When the focus is supervisor support for family-friendly arrangements rather than the level of supportiveness at the workplace as a whole, the same pattern emerges and the relationships are even stronger. The negative link between supervisor support for family-friendly arrangements and women's perceptions of their own chances for advancement is the strongest ($r = -.31$). Moreover, these patterns are virtually identical for men. Men also perceive that family-supportive supervisors and workplace cultures are less likely to provide chances to advance for *any* group. They agree with women that having a supervisor who is supportive of family needs is also less likely to enhance their *own* chances for advancement ($r = -.32$).

Do these perceptions persist when other factors are taken into account? While a family-supportive workplace culture remains negatively associated with chances for advancement, the effects become attenuated

TABLE 10.3
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE CULTURE AND SELF-REPORTED CHANCES FOR ADVANCEMENT

	Workplace Culture[a] (r)	Supervisor Support[b] (r)
Women		
Workplace culture	1.00	.44
Supervisor support scale	.44	1.00
Chances to advance:		
White women	−.12	−.21
Minority women	−.17	−.28
White men	−.07	−.07
Minority men	−.15	−.22
Respondent's chances to advance	−.18	−.31
Men		
Workplace culture	1.00	.46
Supervisor support scale	.46	1.00
Chance to advance:		
White women	−.12	−.17
Minority women	−.15	−.18
White men	−.09	−.19
Minority men	−.14	−.21
Respondent's chances to advance	−.18	−.32

SOURCE: National Study of the Changing Workforce.
NOTE: All correlations statistically significant, $p < .05$.
[a]Workplace Culture is a composite of four items designed to tap whether the respondent's working environment is sensitive to work-family issues.
[b]Supervisor Support is a composite of nine items designed to tap whether the respondent's supervisor is attentive to workers' needs and concerns.

as other factors, such as personal autonomy at work, are added.[10] When supervisor support is included, the effect of workplace culture disappears altogether, but the effect of supervisor support remains. This pattern occurs whether the measure of advancement opportunities refers to the woman herself or to other women, and it holds for men as well.

Women and men alike thus tend to perceive that family-friendly workplace policies come with costly strings attached. If workers feel confronted with a choice between family involvement and career building, their perceptions are probably well founded. The *New York Times* (1996) has reported, for example, that there is no overlap between the

10. The detailed results of this analysis are presented in Jacobs and Gerson (1997).

companies with the best record for promoting women and those with the most supportive family policies. Genuine family support, however, must move beyond mere tinkering at the edges of organizations to restructure the basic assumptions on which they are built. To be woman-friendly and parent-friendly as well as family-friendly, workplaces must be committed to supporting the careers of those who wish time to care for their families even as they strive at work.

BEYOND WORKING TIME: CREATING FLEXIBLE, EGALITARIAN WORKPLACES

While the debate over changes in work and family in America has focused largely on the issue of overwork, we have found that working time is only one of several important ingredients contributing to the problems of work-family conflict and gender inequality. Workplace structure and culture matter, and workers who enjoy job flexibility and employer support are better off than those who do not. Rather than preferring work over family, most full-time workers desire family-supportive workplace options that offer them ways to better integrate and balance their lives. Unfortunately, they also perceive that these benefits can only be gained at considerable cost.

Gender inequality persists in institutional arrangements, yet women and men find their personal dilemmas converging. As women build ever-stronger ties to the workplace and families confront the time squeezes posed by dual-earning arrangements, mothers and fathers must cope with conflicts that are structured not simply by family demands but more fundamentally by intransigent job constraints. When women and men face similar situations, their responses are also similar. In the struggle to resolve work-family conflicts, however, persisting gender inequality continues to place women at a disadvantage. Women not only shoulder more of the burden of domestic work; they also face larger obstacles at the workplace, including less autonomy and flexibility on the job and more pressure to make career sacrifices by cutting back when children are young.

While the problems workers face take different forms, most workers hold the same desire—to balance gratifying work with family involvement. Beyond economic security and opportunity, women and men alike wish some measure of flexibility in how they choose to integrate the many obligations they shoulder. In a world where both mothers and fathers must work, no group should have to sacrifice opportunity and economic welfare in order to make time for their families.

Since the problem of work-family conflict has institutional roots, the resolutions depend on institutional transformations. To understand the circumstances that can genuinely provide opportunities for committed workers to be involved parents, analysis needs to extend beyond worker preferences or choices to focus on workplace organization and the structure of opportunities that parents (and those who would like to become parents) face. If we fail to acknowledge the social sources of personal dilemmas, we are left blaming ordinary women and men for conditions they did not create and cannot control. A social and institutional focus makes it clear that social policy needs to uphold two important and inextricable principles: equal opportunity for women and unencumbered support for involved parents, regardless of sex.

We cannot afford to build work-family policies on outdated stereotypes that cast women as less committed to work than men. Yet we also cannot afford to create new stereotypes that cast employed mothers, and to a lesser extent fathers, as shortchanging their children. These images place all who would endeavor to balance family and work in an impossible bind in which work commitment is defined as family neglect and family involvement is defined as a lack of work commitment. If our findings are a guide, these are inaccurate images that offer untenable choices. What workers need and want is flexible work in a supportive setting that offers them a way to resolve the double binds they face.

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