

## ALFRED P. SLOAN CENTER ON PARENTS, CHILDREN, AND WORK

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The primary goal of the Center on Parents, Children, and Work is to investigate how working families organize and prioritize their resources to foster a productive work atmosphere and build positive relationships in the home. Center research seeks to formulate new understandings of the quality of the relationships in working families and the impact these relationships have on the well-being and life experiences of parents and children. Through quantitative and qualitative methods, Center scholars examine how parents who work take actions at home that affect their children's moral and social development, school performance, civic responsibility, and other attitudes and habits that mark a successful transition to adulthood. Questions focus on discovering how the new division of labor within the family, based on dramatic workplace changes, has altered parental responsibilities and values.

To understand how dual-career families negotiate the conflicts between home and work, the Center has undertaken a major research initiative: the 500 Family Study. This study of middle and upper middle-class families across the United States includes 300 families with adolescents and 200 families with kindergarten children. Surveys, time diaries, and personal interviews were conducted to examine multiple aspects of work and family life. Analysis of this rich database, as well as other national datasets, provides comprehensive information about the strategies used by working parents in coping with stress and balancing work and family demands.

Findings from the 500 Family Study show that:

- Many parents say work and family conflict; as a result, both job performance and family relationships suffer
- Most mothers prefer to work part-time, whereas most fathers prefer to work full-time
- When mothers and fathers spend time with family members they feel happier and more relaxed than they do in other contexts; however, when they are at work they feel more engaged
- Mothers and fathers with higher-than-average levels of stress are more likely to bring work home and to feel angry and exhausted when they return home from work
- Working mothers are more likely to report greater depression and anxiety than working fathers
- Working parents' depression is associated with fewer, and more negative, interactions with their children



Books published by Center affiliated scholars include: *The Ambitious Generation: Motivated but Directionless*, Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson; *The Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*, editor, Linda J. Waite; *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher; *Becoming Adult: How Teenagers Prepare for the World of Work*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Barbara Schneider. From its inception the Center has garnered stories in a broad array of media including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Economist*, *Los Angeles Times*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *National Public Radio*, and *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather*.

Center objectives of training scholars, disseminating findings, and influencing public policy are met through a variety of activities and events, including workshops and seminars, a working paper series, a Web site, brochures, press releases on important findings, and policy briefs aimed at policy influencers, media, and other officials.

### Workplace Best Practices

*Our PeopleFirst strategy supports our flexible work environment and enables both our people and our firm to succeed. Giving our people the ability and the tools to regularly navigate their workload to determine where, when, and how their work gets accomplished, continues to set us apart. Everyone at Ernst & Young should expect understanding and flexibility to meet their personal and professional goals. It is the supportive culture that we want.*

James S. Turley, Global Chairman, Ernst & Young

*Pioneering research performed by the Alfred P. Sloan Centers for Working Families is helping us learn what works for dual-career families. Employers take note: Job flexibility, autonomy, and help for parents are basic elements of a family friendly workplace. Research is revealing how to avoid conflict between work and family, minimize stress, and enable working people to be better parents.*

Robert B. Reich, University Professor of Social and Economic Policy, Brandeis University, and former U.S. Secretary of Labor

INVOLVE WORKING LESS — THROUGH JOB SHARING, REDUCED LOAD, OR REDUCED HOURS — IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THE TIME CRUNCH. AND THEY ARE RECEIVING PROMOTIONS WHILE WORKING ON THESE ARRANGEMENTS. A SURVEY OF 950 U.S. ESTABLISHMENTS, WHO AMONG WHITE COLLAR WORKERS HAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PHASED RETIREMENT? ESTABLISHMENT CHARACTERISTICS<sup>6</sup>, EXAMINES HOW AND WHY ORGANIZATIONS DIFFER IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT OLDER FULL-TIME WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS TO TAKE PHASED RETIREMENT. THE SURVEY INDICATES THAT EMPLOYERS ARE OFTEN WILLING TO PERMIT PHASED RETIREMENT BUT PRIMARILY AS AN INFORMAL ARRANGEMENT. THE RESULTS ALSO INDICATE THAT OPPORTUNITIES TEND TO BE MORE LIMITED IN ESTABLISHMENTS WHERE WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS ARE UNIONIZED AND WHERE THE ESTABLISHMENT IS PART OF A LARGER ORGANIZATION.

*In the 1960s, American families could be described as "nuclear" in that the family provided clear cut, often rigid boundaries between public and private lives, between the home and the workplace, and between children and adults. The contemporary family is more fluid, more flexible, and more vulnerable to pressures. The lines between the home and the world of work for contemporary families are less clearly defined than in previous times.*

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