When the Anchors are Loosened

By Kathleen E. Christensen, Ph.D.

Kathleen Christensen, Ph.D. is the Program Director for the Workplace, Workforce and Working Families Program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Dr. Christensen has articulated strategies designed to have an impact on our understandings of work and family issues and to promote innovative approaches to research. Over the past six years, Dr. Christensen has continued to refine these strategies so that they continue to challenge research, practice, teaching, and policy.

In each issue of the Work-Family Research On-line Newsletter, Dr. Christensen shares her insights about research trends and emergent work and family challenges. In addition, her column discusses the cutting-edge strategies developed by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to enhance well-being of today’s working families.

For nearly two years, American working families – indeed families around the world – have grappled with the persistent tumult in the economy, crises associated with international conflicts, and fears associated with personal insecurities. The September 11th tragedy precipitated dramatic shifts in the

Living in Insecure Times

By Christina Matz

In the book Insecure Times, John Vail, of the University of Newcastle, makes a distinction between the concept of “insecurity” and the concept of “risk”. “Risk,” he suggests, “has come to signify aspects of danger, or threats to people’s livelihood which are in theory accessible to some form of calculation.” Risks are “uncertainties that can be transformed into probabilities.”

“Insecurity, on the other hand, is a form of uncertainty that, by its very nature, is not amenable to (any) sort of calculation. Insecurity refers instead to processes that are presently taking a painful toll on people’s lives, as well as to the psychological state of mind that is a consequence of this daily brutalising experience. It has an immediacy that cannot be avoided or displaced into the realm of probability: an individual who is hungry or homeless, or has a bad job, or is seriously ill does not need to calculate the likelihood of disaster striking because they are already living this fate.”

In this world of war, corporate scandal, politics, and economic

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SLOAN FOUNDATION

THE CONTEXT OF INSECURITY

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everyday lives of working families; on a deeper level, the 9-11 experience may have also changed some of our most fundamental expectations and assumptions about life at home and at work. In response, many families seemed to “batten down the hatches” to weather the storms of our time. Our emotional and financial anchors were lowered into the shoals of our families and our work.

Over the course of the ensuing months, the stalling of the economy shook the financial predictabilities upon which most working families anchor their family caregiving responsibilities. The media continues to remind us that we have witnessed something different in this economic downturn. Whereas the recessions that occurred in the second half of the 20th century were viewed as being part of the cyclical changes in the economy, the economic downturns that have continued for the past 18 to 20 months have been linked to structural changes. Economists do not anticipate any traditional rebound from these structural shifts.

Working families who have become the victims of the current economic turbulence have been caught in a warp of discontinuities. Until recently, it has been normative to assume that individuals who invest in educational achievement and who gain relevant work experience would be able to secure appropriate employment on a somewhat dependable basis. Furthermore, it was assumed that any periods of unemployment experienced by those in the primary labor market would be temporary. We no longer take these assumptions for granted.

Throughout this summer, news broadcasts and newspapers have featured extended examinations of the long-term impact that the structural changes in our economy have had on the lives of working families. On July 20, the New York Times included a story of adult children who expected to be financially independent, but who are finding it necessary to depend on financial assistance from their parents and in-laws because they are unable to secure work at a living wage.¹ During that same week, the Wall Street Journal carried an article about the long-term nature of the under- and unemployment that is affecting employees who had worked in industries, such as manufacturing.² Experts are telling us that many of these jobs will never come back because the labor market shifts reflect permanent, structural changes in the economy.

Ultimately, these new unpredictabilities will make it necessary for working families to re-configure their conceptualizations of the safe harbors where we can work and take care of families.

What is the role of research in this time of uncertainty? Historians, as well as some economists and sociologists, will remind us that there have been structural changes in our economy in eras gone-by and that many families have for decades lived in the spaces of economic instability. These insights and lessons are invaluable as we try to understand our current situations.

However, work-family researchers have a critical role as they pursue their investigations, in part because researchers have the privilege of listening to working families who are experienc-
ing contemporary uncertainties as these uncertainties unfold. In addition, we also have a responsibility to give voice to the meaning of the lives of working families, chronicling their experiences so that decision-makers at the workplace and policy-makers at the local, state and national levels can understand that it is important to begin to lay the groundwork for changes now, even though we are in the midst of uncertainties.

Through our research, we can capture these experiences of discontinuity while they are unfolding. We can continue to provide evidence about the importance of responding creatively and thoughtfully to the basic requests that working families have been making for years: control over hours, more entry points into the labor force and more exit options as well as more points of re-entry, more choices about careers paths, and more sanction for “career wandering.”

Today’s realities may offer fewer securities to a smaller percentage of working families. Given this environment of uncertainties, all working families – dual earners, single parent families, and families with elders – need additional flexibilities so that they can make the adaptations and adjustments necessary to support the well-being of their family members.


“Living in Insecure Times,” continued

and insecurities that families working low-skilled jobs must face and how they differ significantly from those faced by families working “middle class” jobs.

World renowned labor economist, Barry Bluestone offers his perspective on how economic uncertainty has affected the labor force at large and comments on the broader implications of pervasive, long-term economic uncertainty for families.

Also featured, is a study conducted by Marji Erickson Warfield, social scientist at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Her research on the predictors of parental role stress in two-earner families speaks to the almost “predictable” nature of unpredictabilities in the lives of families with disabilities.

Lynne Casper, Rosalind King, Suzanne Bianchi, and Kathleen Christensen share with us their experiences convening the conference, “Work, Family, Health, and Well-being” which was the first in a series of activities associated with a new NICHD initiative, “Workforce/Workplace Mismatch”. This initiative will focus on identifying workplace policies and practices that are the most beneficial for the health and well-being of workers, their families and children, communities, and employers. The goal of this first conference was to present state-of-the-art research to lay the groundwork for the initiative and to educate people in diverse disciplines as well as NIH project officers, government representatives, policy makers, and employers about the research that is already going on in this area.

Articles on the work of Netsy Firestein, Executive Director of the Labor Project for Working Families; Steve Sweet and Phyllis Moen, co-authors of the up-coming book, Uncertain Futures: Sustaining Dual Careers in the New Risk Economy; and Elizabeth Wilcox, Journalist and author of the book, The Mom Economy are also included in this issue.

We hope that you enjoy the summer issue of the Research Newsletter and as always, we encourage you to let us know about your thoughts and reactions.

Christina Matz is the Project Manager of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network.

Dual-Earner Couples and the Transition to Parenthood: Study Looks at Challenges Facing Working Class Families

Maureen Perry-Jenkins is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and past director of the Center for the Family at UMass. She received her doctorate in Human Development and Family Studies from Pennsylvania State University. Her main research interests are in the area of work and family and her most recent research focuses on working-class families and the transition to parenthood for dual-earner families, on which she has published widely. Maureen and her colleagues recently completed a five-year, longitudinal study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health: “The Work and Family Transitions Project”. This study examined the transition to parenthood and transition back to paid employment for working-class couples. She was recently awarded a second grant from NIMH to follow-up on this fascinating study and to replicate the study with three new samples: 1) African-American, two-parent families, 2) African-American, single-mother families, and 3) European-American single-mother families.

Editor’s Note: Maureen Perry-Jenkins has been committed to exploring work and family issues for working-class families for over a decade now. She spoke eloquently at the 2003 NICHD conference about the unique challenges that working-class families face during the transition to parenthood both in their work lives and personal lives. We had the pleasure of speaking with Maureen recently about her current research and its implications for the study of working families.

When Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Ph.D., set out to research the challenges facing new parents who hold working-class jobs, she ran into a problem of definition. What exactly constitutes the working class? The various definitions of middle class point to the ambiguity surrounding class delineation: New York Governor George Pataki defined the middle class as any household earning up to $175,000; former Labor Secretary Robert Reich pegged the middle class as families with incomes between $20,000 and $60,000, while the Congressional Budget Office says a family of four is middle class if it earns an income between $19,000 and $78,000.

Perry-Jenkins points to these wide-ranging definitions of class in the chapter she authored, entitled “Work in the Working Class: Challenges Facing Workers and Their Families”. What each characterization fails to do, she says, is illuminate the day-to-day challenges faced by members of any one social group. For instance, the working class earns more than those of low-income status, making them ineligible for child care subsidies or federal programs like Head Start. Yet, they don’t earn enough to pay for quality child care. Looking within the lives of low-wage earners entering parenthood rather than comparing them as a group to other classes highlights the unique problems they face and should inform policy to address these issues.

In the current economic climate, the plight of the working class is shakier than ever. This population lacks a safety net, such as financial savings or severance pay. Additionally, low-wage earners may work two or three jobs “under the table,” to make ends meet and because of job insecurity issues.

“Being laid off at any level is a difficult thing but when you’re talking about those with the least resources having to deal with that, it’s a very different phenomenon,” says Perry-Jenkins. “I think that the economy has just heightened people’s sense of insecurity.”

To better understand the work and family issues faced by the working class transitioning into parenthood, Perry-Jenkins examined the experiences of 150 couples in which the mother returned to work within six months of giving birth. She chose the couples by their level of education and the position they held at work, defining a working class person as someone with an associates degree or less and who is employed in an unskilled or semi-skilled job. The highest level of education attained by the all of the participants in Perry-Jenkins’ study was some high school or a high school diploma and technical training. This meant that the jobs held by both husbands and wives required them to be “order takers,” at work, rather than “order givers,” with little or no autonomy at work, according to Perry-Jenkins. The researchers left income out of the equation because it can vary greatly due to multiple jobs and therefore is not an accurate measure of social class.

“The reason we let income vary is because we had people who reported incomes of $50,000, $60,000 but when you went back and looked at them, they were working two or three jobs,” says Perry-Jenkins. “It’s very different to work 70 hours for $60,000, then to work 40 hours for $60,000 at a more upper-class job.”

Further, Perry-Jenkins points out, both partners in a working-class couple contribute to the family income. A job loss could put the family on the brink of poverty.

Challenges of New Parenthood among the Working Class

Low-wage earners in general do not enjoy the same benefits as those in white-collar occupations, a reality that became painfully clear in the subjects’ responses to the researchers’ questions. Queries about flextime, job sharing, options to work at home, part-time pay with full-time benefits, paid parental leave, child care reimbursements, referral services, on-site care and dependent care assistance plans were often met with humor or irritation by respondents. Less than 5 percent said their employer offered child care reimbursement, referral services or on-site care. Twenty-four percent said their workplace allowed them to pay for child care with pre-tax dollars, but only 2 percent took advantage of this benefit. Only 13 percent could work at home when needed, 19 percent reported that they could work part time with full-time benefits, and 4 percent said there were job-sharing opportunities at work.

Maternity Leave

The challenges for new parents became apparent right away when they considered how they would care for their newborn. The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) gives workers...
up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave with job protection to care for a new child or a sick relative. However, few working-class employees can afford to lose that much income. Further, the FMLA applies only to businesses that employ 50 or more, excluding 95 percent of employers and 50 percent of employees. And while the FMLA requires an employer to hold a job open for a worker on leave, it does not guarantee the same hours. This can wreak havoc on new parents who are trying to arrange child care. In her chapter, Work in the Working Class, Perry-Jenkins describes an express-mail delivery worker who was shifted to later hours when she returned to work after having a baby. The new schedule left her little time to spend with her new son.

To stay home with their new infant, parents will often piece together vacation time and sick leave. However, this leaves them without a cushion if they or the child gets sick after they return to work. In the study, 61 percent of parents reported having some paid leave. However, only 16 percent had paid parental leave. The rest used vacation time, sick time and personal days to stay home with their newborn. When these workers had to miss work because of an illness, some were “written up” by supervisors and/or docked pay. As a result, new parents worry that their job is insecure.

“That’s becoming a real issue, especially for moms,” says Perry-Jenkins. “They’re getting written up or getting warnings in their files and feel like they may lose their job and that’s a huge problem.”

Still, work was found to be a positive and fulfilling experience for some new mothers, who said they were “bored” at home, they liked to be with other adults, and they felt a sense of accomplishment on the job. While 90 percent of working mothers said they kept their jobs out of financial necessity, 61 percent asserted that they would work even if they didn’t have to.

NIMH Funds a Follow-up to the “Work and Family Transitions Project”

A new study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) will expand upon the findings in the “Work and Family Transitions Project” by looking at how the transition to parenthood differs by race and family structure.

The 153 working-class couples interviewed between 1996 and 2001 for the initial project will be re-interviewed as their first child transitions to kindergarten. This will allow researchers to track how patterns established in the first year of parenthood are related to the mental health of family members and the quality of their relationships with one another over time. Additionally, the study conducted in the initial grant will be replicated with three new samples: 1) African-American, two-parent families, 2) African-American, single-mother families, and 3) European-American single-mother families. The findings will reveal how parents in each group adjust to parenthood and the return to full-time employment; how factors such as social support, gender ideology, access to quality child care, expectations about parenthood, quality of the marital relationship, and characteristics of the child mediate the effects of these multiple transitions on parents’ psychological well-being; and how work conditions and family-friendly workplace policies impact parents’ mental health and marital quality across these transitions.

Mandatory Overtime

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 allows employers to require workers to put in more than 40 hours per week at higher pay for additional time worked. While new parents welcome the extra money, compulsory overtime can upset carefully arranged child care. Mandatory overtime occurs most often in highly supervised, low-control occupations, such as manufacturing plants. Often, employees are asked to work overtime with no or little warning. By law, employers are allowed to fire, demote or otherwise punish a worker for refusing to work overtime.

“You literally find out in the middle of your shift that you need to work until 8 tonight. You are supposed to pick up your child at 5 and you’ve been given mandatory overtime. Then you’re in a real bind,” says Perry-Jenkins. “The issue is, if you don’t do the mandatory overtime, the company can legally dock your pay the next day or for multiple days. They can demote you. They can do all sorts of things. So, it’s kind of a mixed bag because many of these lower-income families want the extra money, but the unpredictability of when it will happen and how to manage child care is really a problem. All of these issues of time and timing and who has control over it, are really big challenges for a lot of our families.”

Health Insurance

Among the study participants, only one spouse had health insurance in 25 percent of the couples and 65 percent of that figure had individual coverage only. This does not make a lot of sense the point is a majority have health insurance but often only one worker holds the insurance, usually the mother which affect leave issues. Often the man will take a higher paying job without health benefits, while the woman earns less, but carries the health insurance. However, in some cases, women who took unpaid leave to stay home with their newborn discovered that their health insurance didn’t continue while they were off continued on pg. 6
the payroll. They had to pay out of pocket to keep up their coverage, and as a result, went back to work earlier than planned to curtail the extra expense.

Child Care
New parents favor shift-work because it allows the couples to stagger their schedules and cut down on child care. In the study, 20 percent of participants were able to eliminate outside child care entirely by working alternating schedules. However, shift work has been cited as the cause of marital instability as well as depression in news parents. Forty-seven percent had relatives care for their children, either in or outside of their home, while 19 percent put their child in a family day care setting and 13 percent used a mixture of relative, parental and family day care arrangements. Just one family used a day care center. While many parents felt fortunate to have family care for their children, many said they felt beholden to their relatives as a result.

Conclusion
The study suggests that policy makers have been asking the wrong questions when it comes to the working class. Traditional family-friendly employee benefits simply don’t apply to this segment of the population. The nature of low-paying positions, whether they be service or manufacturing jobs, require employees to be present in the work place. Flex-time and working from home are not options. Therefore, a paid family leave policy at the federal or state levels and legislation addressing mandatory overtime would ease the pressures on new parents. Perry-Jenkins notes that individual employers are most familiar with the circumstances of their employee population and therefore, should institute family-friendly policies designed to meet the needs of all their workers, not just the salaried ones.

“Our data suggest that working-class families face unique challenges when combining work and family life, challenges that will require unique solutions. We must be careful not to assume that the large literature on dual-career couples’ can inform us about the experiences of lower income families.”

Pervasive Economic Uncertainty and the Labor Force: Susceptibility Reaches a Broader Spectrum of Workers
A Conversation with Barry Bluestone

Barry Bluestone, Ph.D. is the Stearns Trustee Professor of Political Economy and director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Before assuming this post, Bluestone spent twelve years at the University of Massachusetts at Boston as the Frank L. Boyden Professor of Political Economy and as a Senior Fellow at the University’s John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs. He was the founding director of UMass-Boston’s Ph.D. Program in Public Policy. Before coming to UMass in the fall of 1986, he taught economics at Boston College for fifteen years and was director of the University’s Social Welfare Research Institute.

Professor Bluestone was raised in Detroit, Michigan and attended the University of Michigan where he received his Ph.D. in 1974. He currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with his wife and son.

Editor’s Note: As a world renowned labor economist, Barry Bluestone has a unique perspective on working families. He has written widely in the areas of income distribution, business and industrial policy, labor-management relations, higher education finance, and urban and regional economic development. He is the coauthor of nine books. His classic article, “Overworked and Underemployed: Unraveling an Economic Enigma,” (coauthored with Stephen Rose), appeared in The American Prospect in March of 1997. We have summarized highlights of this article so it may serve as an analytic lens to examine the current state of the economy and its impact on the labor market. We are delighted that Dr. Bluestone was able to take the time to comment on these issues.

According to labor economist Barry Bluestone, unemployment and job insecurity has reached people who in previous times of economic uncertainty were largely protected from job loss. Educated and highly skilled professionals are finding themselves as vulnerable to unemployment as those with a high school diploma, or less. As a result, many of those who do have jobs are finding themselves both “overworked and underemployed,” as Bluestone puts it. This job uncertainty is trickling into the home as a potential stressor on families, many of whom include dual-earner couples who work as much as they can to maintain a basic lifestyle.

Bluestone, with Stephen Rose, looked at the phenomenon of overworked and underemployed Americans in the 1997 article, “Overworked and Underemployed: Unraveling an Economic Enigma,” which appeared in The American Prospect. At that
time, Bluestone and Rose found that an increasing number of people had turned to part-time jobs because they were unable to find full-time employment. Growing even faster was the number of adults working as short-term independent contractors and temporary workers. In 1995, 28 percent of the civilian labor force – or 35 million people – were estimated to work part-time, temporary or contract jobs. Part-timers comprised 18 percent of the workforce, working 35 hours or less per week. Between 1982 and 1995, the temporary workforce more than tripled in size to 1.4 million workers. The number of self-employed workers grew at more than 13 percent per year in the late 1980s.

In 1995, 6.4 percent of US workers reported working more than one job during the same work week, up from 4.9 percent in 1979. The increase occurred among women who represent nearly half of all multiple job holders. While many of these contingent workers are by choice, involuntary part-time employment is growing even faster. In 1993, 20 percent of part timers said they wanted, but couldn’t find full-time employment, up from 19 percent 20 years earlier.

So while the average work week reported by employers was shrinking, according to Bluestone and Rose’s The American Prospect article, the number of hours per week that workers were spending at various jobs was increasing. The extra hours did not result in a higher standard of living for families. Rather, they were essential for maintaining the basics.

“Because of growing job instability, workers face a ‘feast and famine’ cycle: they work as much as they can when work is available to compensate for short work weeks, temporary layoffs, or permanent job loss that may follow,” Bluestone and Rose wrote. The situation threatens to further tip the balance between work and leisure, keeping families from spending as much time as they’d like with loved ones, becoming involved with their communities, and decompressing in general.

In 2003, unemployment has reached into the highly skilled, professional classes. In the past, when unemployment rose rapidly, those who lacked a high school diploma would be most severely affected by job loss, while high school graduates would suffer unemployment in somewhat lower numbers. The unemployment rate would be lower still for workers with some college education, and lowest among those with college degrees and beyond.

“This time around, rising unemployment is, in a sense, more democratic. It is affecting very skilled people in the financial services sector, in high-tech, and in other sectors requiring well-educated workers. For the first time since perhaps the Great Depression we see a large number of people in a large number of families feel vulnerable to this economy, despite the fact that they have done, in a sense, ‘everything right’ including getting college and graduate degrees,” Bluestone said.

In his role as director of Northeastern University’s Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Bluestone has seen evidence of highly qualified professionals struggling to release the grip of unemployment. His center has no job openings at present, yet he receives three to four resumes, and interviews one to three people each week. One interviewee had recently lost a job that paid six figures, he said. “I think it’s important to track this trend of insecurity and vulnerability that’s affecting a much broader spectrum of the population than in the past.”

While Bluestone noted that he hasn’t updated his previous research detailed in the 1997 article, he surmised that Americans’ growing sense of job insecurity would exacerbate their willingness to become overworked and underemployed.

“I would think what we discovered in that (previous) research would, if anything, show up even more strongly as people’s anxiety about the economy increases,” Bluestone said.

Indeed, the average annual number of work weeks for people between the ages of 25 and 54, has risen from 45 in 1975 to 48.5 in 2000. At the same time, the average number of hours worked in 2000 stood at 41.3. Female workers saw a sharper increase in annual work hours, growing from 1,500 in 1975 to just over 1,800 in 2000. For men, the average number of hours at work each year has grown from around 2,100 in 1975 to 2,200 in 2000.

Even in good times, Bluestone notes, there has been a growth in dual-earner families. In today’s economy, a second earner is “an absolute necessity for economic security,” he said. In fact, this sense of insecurity may be encouraging even unrelated people to “couple up,” that is share a household or opt for marriage primarily because it eases their sense of vulnerability to economic forces.

“The chances of losing two jobs in one family is a lot lower than losing just one,” Bluestone said.

For families with less than a high school education, the return for two incomes is alarmingly low. Yet without it, they would be even worse off. At the end of the 1980s, the typical dual-earner

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couple was spending an additional day and a half on the job each week. Families headed by high school dropouts found themselves going backward on a treadmill, working nearly 12 percent more between 1973 and 1988, yet making 8 percent less each year. Families headed by high school graduates worked 16 to 17.4 percent longer for only 4 percent more pay over the same time period. Only families headed by a college graduate seem to gain from the extra work, earning about 30 percent more in 1988 than they did in 1973.

A possible outcome of the current economic situation is that more families may be delaying childbearing, according to Bluestone. If a couple is concerned about losing one or both incomes and is aware of the cost of raising a child, they may put off having children.

“We had this (echo) baby boom generation that is now showing up in colleges, but it will be interesting to see if that is followed by a baby bust if this sense of insecurity continues for very long,” he said.

Bluestone sees a glimmer of hope amid the economic gloom. Productivity continues to be high despite the unemployment rate. The question is, he says, whether the demand for products and services will grow fast enough so that productivity growth results in a higher standard of living, not just higher unemployment.

In the meantime, Bluestone said he wonders how the widespread unemployment will affect workers psychically, many of whom emerged from college and graduate school to enter high-paying jobs, only to lose them a few years later. As when a healthy person falls seriously ill and loses his sense of invulnerability, long-term unemployment or underemployment may change families’ sense of security and even their political leanings.

“I’m wondering if politically, more of the recently vulnerable will look toward more conservative politicians or more liberal ones to help them deal with the exigencies of the economy. Will they opt for lower taxes which the conservatives are promising or will they want more services like universal health care as the liberals are suggesting. With more and more people feeling insecure, a greater number of votes are up for grabs.”

References

Selected Publications By Barry Bluestone
The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis. New York: Russell Sage, 2000 (with Mary Huff Stevenson)

Vulnerability within the Family: Predictors of Role Stress in Two Earner Families of Children with Disabilities
An Interview with Marji Erickson Warfield

Marji Erickson Warfield, is a social scientist at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Her work has focused on evaluating early intervention and other educational and support programs for young children and their families, investigating the development of children with disabilities and the adaptation of their families, and examining the impact of parenting a child with disabilities on balancing work and family roles. She is the principal investigator of an NICHD-funded study entitled “Balancing Work and Family: Parents of Children with Disabilities.” Her publications include “Employment, parenting, and well-being among mothers of children with disabilities.”

Mental Retardation (2001), as well as several articles on the well-being of parents raising a child with a disability and the cost-effectiveness of early intervention services. Marji received her Ph.D. from Brandeis University in 1991.

Editor’s Note: Marji Erickson Warfield’s research speaks to the almost “predictable” nature of unpredictabilities in the lives of families of children with disabilities. Warfield had the opportunity to catch a glimpse into the lives of families who experience insecurity and unpredictability on a day-to-day basis to explore how such vulnerability affects the lives of parents. We were pleased to talk with her about her findings.

Raising children with disabilities can interfere with the ability of mothers to work rewarding jobs. Additionally, a lack of adequate child care can result in emotional stress for fathers, who may have a difficult time caring for children with high needs.

The financial and emotional challenges of parents of children with special needs are explored in a study by Marji Erickson Warfield, Ph.D. who looked at 51, two-earner couples and how they experience the dual demands of work and caring for a child continued on pg. 9
with disabilities (this article is currently under review; not yet published).

The study, Family and Work Predictors of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Role Stress among Two-Earner Families of Children with Disabilities, picks up where similar ones leave off by focusing on couples, rather than analyzing mothers and fathers separately. To be eligible for the study, parents of five year old children with disabilities had to be married to each other and be employed 10 or more hours per week. Their children met specific criteria in one of the following three groups: (a) Down syndrome, (b) motor impairments, and (c) developmental delays. More than half of the couples reported $40,000 or more in annual income while 13 percent reported earning less than $25,000 each year. Most of the couples had two children.

Almost one in five children in the US have disabilities or chronic health conditions and/or need health services above those typically required by children, research has shown. Medical advances have improved survival rates for children with low birth weight, and genetic and neurological conditions, while enhanced diagnostic technologies have resulted in a greater number of children than in the past being identified as having specific types of special needs (e.g., Autism). At the same time, the majority of mothers of young children are in the workforce.

To determine how family resources, parenting challenges, work rewards and work demands influence parenting role stress, data were gathered by two researchers who visited the home of each participant within a month of the child’s fifth birthday. They conducted an in-depth interview with the mother and a standardized cognitive and functional assessment with the child. Later, mothers and fathers separately completed self-administered questionnaires.

Not surprisingly, greater support from one’s spouse was linked with lower levels of stress among both fathers and mothers, and having more children was connected to greater stress for both parents. Mothers who had a high interest in their work outside the home had less stress when her child’s demands at home were low. However, when both the demands of caring for her child with special needs and her interest in work were high, these mothers experienced greater stress. A satisfying career gives mothers a focus outside the home, buffering the stress of parenting responsibilities. However, when children require more attention, either because of the severity of the disability or a lack of outside care, mothers may need to leave jobs they enjoy to take ones they view as less desirable, but which would free up more time to care for their child.

In her report, Warfield mentions a mother who gave up her career as a partner in a law firm to work part time writing law books when she couldn’t find after-school care for her son. “I’m a frustrated Perry Mason. I now write law books because that’s the only job that I can work during the day and be the afternoon caregiver.”

In HER REPORT, WARFIELD MENTIONS A MOTHER WHO GAVE UP HER CAREER AS A PARTNER IN A LAW FIRM TO WORK PART TIME WRITING LAW TEXTBOOKS WHEN SHE COULDN’T FIND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE FOR HER SON.

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“Parents cited the psychological benefits they derived from employment and described work as a ‘respite,’ a ‘welcome distraction,’ and a ‘salvation’ that provided a temporary break from their intense caregiving responsibilities. Employers benefit by getting employees who are willing to ‘bend over backwards’ to make sure their work is done, knowing that they will need greater flexibility and special allowances regarding time off. In addition, some parents reported that their experiences raising children with special needs make them better able to handle a greater variety of difficult work situations.”

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The relations among parenting stress and child demands, work interest and child care difficulty suggest that action should be taken to alleviate the strain on working parents of children with disabilities. Many child care providers are unwilling or unable to care for children with special needs. A lack of accessible child care settings and requirements that children be toilet trained contribute to the difficulty parents have finding outside help. Policies that may be pursued include providing financial incentives to child care providers to accept children with disabilities, modifying their facilities to accommodate children with special needs, purchasing equipment to provide appropriate care, and hire or train employees to meet the special needs of these children. Another option is to provide vouchers to families to hire a care giver themselves.

“The benefits of supporting working parents of children with disabilities accrue not only to the parents themselves but also to their employers,” says Marji. “Parents cited the psychological benefits they derived from employment and described work as a ‘respite,’ a ‘welcome distraction,’ and a ‘salvation’ that provided a temporary break from their intense caregiving responsibilities. Employers benefit by getting employees who are willing to ‘bend over backwards’ to make sure their work is done, knowing that they will need greater flexibility and special allowances regarding time off. In addition, some parents reported that their experiences raising children with special needs make them better able to handle a greater variety of difficult work situations.”

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The Long-Term Vision: Secure Employment, Predictable Income, and Dependable Supports
An Interview with Netsy Firestein

Netsy Firestein is Executive Director and founder of the Labor Project for Working Families, a non-profit organization that works with unions to develop better workplaces policies for families. The Labor Project publishes a newsletter on labor and work/family issues and maintains the only national database of collective bargaining agreements on work and family. It provides technical assistance and resources to unions nationwide on issues such as child care, eldercare, family leave and flexible work schedules. Netsy is a social worker with a background in community organizing.

As the director of the District 65-U.A.W. Members Assistance Program in New York City, she developed a union based child care information service and produced videotapes on Stress At Work and Pre-Retirement Programs. In addition, she organized several committees of union rank and file members that led to negotiating work/family and child care benefits. Netsy has consulted with Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 2 in San Francisco in the negotiation and development of a child care and eldercare fund with San Francisco hotels. The fund now has over $1 million and provides subsidies to union members for child care, youth programs and eldercare. She has also worked with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 152 and AC Transit, SEIU Local 616, the AFL-CIO Working Women’s Dept. as well as many unions nationwide. Netsy is on the Executive Board of the Coalition of Labor Union Women-East Bay Chapter. She is a member of the Service Employees International Union Local 535.

Each day, working families structure their daily lives around the predictable; adults who are in the labor force expect that they will go to work; families make arrangements for the care of dependents; and family members coordinate the logistics of making the transitions from home to work/school and back again. Despite the ability of many families to adjust and adapt to the unexpected, family well-being depends on basic securities. In the United States, it is often assumed that each working family must assume the private responsibility for managing their work-family responsibilities. This can be difficult enough during steady-state time, when families have dependable access to affordable and quality arrangements. However, if working families must confront a significant change, such as a major illness of a family member, the management of work-family responsibilities may become nearly impossible unless they receive some assistance.

In contrast to working families in other parts of the world, many working families in the United States receive limited help with their efforts to secure dependable work-family supports. Public support at the national level is restricted to initiatives such as tax credits for dependent care (for families that chose/are able to make arrangements that qualify for the credits) and unpaid leave (for eligible employees working at medium and large firms). And most working families cannot depend on help from their employers. With few exceptions, employer-provided supports are offered on a voluntary basis, so working families find that the availability of a range of work-family supports at the workplace is the “luck of the draw.” Some employees are fortunate to work for firms that are committed to paying employees a living wage, to offering benefits that are critical to families’ well-being (such as meaningful assistance with health care coverage), and to providing critical work-life options, including some flexibility and control over work schedules. Unfortunately, many are not this lucky.

Rather than assuming that individual working families should have to negotiate the unpredictabilities of work-family experiences by themselves, the Labor Project for Working Families has adopted a different approach. Directed by Netsy Firestein, the Labor Project has a vision of partnering with unions to engage key social institutions – advocacy organizations, employers, elected officials, and working families – that are committed to and willing to work toward sustainable change that enhances the quality of life of working families. Some may feel that this vision could be a tough sell in today’s economy, when many of the benefits and supports that used to be provided through public programs or as a term of employment are being reduced or eliminated. But the Labor Project for Working Families has already had noteworthy success.

Consider the passage of the landmark California Paid Family Leave Legislation. Throughout the decade of the ’90s, the Labor Project discussed the importance of introducing paid family leave bills at the state level. In 2002, the Labor Project decided that it was the right time to introduce a bill which could act as a catalyst for serious public conversations about paid leave. The Labor Project understood that significant shifts in public policy, such as the passage of a paid leave bill, would require the investment of a lot of front time; consequently, the bill, sponsored by the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, introduced in California was part of an extensive educational campaign strategy that was implemented for the duration of the 2002 legislative year. The public discussions did indeed take place; the bill was signed into law in September 2002.

FOR A SUMMARY OF THE CALIFORNIA PAID FAMILY LEAVE LAW, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.PAIDFAMILYLEAVE.ORG

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From experience, Firestein knows that a combination of persistence and focus are the building blocks of a successful campaign for meaningful change at the workplace. She observed, “The challenge with a long-term campaign, such as our effort to pass a bill for paid leave, is that you can’t really control the outcomes. Sometimes that’s a bit disconcerting, although in the case of the California Paid Leave campaign, things worked out well. A key ingredient was the support of the state labor movement which had the political power and the ability to mobilize thousands of union members. Of course, we try to plan every campaign carefully. We try to develop a clear agenda. We consider ways to convince other people to support our efforts. However, it is easy to become side-tracked by the pressing issues of today. For example, state legislators across the country have been besieged with budget problems. We certainly had the option to set our bill aside until the budget problems had been addressed, but that would have meant that we would have passed up an opportunity to begin the debate. As it turns out, the timing couldn’t have been better. It may seem odd, but sometimes it is easier to move toward social change during periods of uncertainty and upheaval.”

Long-term campaigns also require the establishment of resilient coalitions that usually include stakeholders with different priorities. Firestein observed that the work-family coalitions needed for long-term social change campaigns should include a range of different groups, such as:

- Unions which place a priority on workers’ rights as human rights.
- Faith groups which focus on the moral rationale for social change.
- Private sector leaders who recognize the links between productivity and employee well-being.
- University researchers who can provide the evidence of problems and the promise of intervention.
- Political groups that can help to engage the interest of elected officials.
- Elected officials (possibly at the local, state and national levels).
- Working families who provide the motivation, authenticity, and stalwart commitment to change.

Firestein explained, “Coalitions are notoriously difficult to manage because the members may not always have the same views; however, these partnerships must be created and nurtured if we want to keep the conversations about a long-term vision going. Progress will stop as soon as the discussions end.”

The Labor Project feels a sense of urgency for initiating other long-term campaigns, such as health care, housing, child care, programs for school age children, and living wages – to mention just a few. Firestein commented, “Some people talk as if work-family issues just emerged during the past couple of decades. But in reality, unions have been grappling with the basics that are important to the security of families for nearly a century. Unions view work-family issues as fundamental, human concerns. As such, we should all be invested in work-family issues.”

“Some people talk as if work-family issues just emerged during the past couple of decades. But in reality, unions have been grappling with the basics that are important to the security of families for nearly a century. Unions view work-family issues as fundamental, human concerns. As such, we should all be invested in work-family issues.” —Firestein

About the Labor Project for Working Families

The Labor Project for Working Families is a national advocacy and policy center providing technical assistance, resources and education to unions and union members addressing family issues in the workplace including childcare, elder care, flexible work schedules, family leave and quality of life issues.

The Labor Project publishes a quarterly labor-oriented newsletter on work and family. The project has an extensive database of work/family collective bargaining language from a range of industries. Collective bargaining examples from the database are accessible to unions by calling the Labor Project.

The Labor Project for Working Families was founded in 1992 by the California Bay Area Labor Councils, AFL-CIO. Since then, the Labor Project has expanded its work to assist unions all over the nation in making workplaces more family friendly. The Labor Project is funded by union contributions and private foundations.

For more information, please visit http://laborproject.berkeley.edu/ or contact the project at:

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Job Insecurity Among Two-Earner Couples: The ‘Couple Context’ of Economic Uncertainty

Stephen Sweet recently joined the sociology faculty at Ithaca College in New York. Prior to that he served as the associate director of the Cornell Careers Institute: A Sloan Center for the Study of Working Families. Among his recent studies of work and family are analyses of “coworking” as a dual career strategy, the impact of returning to school on couples lives, work hour strategies and the life course. Dr. Sweet earned his doctorate in sociology in 1994 from the University of New Hampshire, where he studied the experiences of rural workers adjusting to job loss and organizational restructuring. His most recent books, College and Society: An Introduction to the Sociological Imagination (2001), and Data Analysis with SPSS (2003), demonstrate ways that sociological perspectives and methods can inform personal choices and social policy.

Phyllis Moen has accepted a McKnight Presidential Chair in Sociology from the University of Minnesota for the fall of 2003. Prior to that she served as the Ferris Family Professor of Life Course Studies and Professor of Human Development and of Sociology at Cornell University. Her research focuses on careers, gender and the changing life course, and is funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the National Institute on Aging. Her latest book is It’s about Time: Couples and Careers (Cornell University Press, 2003). Other books include Working Parents (1989) and Women’s Two Roles (1992). She has also co-edited Examining Lives in Context (1995). The State of Americans (1996), A Nation Divided (1999), and Social Integration in the Second Half of Life (2000). While at Cornell she founded the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center, the Cornell Careers Institute, and co-founded the Cornell Gerontology Research Institute.

Editor’s Note: Stephen Sweet and Phyllis Moen are in the process of writing a book on job loss and corporate downsizing and its impact on dual-earner couples, as well as how they plan for these events. The book is based on data from several different research projects conducted at the Cornell Careers Institute: A Sloan Center for the Study of Working Families. The Cornell Ecology of Careers Panel Study, for example, captured the work and family experiences of nearly four thousand husbands and wives at two points in time, and the events that happened in their lives over a two-year period. These data are complemented by in-depth interviews with 260 husbands and wives whose lives have been affected by job insecurity or job loss. The authors are specifically interested in understanding how insecurity and job loss plays out in the “couple context”, and its influence on the lives of partners. Steve graciously took the time to comment on some of their findings.

Unlike the circumstances under which their parents labored, today’s workers face a new kind of social contract with their employers – one in which their job security is not guaranteed and job skills must be continually updated or risk becoming obsolete. At the same time, the typical arrangement in families has changed as well. In the majority of couples, both spouses are employed in the labor force. As a result, husband and wife must manage job insecurity in the context of their own career and that of their spouse. Jobs, too, have changed in the last 20 years. As manufacturers move away from mass production, which required unskilled labor, to the production of more customized goods, workers are required to have higher levels of skills and education. The exportation of low-skilled positions to second- and third-world countries has reduced the number of good paying low skill jobs available to American workers as well. The new demand on the US labor force has not resulted in greater job security. In fact, the number of employees working in temporary positions doubled from 1990 to 2000, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects that number to increase fourfold by 2006.

Work-family researchers Stephen Sweet and Phyllis Moen examine the ways couples negotiate dual careers while also facing insecurity and job loss. The researchers are currently writing a book, Uncertain Futures: Sustaining Dual Careers in the New Risk Economy, that examines the connection between the marriage contract and the employer-employee contract, and the strategies couples use to manage their relationship in the face of these career uncertainties.

Two out of three married couples are in dual-earner relationships where husband and wife set out to forge meaningful careers together. However, most workplaces have not recognized this new reality with sufficient work-family policies. As a result, couples have attempted to manage their personal needs with “neotraditional” arrangements, with the wife working shorter hours in a job that is subordinate to the husbands, or dropping out of the labor force entirely to manage responsibilities at home”, Moen and Sweet write. When women step off the career track they have a more difficult time getting back on at the same rate of advancement as their male counterparts who do not take time away from work. As a result, women are more apt than men to work part-time positions with substandard pay and reduced job security.

“The couple context of job loss is important to consider,” notes Sweet, “especially as lives play out across the life course. Families often experience greater difficulties adjusting to the...”

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husband’s loss of a job, in part because couples tend to invest more in his job than the wife’s.”

In 1998, Phyllis Moen began collecting data for the Cornell Careers Institute: A Sloan Center for the Study of Working Families. For the Ecology of Careers Panel, they looked at nearly 5,000 middle-class couples living in upstate New York to gain insight into how social arrangements fit the needs of working couples and the strategies these couples use to chart careers. Some 4,000 of the couples were interviewed for a second time between 2001 and 2002, after the economy had soured. The two sets of data offered the researchers information about the families during two points in time.

“When job insecurity is viewed across time and in consideration of dual couple’s linked careers,” says Sweet, “the risks in the new economy are revealed. When husband’s and wives careers are paired together, only a minority of couples have both partners feeling secure in their jobs, and many couples make linked career decisions to adjust to a partner’s job loss.”

Though the economy was healthy during the first set of interviews, only one out of three participants felt confident that they would be able to keep their job over the next few years. As the second interview shows, this presumption played out in many cases. One in three participants reported they had changed employers or dropped out of the labor force. One in five of those who had left their jobs had been laid off or their position was eliminated. Many of the others who had left their jobs did so to continue their education, to retire, to look for a better job, or to follow their spouses as they pursued new opportunities. This reveals the fluid nature of employment, as well as the limited security offered by contemporary employer-employee contracts, the authors note.

The researchers discovered that as a result of the mutually dependent interrelationship between the spouses’ jobs, their lives together and as a family, “each childbirth, each job change, each decision to retrain, or to retire, is accompanied by partners’ linked decisions on how to adjust to new demands.”

In their Managing Change Study, the researchers present detailed personal accounts from the couples about how their lives were affected by job loss and insecurity. The study looks at 260 husbands and wives where at least one partner was laid off because of corporate downsizing or who are “hovering in a state of insecurity.”

The ways couples experience job loss differs according to what stage of their lives they are in. Young husbands and wives who do not have children are more flexible, more mobile, and therefore, better able to adjust than those with young children. A job loss can threaten the careers of both spouses, forcing them to prioritize each other’s professional needs as well as adjust their responsibilities and spending habits.

The findings of the Moen and Sweet’s research, outlined in the Uncertain Futures: Sustaining Dual Careers in the New Risk Economy paint a portrait of dual earner couples in an insecure economy, how they prepare for job loss and how they manage when it does occur. With no signs that the unspoken contract between employers and employees will change, and with dual-earner families continuing to be the norm, Moen’s and Sweet’s research is an important contribution to our understanding of the impact of economic insecurities on American families.
Conference Sponsors/Convenors

Lynne M. Casper is Health Scientist Administrator and Demographer in the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) where she directs the family and fertility research program and the training program in population studies. She is currently building new research initiatives in the areas of work, family, health and well-being and family change and variation. Dr. Casper is co-recipient of the American Sociological Association’s 2002 Otis Dudley Duncan Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Social Demography for her book, with Suzanne Bianchi, Continuity and Change in the American Family. She has also published extensively in the areas of families and households, cohabitation, fatherhood, child care, voting and demographic methods. She was awarded Vice-President Gore’s Hammer Award for her work on fatherhood with the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics and the DHHS Secretary’s Award for Distinguished Service for her work on the fatherhood initiative. She currently serves as Secretary –Treasurer of the Population Association of America.

Rosalind B. King is a Social Science Analyst in the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health. Prior to this position, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on adolescent romantic relationships, social aspects of adolescent physical development, and other issues related to union formation and fertility. Her recent publications include “Subfecundity and Anxiety in a Nationally Representative Sample” in Social Science & Medicine (2003) and “Age and College Completion: A Life History Analysis of Women Aged 15-44” (with Jerry A. Jacobs) in Sociology of Education (2002).

Kathy Christensen, Ph.D. directs the Program on The Workplace, Workforce and Working Families at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in New York City. Prior to Sloan, she was a Professor of Psychology at the Graduate School and University Center of City University of New York and before that served as a policy analyst at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.


The conference, “Workforce/Workplace Mismatch? Work, Family, Health, and Well-being”, held in Washington this past June, was sponsored by The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR); The Maryland Population Research Center; The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH); and The Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). It was the first in a series of conferences and other activities aimed at identifying the best workplace policies and practices to improve health and well-being.

“This conference was an essential first step in launching the new NICHD-led initiative that will ultimately evaluate the health benefits of different workplace policies and practices,” explains Lynne Casper, Program Director of NICHD’s Work, Family, Health, and Well-Being Program. “The success of this initiative hinges on our ability to acquire broad multidisciplinary expertise from researchers whose studies focus on work and family interaction, workplaces, experimental methodology, and health and well-being outcomes. What better way to initiate discussion among these researchers than this state-of-the-science conference!”

Casper feels strongly about the value of this initiative. “The fact that so many agencies and organizations contributed their time and money to this conference is testimony to the importance of the topic.”

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Researchers in the areas of anthropology, business management, child development, demography, economics, occupational health, psychology, and sociology identified theories, methodologies, key concepts, and constructs addressing work, family, health, and well-being issues. The conference served to educate researchers across disciplines, NIH and other government staff, policymakers, work-life professionals, and employers about work and family research findings that are relevant to identifying the best workplace policies and programs to improve health and well-being.

“From my point of view,” notes Suzanne Bianchi, Director of the Maryland Population Research Center at the University of Maryland, “there were two main purposes to this conference. First of all, we wanted to bring together people from different fields and disciplines – ranging from occupational health sciences and psychology and from economic to industrial relations – so that they could engage in conversation. We hoped that this type of interaction would help researchers with different points of view to better understand one another’s work. Secondly, we wanted to begin to make stronger connections between the current work-family knowledge and health and well-being outcomes.”

Presentations and discussions explored a variety of topics related to workforce/workplace mismatch, including, time constraints and scheduling complexities, health and well-being outcomes, disciplinary perspectives, community context, diverse populations, low-wage jobs/less-skilled workers, work conditions, life course, and employer/organizational perspectives.

“We were very pleased with the conference,” says Rosalind King, Associate Director of NICHD’s Work, Family, Health, and Well-Being Program. “We were able to recruit top scholars in all of the disciplines that needed to be involved and they prepared excellent papers. The conference generated a lot of excitement about interdisciplinary research in this area that will carry over to the next conference and should result in a number of excellent applications responding to the RFA.”

Kathleen Christensen, Director of the Sloan Foundation’s program on Workplace, Workforce and Working Families notes that “The Sloan Foundation was pleased to partner with NICHD on this conference. The presentations provided a comprehensive overview of the state of the knowledge that has been expanded over the past 10 years. Despite this impressive progress, it was also clear that there is still much to be done in this area.

For papers and presentations, please go to: http://www.popcenter.umd.edu/conferences/nichd/agenda.html

More on this NICHD-Led Initiative

NICHD is in the process of planning 3 subsequent conferences/activities to facilitate progress toward their ultimate goal of “conduct(ing) studies that employ experimental design methodologies to test which types of workplace policies and practices are the most beneficial for the health and well-being of workers, their families and children, communities, and workplaces within a variety of workplace settings.”

1. A conference that will examine current workplace policies and practices, state and federal laws and policies pertaining to work, and employees’ notions about workplace policies and practices;

2. A Request for Applications (RFA) based on input received from conferences 1 and 2 soliciting exploratory/developmental applications to develop model protocols to identify the best workplace policies and practices to improve health and well-being

3. An RFA to form a network of research teams that will use the most successful of these experimental designs to produce a common protocol to measure the same inputs and outcomes to test across a variety of workplace settings.

(see http://www.popcenter.umd.edu/conferences/nichd/initiative.html for details)

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Elizabeth Wilcox, author of *The Mom Economy: The Mothers' Guide to Getting Family-Friendly Work*, is a journalist, mother of three, and certified career coach. Ms. Wilcox began her career in London, working as deputy editor for a subsidiary of Euromoney, a British publishing group. She later moved to Hong Kong where she became a personal finance columnist for the *Sunday Morning Post*, a business presenter for Metro Radio, and then an associate producer for CNBC, first in Hong Kong and later in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Ms. Wilcox entered the field of career development when she founded *Strive Magazine*, a career publication for college graduates. She began providing editorial content for mothers when she became editorial director of Familytime, a website to help mothers better manage their lives. She continues to provide career advice individually and in groups. Ms. Wilcox is married with three children and currently lives in Connecticut. Having worked part-time, telecommuted, and run her own business, she has experienced first-hand the challenges and benefits of family-friendly work arrangements.

Job insecurity could be dissuading workers of both genders from seeking, or even accepting family-friendly conditions, according to Elizabeth Wilcox, the author of the upcoming book, *The Mom Economy: The Mothers’ Guide to Getting Family-Friendly Work*. But an economic downturn does not necessarily mean that proposals for more family-friendly arrangements will be rejected.

In a recent interview, the author noted that the utilization rates of family-friendly opportunities such as flex-time remains low at many companies because people are concerned that if they don’t work traditional hours they will risk their jobs. During a downturn in the economic cycle, anxiety over job security increases, making approaching a current or prospective employer with family-friendly requests more daunting. Those employees that are most successful, however, are able to position their request to be in the interest of the business. The author pointed to an interview with one former CEO of a large public relations firm who said that during an economic downturn he said he was more apt to provide benefits to a valued account executive because maintaining the business was all the more important to him then. Another single mother at a start-up company found that she could successfully propose part-time in tight financial times because the company was actively looking to cut costs.

*The Mom Economy* outlines how to identify, secure and manage work that meets family needs. For the book, due out September 2 from Berkley Publishing Group, Wilcox interviewed hundreds of mothers who represent members of the “Mom Economy – a growing number of women with one foot in the workplace and one foot at home.”

Wilcox notes that women change jobs more frequently than men, particularly during the child-rearing years. Their earnings drop significantly against men’s during these years as well. Additionally, women are far more likely to work part-time than men and to take leave after a child’s birth. Wilcox asserts that these women are changing traditional perceptions of what a career path should look like. To be successful in holding down a rewarding job without sacrificing family obligations, women must first determine what the ideal situation would be for them professionally, as well as for their family.

“Each case is an individual case,” Wilcox says. “People really need to look at their own life and their children and ask, ‘What do I feel like I need, or my child needs? What do I want and what does my child want of my time and energy and attention?’”

Women who are employed before they have a family are in a better position to negotiate a reduced schedule, flex-time or working from home once they have a family, she says.

Through her interviews with women who called their work “very” or “extremely” family friendly, Wilcox found common strategies and traits. Drawing from their experiences, and with advice from career professionals, her book shows readers how to: determine what they must earn; understand how employee benefits may help; negotiate for flextime, part-time or telecommuting; determine what’s important professionally and personally; assess skills, knowledge and value in the marketplace; establish a network; evaluate employers; and talk to human resources and supervisors about getting needs met.
### Annual Council on Contemporary Families’ Media Awards

**Recipients:** Karen Peterson, *USA Today;* Leigh Woosley, *The Tulsa World;* and Tasha Oldham, *SmallTown Productions*

On April 11-12, 2003, at the 6th Annual Conference in New York, the Council of Contemporary Families presented their media awards to Karen Peterson of *USA Today,* Leigh Woosley of *The Tulsa World* and Tasha Oldham of *SmallTown Productions.*

The CCF awards were created in 2002 to acknowledge and encourage the realistic portrayal of family struggles in the context of larger social issues. The individuals and projects honored by the CCF demonstrated commitment to supporting a balanced public perception of American life trends.

- **Karen Peterson** received the “2003 Award for Outstanding Coverage of Change in America’s Families”, for writing three *USA Today* cover stories titled: “Kids, Parents Can Make the Best of Divorce;” “Stepmoms Step Up to the Plate;” and “Refugees Battle Culture Shock.”

- **Leigh Woosley** was honored with the “2003 Award for Outstanding Coverage of Family Diversity”, for a series of 5 articles she wrote for the Tulsa World. Those pieces are titled: “A Child. A Trial;” “History in Chains;” “Suffer the Little Children;” “The Working Poor;” and “Split Decision.”

- **Tasha Oldham** received the “2002 Award for Outstanding Broadcast Media Coverage of Family Issues,” for her work as the director of “The Smith Family,” a documentary.

For more information, please go to [www.contemporaryfamilies.org](http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org)

### Jessie Bernard Award

**American Sociological Association (ASA)**

**Recipient:** Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Ph.D., CUNY-Graduate Center

Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Ph.D., is the 2003 recipient of the American Sociological Association Jessie Bernard Award, “which is given annually in recognition of scholarly work that has enlarged the horizons of sociology to encompass fully the role of women in society.” This award and other ASA awards were presented in a ceremony at ASA’s Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, on August 17th.

To nominate someone for the 2004 Jessie Bernard Award and other ASA Awards, please go to [http://www.asanet.org/members/2004awardnom.html](http://www.asanet.org/members/2004awardnom.html)

For more information, please go to [http://www.asanet.org/media/03awards.html](http://www.asanet.org/media/03awards.html)


**April 11-12, 2003**

**Fordham University, NY**

On April 11-12 the Council on Contemporary Families held its’ 6th Annual conference at Fordham University in New York City. While all of the topics addressed during the conference pertained to policy, the specific focus of each workshop varied from mother’s and father’s strategies for managing work and family, to the effects of welfare reform on low-income families, to the role of the criminal justice system towards the families it serves. The annual Media Awards were presented and closing remarks were given by Stephanie Coontz, co-chair, CCF.

For more information, please go to [http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org](http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org)

### “2nd Invitational Conference on Work and Family Life for Journalists and Social Scientists”

**Community, Families, & Work Program at Brandeis University’s Women’s Studies Research Center and the Department of Journalism of the Boston University College of Communication**

**May 2-3, 2003**

**Boston, MA**

The Community, Family & Work Program (CFWP) at Brandeis University’s Women’s Studies Research Center and the Department of Journalism of the Boston University College of Communication held the 2nd Annual Journalism Work-Family Conference on May 2-3, 2003 in Boston. Roz Barnett, from Brandeis University and Caryl Rivers from the BU Journalism Department were the conference directors.

The conference brought together leading social scientists doing work-family research with general reporting, feature, business journalists, columnists and editors from newspapers and other media outlets from across the country to discuss current research and how work-family research is covered in the media.

The conference program featured panel presentations by leading social scientists moderated by journalists and social scientists. Extensive information about the conference, participants and presentations are posted on the CFWP web site [www.brandeis.edu/centers/wsrc/CFWP](http://www.brandeis.edu/centers/wsrc/CFWP)

The conference was kicked off by Erica Goode a science reporter from the New York Times discussing the two cultures of Journalism and Social Science. The 1.5 day conference wrapped
up with a panel including reporter H.J. Cummins of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Sally Cheriel, editor of the *Oregonian* and columnist and journalism professor of the University of Missouri, Geneva Overholser, providing "a view from the media."

Aside from providing an important forum for presenting current work-family research, the social scientists and journalists have made important contacts at the conferences for disseminating good work-family research.


**The Families and Work Institute and The Conference Board**

**June 17-18, 2003**

**New York, NY**

The Families and Work Institute and the Conference Board held the 2003 Work-Life Conference, “Work-Life at a Crossroads: Providing Leadership on Tough Issues” June 17-18 in New York City. The conference was presented with assistance from ARAMARK Work/Life Partnerships, Deloitte & Touche, IBM Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, J.P. Morgan Chase, and KPMG. Each day of the conference was kicked off with optional Qigong exercise sessions intended to improve health and reduce stress. The 2 day event hosted 37 speakers who addressed corporate challenges, skills, and ethics facing leaders in today’s tough and changing economy. Topics included face time culture, low wage/entry positions, and strategies for future corporate work-life initiatives. The “Conference Board Work-Life Leadership Council’s Media Award” and the “Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award” were presented and participants had networking opportunities.


### “Gender, Work, and Organization”, 3rd International Interdisciplinary Conference

**June 25-27, 2003**

**Keele University, Staffordshire, England**

The journal “Gender, Work, and Organization” held its 3rd International Interdisciplinary conference in June with a special sub-theme of “Gender in the Public Sector”. The conference facilitated an international analysis and discussion of pertinent gender studies issues including: feminist theory, work/life balance, and power and resistance. The event was organized by Dr. Christina Hughes from the University of Warwick and Dr. Deborah Kerfoot from Keele University.

For more information, please go to [http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/mn/journals/gwo.html](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/mn/journals/gwo.html)

### Institute for Women’s Policy Research’s Seventh International Research Conference, “Women Working to Make a Difference”

**The Institute for Women’s Policy Research; The Women’s Studies Program, George Washington University; The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, IBM and AFL-CIO**

**June 22-24, 2003**

**Capital Hilton, Washington, D.C.**

The 2003 Conference brought together policymakers, advocates, researchers, educators, economists and practitioners from the academic, labor, corporate, government, non-profit and media worlds to discuss an extensive assortment of women’s issues. Participants attended presentations/discussions focusing on new research findings, current trends, and policy strategies relating to women’s lives in the United States and throughout the world. More than 60 sessions and over 200 presenters addressed a range of issues related to women’s economic, political, educational, health, and social status experiences.

For more information, please go to [http://www.iwpr.org/](http://www.iwpr.org/)

### “Democracy in a Knowledgeable Economy”, Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management.

**August 1-6, 2003**

**Seattle, Washington**

An international community of professionals and academics convened in Seattle to participate in the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. This conference encouraged the analysis and discussion of the characteristics of democracy and how shifting to a knowledge economy has affected traditional notions of power, leisure, learning, and civic involvement. Professional Development Workshops were offered from Friday-Sunday, including Doctoral Consortia and Junior Faculty Consortia. Sessions offered on Sunday-Wednesday were divided into 3 categories: Referred Scholarly Session, Symposia, and Other Types of Sessions.

For more information, please go to [http://meetings.aomonline.org/2003/](http://meetings.aomonline.org/2003/)
Call for Papers

“Sustainable Careers: New Options for a New Workplace: An Interdisciplinary and International Research Policy Forum”


This academic conference is sponsored by Cornell Careers Institute, an Alfred P. Sloan Working Families Center in cooperation with Cornell University, University of Minnesota, and Eastern Sociological Society.

For more information, please go to http://www.lifecourse.cornell.edu/CCI/Default.htm or e-mail pem3@cornell.edu or lmd7@cornell.edu

74th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, “Rethinking Careers for a Changing Society”

The deadline for submissions is October 1, 2003.

Submissions on all sociological topics are welcome and the conference sponsors are anxious to have them in such varied forms as: individual papers, wholly constituted sessions, thematic forums, author-meets-critics sessions, workshops on specific topics and techniques, or round-table and poster-session presentations.

All submissions must include all identifying information for all participants, including telephone number, complete mailing address and e-mail address. The submission deadline will be October 1, 2003. Details about electronic submission are available on the ESS website: http://www.essnet.org

Conferences

The 25th International Association for Time Use Research (IATUR) Conference 2003, “Comparing Time”

September 17-19
Free University of Brussels
Brussels, Belgium

The IATUR conference provides a forum for researchers to present the latest findings in time use studies. New results, methodologies and data sets will be compared regarding topics including changing family roles, work and leisure.

For more information, please go to http://www.vub.ac.be/TOR/iatur/


Sponsored by DaimlerChrysler

September 24-25
Chateau du Lac, Genval (Brussels), Belgium

Topics include: Driving Profits through Diversity; The Changing Work Culture; Overcoming Barriers: New Models for Integrating People with Disabilities; An Age-Balanced Workforce: Why and How Organisations Should Achieve It; New Ways to Teach and Train Europe's Diverse Workforce; Assimilation versus Integration: Which Approach will Best Enable Europe's Countries and Companies to Achieve Inclusion?; Global Diversity: Global Recognition with Local Respect; Cultural Diversity: Managing the Mixture Pro-actively; Meeting the Challenges of Cultural Diversity-Corporate case studies followed by interactive group discussions; Managing Mobility-Family as a Factor of Success; Managing Across Cultures in Europe: Between the Nations and the Genders; The Pros and Cons of Support Networks for Minority Groups: Do they Promote Inclusion or Emphasize Differences?; Tools for Work-Life Support Systems; Career Development Planning for Part-Time Employees: Making the Financial Case for Work-Life and Employee Assistance Programmes: A New Model for Calculating ROI; The Growing Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility; and Redesigning the Ways We Work.

For more information, please visit: http://www.conference-board.org/conferences/conference.cfm?id=495
Sponsored by the National Council on Family Relations
November 19-22, 2003
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

This conference traditionally attracts 1,200-1,300 professionals and graduate students seeking professional development through discussion of the latest research. This year the conference will focus on marriage as a changing institution and how these changes influence policy and racial and ethnic groups. NCFR is an approved provider of continuing education for APA, NASW (Metro Washington Chapter), EAPA, and NBCC.

For more information, please go to: http://www.ncfr.org/conference_info/index.asp

74th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, Theme: “Rethinking Careers for a Changing Society”
February 19-22, 2004
The Roosevelt Hotel, New York, NY

The 74th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society will be held February 19-22, 2004 at The Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. The theme is: Rethinking Careers for a Changing Society.

For an ESS 2004 Preliminary Program and details on abstract submission and the call for papers, please visit http://www.essnet.org/annualmeeting.htm

8th Annual AWLP Conference, “Progress in Motion”
The Alliance for Work-Life Progress
February 18-20, 2004
Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa, Phoenix, AZ

Presentations scheduled for the AWLP Conference will address a variety of work-life issues including child care, eldercare, and wellness along with strategies for integrating work-life programs into organizations. The Innovative Excellence Award will be presented and attendees will have plenty of opportunities to network.

To download a conference program or to nominate an organization for the 2003 Innovative Excellence award, please go to http://www.awlp.org/events

Year 2004

“Sustainable Careers: New Options for a New Workplace: An Interdisciplinary and International Research Policy Forum”
February 19-22, 2004
New York, NY

This academic conference is sponsored by Cornell Careers Institute, an Alfred P. Sloan Working Families Center in cooperation with Cornell University, University of Minnesota, and Eastern Sociological Society.

For more information, please go to http://www.blcc.cornell.edu/cci/default.html