

Families and Work Institute
National Study of the Changing Workforce

NSCW

THE NEW MALE MYSTIQUE

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Families and Work Institute's most recent National Study of the Changing Workforce, a nationally representative study of the U.S. workforce, finds that men now experience more work-family conflict than women.¹ Since that finding was released two years ago, it has generated a great deal of attention and speculation. This paper is the first to take the same data set and conduct an in-depth exploration of the underlying reasons behind men's rising work-family conflict.

In essence, we have uncovered what we term the "new male mystique." We find that although men live in a society where gender roles have become more egalitarian and where women contribute increasingly to family economic well-being, men have retained the "traditional male mystique"—the pressure to be the primary financial providers for their families. As such, men who are fathers work longer hours than men the same age who don't live with any children under 18. However, men are also much more involved in their home lives than men in the past, spending more time with their children and contributing more to the work of caring for their homes and families. In other words, men are experiencing what women experienced when they first entered the workforce in record numbers—the pressure to "do it all in order to have it all." We term this the new male mystique.

Key findings and insights include:

- Men today view the "ideal" man as someone who is not only successful as a financial provider, but is also involved as a father, husband/partner and son. Yet flat earnings, long hours, increasing job demands, blurred boundaries between work and home life, and declining job security all contribute to the pressures men face to succeed at work and at home and thus to work-family conflict.
- We find that among men living with family members (the sample for this investigation of work-family conflict), a wide array of them are "at risk" for work-family conflict—especially those men who work long hours, who work in demanding jobs, are work-centric (prioritize work over their family or personal lives) or are fathers in dual-earner couples.
- Supervisor support for managing work and for managing work life, coworker support, access to schedules that fit their needs and to workplace flexibility, as well as a to workplace cultures that supports using flexible options are especially important for men to reduce their risk of work-family conflict. Yet, more is needed, especially bringing the new male mystique to light and involving men in helping to create new solutions to improve their work life fit.

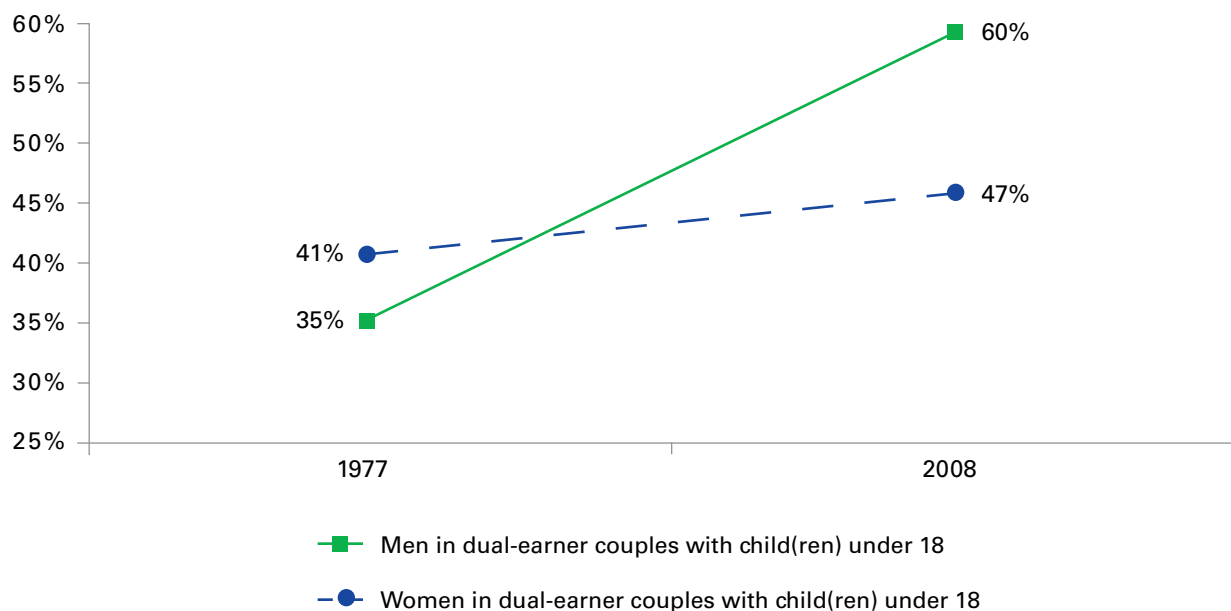
INTRODUCTION

The U.S. workplace is no longer a "man's world." In many ways, men find that conventions about what it means to be a man in today's workplaces and families have changed. Traditional, clear-cut gender roles are giving way to a "new normal" that is both more egalitarian and challenging.² Data from the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), a nationally representative telephone survey of the U.S. workforce conducted by the Families and Work Institute (FWI), suggest that it has not been easy for many men to adjust to this new normal. In fact, our data show that men are experiencing significantly higher levels of work-family conflict today than they did three decades ago when the Quality of Employment Study (QES; the legacy study that is the basis for FWI's National Study of the Changing Workforce) was conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor.³

In 2008, 49% of employed men with families reported experiencing some or a lot of work-family conflict, up significantly from 34% in 1977 ($p < .001$).⁴ It is important to note that the measure we use to define work-family conflict is bi-directional; it asks employees with family responsibilities (defined as those who live with spouses or partners, children, parents or other family members—representing 85% of all employed men) how much their work and family responsibilities interfere with each other.

The rise in work-family conflict has been especially striking among fathers in dual-earner couples. As shown in Figure 1, work-family conflict among these men has increased substantially and significantly—from 35% in 1977 to 60% in 2008⁵—while that of mothers in dual-earner couples has remained relatively stable (41% in 1977 and 47% in 2008, not a statistically significant change).

Figure 1: Percentage of Fathers and Mothers in Dual-Earner Couples Reporting Work-Family Conflict (1977–2008)



Statistically significant differences between men and women in dual-earner couples with children under 18: 1977 not significant; 2008 $p < .01$; Statistically significant differences between 1977 and 2008: Men $p < .001$; women not significant. Sample size: 1977 $n=283$; 2008 $n=391$. Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI and 1977 QES, U.S. Department of Labor.

We suggest that the increase in work-family conflict experienced by men is a symptom of the new male mystique—today’s male version of the “feminine mystique” coined by Betty Friedan in 1963 to describe how assumptions about women finding fulfillment in traditional domestic roles created tension and conflict for a number of women, preventing them from finding their identities and opportunities for meaningful work.⁶ Applying Friedan’s reasoning to men, the “traditional male mystique” would reflect the notion that men should seek fulfillment at work and strive to be successful as financial providers for their families. We use the term new male mystique to describe how traditional views about men’s role as breadwinners in combination with emerging gender role values that encourage men to participate in family life and a workplace that does not fully support these new roles have created pressure for men to, essentially, do it all in order to have it all.

The “ideal” man today is not only a good employee working long hours to be a successful breadwinner, but is also an involved and nurturing husband/partner, father and son. Some men struggle because they have traditional gender role values that may feel out of sync with the world of work and family today. Others struggle because society and their workplaces are out of sync with the realities of their lives. Thus, many men are caught between these old and new worlds and are bound to experience some conflict between work and family.

Although work-family conflict has been on the rise among men for some time, only a few studies have examined work-family conflict specifically among men.⁷ This study addresses this gap by exploring work-family conflict in the same nationally representative sample in which the increasing conflict was first noted.

We focus on two central questions:

- **What factors put men “at risk” for experiencing work-family conflict?**
- **What factors make a difference in reducing the probability of experiencing work-family conflict, especially among the groups who experience the highest levels?**

ABOUT THE STUDY

The sample for this study included 1,298 men drawn from the Families and Work Institute’s 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW),⁸ a nationally representative telephone survey of the U.S. workforce conducted every five to six years. To be included in the sample, male respondents had to meet two criteria: live with at least one family member (e.g., spouse/partner, child or other relative) and be employed in a wage or salaried job. The sample doesn’t include men who are unmarried/unpartnered, who don’t have any children, who don’t have children under 18 with whom they live, and who don’t live with any other relatives (e.g., parents, in-laws, siblings, etc.).

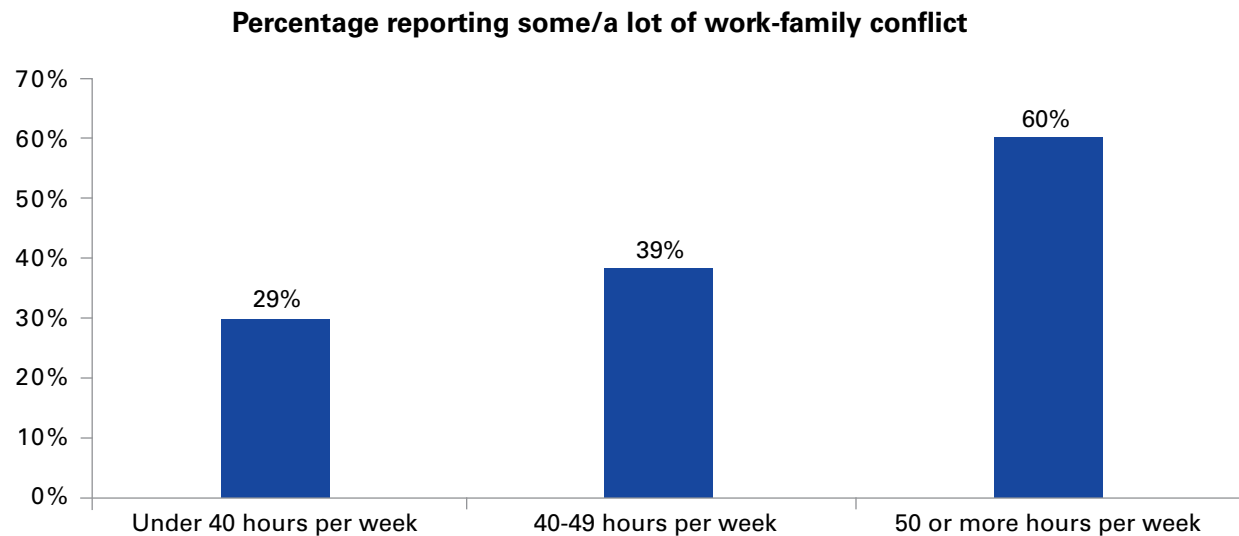
Eighty percent of respondents live with a spouse or partner, and the majority of men who live with a spouse or partner (75%) are in dual-earner couples. Nearly half (49%) of the men in this sample have at least one child under age 18 living in their homes for at least half the year (referred to in this report as “fathers”).⁹ Sixteen percent of men in this sample reported currently having elder care responsibilities.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT FACTORS PUT MEN AT RISK FOR EXPERIENCING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT?

Finding: One of the most important predictors of men’s work-family conflict is how much time they spend working—spending more time at work significantly increases the potential for work-family conflict.

The relationship between average number of hours per week spent working and men’s probability of experiencing work-family conflict is depicted in Figure 2. Conflict is clearly highest among the 38% of men who work on average 50 or more hours a week, compared with the 14% who work fewer than 40 hours and the 48% who work 40-49 hours per week.

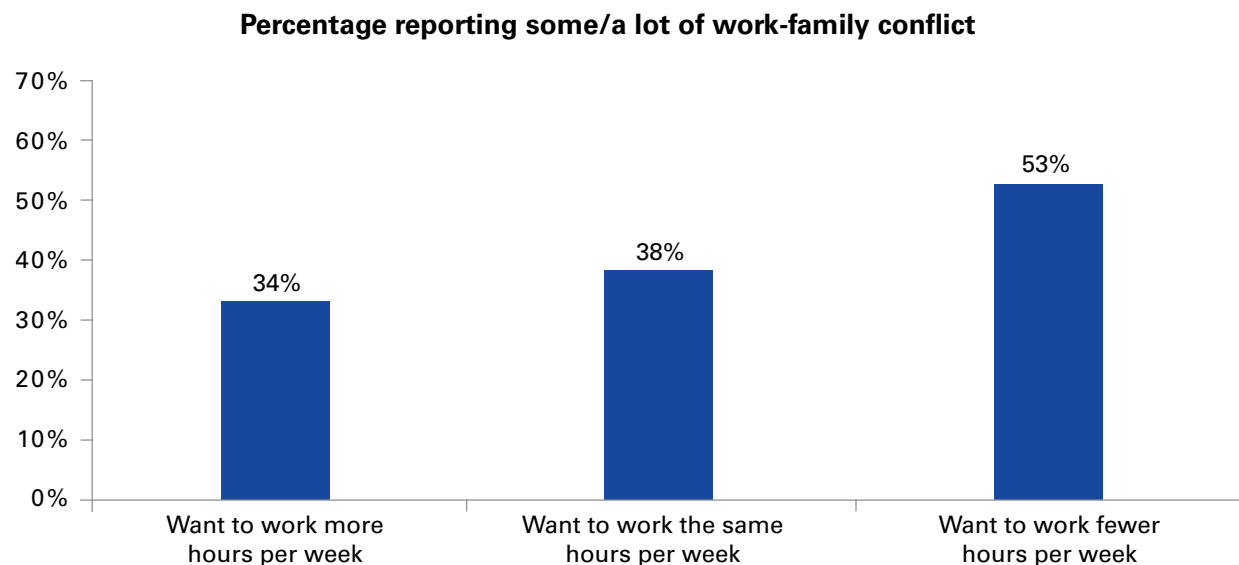
Figure 2: Percentage of Men Reporting Some/a Lot of Work-Family Conflict by Average Hours per Week Spent Working¹⁰



Differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$); sample size $n = 1,277$.
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

Furthermore, our data indicate that more than one in two (54%) men prefer to work fewer hours than they actually work per week. As shown in Figure 3, men who prefer to work fewer hours are significantly more likely to report work-family conflict than men who are working their preferred number of hours or men who prefer to work more hours.

Figure 3: Percentage of Men Reporting Some/a Lot of Work-Family Conflict for More, the Same or Fewer Work Hours per Week



Differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$); sample size $n = 1,269$.
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

Finding: Work-family conflict is not simply a function of hours spent working. Job characteristics and psychological factors—including attitudes about work, family and appropriate gender roles—all contribute to men’s work-family conflict.

Time spent working does not fully explain why conflict has increased substantially over the past three decades, because men spend as much time working today as they did three decades ago:

- In 1977 and in 2008, men worked an average of 47 hours per week.
- By contrast, women’s work hours have increased from 39 hours per week in 1977 to 42 hours in 2008.

Consistent with emerging egalitarian gender roles, men do, however, spend more time involved at home—e.g., doing chores or caring for the children than men did three decades ago:¹¹

- In 2008, fathers report spending 3 hours per workday (on average) with their children, up significantly from 1.8 hours per workday in 1977.
- Similarly, in 2008, men report spending an average of 2.3 hours per workday on household chores, up significantly from 1.2 hours in 1977.

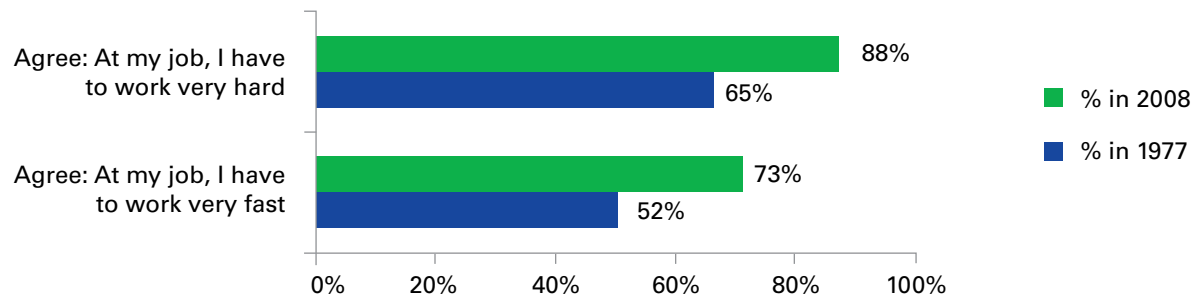
Although it seems logical that increasing demands on men’s time at home would be a major factor in work-family conflict, importantly and perhaps surprisingly, our data reveal a more complex picture. Although work and family hours, taken together, are indicative of more conflict, when we control for the hours spent at work, we find:

- Workday time spent on child care, chores and leisure is not significantly related to work-family conflict when taking into account time spent working. This means that the amount of time men spend working is more important in predicting their work-family conflict than the time men spend on child care, chores and leisure.

Finding: Increasing job demands, the blurring of boundaries between work and home life, declining job security and flat earnings have made it more challenging for men to live up to the new male mystique, thereby contributing to an increased probability of work-family conflict.

Men may be working a similar number of hours per week as 30 years ago, but work itself has changed. Our data show that men’s job demands have risen significantly from 1977 to 2008.¹² Specifically, as depicted in Figure 4, men’s perceptions of having to work very fast and very hard—two components of job demands—have increased significantly over the past 30 years. A third component of job demands—having enough time to complete tasks—has changed in the opposite direction since 1977, with more men today saying they have enough time to get their work done. This change, however, is likely due to the fact that technology has blurred the boundaries between work and family life, thus making it easier to complete tasks after the workday is supposed to be over.

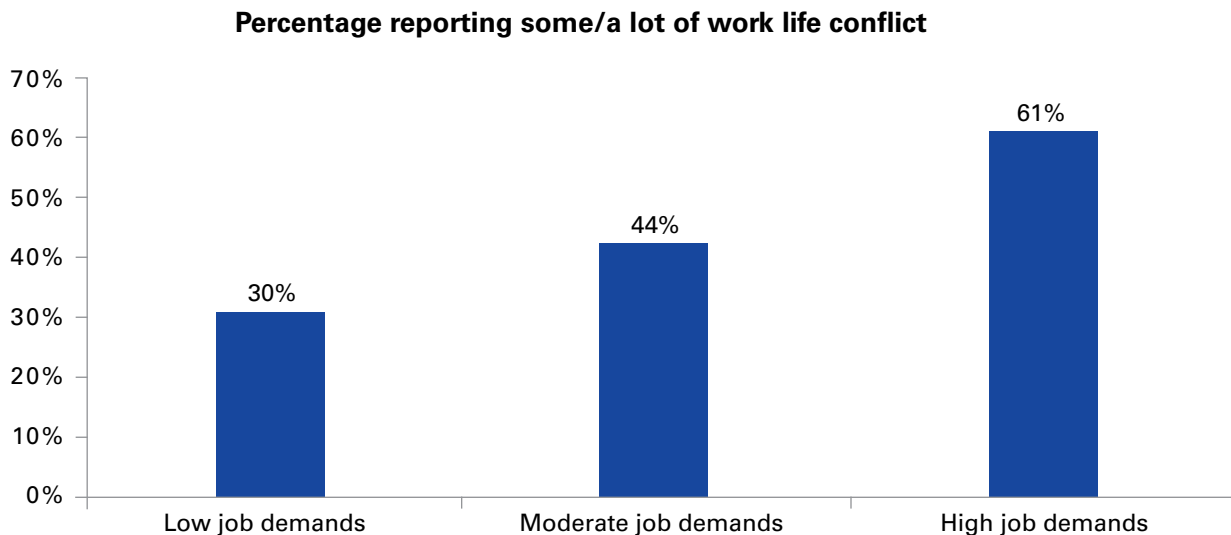
Figure 4: Men's Job Demands Over Time



Differences between 1977 and 2008 surveys are statistically significant for the two items ($p < .001$); sample size 1977 QES $n=536-547$, 2008 NSCW $n=852-853$.
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI and 1977 QES, U.S. Department of Labor.

As depicted in Figure 5, men with moderate (61% of men) and high job demands (22% of men) are more likely to experience work-family conflict than men with low job demands (17% of men). These findings apply to men regardless of how many hours per week they work.

Figure 5: Percentage of Men Reporting Some/a Lot of Work-Family Conflict by Level of Job Demands¹³



Differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$); sample size $n=1,296$.
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

We wondered to what extent have technology changes and the blurring of boundaries between work and home affected men's work-family conflict. In 2002 (the first year we asked this question), we found that 32% of men were contacted by people from their workplace at least once a week or more when they were at home. By 2008, 41% of men are contacted at least once a week or more by people from their workplace outside of normal work hours. Not surprisingly, we find that among those men in 2008 who are contacted this frequently, almost half (47%) experience high work-family conflict. By contrast, only 18% of men who are never contacted outside of normal work hours experience high work-family conflict. Men's perceptions of job security have also declined over the past 30 years:

- In 1977, 84% of men said it was not at all likely or not too likely that they would lose their job in the next two years. This figure declined to 70% by 1997 and has remained more or less the same through 2008 (statistically significant change between 1977 and 2008 $p < .001$; 1977 $n = 536$; 2008 $n = 663$).

The decline in job security is related to a significantly higher probability of experiencing work-family conflict:

- 51% of men who say they are somewhat or very likely to lose their job report some or a lot of work-family conflict; and
- 43% of men who say they are not very or not at all likely to lose their job report similar work-family conflict (statistically significant change $p \leq .01$; $n = 1,264$).

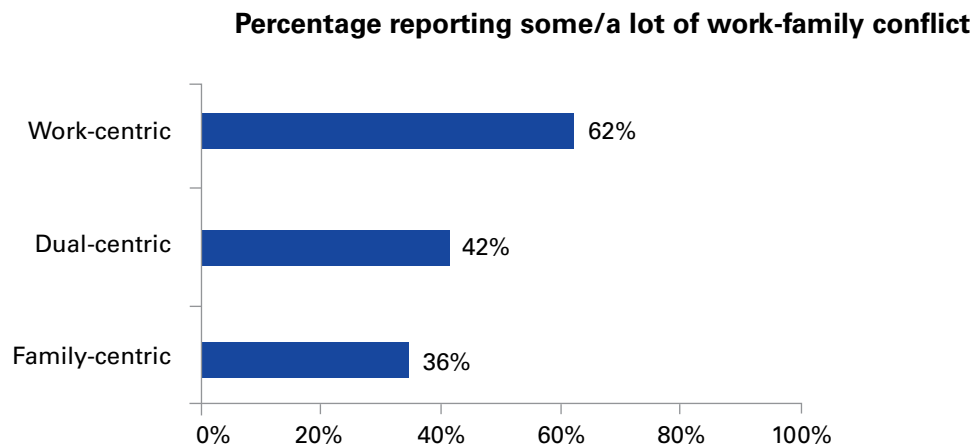
At the same time, men's earnings have remained relatively flat over the past three decades. Data from the U.S. Department of Labor show that median weekly earnings of men age 25 and older employed full time in wage and salaried jobs have actually declined slightly from \$867 in 1979 to \$857 in 2008 (both figures are in 2008 dollars). Thus, living up to the new male mystique of the successful breadwinner now requires that men work long and hard in a world where the rules have changed: greater effort is not always linked to higher income. Clearly, this new reality creates the potential for work-family conflict.

Finding: Work-centric men are more likely to experience work-family conflict than dual- or family-centric men.

Work-family centrism refers to the degree to which an individual prioritizes work (i.e., work-centric), family/personal life (i.e., family-centric) or both work and family/personal life more or less equivalently (i.e., dual-centric). In 2008, 29% of men are work-centric, while 36% are family-centric and 35% are dual-centric. By comparison, 25% of women are work-centric, while 31% are family-centric and 44% are dual-centric, but these differences between women and men are not statistically significant.

For men, work has traditionally been seen as coming first because providing for their families is paramount. Thus, work-centric attitudes—prioritizing work matters over family or personal life—are consistent with the traditional male mystique. Our data, depicted in Figure 6, show that work-centric men are significantly more likely to experience work-family conflict than family or dual-centric men.

Figure 6: Percentage of Men Reporting Some/a Lot of Work-Family Conflict by Work-Family Centrism



Differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$); sample size $n = 1,289$.
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

Work-centric men work significantly more hours per week than dual- or family-centric men:

- Work-centric men work 49 hours per week on average.
- By comparison, dual-centric men work 46 hours and family-centric men work 43 hours per week on average (statistically significant difference $p < .001$; $n = 1,271$).

The greater number of hours per week spent working contributes to work-family conflict among work-centric men, although, as we discussed above, it does not entirely explain their increased risk of work-family conflict. Work-centric men are more likely to experience work-family conflict than dual- or family-centric men, regardless of how many hours per week they work. Perhaps these men, despite their work-centric attitudes, still face pressure from their families or peers to spend more time with their families. Importantly, dual- and family-centric men seem to be more comfortable spending less time at work in favor of more family or personal time, even if that means decreased earnings. Perhaps dual or family-centric men have less conflict because they are more comfortable with the new roles, where men have a greater involvement with family life.

Finding: Men who hold traditional gender role values—i.e., strongly agree the man should earn the money and the woman should take care of the home and children—are also more likely to experience work-family conflict.

Traditional gender role values are grounded in the belief that the man should earn the money while the woman takes care of the home and children. Thus, traditional gender role values are consistent with the traditional male mystique of the man as breadwinner providing for his wife and children. Our data show that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women on these views—40% of men and 37% of women somewhat or strongly agree with traditional attitudes about gender role values. Men who *strongly agree* with traditional gender role values—as 16% of men do—are more likely to experience work-family conflict than men who do not endorse traditional gender roles (i.e., do not agree strongly that

it's better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children):

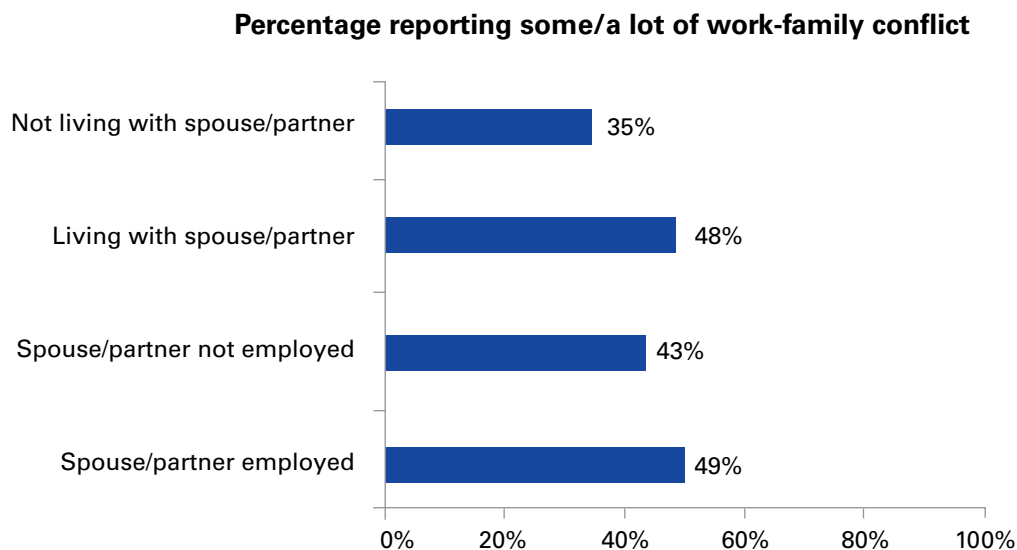
- 54% of men who *strongly agree* that it's better if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children report some or a lot of work-family conflict.
- By comparison, only 40% of men who *strongly disagree* that it's better if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children report some or a lot of work-family conflict (a statistically significant difference, $p < .01$; $n = 1,275$).

Perhaps men with egalitarian attitudes about gender roles are less likely to feel pressured by traditional notions of male success, including being the primary breadwinner for their families and having a successful career in the workplace and may be more comfortable with life as it plays out today at work and at home.

Finding: Men living with a spouse or partner are significantly more likely to report some or a lot of work-family conflict than men who do not live with a spouse or partner.

As shown in Figure 7, men with who are married or living with a partner (representing 71% of all men in the workforce) experience more work-family conflict than do men who are single—regardless of whether or not their spouse/partner is also employed.¹⁴ This finding is especially interesting when one considers that within a traditional gender role framework, having a spouse/partner should reduce family pressures on men, since the spouse/partner is the one generally responsible for managing family responsibilities. This suggests that the traditional gendered divisions of labor are not currently as successful at reducing family pressures on married/partnered men as might be assumed.

Figure 7: Percentage of Men Reporting Some/a Lot of Work-Family Conflict by Relationship Status



Difference between men living with a spouse/partner and men not living with a spouse/partner is statistically significant ($p < .001$; $n = 1,295$); difference between spouse/partner employed versus spouse/partner not employed is not statistically significant ($n = 1,035$).

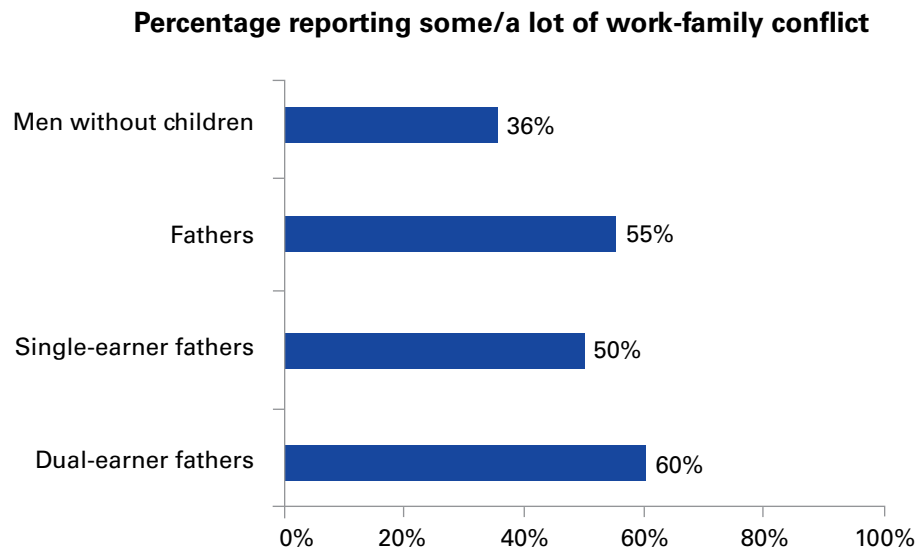
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

Men's contribution to family income vis-à-vis their spouse's or partner's earnings is not related to men's work-family conflict. Men are just as likely to experience work-family conflict regardless of whether or not they earn more, less, or the same as their spouse or partner.

Finding: The majority (55%) of fathers with children under age 18 at home experience some or a lot of work-family conflict.

Fathers (representing 49% of the men in this sample) may feel that life as they “must” live it puts them at odds with the way they may “want” to live it. Raising children is expensive, and these men may feel increased pressure to work long and hard and yet be involved fathers. Fathers who experience pressure to do it all in order to have it all, may feel trapped in essence, by the new male mystique not only because of financial pressures, but also because of a desire to spend time with their children. These men may find that the reality of American society and particularly of workplaces is not congruent with their values and preferences. In fact, 76% of fathers report that they don't have enough time with their children. The resulting tension likely contributes to work-family conflict among fathers, especially those in dual-earner couples. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8: Percentage of Men Reporting Some or a Lot of Work-family Conflict by Parental Status



Difference between men with children versus men without children is statistically significant ($p < .001$; $n = 1,296$); difference between single-earner fathers and dual-earner fathers is statistically significant ($p < .05$; $n = 574$).
Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

The number of children under 18 living at home (at least half time) does not affect men's work-family conflict, but the age of the youngest child does. Fathers of very young children and fathers of teenagers—both potentially psychologically demanding times in family life—are more likely to experience some or a lot of work-family conflict than fathers of children of other ages (statistically significant differences at $p < .001$, $n = 629$).

Interestingly, allocation of responsibilities within the family (e.g., who takes most of the responsibility caring for the children, cooking and cleaning) between men and their partners/spouses does not affect men's probability of experiencing work-family conflict when controlling for other factors (e.g., time spent working).

Finding: Fathers are more likely to be family-centric, yet they work significantly more hours per week than men without children.

The tension between the real need to provide for their families and a desire to be involved with their families is particularly acute for fathers. Our data show that the large majority of fathers (71%) emphasize family over work or value both equivalently:

- Just over one in three (36%) of fathers is family-centric (i.e., want to prioritize family/ personal life over work).
- Similarly, just over one in three (35%) of fathers is dual-centric (emphasizing family/ personal life and work more or less equivalently).

Recall from our earlier findings that men with family- or dual-centric attitudes are less likely than men with work-centric attitudes to experience work-family conflict and they are also less likely to work longer hours. However, fathers are *more* at risk for work-family conflict than other groups of men. This is possibly due to the fact that fathers work three hours more per week than men without children:

- Fathers work, on average, 47 hours per week. By comparison, men who do not live with any children under 18 work an average of 44 hours per week (a statistically significant difference at $p < .001$; $n = 1,278$).
- More than two in five (42%) fathers work 50 or more hours per week on average. By comparison, only one in three (33%) men who does not live with any children under 18 works 50 or more hours per week on average (a statistically significant difference at $p < .001$; $n = 1,278$).

These findings hold for men regardless of their own ages. By comparison, women work between 40 and 41 hours per week regardless of whether they live with any children under 18 or not.

Fathers are also significantly less likely than men who do not live with any children under 18 to work part time—only 5% of fathers do so, compared with 19% of men who do not live with any children under 18 (a statistically significant difference at $p < .001$; $n = 1,243$).

Finding: Many fathers would prefer to work less, but they continue to work long hours to earn money for their families.

Fathers today are significantly more likely than men without children to say they would prefer to work fewer hours—58% of fathers says so, compared with 49% of men who do not live with any children under 18 (a statistically significant difference at $p < .001$; $n = 1,271$). If fathers prefer to work fewer hours per week, why don't they? The majority (72%) of fathers report their income would be reduced if they worked fewer hours.

Fathers want to work fewer hours were asked in this study why they don't reduce their work hours. We find:

- 47% say they need the money they earn by working long hours, whether or not their spouse earns more money than they do.
- 16% say they could not keep their jobs if they worked fewer hours.
- 14% say they need to work long hours to keep up with the demands of their job.

- 7% say they have to work long hours to achieve their own standards.
- 4% say they would not be as successful as they would like to be if they worked fewer hours.

The fact that gender roles clearly have changed over the past three decades, with women gaining momentum in the workplace and men becoming more involved at home, presents fathers with a complex situation. They want to spend time with their family and be involved in caring for their children, but they still very much want and need to succeed in the workplace and be the financial provider. Spending less time at work and more time at home might cause fathers to feel that they would not be providing for their families as well as they could if they worked more. Our finding that mainly time spent working (not time spent with children, on chores or on leisure activities when work hours are controlled) predicts men's probability of work-family conflict and thus supports the notion that for men, work is more likely to interfere with family than the other way around.

We also explored the impact that current elder care responsibilities have on men. We found that elder care responsibilities are fairly evenly distributed among men: 16% of men overall, 15% of fathers and 17% of men who do not live with any children under 18 currently have elder care responsibilities. Although our data indicate the fathers who also have elder care responsibility have high levels of work-family conflict, our sample size of these men is too small to probe further.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT FACTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN REDUCING THE PROBABILITY OF EXPERIENCING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE GROUPS WHO EXPERIENCE THE HIGHEST LEVELS?

In this section of the report, we explore factors related to reducing the probability of work-family conflict among men. Thus, we shift our focus from the 49% of men who experience some or a lot of work-family conflict (34% and 15% respectively) to the 51% of men who experience *little* or *no* work-family conflict (32% and 19% respectively).

To conduct these analyses, we focus on four groups of men whom we find experience the highest levels of work-family conflict, which we define as over 60% of a group experiencing "some" or "a lot" of conflict. These are men who work more than 50 hours a week, men with high levels of job demands, men who are work-centric, and men who are fathers in dual-earner couples. Taken together, 76% of men in this sample (that is, men who live with family members) are part of one or more of these groups, emphasizing how widespread the potential for high work life conflict is among men.

Finding: Men in these "at risk" groups benefit from having supportive supervisors and coworkers.

Supervisor support for men succeeding in their jobs (which we call supervisor task support) and supervisor support for family or personal matters as well support from their coworkers helps men in these at-risk groups experience less work-family conflict:

- Supervisor task support makes a substantial difference for these at risk groups. The majority of men working 50 or more hours a week (57%), fathers in dual-earner couples (57%) and work-centric men (53%) with high supervisor task support report little or no work-family conflict.

- 52% of men working 50 or more hours a week, 49% of fathers in dual-earner couples, and 57% of work-centric men with strong supervisor support for family or personal issues report little or no work-family conflict.
- 44% of men with high job demands (44%) report little or no work-family conflict when they agree that they have the coworker support to manage work and family.
- 54% of men working 50 or more hours a week, 54% of fathers in dual-earner couples and 51% of work-centric men who perceive their coworkers as supportive report little or no work-family conflict.

Being able to engage in a dialogue with their supervisors about family and personal issues makes a significant difference to men with family responsibilities. Fathers in dual-earner couples who feel comfortable bringing up family or personal issues with their supervisor are significantly less likely to experience work-family conflict than their counterparts who do not feel comfortable. For work-centric men, having coworkers where they feel supported in managing their work and family lives, in succeeding in doing a good job, and where they feel a part of the group they work with (which we call overall coworker support) appears to be more important than having supportive supervisors in reducing work-family conflict.

Interestingly, men with high demand jobs are not supported by overall coworker support, but only by support specifically around managing work and family issues. One possible explanation is that men in high pressure jobs may worry that family responsibilities won't be seen as a respectable reason to request support from their coworkers. Such men may need their coworkers to be explicitly open to providing support for managing work and family issues.

Finding: High access to relevant workplace flexibility options is especially important for men most likely to experience work-family conflict.

Men who work 50 or more hours per week, have high job demands, are fathers in dual-earner couples, or are work-centric with high access to workplace flexibility are significantly less likely to report work-family conflict than men in these groups with moderate or low access to workplace flexibility (Table 1):

- 57% of men working 50 or more hours a week with high access to flexibility report little or no work-family conflict, compared with 20% of men working 50 or more hours a week with low access to flexibility.
- 47% of men with high job demands with high access to flexibility report little or no work-family conflict, compared with 27% of men with high job demands and low access to flexibility.
- 51% of fathers in dual-earner couples with high access to flexibility report little or no work-family conflict, compared with 37% of fathers in dual-earner couples with low access to flexibility.
- 64% of work-centric men with high access to flexibility report little or no work-family conflict, compared with 21% of work-centric men with low access to flexibility.

For men working 50 or more hours per week, being able to adjust their schedules and take time to deal with emergencies is effective in reducing work life conflict. These men may benefit most from flexibility options that allow them to determine which hours they are working, so they can find the time to address family issues as well as work performance. We find that

the following *specific types of workplace flexibility* are helpful for men working 50 or more hours a week (Table 1):

- Having control over their work schedule
- Having a work schedule or shift that meets their needs
- Having schedule flexibility
- Being able to make short-notice schedule changes
- Being able to take time off during the workday without too much difficulty to attend to personal or family matters
- Having at least five paid days off to care for a sick child

Among men with high job demands, we find that having a schedule that is responsive to their needs and does not prohibit them from taking time during the workday to address family matters was linked with lower work-family conflict. Our results show that the following *specific types of workplace flexibility* are beneficial to men with high job demands (Table 1):

- Having a work schedule or shift that meets their needs
- Having schedule flexibility
- Being able to take time off during the workday without too much difficulty to attend to personal or family matters

Fathers in dual-earner couples are also in need of *specific types of workplace flexibility*, as our data reveal (Table 1):

- Having control over their work schedule
- Having a work schedule or shift that meets their needs
- Having schedule flexibility
- Being able to arrange to work for part of the year
- At least five paid days off to care for a sick child

The risk of work-family conflict among work-centric men is likely a function of both the relatively high number of hours per week they spend working and the fact that their work-centric attitude does not fit well with changing social norms about men's involvement in their families. Thus, *specific types of workplace flexibility* can significantly help these men manage their work and family life. Work-centric men benefit from (Table 1):

- Having control over their work schedule
- Having a work schedule or shift that meets their needs
- Having schedule flexibility
- Being able to make short-notice schedule changes
- Being able to take time off during the workday without too much difficulty to attend to personal or family matters

Finding: Men at risk for work-family conflict need a workplace culture that supports the use of workplace flexibility.

Using workplace flexibility is traditionally perceived as a signal that employees are more focused on their family or personal life and less committed to their job. Thus, using workplace flexibility may go against the principles of the new male mystique. Workplace culture needs to signal that it is safe for men to use flexible options without their being perceived as less hard-working or harming their opportunities for advancement.

Our data in Table 1 show that men who work 50 or more hours per week and work-centric men who do not believe that using flexibility harms advancement are significantly less likely to experience work-family conflict than men in these groups who believe there is jeopardy for using flexibility. Similarly, men who work 50 or more hours per week and fathers in dual-earner couples who do not feel they must choose between career advancement and attention to their families are also significantly less likely to report work-family conflict than men in these groups who feel they must choose between advancement and their families.

Table 1: Supervisor Support, Coworker Support and Workplace Flexibility Among Men in General and Men Experiencing the Highest Levels of Work-Family Conflict

	Men in general		Men working 50 or more hours a week		Men with high job demands		Dual-earner fathers		Work-centric men	
% reporting little or no work-family conflict	51% (n=1,243)		41% (n=464)		40% (n=279)		41% (n=409)		38% (n=377)	
Supervisor and coworker support	% reporting little or no work-family conflict									
	Men in general	Sig	Men working 50 or more hours a week	Sig	Men with high job demands	Sig	Dual-earner fathers	Sig	Work-centric men	Sig
My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal/family issues. Agree Disagree	 58% 37%	 ***	 	 ns	 	 ns	 43% 27%	 *	 	 ns
I feel comfortable bringing up personal/family issues with my supervisor. Agree Disagree	 60% 42%	 ***	 	 ns	 	 ns	 46% 26%	 **	 	 ns
Overall supervisor support for family/personal matters High Moderate Low	 67% 57% 43%	 ***	 52% 40% 33%	 **	 	 ns	 49% 43% 27%	 **	 57% 37% 31%	 **
Supervisor task support High Moderate Low	 68% 54% 43%	 ***	 57% 38% 27%	 ***	 	 ns	 57% 37% 27%	 ***	 53% 36% 31%	 **
I have the coworker support I need to manage work and family. Agree Disagree	 59% 39%	 ***	 44% 30%	 *	 44% 29%	 *	 45% 24%	 **	 42% 25%	 **
Overall coworker support High Moderate Low	 66% 51% 40%	 ***	 54% 37% 23%	 ***	 	 ns	 54% 34% 30%	 ***	 51% 38% 18%	 ***

	Men in general		Men working 50 or more hours a week		Men with high job demands		Dual-earner fathers		Work-centric men	
% reporting little or no work-family conflict	51% (n=1,243)		41% (n=464)		40% (n=279)		41% (n=409)		38% (n=377)	
Workplace flexibility	% reporting little or no work-family conflict									
	Men in general	Sig	Men working 50 or more hours a week	Sig	Men with high job demands	Sig	Dual-earner fathers	Sig	Work-centric men	Sig
Amount of control over schedule										
Complete	61%		55%				52%		50%	
A lot	63%	***	54%	**		ns	43%	*	52%	*
Some	56%		31%				41%		30%	
Very little	47%		25%				46%		26%	
None	50%		38%				31%		35%	
My work schedule/shift meets my needs.										
Very true	65%	***	55%	***	47%	*	48%	**	50%	***
Somewhat/not true	42%		21%		34%		32%		27%	
I have the schedule flexibility I need to manage work and family life.										
Strongly agree	67%	***	57%	***	55%	**	49%	***	58%	***
Somewhat agree	52%		36%		33%		42%		32%	
Somewhat disagree	36%		20%		26%		21%		21%	
Strongly disagree	23%		20%		33%		15%		10%	
Allowed to choose start/quit times		**		ns		ns		ns		ns
Yes	60%									
No	52%									
Allowed to make short-notice schedule changes										
Yes	58%	***	43%	**		ns		ns	42%	*
No	37%		25%						26%	
Allowed to work compressed workweek		ns		ns		ns		ns	47%	*
Yes									34%	
No										
Full-timers: Could arrange to work part time in current position if desired		***		ns		ns		ns		ns
Yes	62%									
No	48%									
Able to arrange working for part of the year		***		ns		ns	54%	*		ns
Yes	68%						39%			
No	52%									

	Men in general		Men working 50 or more hours a week		Men with high job demands		Dual-earner fathers		Work-centric men	
% reporting little or no work-family conflict	51% (n=1,243)		41% (n=464)		40% (n=279)		41% (n=409)		38% (n=377)	
Workplace flexibility	% reporting little or no work-family conflict									
	Men in general	Sig	Men working 50 or more hours a week	Sig	Men with high job demands	Sig	Dual-earner fathers	Sig	Work-centric men	Sig
Difficulty in taking time of during workday for personal/family matters										
Not at all difficult	69%	***	53%	***	54%	**		ns	57%	***
Not too difficult	57%		42%		38%				41%	
Somewhat difficult	45%		31%		36%				27%	
Very difficult	28%		26%		30%				25%	
At least five paid days off to care for sick child(ren)										
Yes		n.s.	42%	*		ns	47%	*		ns
No			27%				35%			
Feel they must choose between career advancement and attention to family										
Strongly agree	51%	**	30%	*		ns	41%	*		ns
Somewhat agree	48%		36%				52%			
Somewhat disagree	59%		46%				34%			
Strongly disagree	61%		47%				30%			
Believe they are less likely to advance if using flex options										
Strongly agree	43%	***	27%	**		ns		ns	35%	**
Somewhat agree	53%		42%						34%	
Somewhat disagree	55%		39%						25%	
Strongly disagree	64%		50%						55%	
Overall access to workplace flexibility										
High	70%		57%		47%		51%		64%	
Moderate	59%	***	46%	***	47%	**	39%	*	43%	***
Low	35%		20%		27%		37%		21%	

Statistical significance: *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$; ns=not statistically significant. Sample sizes: Men in general n=1,019-1,296; men living with spouse/partner n=812-1,035; fathers n=496-631; dual-earner fathers n=322-409; work-centric men n=288-377.

Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

The new male mystique suggests that men today are facing two opposing forces—greater value placed on involvement with their families versus social structures, systems and norms that do not make it easy for them to spend less time working and more time with their families. In addition, their jobs are both demanding and insecure. The reality of American workplaces still favors men who work full time or overtime, without career interruptions. In addition, many men—and especially fathers—remain in the role of the primary breadwinner because it is typically easier for American families to manage a reduction or loss of the woman's income (which in the majority of families is lower than that of the man). As a result, men are under increasing pressure to do it all in order to have it all—be dedicated employees in increasingly demanding jobs, good financial providers and involved family members. Men who hold views consistent with the traditional male mystique—e.g., work-centric men who prioritize work over family, or men with strong traditional values who prefer to be the breadwinner—also find themselves under pressure perhaps because their views are no longer congruent in a world that has changed significantly over the past three decades. In other words, for some men—those with work-centric or strong traditional values—the world has changed too much, while for others—especially those with family responsibilities—the world has not yet changed enough.

What changes do men need in order to more effectively manage work and family in contemporary American society and its workplaces? First and foremost, we believe there needs to be an open and visible dialogue about the work-family challenges that men face in today's world to transform the assumptions of the new male mystique. This implies acknowledging that work-family conflict is a men's issue as much as it is a women's issue. The dialogue might occur in conversations with men's supervisors and coworkers at work, among friends, in families and in communities, among policy makers, and in the media.

Employers can do their share to help address work-family conflict among men. Most importantly, this means developing organizational cultures, policies and practices that discourage and dispel the mystique of the work-centric man and his linear, uninterrupted career path as the only pathways to success:

- Change the assumption that men must work long hours to be good employees and create a workplace culture where men are not jeopardized for using flexibility.
- Address the issue of demanding jobs and find ways to help employees work more effectively (e.g., by reducing unnecessary work and improving how teams work together to get work done).
- Evaluate flexibility policies and practices to assess the extent to which they meet the needs of different groups of men and make changes as needed.
- Develop more flexible career paths that allow for time off or reduced schedules especially during periods when family matters require attention (e.g., after the birth or adoption of a child, when caring for an elderly parent or relative) without jeopardizing men's opportunities for career advancement.
- Offer men reduced schedules with pro-rated pay, benefits and opportunities for career advancement.
- Provide opportunities for men to discuss their work and family roles and to become part of the process of creating solutions that specifically work for them and for their employers.

At a societal or policy level, the new male mystique revolves around issues related to the availability and affordability of child care, health care and housing. Making it easier for families to address these important basic needs will help ease some of the pressure men face in providing for their families. Importantly, the issue of gender parity in pay needs to continue to receive attention. Only when men and women are on much more equal footing in the workplace both in terms of pay and career advancement opportunities will families truly have choices in how they manage breadwinning and caregiving roles.

To improve men's lives at work and at home, change needs to occur at all levels—from individual attitudes about work and family to effective workplace design and cultural change that dispel the mystiques for both men and women. Change needs to occur not only in the form of practical interventions—e.g., changes in workplace policies and practices—but also in ways that address the underlying psychological factors contributing to the struggle and tension between the old and new men's worlds. The new male mystique is harming men much in the ways that the feminine mystique harmed women, and we owe it to men and women alike to work for change.

ENDNOTES

1. Galinsky, E., Aumann, K., & Bond, J. T. (2009). *Times are changing: Gender and generation at work and at home*. New York: Families and Work Institute. Retrieved from http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 Quinn, R. P. & Staines, G. L. (1979). The 1977 Quality of Employment Survey. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

4 1977: sample size n=465; data weighted by number of eligible persons in household to adjust for differential probabilities of selection; data adjusted by design effect (1.2); 2008 sample size n=564, data weighted based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 2007) to number of eligible respondents in household weighted to the percentage of households in the population with the same number of eligibles, gender, education, race/ethnicity and age; data adjusted by design effect (1.7).

5 These percentages are slightly different from the percentages reported in FWI's 2009 report, *Times are changing: Gender and generation at work and at home* due to reweighting the data.

6 Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

7 Harrington, B., Van Deusen, F., & Humbert, B. (2011). *The new dad: Caring, committed and conflicted*. Boston, MA: Boston College Center for Work and Family.

Linkow, P., Civillian, J., & Lingle, K. M. (2011). *Men and work life integration: A global study*. Scottsdale, AZ: World at Work.

8 The 2008 NSCW survey was conducted using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. Calls were made to a regionally stratified unclustered random probability sample generated by random-digit-dial methods. Interviews were conducted with a questionnaire developed by Families and Work Institute and averaged 50 minutes in length. Interviewers initially offered cash honoraria of \$25 as incentives. In order to convert refusals, a higher amount (\$50) was offered. Sample eligibility for the NSCW was limited to people who 1) worked at a paid job or operated an income-producing business, 2) were 18 years or older, 3) were in the civilian labor force, 4) resided in the contiguous 48 states, and 5) lived in a non-institutional residence—i.e., household—with a telephone. In households with more than one eligible person, one was randomly selected to be interviewed.

The total sample for 2008 was 3,502 people (53% men, 47% women), including wage and salaried employees who work for someone else, independent self-employed workers who do not employ anyone else, and small business owners who do employ others. Applying the conservative method of calculation recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, the response rate for the 2008 NSCW was 54.6%. The estimated maximum sampling error for the total wage and salaried sample is approximately +/- 1%.

The NSCW sample is weighted to March 2007 U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics on the total U.S. population to adjust for any sampling bias that might have occurred. Specifically, the sample used in the present study is weighted according to number of eligible respondents in household weighted to the percentage of households in the population with the same number of eligibles, respondent gender, education level, race/ethnicity and age.

Various statistical tests for significance were used to analyze data for this study, including Pearson Chi-square for comparing nominal scale variables, Mantel-Haenszel Chi-square for comparing ordinal scale variables and logistic regression. Relationships reported in this paper represent statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level or better.

9 Throughout this report we refer to the group of men with at least one child under age 18 living in his home for at least half the year as fathers. We do not include men with children that do not live with them in our analyses of fathers in order to limit our sample to men with responsibilities to cohabitating family members.

10 Average hours per week worked in all jobs was transformed into a 3-level variable based on quartiles: Q1=less than 40hrs/wk, Q2+Q3=40 to 49 hrs/wk, Q4=50 or more hrs/week.

11 Time with children: $F=51$ (1,631), $p < .001$, 1977 $n=294$, 2008 $n=339$; Time spent doing chores: $F=106$ (1,1201), $p < .001$, 1977 $n=535$, 2008 $n=668$.

12 Oneway ANOVA comparing 3-item job demands variable from 1977 QES and 2008 NSCW indicates statistically significant increase in job demands (1977 $n=546$, 2008 $n=681$; $F=1902$ (1, 1226); $p < .001$).

13 Job demands variable was transformed into 3-level variable based on quartiles: Q1=low demands, Q2+Q3=moderate demands, Q4=high demands.

14 Men in dual earner couples $n=777$; men living with a spouse/partner who is not employed $n=258$; men who do not live with a spouse/partner $n=260$.

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