BEYOND THE MOMMY TRACK: SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATING WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES WITHOUT SACRIFICING JOB STATUS AND PAY

Families with plenty to feast on are facing another kind of famine – time. Today’s dual-earner couple now has a combined work time of 91 hours per week. The long hours make it difficult for professional women with small children to successfully integrate work and family responsibilities. While it is not uncommon for these women to bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and then ... change a diaper, run to soccer practice, and fax a business proposal, it is often accompanied by great sacrifice—not to mention fatigue.

New research from Brigham Young University, published in the current issue of *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, investigates how the growing trend of “new-concept, part-time employment” is helping professional women battle the time famine, and companies win the war for talent.

In contrast with typical part-time jobs, these custom hour positions are high-status, career-oriented, reduced-hours options that maintain prorated professional salaries and benefits. These new-concept, part-time positions reach a large segment of professional women who previously were not willing to work part-time because they would have to sacrifice status, pay, and opportunity.

“While part-time work has always been an option, many professional women did not view it as a viable choice because often these jobs were of lower status, with less pay and fewer career opportunities,” said E. Jeffrey Hill, BYU professor and lead researcher. “However, the new-concept, part-time option allows professional women greater opportunity to customize their work while preserving job status and family life, not to mention they earned slightly more per hour than those in fulltime professional positions.”

According to the research, professional women with pre-school age children who worked in these new-concept, part-time positions reported working approximately 47 percent fewer hours per week with only a 41 percent reduction in personal income. They also reported greater harmony between work and family responsibilities.

For the part-time professionals, this translated into a reduction of 23 hours of work per week. “A real benefit is that these extra hours enable these women to get sufficient sleep, recreation, and other renewal activities to avoid the burnout often associated with raising preschoolers while forging ahead in a professional career,” explained Hill.

“Of course, the extra time for the primary care of their children is highly valued by these mothers, and may be renewing in and of itself.”

Other findings include significantly more flexibility than full-time employees in the time and place they work and, surprisingly, no significant differences in career opportunity.

“Overall, new-concept, part-time work can facilitate greater work-life harmony for professional women with pre-school age children,” Hill said. “And, if companies want to avoid losing this valuable talent pool, it is important that they make the new-concept, part-time option more available to their employees.”

—Tonya Fischio

BYU PART OF NEW NATIONAL MARRIAGE CENTER

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has selected the Brigham Young University School of Family Life along with the National Council on Family Relations and a team of four other major universities to create and operate the first-ever National Healthy Marriage Resource Center.

With a $900,000 grant per year, the comprehensive, national center will collect and make accessible all reliable marriage research and resources over the next five years.

In commenting on the center, Wade Horn, U.S. assistant secretary for children and families, noted, “The most important
The object of the healthy marriage initiative is to benefit children, Horn said. “Children do better in married households than unmarried households and do better in stable homes than in unstable homes.

“We want to increase the number of children in married, stable households and decrease the number in unmarried, unstable households.”

“With the ever increasing interest in the institution of marriage and related public policy, there is a great demand for a centralized, national clearinghouse of reliable, nonpartisan, research-based information,” said Alan Hawkins, BYU professor and BYU team director for the center.

This project will allow those working to strengthen marriages in their communities to access tools to help them in their work. In addition, the center will help them keep up with the growing body of research related to healthy marriages,” he said.

To create the center, BYU is collaborating with NCFR, a nonpartisan professional family organization; Child Trends, a nonpartisan research organization, located in Washington, D.C.; and four other universities: Syracuse, Texas Tech, Norfolk State, and Minnesota.

BYU will be the center’s western region and research hub. The School of Family Life will assume primary responsibility for the efforts to collect and synthesize research related to healthy marriages. This research will then be published in various forms to ensure the information is readily available to federal, state, and local governments; educational institutions; private and public agencies; faith-based and community organizations; and interested individuals.

“We are committed to bringing the highest level of scholarship to this task,” Hawkins said. “BYU brings to this task the largest concentration of marriage scholars and educators of any university in the nation. In particular, three scholars from three different disciplines along with three graduate students will donate nearly 70 hours a week to keeping the public informed.”

The center will:

• Collect and disseminate information on healthy marriage.

• Create resources and tools to aid marriage educators, practitioners, community activists, and other interested individuals and groups.

• Collect, organize, synthesize, and disseminate research findings about how to build and sustain healthy marriages.

• Collect, foster, and articulate best practices for practitioners, such as marriage counselors, social workers, clergy, and mental health professionals.

• Communicate information about healthy marriage to practitioners, policymakers, legislators, and the general public.

The center will offer a regular listserv for electronic news and will publish newsletters and other publications targeted at specific populations and audiences. Beginning in 2006, the center will host an annual Marriage Summit. NCFR will convene participants from across the political, regional, cultural, and educational spectrum to coordinate healthy marriage efforts, advise the center, and discuss the current state of marriage.

“Family life and marriage are crucial for the well-being of society,” said William J. Doherty, author of The Intentional Family: Simple Rituals to Build Family and past president of the National Council on Family Relations. “Government ends up picking up the tab in welfare, health care and prisons for families that fall apart. You can basically guarantee that the whole productivity of our nation rides on the ability of men and women to come together in marriage and raise children successfully.”

Doherty is a professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota, which is tasked with supporting grass-roots efforts to encourage premarital education. He added that BYU is uniquely positioned to benefit the Healthy Marriage Resource Center. “BYU has a critical mass of marriage researchers,” he said. “They are as good as any or better than any academic program in the country. That’s why they’re perfect for what they’re doing.”
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON STRENGTHENING TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

The year 2004 has marked the tenth anniversary of the United Nations’ International Year of the Family, an anniversary that brought renewed attention around the world to issues affecting the traditional family and that led to the U.N. General Assembly adopting a consensus resolution in support of the family.

One of the many significant outcomes of a wide range of international activities came to fruition in late November as representatives of governments, scholars, and leaders of numerous family movements met in Doha, Qatar, for the Doha International Conference for the Family.

The Doha Conference was the concluding event of a series of meetings that took place during 2004 in Mexico City; Stockholm, Sweden; Geneva, Switzerland; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Doha Conference process was proposed by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and President of Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The Doha Conference was designed to collect the International Year of the Family work products of academicians and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide, bringing to the public’s attention constructive academic research on the family and funneling all these efforts to an international intergovernmental meeting.

The Organizing Committee for the Doha Conference included representatives from the World Family Policy Center at Brigham Young University, the Family Research Council, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Foundation, and CARE, Inc. On December 15, 2003, The Conference was recognized as an official event of the UN International Year of the Family by a Resolution of the UN General Assembly.

In outlining the aims of the Conference, the Organizing Committee stated that it hoped “to identify not only what is already known about marriage and family life, but what is not known, and to make concrete proposals for positive future action in the development and implementation of family policy (as well as the completion of needed future research). Topics of particular interest include the social role of marriage, developmental needs of children, the impact of media on family life, governmental policy and the family (both economic and social), the family and human dignity, and historical and global perspectives on the family.”

The Doha Conference reiterated the objectives of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, which included efforts to:

• Strengthen the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families;
• Stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families;
• Undertake analytical reviews at all levels and assessments of the situation and needs of families;
• Strengthen the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to execute specific programs concerning families; and
• Improve collaboration among national and international nongovernmental organizations in support of families.

In opening the Conference, Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Naser Al-Missned stated, “There is no common denominator
better able to bridge the gap between different people from around the world despite conflicts and diversity, than the firm belief in the sacredness of the family. All divine laws have blessed this sacred institution, forging a strong bond between males and females which conforms to human nature in bearing and raising new generations that contribute to building civilizations.”

She then added, “The concept of the family, as we all know, has, at times, been defined in a manner contrary to that of religions, social rules and human consciousness. We should combat these notions, especially those that try to disguise them under the guise of modernity. Modernity cannot be accepted as a pretext to bypass religious, social, and cultural values which have long shielded and maintained the family.

“No less dangerous than these challenges is the fact that the family today has new tasks in addition to the traditional ones of bearing and raising children. The most important new responsibility is the duty towards contributing to the development and progress of society. It has been ascertained that the enlightened family is not only a safety net to the individual but has become even more so for society.”

Noting that efforts to strengthen the family result in the strengthening of nations and the ideals of democracy, Her Highness continued, “It is within this context that the UN General Assembly’s decision to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family emphasizes that the fate of today’s families may be influenced by leaders in the international arena. Because of the leaders’ ability to shape public opinion, they advance the agenda facilitate progress through the active promotion of mutual dialogue and understanding.”

In concluding her comments, Her Highness emphasized that “It is not possible to guarantee the safety of the family — keeping it from disintegrating — by merely solving the problems of poverty and illiteracy. We must turn the solutions themselves into strategic tools for reconstruction and development.

“It is imperative to coordinate among national programs in connection with the family, the basic social unit, in order to guarantee the care it deserves. It is practically impossible to deal with family issues and problems through individual programs or separate systems. Rather, what is needed, is a comprehensive policy capable of dealing with the larger tasks related to the family which go beyond limited social responsibilities and awareness; safeguarding the family as a prerequisite for promoting national progress and consolidating the spirit of universal cooperation.”

Richard G. Wilkins, a professor of law at BYU’S J. Reuben Clark Law School and managing director of the World Family Policy Center, explains that “The Doha International Conference for the Family was a complex, year-long series of events organized by the World Family Policy Center with the assistance of various governmental and non-governmental partners. At the November meeting, governmental representatives negotiated and adopted the Doha Declaration, which reaffirms long-standing legal norms related to religious and ethical values, human dignity, marriage, parent and child relations, and the right of children to be raised within a loving and caring family. The Declaration is consistent with, and substantially furthers, the values and objectives set out in ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World.’

“Then On December 6, 2004, the UN General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution formally noting the Doha Declaration. As a result of this action, the Declaration takes its place in the canon of declarations, platforms and agendas from which international legal norms are derived by political leaders, judges and lawyers.”

Wilkins adds, “The first International Year of the Family in 1994 ended with international assertions that were deeply troubling. The UN General Assembly concluded the 10th Anniversary Celebration of this Year in 2004 by taking note of a Declaration that charts a completely contrary course. This development is significant, indeed, astonishing.”

Numerous BYU faculty members were involved with the yearlong activities that culminated in the Doha Conference. Included among those is Thomas B. Holman, a professor of Marriage, Family and Human Development and recently appointed chair of the MFHD department, who, together with A. Scott Loveless, a professor in the J. Reuben Clark Law School, will edit a scholarly publication that contains the scholarly proceedings from all the international dialogue conferences held throughout 2004.

Additional information on the Doha Conference and related activities, including the complete text of the Doha Declaration, is available at www.dicf.org.qa/english/ and at www.worldfamilypolicy.org.