

Research to Action: Review of Research Conducted by the Families and Work Institute

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The Oxford Handbook of Work and Family

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides an overview of the research of the Families and Work Institute over the past 25 years, showing how it selects the subject of its research, sets its short- and longer-term goals, designs its methodology, and translates the findings into change experiments that can then be evaluated. The examples of research described include research on public policy, specifically on parental leave; employer and employee studies culminating in an action project, the When Work Works initiative; and child development research leading to a project called Mind in the Making.

Keywords: work-life research, parental leave, child care, workplace research, workforce research, effective workplaces, workplace flexibility, executive functions of the brain

Overview

Families and Work Institute (FWI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing research for living in today's changing workplace, changing family, and changing community. Since the Institute was cofounded in 1989, our work has tackled issues in three major areas: the workforce/workplace, youth, and early childhood. For a history of our accomplishments over the past 25 years, please see <http://www.familiesandwork.org/about/>.

Research to Live, Work, and Learn By.

This is the mission of the FWI. Our very reason for being is to conduct research that leads to action. We are unusual among organizations—both academic and nonprofit organizations—in four ways:

- 1.** Whereas other organizations tend to be focused on one or a few specific topics, we take a *broad, life-cycle approach*, covering topics from birth through aging.
- 2.** Whereas other organization tend to focus on individuals or on the context in which individuals live, we take an *ecological approach*, looking at individuals in terms of their work, their families, and their communities.

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3. Whereas other organizations tend to be either focused on conducting research or advocating for changes, we are a research organization that works to ensure that the rigorous findings resulting from our studies can or do *lead to action*.

4. Whereas other organizations that focus on action tend to stop there, we additionally work to ensure that our action projects are *change experiments*—they are evaluated by research and then improved.

This broad mission, ecological approach, and focus on change experiments shape the research we conduct, how we design it, and how we work to ensure both its rigor and its potential for leading to change experiments that can be evaluated. Three questions guide our decision making:

1. The subject: Should we take on this issue? Because our intent is to be ahead of the curve, to investigate issues as they crest, where there is (p. 200) mounting debate, strong and divided opinion, but few data to inform decision making, we select subjects that meet these criteria on the changing workforce, family, and community. As such, our studies cover a range of issues, for example: What makes an effective and flexible workplace? How are gender roles changing? How do young people feel about the major issues they face growing up? How can we best promote learning?

2. The methodology: How should we design the study? It is important that the design reflects the future plan for affecting action—by engaging the diverse stakeholders as advisors and/or by taking into account how people think about the issue and the most compelling way to make new findings “sticky,” whether they conform to or refute common wisdom.

3. The action plan: How should we use the findings to inform action that can be evaluated? Of course, the findings of any inquiry are not known in advance—there are hypotheses to be sure—but some of these are born out and some are not. Our research-to-action plan is always flexible in keeping with the actual findings and its potential for evaluation.

There are several underlying tenets that inform our approach:

- It is imperative that we use the most rigorous research, whether it is our own or that of others. We conduct the two most comprehensive, ongoing, nationally representative studies of the changing U.S. *workforce* (the National Study of the Changing Workforce) and the U.S. *workplace* (the National Study of Employers) that focus on employees’ lives on and off the job. We work hard to ensure the representativeness of the samples, the scientific accuracy of the measures used, and the analyses conducted. (See the Appendix for a description of these two studies.)
- We are not advocates—we do not do research to convince others of predetermined points of view, but rather, to thoroughly investigate an issue. We are available, however, to serve as “expert witnesses” on the findings of any study or project.
- We do not take an either/or stance toward change. If our purpose is to conduct research that leads to action, our view is that it has to involve multiple sectors—public

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policy leaders, employers, employees, and community leaders. Thus, each study or project, either sequentially or concurrently, involves many different sectors.

Examples of Research to Action—In Action

The examples we describe here are intended to be a sample of the research-to-action strategies we have used in our 25-year history.

Public Policy: The Impact of Parental Leave Legislation

One of the first projects the FWI embarked upon soon after our founding in 1989 was an investigation of the impact of newly implemented parental leave statutes on employers and new parents in four states: Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. It was called the *State Parental Leave Study*, and it met our standard for being a good *subject* for study. Recent legislation in the states at that time presaged the eventual passage of more state and national family leave legislation, yet these laws were the topic of fierce controversy.

The opponents of the laws argued that public policy was not needed, that good employers did the right thing. Furthermore, they testified that mandates would harm—even close down—businesses because of the cost of paying for temporary workers to cover employees on leave as well as the cost of maintaining benefits for the leave takers. They also warned of employees abusing the laws, specifically men who would not use the time off to take care of new babies. Additionally, they argued that family leave legislation was “the camel’s nose under the tent”—the gateway to big government controlling and interfering with business.

Conversely, the proponents of the laws countered that minimum standards were necessary because not all employers provided adequate leaves, especially for their lowest paid employees. They emphasized that the costs of covering leaves would not be that high or the implementation that difficult to administer. Their approach took a family values stance, stressing the importance of new parents having enough time after childbirth and adoption to bond with their newborns, thus getting these young children off to a healthier start in life, both physically and emotionally.

Although the debates were contentious, there were surprisingly few studies on this topic to inform decision making; thus, it was an ideal subject from our point of view. Funding for the study came from the Ford Foundation. Our *immediate goal* was to disentangle fact from fiction in the state debates. Our *longer-term goal* was to provide data that could be used to inform future action.

The *methodology* had to fit the controversial nature of this study. If this project was seen as an (p. 201) advocacy study for either side, the findings—whatever they were—would

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have less of a chance of being heard and heeded. Thus, we first selected states that differed on the policy dimensions in various state laws, including the following:

- The *length of the leave* being offered: we selected states that offered shorter to longer leaves, from 6 weeks in Minnesota and Wisconsin to 12 weeks in Oregon and 13 weeks in Rhode Island.
- The *size of the employers* required to comply with the law: we selected states that required coverage of smaller to larger firms—from 21 or more employees in Minnesota, 25 in Oregon, to 50 or more employees in Rhode Island and Wisconsin.
- The presence of *wage replacement*: Rhode Island provided Temporary Disability Insurance for new mothers; thus, there was a form of wage replacement in one of the four states being studied.

Second, we created a national advisory board that consisted of many of the most prominent opponents and proponents of family leave legislation, so this study would not be seen as partisan. We interviewed leaders of each of these national organizations individually, asking them what study questions should be included. We then replicated this methodology in the states, inviting the governor or lieutenant governor to be our state sponsor. Under their auspices, we brought the leading opponents and proponents in each of these states together, inviting them to help frame the questions the study would address.

The design of the study involved obtaining samples of between 1,000 and 1,500 employers per state from the state agency responsible for maintaining the official databases of unemployment insurance records and surveying these employers 2 to 3 years after the passage of their state law about its impact. In each of the states, we used birth records to obtain representative samples of approximately 1,000 biological mothers who had given birth 3 to 9 months before the enactment of their state law and another representative sample of mothers who had given birth 6 to 12 months after enactment. The mothers were asked about their leave-taking behavior as well as that of their spouse or partner.

The national and state advisory groups reviewed the employer and employee questionnaires to ensure that they addressed their “burning” questions about the impact of the laws and were not seen as biased. The advisors also reviewed the final report, although a few declined to participate at this juncture because the findings did not conform to their advocacy positions.

The *action plan* for dissemination involved releasing the study as federal legislation was being debated. The findings were presented in a FWI report called Beyond the Parental Leave Debate: The Impact of Laws in Four States (Bond, Galinsky, Lord, Staines, & Brown, 1991). They revealed that employers did not have a hard time implementing the new state laws 2 to 3 years after their passage. Only 9% of employers reported problems. Contrary to expectations, smaller employers were not more likely than larger employers to have problems with implementation. Similarly, employers did not find implementation costly nor did they cut back on providing health insurance, with only 6% reporting reduc-

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ing this benefit. Furthermore, few employers relied on temporary workers to replace employees on leave. On the employee side, we found that the laws did little to change mothers' leave-taking behavior 6 to 12 months after enactment, but the laws did affect fathers, who were more likely to take time off under the laws (rather than using their vacation or sick days), and they took more time off, from 3.7 days to 4.7 days on average. In Rhode Island (the one state with Temporary Disability Insurance in place), low-income mothers took longer leaves than low-income mothers in the other states. Only 7% of new mothers in Rhode Island took fewer than the medically advised 6 weeks off, compared with 18% in Oregon and 9% in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. Low-income mothers took longer average leaves in Rhode Island (13 weeks on average) compared with 9.4 weeks in the other three states.

In our view, one of the greatest *effects* of this study was on the debate about family leave. The results of the Beyond the Parental Leave Debate study were cited in the Congressional debate about passage of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and became part of the information used by Presidential candidates in the months leading up to the 1992 election. The Clinton campaign, for example, requested a copy of the study at the time of its release. We were subsequently invited to discuss the findings with campaign advisors, and then invited to attend the Economic Summit held by incoming President William Jefferson Clinton in December 1992 to share the study results. Our findings were also used by the coalition of groups arguing for and against the laws, but, given the findings, were especially compelling to the women's, family advocacy, and labor groups that had been urging the new President to make the family leave legislation the first piece of legislation he signed into law.

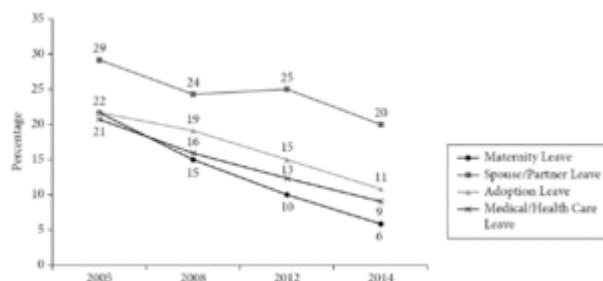


Figure 15.1. Percentage of employers offering less than 12 weeks of leave among those reporting they are required to comply with the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA): 2005–2012.

Copyright © 2015, Families and Work Institute National Study of Employers Sample sizes range between 993 and 1,100. Only the 2014 sample was restricted to employers indicating that they must comply with FMLA.

The Family and Medical Leave Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton as his first official law on February 5, 1993. After the passage of the law, researchers at the FWI were contracted to work with the Department of Labor (p. 202) and its Women's Bureau to help shape the assessment of its impact by (1) identifying ongoing

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governmental studies in which new questions on family leave could be added and by (2) proposing new avenues for the monitoring of this law.

The FWI has continued to monitor implementation in its own ongoing study, the National Study of Employers (Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield, 2005; Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, with Kim & Giuntoli, 2008; Matos & Galinsky, 2012, 2014).

In 2014, we found that 12 weeks of leave has become the norm among those employers covered by the law, although paternity leave lags behind the other three types of leave we assessed (Figure 15.1). Here business practice has not kept pace with changes in men, whom studies by the FWI reveal are more involved with the care of their children than in the past (Aumann & Galinsky, 2009, revised 2011; Aumann et al., 2011).

On the other hand, the average maximum amount of time off has declined among *all* employers—those covered by FMLA and those not covered—except for maternity leaves, as shown in Table 15.1.

Similar to our findings in the original Beyond the Parental Leave Debate study, the passage of leave legislation has brought about largely positive change (Bond et al., 1991). Twenty years after the passage of FMLA in 1993, we find that it has helped level the playing field as 12 weeks of leave has become the norm. On the other hand, longer leaves are less available.

It is further clear—from these findings and others—that public policy change has to involve multiple sectors, not just the government. In the State Parental Leave Study, we found that only 54% of new mothers were aware of the passage of laws in their states providing parental leave. In the 2014 National Study of Employers, we found that one in five employers required to be in compliance with the law is out of compliance (Matos & Galinsky, 2014). Other studies we have conducted on state policies efforts to improve the quality of child care and early education have come to similar conclusions (Galinsky, 2006). Without the active involvement of employers and employees as well as community leaders, public policy will not yield its intended results.

Employers/Employees: Effective Workplaces

The FWI conducts two ongoing and parallel nationally representative studies of the U.S. workforce and workplace: the National Study of the Changing Workforce and the National Study of Employers. (Please see the Appendix for fuller descriptions of both studies.) They are the sources of many of our projects on employers and employees.

Since 1997, we have been investigating the factors in workplaces that lead to positive outcomes for employees and employers (Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield, 2005; Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1997; Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, with Kim & Giuntoli, 2008; Matos & Galinsky, 2012, 2014). We have conducted these studies on the workforce as a whole and on specific segments of the workforce, particularly the low-wage workforce (Bond & Galinsky, 2011a, 2011b).

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The subject of one of our more recent reports in this genre was on the health of the U.S. workforce, (p. 203) a topic of obvious concern during the debates that led up to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that was passed and signed into law in 2010 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 2012. This subject was also of concern to employers because health care costs continue to spiral up. Our *immediate goal* in this report based on our National Studies of the Changing Workforce was to document the trends in employees' health in 2008 and compare them to 2002, but our *longer-term goal* was to identify the factors in jobs and the workplace that are linked with improved health, providing employers with a potential road map for improving workplaces in ways that can lead to better health among their employees. This study continued an investigation we began in 1997, identifying the job factors that benefit both employers and employees—in this case, the job factors that are predictive of better health, well-being, engagement, job satisfaction, and retention (Bond et al., 1997). We group these factors under the rubric of an effective workplace.

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Table 15.1. Caregiving Leaves from 2008 to 2014.

Leave Policy/Benefit	2008	Significance	2014
Average maximum job-guaranteed leave for women following the birth of a child	14.7 weeks	NS	13.8 weeks
Average maximum job-guaranteed leave for spouses/partners of women following the birth of their child (typically called paternity leave)	12.1 weeks	**	10.9 weeks
Average maximum job-guaranteed leave following the adoption of a child	13.0 weeks	***	11.8 weeks
Average maximum job-guaranteed leave for employees to care for seriously ill family members	13.3 weeks	**	12.1 weeks

Copyright © 2015, Families and Work Institute 2014 National Study of Employers Sample sizes range within survey year from 648 to 695 in 2008 and from 753 to 754 in 2014. Statistical significance: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; ns = not significant. Because of rounding errors, when findings are presented as percentage distributions across several response categories, they do not always add to 100%. Fractional percentages are not reported in order to simplify the presentation.

Our *methodology* was to use FWI's 2002 and 2008 National Studies of the Changing Workforce as sources. The key *findings* were presented in a report called *The State of Health of the American Workforce: Does Having an Effective Workplace Matter?* (Aumann & Galinsky, 2009, revised 2011). We found the following:

- In 2008, less than one-third of employees (28%) said that their overall health is “excellent”—a significant decline of 6%.
- Men’s health has been deteriorating more rapidly than women’s health.
- Minor health problems are becoming more frequent among American employees—the percentage of people reporting that they *never* experience minor health problems in the past month was 29% in 2008, whereas it was 36% in 2002.

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- Just more than one in five employees is currently receiving treatment for high blood pressure.
- A closer look at the lifestyles of American employees reveals that there is room for improvement. Despite widespread efforts to reduce smoking and the pervasiveness of strict nonsmoking policies in American workplaces, one in four employees still smokes, the majority of employees do not exercise on a regular basis, and nearly two out of three employed individuals (62%) are overweight or obese.
- More than one in three employees shows signs of clinical depression.
- Sleep problems are pervasive.

Our findings identified the factors in the work environment that are related to better outcomes for both employers and employees. They are opportunities for learning, autonomy, work-life fit, supervisor support for work success, a culture of trust, and satisfaction with earnings, benefits, and opportunities for advancement (Figure 15.2).

We found that employees in effective workplaces are more likely to feel healthy and report better well-being—clearly a result that is important to employers and employees alike (Figure 15.3).

Opportunities for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My job lets me use my skills and abilities.• The work I do is meaningful to me.• My job requires that I be creative.• I get to do different things on my job.• My job requires that I keep learning new things.	Supervisor Support for Work Success <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem.• My supervisor recognizes when I do a good job.• My supervisor keeps me informed of things I need to know to do my job well.
Autonomy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have a lot of say about what happens on my job.• I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.• I can be myself on my job.	Culture of Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I trust what our managers say.• My managers deal ethically with employees and clients.• My managers seek information and new ideas from employees.
Work-Life Fit <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My supervisor cares about the effect of work on my personal/family life.• My supervisor is responsive when I have personal/family business.• I have the co-worker support I need to successfully manage my work and family life.• I have the schedule flexibility I need to successfully manage my work and family life.• My work schedule/shift meets my needs.	Satisfaction with earnings, benefits, and opportunities for advancement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am satisfied with my earnings from my job.• I am satisfied with my benefits from my job.• I am satisfied with my opportunities for career advancement.

Figure 15.2. The characteristics of an effective workplace.

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We also found that employees in more effective workplaces are more engaged, more satisfied (p. 204) with their jobs, and less likely to plan on leaving. Obviously, these outcomes also benefit both employers and employees (Figure 15.4).

The first step in our *action plan* was to raise awareness. Our report was launched with a news conference. We then shared the findings with business leaders in ongoing ways. We work with 50 to 60 corporations through the FWI's Corporate Leadership Circle (CLC), staffed The Conference Board's Work Life Leadership Council from 1983 to 2013, and co-ran a conference tract with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) at its annual conference called "reinvent work." Thus, we can provide our research findings to employers on an ongoing basis. We have made the point that employers can improve

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workplace effectiveness in their organizations by making small changes, for example, by providing employees with some degree of job autonomy and more challenging assignments, improving the culture of trust, and encouraging supervisors to be more supportive of employees' work success. These changes can potentially reduce employees' stress levels as well as improve employee health and well-being, which, in turn, can lead to a more engaged workforce willing and able to work hard to help achieve organizational goals.

Our most significant aspect of our *action plan*, however, involves operationalizing the findings into When Work Works, a project of the FWI and the Society for Human Resource Management: <http://www.whenworkworks.org>. When Work Works had its origins in 2003 when the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation refocused some of its funding on action-based projects and change experiments. Across the more than 100 Sloan-funded studies in various academic disciplines and among different populations, there were consistent findings revealing a mismatch between the needs of the workforce and the structure of the workplace. These studies also revealed that workplace flexibility could reduce this mismatch, and, at the same time, improve the lives of employees and business outcomes of employers (Christensen, 2013).

FWI was selected as one of the anchor grants of this new initiative in 2003 because our ongoing research enables us to track trends in workplace flexibility, because we have a "theory of change," and because we have strong links to business.

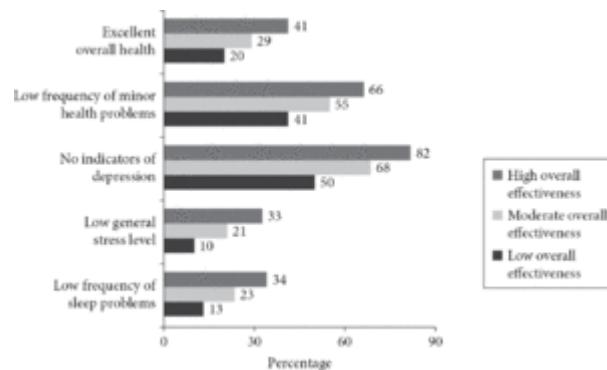


Figure 15.3. Relationships between workplace effectiveness and employee health outcomes.

Copyright © 2015, Families and Work Institute, 2008
National Study of the Changing Workforce.

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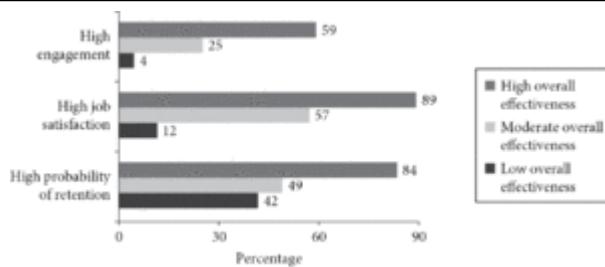


Figure 15.4. Relationships between varying levels of overall workplace effectiveness and positive work outcomes.

Copyright © 2015, Families and Work Institute, 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce.

The strategy for When Work Works was to implement and test FWI's theory of change, which consists of eight principles (Galinsky, 2014; Galinsky, Matos, & Sakai-O'Neill, 2013). Our (p. 205) initial 2003 funding was focused on flexibility, but we have continually widened this focus to include all of the ingredients of effective workplaces in response to the findings from our studies.

Principle 1: It Takes Time and a Well-Developed Network of Partnerships to Bring about Change

Our initial approach was to work in eight communities—enabling us to pilot our program in order to improve the process before scaling up our efforts and engaging a wider group of communities. We took a community approach because it enables us to reach small and mid-sized companies—not just corporations—because that is where most Americans work.

Each of the selected communities was required to do three things to raise awareness and promote organizational change: (1) conduct at least two educational events to share research findings from our nationally representative studies and local best practices in workplace flexibility and effectiveness, (2) conduct outreach to the media, and (3) promote the When Work Works Award and honor its recipients.

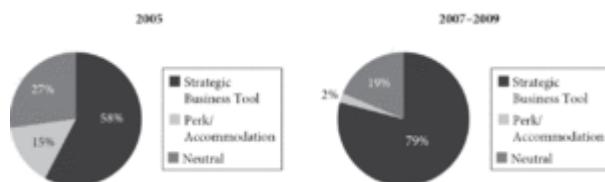


Figure 15.5. Flexibility portrayed in the media as a perk versus a business tool.

Copyright © 2015, Families and Work Institute, based on data from Cision Media Tracking Tools, 2005-2009.

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An award was chosen as the vehicle of change because it could become a forum for companies to compete as an “employer of choice” within their communities, thus providing visibility, media attention, and access to better job candidates. We also knew from our studies within companies that there could be huge variation within any company. Thus, (p. 206) we decided to create an award for individual worksites/offices, rather than an award for the whole organization.

By the end of 2010, we had partnered with five states and 28 communities that reached 30% of the U.S. population. As Sloan funding was ending, we began a search for another partner to support and sustain this effort. During our search, we found that SHRM—the world’s largest association devoted to human resource management with more than 275,000 members and 575 affiliated chapters—had a strong interest in addressing these issues because in a study of their own, their members reported that flexibility was more important than compensation in attracting and retaining talent (Allen, 2010). After a year of discussion and negotiation, the partnership was announced on February 1, 2011.

Principle 2: Understand the Current State of Your Issue—How People See and Experience It

We have continued to review the research conducted by FWI and other leading researchers to understand the current state of attitudes about, access to, and provisions of effective and flexible workplaces (Galinsky, Sakai, & Wigton, 2010, 2011; Matos & Galinsky, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d). Among the trends that these studies reveal are the following:

- 1.** Employees see flexibility as a personal issue—a solution to individual employee problems—not as a business strategy
- 2.** Managers see flexibility as important, but prefer work-centric employees.
- 3.** Employees and managers have a limited perspective of flexibility (which they largely define as flextime and telecommuting) and do not fully understand the range of options.

Our response has been to address these trends directly. The first trend notes that flexibility is seen as a personal issue. FWI has shared its research showing that flexibility is more than a perk, but rather is an effective business strategy. As shown in Figure 15.5, media coverage of our research has similarly shifted. And in 2013, media coverage averaged 1.4 times per day!

In response to the second trend, FWI has shared our research that employees who are dual centric—they put an equivalent priority on their work and their personal or family lives—are not only less stressed and feel more successful at work, but also have an easier time handling their work and family responsibilities. In a study of the top leaders in 10 multinational companies, women who were dual centric had advanced to higher reporting levels (Aumann et al., 2011; Galinsky et al., 2003).

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In response to the third trend—that many employees and managers tend to think of flexibility as flextime and telecommuting and do not understand the full range of options available to them—we have created toolkits and brochures that quickly display the range of flexibility options to increase their knowledge about possibilities that extend beyond flextime and flexplace (Workflex: Employee Toolkit, 2012; Workflex: Flex and the Bottom Line, 2012; Workflex Primer. What Is Workflex? How Does It Work? And How Can Workplace Flexibility Help My Organization? 2012).

Our finding that flexibility is only one aspect of an effective workplace—that it is not a magic bullet in and of itself—poses our next challenge. There is such strong interest in flexibility that we are working hard to create resonance for the larger concept of effective workplaces. Thus, we continue to share this research with employers and the public, and, as described more fully below, have redesigned the When Work Works Award to focus on effective workplaces as well to position this notion within the (p. 207) professionals in companies who are responsible for talent management.

Principle 3: Know What the “Ask” Is

The major “ask” of When Work Works has been inviting employers to apply for and win a When Work Works Award. The award application exists in two parts, with employers filling out an initial application indicating whether they have the range of flexibility options, cultural support for flexibility within their organization, and efforts that provide learning opportunities that help supervisors better support their direct reports in succeeding on the job and that promote economic security, job autonomy, as well as a culture of trust. If the organization qualifies as being in the top 20% of employers nationally based on our National Study of Employers, a random sample of employees is asked to fill out a matched survey that shows whether they have access to and use the flexibility, and whether or not there is support or jeopardy for its use. The major focus of the employee survey, however, is on all aspects of an effective workplace.

This process provides a number of benefits for organizations that apply. First, the application itself is a learning tool. As employers fill out the survey, they learn what FWI considers an effective workplace. Second, FWI prepares benchmarking reports for all applicants, comparing their data with award winners as well as with nationally representative data from the National Study of Employers and the National Study of the Changing Workforce. These benchmarking reports—which would have required numerous consultants and extensive time, effort, and cost to provide—are instead gained through a free award application and are invaluable as a tool to use to plan improvements. Third, FWI creates a book—online and in print—called the Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work. It is a compendium of the best practices that companies can use as inspiration for improvements in their practices, programs, and policies. As John Parry, the recently retired CEO of Solix, Inc., a six-time award winner, wrote: “This Guide is a gold mine.” Another CEO, G. Brint Ryan of Ryan LLC, with 27 winning workplaces in 2013, wrote that this award is the “gold standard” because of its rigor.

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Principle 4: Messages Are Critical

In response to the principle that “unexpected messages” have stopping power, FWI staff carefully deliberated about the name of the project, which is its ultimate message. We finally selected When Work Works. We intentionally did not use the words “workplace flexibility” or “work life” or even “effective workplace” in the name because these are the expected names. We wanted a larger framework, specifically, the notion that work has to work for both the employer and the employee. We took into account the principle that “messages must evoke strong feelings” in our name by appealing to the uniquely American value that work can, in fact, “work.”

An ancillary principle is that “messages must include a problem that *can* be solved.” Here we have invested a great deal of effort in sharing the stories of winners of the When Work Works Award through the annual Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work, conferences, and speeches. The SHRM-FWI When Work Works team gave more than 95 presentations in 32 states in 2014, reaching more than 6,000 employers.

Principle 5: Unexpected Messengers Also Make a Difference

We continue to call on unexpected messengers on effective workplaces. For example, James Turley, then Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Ernst & Young and now retired, was featured at a FWI Gala in 2009. He said:

Ernst & Young is an organization that's got 140,000 plus people around the world and it's the only asset we have. We have no inventory; we have no plant and equipment. Every day, every one of our assets goes home, and we have to be the kind of organization they wish to come back to the next day ... I could tell you with certainty that when I look at what we've done around the issues that FWI is all about and the change we put into it, it has cost us one heck of a lot less and delivered one heck of a lot more than anything else we have possibly done. And so, it is all about attracting that talent and helping our business performance.

Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (now retired), was also featured at the same gala. He said:

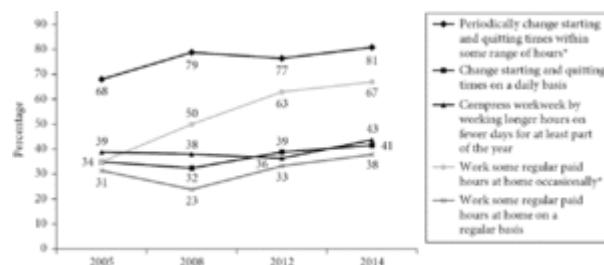


Figure 15.6. Flextime and flexplace 2005–2014.

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We recently reached a tipping point in the Navy where over 50% of all our people, both in the officer and (lower) ranks are from the Millennials. So, this is an urgent question for us when you talk about retaining the talent you have to have to do the missions we are assigned. Now when we get into this (work-life fit) in a big way, we (p. 208) find that they are equally committed to the Navy, but also committed to their family. This is one of the reasons why we have gotten into this in a big way—[to help the Navy] to be true to them so they can be true to both the career they want and the families they love.

Principle 6: Target the People Who Have the Power to Bring about Change—Recognize, Connect, and Assist Them

With SHRM, we are targeting human resource leaders now in all 50 states. They become their local champions of effective workplaces. We keep them connected to each other through once a month conference calls and regular communications.

Principle 7: Take Advantage of Opportunities as They Arise

FWI is well-positioned to be a leader in the broader conversations as they emerge into the public venues because of the wealth of data it collects on the workplace and workforce. In 2010, the White House Council on Women and Girls hosted The White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility to encourage a select group of leaders to consider the benefits of flexibility for businesses and employees. The Council of Economic Advisors published a report, Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility, in which FWI research was a key contributor. The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor continued the conversation by convening the National Dialogue on Workplace Flexibility (NDWF), a series of forums on workplace flexibility that brought together stakeholders in multiple communities across the nation. Again, FWI staff served as keynoters, discussion group members, and/or subject matter experts. In addition, we produced eight original reports tailored to the specific interest of each forum, including health care, education, low-wage workers, and retail (Bond & Galinsky, 2011a, 2011b; Galinsky & Sakai, 2011; Galinsky et al., 2010; Matos & Galinsky, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d; Sakai, Matos, & Galinsky 2011).

In 2014, we helped to plan and spoke at The White House Summit on Working Families, and used that as an opportunity to share information about effective workplaces.

Principle 8: Detail Expected Outcomes, Assess Results, and Make Change

The National Study of Employers (NSE) enables FWI to track the trends in workplace flexibility while the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) enables us to track the trends in workplace effectiveness. While national level trends are governed by a multitude of factors beyond the scope of When Work Works, it is still valuable to show these changes.

The 2014 NSE reveals that flexibility around full-time work has increased and flexibility around significant time away from work has declined (Matos & Galinsky, 2014) (Figures 15.6, 15.7, and 15.8).

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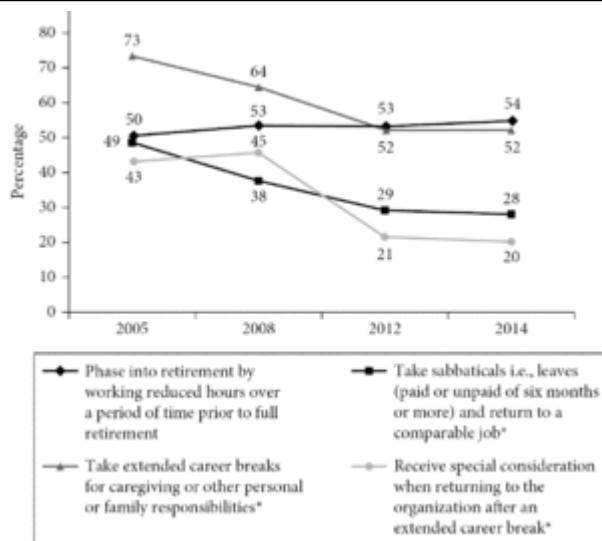


Figure 15.7. Flex careers 2005–2014.

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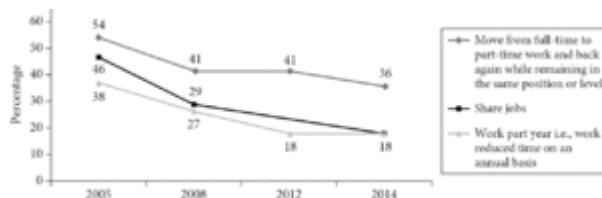


Figure 15.8. Reduced time 2005–2014.

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In addition, we found that manager support for flexibility has declined. For example, managers are less likely to assess employees on results than face time (64% in 2014, down from 71% in 2008); and management is less likely to reward those in the organization who support an effective flexible [\(p. 209\)](#) work arrangement (11% in 2014, down from 20% in 2008).

These findings make it clear that When Work Works needs to focus on reversing the decline of significant time away from work as well as management support for flexibility (Matos & Galinsky, 2014)

The next NSCW will enable us to track trends in effective workplaces and further target our work.

Families/Family-Serving Professionals

FWI has conducted numerous studies in which the focus is on families and family-serving professionals. Especially notable are our Ask the Children studies.

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Typically, children are the “objects” of study—but, in this research, we have made them the “subjects,” not only eliciting their views of the major issues they face growing up such as their views of employed parents, of their vision of their jobs for the future, and of violence and bullying—their views are always surprising—but also their suggestions for redressing these issues. As one child put it, “If we are the problem, then we need to be part of the solution” (Galinsky, 2000).

Our most recent initiative, Mind in the Making, emerged from the Ask the Children studies. In conducting focus groups for an Ask the Children Study on Youth and Learning, we found that far too many (p. 210) children saw learning as extrinsically motivated. When children were asked to finish the sentence, “It’s important to learn,” they said: “So I can ... get good grades ... go to good schools ... get a good job ... support myself—have a good house—have a nice car ... not be a bum on the street.”

Although, of course, these reasons are crucially important, far too many children had lost the fire in their eyes for learning with which all children are born. Not only does the United States have a problem with children dropping out of school, but it also has a problem with children dropping out of learning (Galinsky, 2010). These findings echoed other studies revealing a lack of engagement in learning (Yazzi-Mintz, 2006). Thus, the *subject* for this inquiry was: What can we do to keep the fire for learning burning in children’s eyes and, if it has dimmed, how can we rekindle it?

To arrive at the *methodology* for addressing this question, FWI conducted focus groups with parents. Both low-income and higher-income parents reported wanting to learn brain science, but they did not want generalities, with experts telling them that “Science says blah, blah, blah”—whatever the finding. As one parent put it: “I want to know who did the study and how it was done. How does this person know what he knows about children?”

Beginning in 2000, FWI staff reviewed more than 1,000 studies and conducted in-depth interviews with close to 100 leading researchers who study children’s learning from many different academic disciplines—filming these researchers “in action” as they conducted their actual experiments. The *short-term and longer-term goals* are the same: to share the science of children’s learning and to create action experiments based on the science. Visit <http://www.mindinthemaking.org>.

Among the findings of this research journey is the critical importance of executive functions of the brain in helping children thrive now and in the future. Some people do not like the word *executive* because it conjures up an image in your brain of a boss ordering you around. Instead, think of executive brain functions as “managing,” not ordering. We use these functions to “manage” our attention, our emotions, and our behavior in order to reach our goals. Nor are they only intellectual skills—they involve weaving together our social, emotional, and intellectual capacities. Here are some key aspects of executive functions:

Executive functions are always driven by goals

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(Zelazo, 2008).

They involve using our working memories to keep a number of different things in our minds at the same time while paying attention, thinking flexibly, and inhibiting our tendency to go on automatic pilot (Diamond, 2008).

Executive functions pull together our feelings and thinking, so that we can reflect, analyze, plan, and evaluate (Zelazo, 2008).

Stanislas Dehaene of the Collège de France in Paris calls the prefrontal cortex and executive functions a “neuronal workspace” whose main purpose is to “assemble, confront, recombine, and synthesize knowledge,” allowing “our behavior to be guided by any combination of information from past or present experience” (Dehaene, 2009). “It’s a Theoretical Construct.”

Adele Diamond from the University of British Columbia states that executive functions predict children’s achievements as well as IQ tests do, or even better, because they go beyond what we know—they tap our abilities to *use* what we know (Diamond, 2008). There are numerous studies that indicate that executive functions predict school readiness and school success (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011), school achievement (Christensen & Schneider, 2010; Duncan et al., 2007), college achievement (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004), and college graduation rates (McClelland & Wanless, 2012).

From the review of the literature, seven executive function life skills were identified: Focus and Self Control, Perspective Taking, Communicating, Making Connections, Critical Thinking, Taking on Challenges, and Self-Directed, Engaged Learning.

The FWI has created a number of materials to share this information, including *Mind the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs*, a highly acclaimed book that has sold more than 110,000 copies (Galinsky, 2010); experiments in Children’s Learning, a set of DVDs with videos of 42 experiments conducted by top child development scientists; and a collection of 42 children’s books for infants-toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children that promote executive function life skills. The children’s books are available through First Book to programs serving low-income children at greatly reduced prices. The tip sheets that FWI and First Book created for each book are available free and have been downloaded 260,608 times since their launch: <http://mindinthemaking.org/firstbook/>. We have also developed Prescriptions for Learning—tip sheets that take frequently asked (p. 211) questions by parents, showing how to turn behavioral issues into opportunities to promote Life Skills.

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The book has also been translated into Seven Essential Life Skills Modules that share research on promoting executive function life skills. The Modules have been carefully designed to promote new ways of learning and teaching. We are among the only training program that does the following:

- *Promotes Executive Function Life Skills for children that begin with promoting them in adults.* We start by engaging families and professionals in an experiential process of self-reflection and self-discovery where they experience their own competence in each of these life skills, probe why this skill is important in their own lives, and take responsibility for proposing strategies to improve this skill in themselves.
- *Provides first-hand experience with child development research.* In the Modules, we then connect the adults' experiences to the research on this life skill in children's lives—why it is important, and how it can be promoted—through videos that present the most respected and compelling child development research (not “talking heads,” but the actual experiments) on the skill in an accessible way.
- *Ties action to research.* In the Modules, each participant then makes specific plans to promote these life skills in themselves and in children, which they report on in subsequent Modules.
- *Is based on an evidence-based articulated theory of teaching and learning.* Using the research review, we have developed a list of effective teaching and learning principles. The Modules are taught using these stated principles, trainers are evaluated using these principles, and practitioners are expected to use these principles in their work with children.
- *Has a goal of creating linkages and alignments among systems in the 0-8 systems.* All too often community planning is “show and tell,” where diverse stakeholders come together to share what they are doing. While this is a positive and necessary first step to creating better systems for children and families, it is not sufficient. Our approach convenes diverse stakeholders—leaders representing the public schools, early childhood programs, health care, social services, parent support, and libraries, museums, etc.—to learn the Modules together. Second, these trainers teach the Modules to their constituencies, using an unusual process of co-facilitation with leaders from other sectors. Thus, you would have a leader from the schools co-facilitating with a leader from the early childhood system in order to improve cross-systems linkages.
- *Redefines family engagement.* Family engagement has typically been seen as a top-down approach—the professional has the information and imparts it to families in engaging ways. We are working to turn that concept on its head by having families and professionals learn the Modules together.

The *action plan* involves disseminating the training and materials in a sequential way that builds out from a hub and becomes a community-surround system. This process is as carefully designed as the materials themselves.

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The first sector we worked with is *education*. With a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we selected six communities and introduced the Modules through their community school system. From this hub of six communities, the Modules are being implemented in an additional nine states and communities.

The second sector we have worked with is the *health care system*. Now in partnership with Mt Sinai Hospital, and with funding from the Popplestone Foundation, we are creating Learning Modules for Pediatricians and Health Care Professionals to be implemented during residency training.

The third sector is *museums and libraries*. We are creating a report on best practices in presenting information about brain development and Executive Functions in children's museums, science museums, and libraries, in collaboration with the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) and with funding from the Popplestone Foundation. In addition, we will help set up pilot community design teams to develop training as well as new visual displays, exhibits, and outreach and education tools on brain development that can be replicated by other libraries and museums.

The fourth sector is *families*. We have been working with the Bezos Family Foundation to create materials for their initiative called Vroom. These materials inspire families to turn everyday moments into brain building moments: <http://www.bezosfamilyfoundation.org/vroom>. The sites we work with have begun to receive other funding, including the following:

- The Providence Public School Department (PPSD) and Ready to Learn Providence received (p. 212) a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) to bring Mind in the Making to 2,580 families, 240 PPSD teachers, and 160 other schools.
- The Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa received a W.K. Kellogg Foundation competitive family engagement grant to expand the capacity of Tulsa-area family, friend, and neighborhood care givers, using Mind in the Making in their training.
- The University of New Mexico Family Development Program and the New Mexico School Leadership Institute have been funded to use Mind in the Making and their state standards to implement Common Core State Standards.
- Now that we have created a change experiment, we will evaluate its results in the community school systems. In addition, we are beginning research on executive functions in adolescents, and will ultimately follow the same research to action process in implementing our findings.

Conclusions

To fulfill our mission—*research to live, work, and learn by*—we have taken a broad, life-cycle, ecological approach in which we select projects that can and do lead to action, be-

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coming change experiments that can be evaluated by research and then improved. A common purpose unites our research over the past 25 years.

We are trying to understand how we—children and adults—can best thrive and work toward changes that create families that thrive, workplaces that thrive, and communities that thrive.

Appendix

The National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) has its origins in the U.S. Department of Labor's Quality of Employment Surveys (QES) that began in 1969. The last survey in this series, conducted in 1977, marked the first time that research on a large representative sample of U.S. workers collected information about not only the work lives of employees, but their personal lives as well (Quinn & Staines, 1977). When the QES program was halted for a variety of reasons in 1977, a 15-year gap ensued during which there were numerous small-scale studies of life on and off the job, but no large-scale studies of nationally representative samples.

The FWI (FWI) stepped into this breach in the early 1990s by obtaining private support for the NSCW as an ongoing research program of the Institute. FWI's program is more explicit and comprehensive than the QES in addressing issues related to both work and personal life. It also reflects a strong business perspective in addition to the broad social and public policy perspectives that shaped the QES. It is crafted to address timely questions about the changing workforce that are of practical importance to decision makers.

NSCW surveys are conducted every 5 years with representative samples of the U.S. workforce averaging about 3,500 in size—the first in 1992, the second in 1997, the third in 2002, the fourth in 2008, and the fifth in 2015. It is a very rigorous study. The 2008 study had a 54.6% response rate and a 99% completion rate, with a sampling error of $\pm 1\%$. All NSCW surveys have been funded from private sources—corporations, corporate foundations, and philanthropic foundations. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funded data collection in both 2002 and 2008.

The National Study of Employers (NSE) is the most comprehensive and far-reaching study of the practices, policies, programs, and benefits provided by U.S. employers to address the changing needs of today's workforce and workplace. The NSE is based on the Institute's landmark 1998 Business Work-Life Study (BWLS) and has been conducted four additional times since the BWLS survey was completed (2005, 2008, 2012, and 2014).

Although there are similar surveys by employer membership organizations, consulting firms, and government agencies, the NSE is notable in that it is the only study of employers in the United States that comprehensively assesses a broad array of programs, policies, and benefits designed to address the changing need of employees among a nationally representative group of employers.

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The 2014 NSE surveyed a representative national sample of 1,051 for-profit (67% of the sample) and nonprofit employers (33% of the sample) with 50 or more employees by telephone interviews and web surveys with Human Resource directors. All respondents were offered the opportunity to complete the survey in their preferred mode (telephone interview or online survey). Representatives of Harris Interactive conducted the 48-minute phone interviews between September 13, 2013 and January 31, 2014. Online interviews averaged about 37 minutes in length and were conducted during the same time period. Approximately 34% of the sample chose to respond via telephone interview and 66% (p. 213) chose to respond by online survey. Employers were selected from Dun & Bradstreet lists using a stratified random sampling procedure in which selection was proportional to the number of people employed by each company to ensure a large enough sample of large organizations. The response rate for the study was 40%. The maximum sampling error (margin of error) for the study when describing the total sample is approximately 4%. (If the design effect is taken into account, the maximum sampling error for total sample estimates increases to about 5.2%). When analyzing data to make generalizations about the universe of organizations with 50 or more employees in the United States, the sample was weighted to the distribution of employers found in the D&B database, a close approximation of the distribution of employers of different sizes in the United States. The questionnaire was developed to complement the FWI's ongoing NSCW, which surveys representative national samples of employees in the U.S. labor force. Harris Interactive was responsible for the data collection; FWI conducted the analysis of the data.

The NSE has been funded by private and corporate philanthropies, and is currently funded by FWI and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

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