

Why Women Still Can't Have It All

ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER



Redefining the Arc of a Successful Career

EIGHTEEN MONTHS INTO MY JOB as the first woman director of policy planning at the State Department, a foreign-policy dream job that traces its origins back to George Kennan, I found myself in New York, at the United Nations' annual assemblage of every foreign minister and head of state in the world. On a Wednesday evening, President and Mrs. Obama hosted a glamorous reception at the American Museum of Natural History. I sipped champagne, greeted foreign dignitaries, and mingled. But I could not stop thinking about my 14-year-old son, who had started eighth grade three weeks earlier and was already resuming what had become his pattern of skipping homework,

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disrupting classes, failing math, and tuning out any adult who tried to reach him. Over the summer, we had barely spoken to each other—or, more accurately, he had barely spoken to me. And the previous spring I had received several urgent phone calls—invariably on the day of an important meeting—that required me to take the first train from Washington, D.C., where I worked, back to Princeton, New Jersey, where he lived. My husband, who has always done everything possible to support my career, took care of him and his 12-year-old brother during the week; outside of those midweek emergencies, I came home only on weekends.

As the evening wore on, I ran into a colleague who held a senior position in the White House. She has two sons exactly my sons' ages, but she had chosen to move them from California to D.C. when she got her job, which meant her husband commuted back to California regularly. I told her how difficult I was finding it to be away from my son when he clearly needed me. Then I said, "When this is over, I'm going to write an op-ed titled 'Women Can't Have It All.'"

She was horrified. "You *can't* write that," she said. "You, of all people." What she meant was that such a statement, coming from a high-profile career woman—a role model—would be a terrible signal to younger generations of women. By the end of the evening, she had talked me out of it, but for the remainder of my stint in Washington, I was increasingly aware that the feminist beliefs on which I had built my entire career were shifting under my feet. I had always assumed that if I could get a foreign-policy job in the State Department or the White House while my party was in power, I would stay the course as long as I had the opportunity to do work I loved. But in January 2011, when my two-year public-service leave from Princeton University was up, I hurried home as fast as I could.

A rude epiphany hit me soon after I got there. When people asked why I had left government, I explained that I'd come home not only because of Princeton's rules (after two years of leave, you lose your tenure), but also because of my desire to be with my family and my conclusion that juggling high-level government work with the needs of two teenage boys was not possible. I have not exactly left the ranks of full-time career women: I teach a full course load; write regular print and online columns on foreign policy; give 40 to 50 speeches a year; appear regularly on TV and radio; and am working on a new academic book. But I routinely got reactions from other women my age or older that ranged from disappointed ("It's such a pity that you had to leave Washington") to condescending ("I wouldn't generalize from your experience. I've never had to compromise, and my kids turned out great").

The first set of reactions, with the underlying assumption that my choice was somehow sad or unfortunate, was irksome enough. But it was the second set of reactions—those implying that my parenting and/or my commitment to my profession were somehow substandard—that triggered a blind fury. Suddenly, finally, the penny dropped. All my life, I'd been on the other side of this exchange. I'd been the woman smiling the faintly superior smile while another woman told me she had decided to take some time out or pursue a less competitive career track so that she could spend more time with her family. I'd been the woman congratulating herself on her unswerving commitment to the feminist cause, chatting smugly with her dwindling number of college or law-school friends who had reached and maintained their place on the highest rungs of their profession. I'd been the one telling young women at my lectures that you *can* have it all and do it all, regardless of what field you are in. Which means I'd been part, albeit unwittingly, of making millions of women

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feel that *they* are to blame if they cannot manage to rise up the ladder as fast as men and also have a family and an active home life (and be thin and beautiful to boot).

Last spring, I flew to Oxford to give a public lecture. At the request of a young Rhodes Scholar I know, I'd agreed to talk to the Rhodes community about "work-family balance." I ended up speaking to a group of about 40 men and women in their mid-20s. What poured out of me was a set of very frank reflections on how unexpectedly hard it was to do the kind of job I wanted to do as a high government official and be the kind of parent I wanted to be, at a demanding time for my children (even though my husband, an academic, was willing to take on the lion's share of parenting for the two years I was in Washington). I concluded by saying that my time in office had convinced me that further government service would be very unlikely while my sons were still at home. The audience was rapt, and asked many thoughtful questions. One of the first was from a young woman who began by thanking me for "not giving just one more fatuous 'You can have it all' talk." Just about all of the women in that room planned to combine careers and family in some way. But almost all assumed and accepted that they would have to make compromises that the men in their lives were far less likely to have to make.

The striking gap between the responses I heard from those young women (and others like them) and the responses I heard from my peers and associates prompted me to write this article. Women of my generation have clung to the feminist credo we were raised with, even as our ranks have been steadily thinned by unresolvable tensions between family and career, because we are determined not to drop the flag for the next generation. But when many members of the younger generation have stopped listening, on the

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for tips on
indicating the
importance of
a claim.

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grounds that glibly repeating “you can have it all” is simply airbrushing reality, it is time to talk.

I still strongly believe that women can “have it all” (and that men can too). I believe that we can “have it all at the same time.” But not today, not with the way America’s economy and society are currently structured. My experiences over the past three years have forced me to confront a number of uncomfortable facts that need to be widely acknowledged—and quickly changed.

Before my service in government, I’d spent my career in academia: as a law professor and then as the dean of Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Both were demanding jobs, but I had the ability to set my own schedule most of the time. I could be with my kids when I needed to be, and still get the work done. I had to travel frequently, but I found I could make up for that with an extended period at home or a family vacation.

I knew that I was lucky in my career choice, but I had ¹⁰ no idea how lucky until I spent two years in Washington within a rigid bureaucracy, even with bosses as understanding as Hillary Clinton and her chief of staff, Cheryl Mills. My workweek started at 4:20 on Monday morning, when I got up to get the 5:30 train from Trenton to Washington. It ended late on Friday, with the train home. In between, the days were crammed with meetings, and when the meetings stopped, the writing work began—a never-ending stream of memos, reports, and comments on other people’s drafts. For two years, I never left the office early enough to go to any stores other than those open 24 hours, which meant that everything from dry cleaning to hair appointments to Christmas shopping had to be done on weekends, amid children’s sporting events, music lessons,

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family meals, and conference calls. I was entitled to four hours of vacation per pay period, which came to one day of vacation a month. And I had it better than many of my peers in D.C.; Secretary Clinton deliberately came in around 8 a.m. and left around 7 p.m., to allow her close staff to have morning and evening time with their families (although of course she worked earlier and later, from home).

In short, the minute I found myself in a job that is typical for the vast majority of working women (and men), working long hours on someone else's schedule, I could no longer be both the parent and the professional I wanted to be—at least not with a child experiencing a rocky adolescence. I realized what should have perhaps been obvious: having it all, at least for me, depended almost entirely on what type of job I had. The flip side is the harder truth: having it all was not possible in many types of jobs, including high government office—at least not for very long.

I am hardly alone in this realization. Michèle Flournoy stepped down after three years as undersecretary of defense for policy, the third-highest job in the department, to spend more time at home with her three children, two of whom are teenagers. Karen Hughes left her position as the counselor to President George W. Bush after a year and a half in Washington to go home to Texas for the sake of her family. Mary Matalin, who spent two years as an assistant to Bush and the counselor to Vice President Dick Cheney before stepping down to spend more time with her daughters, wrote: "Having control over your schedule is the only way that women who want to have a career and a family can make it work."

Yet the decision to step down from a position of power—to value family over professional advancement, even for a time—is directly at odds with the prevailing social pressures

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on career professionals in the United States. One phrase says it all about current attitudes toward work and family, particularly among elites. In Washington, "leaving to spend time with your family" is a euphemism for being fired. This understanding is so ingrained that when Flournoy announced her resignation last December, *The New York Times* covered her decision as follows:

Ms. Flournoy's announcement surprised friends and a number of Pentagon officials, but all said they took her reason for resignation at face value and not as a standard Washington excuse for an official who has in reality been forced out. "I can absolutely and unequivocally state that her decision to step down has nothing to do with anything other than her commitment to her family," said Doug Wilson, a top Pentagon spokesman. "She has loved this job and people here love her."

Think about what this "standard Washington excuse" implies: it is so unthinkable that an official would *actually* step down to spend time with his or her family that this must be a cover for something else. How could anyone voluntarily leave the circles of power for the responsibilities of parenthood? Depending on one's vantage point, it is either ironic or maddening that this view abides in the nation's capital, despite the ritual commitments to "family values" that are part of every political campaign. Regardless, this sentiment makes true work-life balance exceptionally difficult. But it cannot change unless top women speak out.

Only recently have I begun to appreciate the extent to which many young professional women feel under assault by women my age and older. After I gave a recent speech in New York, several women in their late 60s or early 70s came up to tell me how glad and proud they were to see me speaking as a foreign-policy expert. A couple of them went on, however, to contrast

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my career with the path being traveled by “younger women today.” One expressed dismay that many younger women “are just not willing to get out there and do it.” Said another, unaware of the circumstances of my recent job change: “They think they have to choose between having a career and having a family.”

A similar assumption underlies Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg’s widely publicized 2011 commencement speech at Barnard, and her earlier TED talk, in which she lamented the dismally small number of women at the top and advised young women not to “leave before you leave.” When a woman starts thinking about having children, Sandberg said, “she doesn’t raise her hand anymore . . . She starts leaning back.” Although couched in terms of encouragement, Sandberg’s exhortation contains more than a note of reproach. We who have made it to the top, or are striving to get there, are essentially saying to the women in the generation behind us: “What’s the matter with you?”

They have an answer that we don’t want to hear. After the speech I gave in New York, I went to dinner with a group of 30-somethings. I sat across from two vibrant women, one of whom worked at the UN and the other at a big New York law firm. As nearly always happens in these situations, they soon began asking me about work-life balance. When I told them I was writing this article, the lawyer said, “I look for role models and can’t find any.” She said the women in her firm who had become partners and taken on management positions had made tremendous sacrifices, “many of which they don’t even seem to realize. . . . They take two years off when their kids are young but then work like crazy to get back on track professionally, which means that they see their kids when they are toddlers but not teenagers, or really barely at all.” Her friend nodded, mentioning the top professional women she

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knew, all of whom essentially relied on round-the-clock nannies. Both were very clear that they did not want that life, but could not figure out how to combine professional success and satisfaction with a real commitment to family.

I realize that I am blessed to have been born in the late 1950s instead of the early 1930s, as my mother was, or the beginning of the 20th century, as my grandmothers were. My mother built a successful and rewarding career as a professional artist largely in the years after my brothers and I left home—and after being told in her 20s that she could not go to medical school, as her father had done and her brother would go on to do, because, of course, she was going to get married. I owe my own freedoms and opportunities to the pioneering generation of women ahead of me—the women now in their 60s, 70s, and 80s who faced overt sexism of a kind I see only when watching *Mad Men*, and who knew that the only way to make it as a woman was to act exactly like a man. To admit to, much less act on, maternal longings would have been fatal to their careers.

But precisely thanks to their progress, a different kind of conversation is now possible. It is time for women in leadership positions to recognize that although we are still blazing trails and breaking ceilings, many of us are also reinforcing a falsehood: that “having it all” is, more than anything, a function of personal determination. As Kerry Rubin and Lia Macko, the authors of *Midlife Crisis at 30*, their cri de coeur for Gen-X and Gen-Y women, put it:

What we discovered in our research is that while the empowerment part of the equation has been loudly celebrated, there has been very little honest discussion among women of our age about the real barriers and flaws that still exist in the system despite the opportunities we inherited.

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I am well aware that the majority of American women face problems far greater than any discussed in this article. I am writing for my demographic—highly educated, well-off women who are privileged enough to have choices in the first place. We may not have choices about whether to do paid work, as dual incomes have become indispensable. But we have choices about the type and tempo of the work we do. We are the women who could be leading, and who should be equally represented in the leadership ranks.

Millions of other working women face much more difficult life 20 circumstances. Some are single mothers; many struggle to find any job; others support husbands who cannot find jobs. Many cope with a work life in which good day care is either unavailable or very expensive; school schedules do not match work schedules; and schools themselves are failing to educate their children. Many of these women are worrying not about having it all, but rather about holding on to what they do have. And although women as a group have made substantial gains in wages, educational attainment, and prestige over the past three decades, the economists Justin Wolfers and Betsey Stevenson have shown that women are less happy today than their predecessors were in 1972, both in absolute terms and relative to men.

The best hope for improving the lot of all women, and for closing what Wolfers and Stevenson call a “new gender gap”—measured by well-being rather than wages—is to close the leadership gap: to elect a woman president and 50 women senators; to ensure that women are equally represented in the ranks of corporate executives and judicial leaders. Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women. That will be a society that works for everyone.

. . .

Rediscovering the Pursuit of Happiness

One of the most complicated and surprising parts of my journey out of Washington was coming to grips with what I really wanted. I had opportunities to stay on, and I could have tried to work out an arrangement allowing me to spend more time at home. I might have been able to get my family to join me in Washington for a year; I might have been able to get classified technology installed at my house the way Jim Steinberg did; I might have been able to commute only four days a week instead of five. (While this last change would have still left me very little time at home, given the intensity of my job, it might have made the job doable for another year or two.) But I realized that I didn't just *need* to go home. Deep down, I *wanted* to go home. I wanted to be able to spend time with my children in the last few years that they are likely to live at home, crucial years for their development into responsible, productive, happy, and caring adults. But also irreplaceable years for me to enjoy the simple pleasures of parenting—baseball games, piano recitals, waffle breakfasts, family trips, and goofy rituals. My older son is doing very well these days, but even when he gives us a hard time, as all teenagers do, being home to shape his choices and help him make good decisions is deeply satisfying.

The flip side of my realization is captured in Rubin and Macko's ruminations on the importance of bringing the different parts of their lives together as 30-year-old women:

If we didn't start to learn how to integrate our personal, social, and professional lives, we were about five years away from morphing into the angry woman on the other side of a mahogany desk who questions her staff's work ethic after standard 12-hour workdays, before heading home to eat moo shoo pork in her lonely apartment.

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Women have contributed to the fetish of the one-dimensional life, albeit by necessity. The pioneer generation of feminists walled off their personal lives from their professional personas to ensure that they could never be discriminated against for a lack of commitment to their work. When I was a law student in the 1980s, many women who were then climbing the legal hierarchy in New York firms told me that they never admitted to taking time out for a child's doctor appointment or school performance, but instead invented a much more neutral excuse.

Today, however, women in power can and should change 25 that environment, although change is not easy. When I became dean of the Woodrow Wilson School, in 2002, I decided that one of the advantages of being a woman in power was that I could help change the norms by deliberately talking about my children and my desire to have a balanced life. Thus, I would end faculty meetings at 6 p.m. by saying that I had to go home for dinner; I would also make clear to all student organizations that I would not come to dinner with them, because I needed to be home from six to eight, but that I would often be willing to come back after eight for a meeting. I also once told the Dean's Advisory Committee that the associate dean would chair the next session so I could go to a parent-teacher conference.

After a few months of this, several female assistant professors showed up in my office quite agitated. "You *have* to stop talking about your kids," one said. "You are not showing the gravitas that people expect from a dean, which is particularly damaging precisely because you are the first woman dean of the school." I told them that I was doing it deliberately and continued my practice, but it is interesting that gravitas and parenthood don't seem to go together.

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Ten years later, whenever I am introduced at a lecture or other speaking engagement, I insist that the person introducing me mention that I have two sons. It seems odd to me to list degrees, awards, positions, and interests and *not* include the dimension of my life that is most important to me—and takes an enormous amount of my time. As Secretary Clinton once said in a television interview in Beijing when the interviewer asked her about Chelsea's upcoming wedding: "That's my real life." But I notice that my male introducers are typically uncomfortable when I make the request. They frequently say things like "And she particularly wanted me to mention that she has two sons"—thereby drawing attention to the unusual nature of my request, when my entire purpose is to make family references routine and normal in professional life.

This does not mean that you should insist that your colleagues spend time cooing over pictures of your baby or listening to the prodigious accomplishments of your kindergartner. It does mean that if you are late coming in one week, because it is your turn to drive the kids to school, that you be honest about what you are doing. Indeed, Sheryl Sandberg recently acknowledged not only that she leaves work at 5:30 to have dinner with her family, but also that for many years she did not dare make this admission, even though she would of course make up the work time later in the evening. Her willingness to speak out now is a strong step in the right direction.

Seeking out a more balanced life is not a women's issue; balance would be better for us all. Bronnie Ware, an Australian blogger who worked for years in palliative care and is the author of the 2011 book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, writes that the regret she heard most often was "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me." The second-most-common regret was "I wish I didn't work

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so hard." She writes: "This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship."

Juliette Kayyem, who several years ago left the Department of Homeland Security soon after her husband, David Barron, left a high position in the Justice Department, says their joint decision to leave Washington and return to Boston sprang from their desire to work on the "happiness project," meaning quality time with their three children. (She borrowed the term from her friend Gretchen Rubin, who wrote a best-selling book and now runs a blog with that name.)

It's time to embrace a national happiness project. As a daughter of Charlottesville, Virginia, the home of Thomas Jefferson and the university he founded, I grew up with the Declaration of Independence in my blood. Last I checked, he did not declare American independence in the name of life, liberty, and professional success. Let us rediscover the pursuit of happiness, and let us start at home.

Innovation Nation

As I write this, I can hear the reaction of some readers to many of the proposals in this essay: It's all fine and well for a tenured professor to write about flexible working hours, investment intervals, and family-comes-first management. But what about the real world? Most American women cannot demand these things, particularly in a bad economy, and their employers have little incentive to grant them voluntarily. Indeed, the most frequent reaction I get in putting forth these ideas is that when the choice is whether to hire a man who will work whenever and wherever needed, or a woman who needs more flexibility, choosing the man will add more value to the company.

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In fact, while many of these issues are hard to quantify and measure precisely, the statistics seem to tell a different story. A seminal study of 527 U.S. companies, published in the *Academy of Management Journal* in 2000, suggests that “organizations with more extensive work-family policies have higher perceived firm-level performance” among their industry peers. These findings accorded with a 2003 study conducted by Michelle Arthur at the University of New Mexico. Examining 130 announcements of family-friendly policies in *The Wall Street Journal*, Arthur found that the announcements alone significantly improved share prices. In 2011, a study on flexibility in the workplace by Ellen Galinsky, Kelly Sakai, and Tyler Wigton of the Families and Work Institute showed that increased flexibility correlates positively with job engagement, job satisfaction, employee retention, and employee health.

This is only a small sampling from a large and growing literature trying to pin down the relationship between family-friendly policies and economic performance. Other scholars have concluded that good family policies attract better talent, which in turn raises productivity, but that the policies themselves have no impact on productivity. Still others argue that results attributed to these policies are actually a function of good management overall. What is evident, however, is that many firms that recruit and train well-educated professional women are aware that when a woman leaves because of bad work-family balance, they are losing the money and time they invested in her.

Even the legal industry, built around the billable hour, is 35 taking notice. Deborah Epstein Henry, a former big-firm litigator, is now the president of Flex-Time Lawyers, a national consulting firm focused partly on strategies for the retention of female attorneys. In her book *Law and Reorder*, published by the

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American Bar Association in 2010, she describes a legal profession “where the billable hour no longer works”; where attorneys, judges, recruiters, and academics all agree that this system of compensation has perverted the industry, leading to brutal work hours, massive inefficiency, and highly inflated costs. The answer—already being deployed in different corners of the industry—is a combination of alternative fee structures, virtual firms, women-owned firms, and the outsourcing of discrete legal jobs to other jurisdictions. Women, and Generation X and Y lawyers more generally, are pushing for these changes on the supply side; clients determined to reduce legal fees and increase flexible service are pulling on the demand side. Slowly, change is happening.

At the core of all this is self-interest. Losing smart and motivated women not only diminishes a company’s talent pool; it also reduces the return on its investment in training and mentoring. In trying to address these issues, some firms are finding out that women’s ways of working may just be better ways of working, for employees and clients alike.

Experts on creativity and innovation emphasize the value of encouraging nonlinear thinking and cultivating randomness by taking long walks or looking at your environment from unusual angles. In their new book, *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change*, the innovation gurus John Seely Brown and Douglas Thomas write, “We believe that connecting play and imagination may be the single most important step in unleashing the new culture of learning.”

Space for play and imagination is exactly what emerges when rigid work schedules and hierarchies loosen up. Skeptics should consider the “California effect.” California is the cradle of American innovation—in technology, entertainment, sports, food, and lifestyles. It is also a place where people take leisure

as seriously as they take work; where companies like Google deliberately encourage play, with Ping-Pong tables, light sabers, and policies that require employees to spend one day a week working on whatever they wish. Charles Baudelaire wrote: "Genius is nothing more nor less than childhood recovered at will." Google apparently has taken note.

No parent would mistake child care for childhood. Still, seeing the world anew through a child's eyes can be a powerful source of stimulation. When the Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling wrote *The Strategy of Conflict*, a classic text applying game theory to conflicts among nations, he frequently drew on child-rearing for examples of when deterrence might succeed or fail. "It may be easier to articulate the peculiar difficulty of constraining [a ruler] by the use of threats," he wrote, "when one is fresh from a vain attempt at using threats to keep a small child from hurting a dog or a small dog from hurting a child."

The books I've read with my children, the silly movies I've 40 watched, the games I've played, questions I've answered, and people I've met while parenting have broadened my world. Another axiom of the literature on innovation is that the more often people with different perspectives come together, the more likely creative ideas are to emerge. Giving workers the ability to integrate their non-work lives with their work—whether they spend that time mothering or marathoning—will open the door to a much wider range of influences and ideas.

Enlisting Men

Perhaps the most encouraging news of all for achieving the sorts of changes that I have proposed is that men are joining the cause. In commenting on a draft of this article, Martha Minow, the dean of the Harvard Law School, wrote me that one change

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she has observed during 30 years of teaching law at Harvard is that today many young men are asking questions about how they can manage a work-life balance. And more systematic research on Generation Y confirms that many more men than in the past are asking questions about how they are going to integrate active parenthood with their professional lives.

Abstract aspirations are easier than concrete trade-offs, of course. These young men have not yet faced the question of whether they are prepared to give up that more prestigious clerkship or fellowship, decline a promotion, or delay their professional goals to spend more time with their children and to support their partner's career.

Yet once work practices and work culture begin to evolve, those changes are likely to carry their own momentum. Kara Owen, a British foreign-service officer who worked a London job from Dublin, wrote me in an e-mail:

I think the culture on flexible working started to change the minute the Board of Management (who were all men at the time) started to work flexibly—quite a few of them started working one day a week from home.

Men have, of course, become much more involved parents over the past couple of decades, and that, too, suggests broad support for big changes in the way we balance work and family. It is noteworthy that both James Steinberg, deputy secretary of state, and William Lynn, deputy secretary of defense, stepped down two years into the Obama administration so that they could spend more time with their children (for real).

Going forward, women would do well to frame work-family 45 balance in terms of the broader social and economic issues that affect both women and men. After all, we have a new

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generation of young men who have been raised by full-time working mothers. Let us presume, as I do with my sons, that they will understand “supporting their families” to mean more than earning money.

I have been blessed to work with and be mentored by some extraordinary women. Watching Hillary Clinton in action makes me incredibly proud—of her intelligence, expertise, professionalism, charisma, and command of any audience. I get a similar rush when I see a front-page picture of Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, deep in conversation about some of the most important issues on the world stage; or of Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, standing up forcefully for the Syrian people in the Security Council.

These women are extraordinary role models. If I had a daughter, I would encourage her to look to them, and I want a world in which they are extraordinary but not unusual. Yet I also want a world in which, in Lisa Jackson’s* words, “to be a strong woman, you don’t have to give up on the things that define you as a woman.” That means respecting, enabling, and indeed celebrating the full range of women’s choices. “Empowering yourself,” Jackson said in a speech at Princeton, “doesn’t have to mean rejecting motherhood, or eliminating the nurturing or feminine aspects of who you are.”

I gave a speech at Vassar last November and arrived in time to wander the campus on a lovely fall afternoon. It is a place infused with a spirit of community and generosity, filled with

*Jackson From 2009 until 2013, Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

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benches, walkways, public art, and quiet places donated by alumnae seeking to encourage contemplation and connection. Turning the pages of the alumni magazine (Vassar is now coed), I was struck by the entries of older alumnae, who greeted their classmates with *Salve* (Latin for “hello”) and wrote witty remembrances sprinkled with literary allusions. Theirs was a world in which women wore their learning lightly; their news is mostly of their children’s accomplishments. Many of us look back on that earlier era as a time when it was fine to joke that women went to college to get an “M.R.S.” And many women of my generation abandoned the Seven Sisters as soon as the formerly all-male Ivy League universities became coed. I would never return to the world of segregated sexes and rampant discrimination. But now is the time to revisit the assumption that women must rush to adapt to the “man’s world” that our mothers and mentors warned us about.

I continually push the young women in my classes to speak more. They must gain the confidence to value their own insights and questions, and to present them readily. My husband agrees, but he actually tries to get the young men in his classes to act more like the women—to speak less and listen more. If women are ever to achieve real equality as leaders, then we have to stop accepting male behavior and male choices as the default and the ideal. We must insist on changing social policies and bending career tracks to accommodate *our* choices, too. We have the power to do it if we decide to, and we have many men standing beside us.

We’ll create a better society in the process, for *all* women. 50
We may need to put a woman in the White House before we are able to change the conditions of the women working at Walmart. But when we do, we will stop talking about whether women can have it all. We will properly focus on

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how we can help all Americans have healthy, happy, productive lives, valuing the people they love as much as the success they seek.

Joining the Conversation

1. According to Anne-Marie Slaughter, women can “‘have it all.’ . . . But not today, not with the way America’s economy and society are currently structured” (paragraph 8). Summarize her “I say,” noting the reasons and evidence she gives to support her claims.
2. In paragraph 19, Slaughter entertains a possible objection to her argument, saying that she is “well aware that a majority of American women face problems far greater than any discussed in this article.” How does she answer this objection?
3. This essay consists of four sections: Redefining the Arc of a Successful Career, Rediscovering the Pursuit of Happiness, Innovation Nation, and Enlisting Men. Summarize each section in a sentence or two. Put yourself in Slaughter’s shoes; your summary should be true to what she says. (See pp. 31–33 for guidance in writing this kind of summary.)
4. Slaughter claims that most young men today have not yet had to decide between accepting a promotion or other professional opportunity and delaying their own goals “to spend more time with their children and to support their partner’s career” (paragraph 42). What would Richard Dormant (pp. 555–75) say to that?
5. Write a paragraph stating your own thoughts and perceptions on mixing family and career. Given Slaughter’s arguments, how do you think she’d respond to what you say?

Why Men Still Can't Have It All

RICHARD DORMENT



Lately, the raging debate about issues of “work-life balance” has focused on whether or not women can “have it all.” Entirely lost in this debate is the growing strain of work-life balance on men, who today are feeling the competing demands of work and home as much or more than women. And the truth is as shocking as it is obvious: No one can have it all. Any questions?

THE BABY HAS A HEARTBEAT. The ultrasound shows ten fuzzy fingers and ten fuzzy toes and a tiny crescent-moon mouth that will soon let out the first of many wails. We have chosen not to find out the gender, and when the question comes, as it does every day, we say we have no preference. Ten fingers, ten toes. A wail in the delivery room would be nice. But in private, just us, we talk. About the pros and cons of boys versus girls, and about whether it would be better, more advantageous, to

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be born a boy or a girl right now. It's a toss-up, or maybe just a draw—impossible to say that a boy or a girl born in America in 2013 has any conspicuous advantages because of his or her gender.

Consider the facts: Nearly 60 percent of the bachelor's degrees in this country today go to women. Same number for graduate degrees. There are about as many women in the workforce as men, and according to Hanna Rosin's 2012 book, *The End of Men*, of the fifteen professions projected to grow the fastest over the coming years, twelve are currently dominated by women. Per a 2010 study by James Chung of Reach Advisors, unmarried childless women under thirty and with full-time jobs earn 8 percent more than their male peers in 147 out of 150 of the largest U. S. cities. The accomplishments that underlie those numbers are real and world-historic, and through the grueling work of generations of women, men and women are as equal as they have ever been. Adding to that the greater male predisposition to ADHD, alcoholism, and drug abuse, women have nothing but momentum coming out of young adulthood—the big mo!—and then . . .

Well, what exactly? Why don't women hold more than 15 percent of *Fortune* 500 executive-officer positions in America? Why are they stalled below 20 percent of Congress? Why does the average woman earn only seventy-seven pennies for every dollar made by the average man? Childbirth plays a role, knocking ambitious women off their professional stride for months (if not years) at a time while their male peers go chug-chug-chugging along, but then why do some women still make it to the top while others fall by the wayside? Institutional sexism and pay discrimination are still ugly realities, but with the millions in annual penalties levied on offending businesses . . . they have become increasingly, and thankfully, uncommon.

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College majors count (women still dominate education, men engineering), as do career choices, yet none of these on their own explains why the opportunity gap between the sexes has all but closed yet a stark achievement gap persists.

For a fuller explanation, the national conversation of late has settled on a single issue—work-life balance—with two voices in particular dominating: The first belongs to former State Department policy chief Anne-Marie Slaughter, whose essay “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All” was the most widely read story ever on the *Atlantic*’s web site and landed her a book deal and spots on *Today* and *Colbert*. Slaughter’s twelve-thousand-word story relies on personal anecdotes mixed with work talk: “I still strongly believe that women can ‘have it all’ (and that men can too). I believe that we can ‘have it all at the same time.’ But not today, not with the way America’s economy and society are currently structured.” The scarcity of

female leaders to effect public and corporate change on behalf of women; the inflexibility of the traditional workday; the prevalence of what she calls “‘time macho’—a relentless competition to work harder, stay later, pull more all-nighters, travel around the world and bill the extra hours that the international date line affords you.” All these factors conspire to deprive women of “it all.” (The “it” in question being like Potter Stewart’s definition of pornography: You know it when you have it.)

The second, and altogether more grown-up, voice belongs to Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, whose “sort of feminist” manifesto *Lean In* urges women to command a seat at any table of their choosing. Like Slaughter, Sandberg references the usual systemic challenges, but what it really boils down to, Sandberg argues, is what Aretha Franklin and Annie Lennox prescribed back in the eighties: Sisters Doin’ It for Themselves. Sandberg encourages women to negotiate harder, be more assertive, and forget about being liked and concentrate instead on letting ‘er rip. She believes that women can, and should, determine the pace and scope of their own careers, and for her audacity in assigning some agency to the women of America, her critics (Slaughter among them) say she blames women for their failure to rise farther, faster, rather than the real culprits: society, corporations, and men (which is to say: men, men, and men). Commenting on the *Lean In* debate in a blog for *The New York Times*, Gail Collins asked, “How do you give smart, accomplished, ambitious women the same opportunities as men to reach their goals? What about universal preschool and after-school programs? What about changing the corporate mind-set about the time commitment it takes to move up the ladder? What about having more husbands step up and take the major load?”

Her questions echo a 2010 *Newsweek* cover story, “Men’s Lib,” which ended with an upper: “If men embraced parental leave,

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women would be spared the stigma of the 'mommy track'—and the professional penalties (like lower pay) that come along with it. If men were involved fathers, more kids might stay in school, steer clear of crime, and avoid poverty as adults. And if the country achieved gender parity in the workplace—an optimal balance of fully employed men and women—the gross domestic product would grow by as much as 9 percent. . . . Ultimately, [it] boils down to a simple principle: in a changing world, men should do whatever it takes to contribute their fair share at home and at work."

Two men wrote that, incidentally, which must make it true, and among those who traffic in gender studies, it is something of a truth universally acknowledged: Men are to blame for pretty much everything. And I freely admit, we do make for a compelling target. Men have oppressed their wives and sisters and daughters for pretty much all of recorded history, and now women are supposed to trust us to share everything 50-50?

Allow me to paint another picture. One in which women are asked to make the same personal sacrifices as men past and present—too much time away from home, too many weekends at the computer, too much inconvenient travel—but then claim some special privilege in their hardship. One in which universal pre-school and after-school programs would be a boon to all parents (and not, as Collins suggests, simply to women). In which men spend more time with their children, and are more involved with their home lives, than ever before. In which men work just as hard at their jobs, if not harder, than ever before. In which men now report higher rates of work-life stress than women do. In which men are tormented by the lyrics of "Cat's in the Cradle." In which men are being told, in newspapers and books, on web sites and TV shows, that they are the problem, that they need to

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help out, when, honestly folks, they're doing the best they can. In which men like me, and possibly you, open their eyes in the morning and want it all—*everything!*—only to close their eyes at night knowing that only a fool could ever expect such a thing.

My wife makes more money than I do. We majored in the same thing at the same college at the same time, and when I chose to go into journalism, she chose to go to law school. She works longer hours, shoulders weightier responsibilities, and faces greater (or at least more reliable) prospects for long-term success, all of which are direct results of choices that we made in our early twenties. She does more of the heavy lifting with our young son than I do, but I do as much as I can. (Someone else watches him while we are at work.) I do a lot of cooking and cleaning around our house. So does she. I don't keep score (and she says she doesn't), and it's hard to imagine how our life would work if we weren't both giving every day our all.

According to a study released in March by the Pew Research ¹⁰ Center, household setups like ours are increasingly the norm: 60 percent of two-parent homes with kids under the age of eighteen are made up of dual-earning couples (i.e., two working parents). On any given week in such a home, women put in more time than men doing housework (sixteen hours to nine) and more time with child care (twelve to seven). These statistics provoke outrage among the "fair share" crowd, and there is a sense, even among the most privileged women, that they are getting a raw deal. (In April, Michelle Obama referred to herself as a "single mother" before clarifying: "I shouldn't say single—as a busy mother, sometimes, you know, when you've got a husband who is president, it can feel a little single." Because really: The president should spend more time making sure the First Lady feels supported.)

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But the complete picture reveals a more complex and equitable reality.

Men in dual-income couples work outside the home eleven more hours a week than their working wives or partners do (forty-two to thirty-one), and when you look at the total weekly workload, including paid work outside the home and unpaid work inside the home, men and women are putting in roughly the same number of hours: fifty-eight hours for men and fifty-nine for women.

How you view those numbers depends in large part on your definition of work, but it's not quite as easy as saying men aren't pulling their weight around the house. (Spending eleven fewer hours at home and with the kids doesn't mean working dads are freeloaders any more than spending eleven fewer hours at work makes working moms slackers.) These are practical accommodations that reflect real-time conditions on the ground, and rather than castigate men, one might consider whether those extra hours on the job provide the financial cover the family needs so that women can spend more time with the kids.

Also, according to women in the Pew study, it seems to be working out well. Working mothers in dual-earning couples are more likely to say they're very or pretty happy with life right now than their male partners are (93 percent to 87 percent); if anything, it's men who are twice as likely to say they're unhappy. (Pew supplied *Esquire* with data specific to dual-income couples that is not part of its published report. There is plenty of data relating to other household arrangements—working father and stay-at-home mom; working mother and stay-at-home dad; same-sex households—but since the focus of Slaughter, Sandberg, et al. is on the struggles of working mothers, and most working mothers are coupled with working fathers, the dual-income data set seems most relevant to examine here.)

Ellen Galinsky has been studying the American workplace ¹⁵ for more than thirty years. A married mother of two grown kids with a background in child education and zero tolerance for bullshit, she cofounded the Families and Work Institute in part to chart how the influx of women in American offices and factories would affect family dynamics. "In 1977," she says, "there was a Department of Labor study that asked people, 'How much interference do you feel between your work and your family life?' and men's work-family conflict was a lot lower than women's." She saw the numbers begin to shift in the late 1990s, and "by 2008, 60 percent of fathers in dual-earning couples were experiencing some or a lot of conflict compared to about 47 percent of women. I would go into meetings with business leaders and report the fact that men's work-family conflict was higher than women's, and people in the room—who were so used to being worried about women's advancement—couldn't believe it."

What they couldn't believe was decades of conventional wisdom—men secure and confident in the workplace, women somewhat less so—crumbling away as more and more fathers began to invest more of their time and energy into their home lives. Though they still lag behind women in hours clocked at the kitchen sink, men do more than twice as much cooking and cleaning as they did fifty years ago, which probably comes as a shock to older women who would famously come home from work to a "second shift" of housework. In reporting her book, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, a study of women's roles in the 2008 election, Rebecca Traister interviewed dozens of high-achieving women who were in the thick of second-wave feminism and encountered the generation gap for herself. "I remember one day, right before Thanksgiving, a woman who had grown children said something like 'I would love to keep talking to you but

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I have to start my two-day slog to Thanksgiving.' And I said very lightly, 'Oh, my husband does the cooking in our house.' This woman then got very serious, as if she had never heard of such a thing. For people [in their thirties], isn't it totally normal for guys to do a lot of cooking? In fact it's one of the things about today—dudes love food, right? But it was so foreign to her."

In speaking with a variety of men for this article, I found that most men say they share responsibilities as much as circumstances allow. One of the men who spoke with me, Dave from Atherton, California, runs a successful business, and both he and his wife (a fellow technology executive) say that they split their family duties 50-50. "We have a Google calendar that we share so that everyone is on the same page, and on the weekend, we plan out our week: who's doing what, who's driving the kids which day, what dinner looks like each night during the week."

Yet Dave still considers himself an anomaly. "There is still this expectation that women are going to do the majority of the housework, and deal with schools and stuff, while men can just make it home for dinner and show up at sporting events and be like, 'Wow, I'm being a great father.' It is a real issue, and it is something you really have to work at. You have to try and make sure that you're doing the other stuff around the house in a way that's fair and equal."

He makes a valid point, and in trying to figure out why men don't do more around the house, we could discuss any number of factors—men generally spend more time at work, out of the home, than women do, so they don't have as much time for chores; women are inherently more fastidious; men are lazy and/or have a higher threshold for living in filth—but the most compelling argument comes from writer Jessica Grose in *The New Republic*. "Women are more driven to keep a clean house

because they know they—before their male partners—will be judged for having a dirty one.” Rather than confront or ignore paternalistic expectations, some women seem willing to cede to them, and this whiff of put-upon-ness recalls something Slaughter acknowledged in an online chat with readers following her article’s publication: “SO MUCH OF THIS IS ABOUT WHAT WE FEEL, or rather WHAT WE ARE MADE TO FEEL by the reactions of those around us.” Between the all-caps (hers) and the sentiments expressed, this writing wouldn’t be out of place on a teenage blog, and as anyone who’s ever argued with a teenager knows, it’s hard to reason with feelings.

However, I will try. The *validation of one’s feelings* is the language of therapy, which is to say that it is how we all talk now. 20

See p. 137 for ways to ward off potential misunderstandings.

This is not to denigrate the language or the feelings; it is only to say that to use one’s feelings as evidence of an injury is no way to advance a serious cause. And to imply that one has been *made* to feel any way at all—well, no grown man has ever won that argument before.

A final point about housework: It is not always as simple as men volunteering to do what needs to be done. To give a small, vaguely pitiful example from my own life: We share laundry duty in my house, and yet whenever I’m through folding a pile of clothes, my wife will then refold everything, quietly and without comment. This used to annoy me—why do I even bother? or, conversely, Is this the Army?—but now it mostly amuses me. When I press her on it, she tells me that I’m doing it wrong, and this too used to annoy me, until I realized that it wasn’t really about me. “If I’ve talked to one group of people about this, I’ve talked to hundreds,” says Galinsky. “Women will say ‘Support me more,’ and men will say ‘But you’re telling me I’m doing it wrong.’ I wouldn’t say it’s biological, because I’m not a biologist, but it feels biological to me in that it’s very

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hard to let someone else do something different, because it might mean that the way you're doing it isn't right." When I asked Galinsky if this could explain why a wife would refold a pile of laundry that her husband had just done a perfectly good job folding, she laughed. "Exactly."

What you're about to read is a passage from "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," and though it's long and windy, I feel the need to quote from as much of it as possible. You will understand why:

The proposition that women can have high-powered careers as long as their husbands or partners are willing to share the parenting load equally (or disproportionately) assumes that most women will *feel* as comfortable as men do about being away from their children, as long as their partner is home with them. . . . From years of conversations and observations . . . I've come to believe that men and women respond quite differently when problems at home force them to recognize that their absence is hurting a child, or at least that their presence would likely help. I do not believe fathers love their children any less than mothers do, but men do seem more likely to choose their job at a cost to their family, while women seem more likely to choose their family at a cost to their job.

(Dr. Slaughter, you had me at "I do not believe fathers love their children any less than mothers do. . . .")

Since Slaughter doesn't provide any evidence to support her claim, it's impossible to say whether the men she's referring to are the sole breadwinners in the family (meaning: the ones who feel the intense weight and pressure of being what one writer described as "one job away from poverty") or are in two-income households, or what, but it's worth keeping in mind that this comes from a

person whose husband, by her own admission, sacrificed much in his own academic career to do the heavy lifting with their children, all so she could pursue her dream job and then complain about it, bitterly, in the pages of a national magazine.

The trouble with probing men's and women's emotional relationships with their children is that the subject is fraught with stereotypes and prone to specious generalities (see above), but here goes: In my own experience as both son and father, I've learned that one parent's relationship with a child (and vice versa) isn't inherently richer or deeper than the other parent's. It's just different, and with more and more fathers spending more and more time with their kids today—nearly three times as much as they did in 1965—that has become more true than ever. “There is a dramatic cultural shift among millennial and Gen X-ers in wanting to be involved fathers,” says Galinsky. “And I don’t just think it’s just women who are telling men they need to share. Men want a different relationship with their children than men have had in the past. . . . They don’t want to be stick figures in their children’s lives. They don’t want it on their tombstone how many hours they billed. That ‘Cat’s Cradle’ song is very much alive and well in the male psyche.”

“Men are being judged as fathers now in a way that I think 25 they never have been before,” says Traister, and just as women are historically new to the workplace, men are new to the car-pool and negotiating these fresh expectations (their own and others’) as they go along. Not only do working fathers from dual-income homes spend just as much time at work as their fathers and grandfathers did (all while putting in many, many more hours with kids and chores), they also spend more time at work than non-fathers. Seven hours more a week, according to Pew, a trend that Galinsky has noticed in her own research and that she attributes to the unshakable, if often illusory, sense

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of being the breadwinner. "There are these expectations, even among men whose wives bring in 45 percent of family income, that they were still responsible for the family."

There is the matter of guilt and whether women find it harder than men to be away from their children—which, if that's the case, would mean that women looking to advance in the workplace would have heavier emotional baggage than their male peers. Any husband who's watched his wife cry before taking a business trip (and wondering—silently, I hope—to himself, why?) will tell you that men and women have different ways of experiencing and expressing ambivalence, frustration, and, yes, guilt. "I have no idea if it's societal or genetic or whatever," says Dave, the California businessman, "but it's certainly real that I think my wife feels more guilty than I do when she's gone from the kids. There's no question." I can't claim to speak for Men Everywhere, but in the interviews I conducted for this article, nearly every subject admitted to missing his kids on late nights at the office or aching for home while on a business trip, yet they couch any guilt or regret in the context of sacrifice. Chalk this up to social conditioning (men are raised to be the providers, so it's easier for them to be absent) or genetic predisposition (men are not naturally nurturing) or emotional shallowness (men aren't as in touch with their feelings), but there is the sense, down to the man, that missing their kids is the price of doing business.

And so we all do the best we can. Dave and his wife make weekends sacrosanct and family dinners a priority. "My wife famously said she leaves her office at 5:30 so we can be home at 6:00 for dinner, and I do the same thing, though we're both back online doing work after the kids go to bed."

(Dave's last name, by the way, is Goldberg, and his wife is Sheryl Sandberg, and thanks to *Lean In*, she is famous. Goldberg

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is the CEO of a company named SurveyMonkey, which provides interactive survey tools for the masses, and he helped build it from a twelve-person operation to a staff of more than two hundred and a \$1.35 billion valuation. All while splitting parenting responsibilities 50-50 with a really busy wife. They have the means, certainly, but more importantly, the will.)

Speaking of: In her commencement speech for Harvard Business School in 2012, Sandberg addressed an issue that comes up often—men need to do more to support women in the workplace. “It falls upon the men who are graduating today just as much or more than the women not just to talk about gender but to help these women succeed. When they hear a woman is really great at her job but not liked, take a deep breath and ask why. We need to start talking openly about the flexibility all of us need to have both a job and a life.”

Among the various ways men can help women, paternity 30 leave is sometimes mentioned as a good place to start, the idea being that if more men took a few weeks off following the birth of a child, they would help remove the professional stigma surrounding maternity leave and level the playing field. Anyone who has watched any woman, much less one with a full-time job, endure third-term pregnancy, delivery, and the long, lonely nights of postpartum life would tell you how necessary a national paid maternity-leave policy is. Expectant and new mothers are put through the physical and emotional wringer, and they need that time to heal without worrying about losing their job or paying the bills. There are really no two ways about it.

Dads, however, are a different and more complicated story. In California, the first state to fund up to six weeks of paid leave for new moms and dads, only 29 percent of those who take it are men, and there have been numerous studies lately

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exploring why more men aren't taking greater advantage of the ability to stay home. The general consensus is reflected in a paper out of Rutgers University: "Women who ask for family leave are behaving in a more gender normative way, compared with men who request a family leave. . . . Because the concept of work-life balance is strongly gendered, men who request a family leave may also suffer a *femininity stigma*, whereby 'acting like a woman' deprives them of masculine agency (e.g., competence and assertiveness) and impugns them with negative feminine qualities (e.g., weakness and uncertainty)." This is some paleolithic thinking here, starting, for instance, with the idea that "acting like a woman" means anything at all, much less weakness and uncertainty.

I'm lucky enough to work for a company that provides paid paternity leave, but a few days after my son was born, I was back in the office. It's not because I was scared about appearing weak to my mostly male coworkers or employers, and it's not because I was any more wary of losing my job than usual. At work, I had a purpose—things needed to be done, people needed me to do them. At home, watching my wife feed and swaddle our son and then retreat to our bed to get some sleep of her own, I learned what many first-time fathers learn: assuming an absence of any health issues related to child or mother, the first six weeks of a child's life are fairly uneventful for men. A baby eats (with about 80 percent of women today choosing to breast-feed); he poops; he sleeps. There is potential for valuable bonding time, and a new mother could almost certainly use another pair of hands, but a man's presence is not strictly necessary. Baby book after baby book warns parents that new fathers typically feel "left out," and there's a reason for that: because they are typically left out. More and more companies offer paid and unpaid paternity leave, and a man should feel

proud to exercise that option if that's what is best for him and his family. Maybe with the next baby I will. Maybe I won't. But when the doctor delivers a newborn to my exhausted, elated wife, I won't kid myself thinking that I, of all people, really deserve a little time off.

In her Harvard speech, Sandberg also evoked the specter of good old-fashioned sexism by claiming that ambitious, assertive women are generally less well liked than ambitious, assertive men. (In her book, she cites a now famous study conducted by a team of Columbia and NYU professors in which two groups were asked to assess two hard-charging executives, a man named Howard and a woman named Heidi, who were identical in every way except their names. Howard was considered the Man. Heidi, the Shrew.) It's a compelling and convincing study, and Sandberg is persuasive when she argues that too many women too often get an eye roll when they open their mouths. Two things I would hasten to add, though. One: Productivity, profitability, drive, and talent trump all. (I'm reminded of Tina Fey's defense of Hillary Clinton in 2008: "She is [a bitch]. So am I. . . . Bitches get stuff done.") Women might suspect that men don't like assertive, confrontational women, which is only half the truth, leading to my next point: that nobody wants to work with a nightmare of either gender. While the Howard-Heidi problem suggests that some men may get a longer leash than some women, the workplace is not every man's for the shitting all over.

"Advertising is a very small world and when you do something like malign the reputation of a girl from the steno pool on her first day, you make it even smaller. Keep it up, and even if you do get my job, you'll never run this place. You'll die in that corner office, a midlevel executive with a little bit of hair who women go home with out of pity. Want to know

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why? 'Cause no one will like you." Don Draper said that. Not me. And the wisdom he drops on Pete Campbell in the pilot of *Mad Men* shows that men can be just as vulnerable to office politics as women.

Finally, there is the issue of flex time, with some suggesting 35 that men should demand more options for when and where they can do their work so that women alone aren't penalized for requesting it. It has never been easier to work remotely for many professionals, yet many jobs—and in particular the top jobs, the leadership roles that history (men) has deprived women of in the past—don't have much give to them. Marissa Mayer at Yahoo was dragged into the flex-time debate when she decided that in order to save a struggling business with abysmal morale, she would do away with the company's generous work-from-home policy and require her employees to show up to an office. She was immediately painted as elitist and antiwoman, and it's easy to see why. Even though men and women are equally likely to telecommute, they typically don't place the same value on being able to do so. According to the Pew study, 70 percent of working mothers say a flexible schedule is extremely important to them, compared with just 48 percent of working fathers, and for many of those women (including my wife, who often works well past midnight at a crowded desk in our bedroom), the opportunity to do some work from home is the critical difference between a life that works and one that doesn't. That's what Mayer was messing with when she ordered all hands on deck, and it's what any employer faces when trying to balance family-friendly policies with the sometimes soul-destroying demands of a competitive marketplace.

When Barack Obama entered the White House, he talked about how he wanted his administration to be family-friendly,

offering up Sasha and Malia's swing set to staffers so they could bring their own kids to work on the weekends. Rahm Emanuel famously assured him that it would be—"family-friendly to your family."

It was classic Obama—well-meaning, forward-thinking, mindful of the struggles of the common man—undermined by classic Emanuel, which is to say reality. The White House staff would be working at the highest levels of government, investing their love and labor into what can only be described as dream jobs at a time that can only be described as a national nightmare, and if that meant kids and partners had to take the backseat for a year or two, so be it. Man, woman, whoever: Get a shovel and start digging.

Slaughter, a tenured professor at Princeton, came on board as Hillary Clinton's head of policy planning at State, and in her *Atlantic* piece, she describes her grueling workweek in D.C., her weekend commute back to New Jersey, and her ultimate conclusion that "juggling high-level government work with the needs of two teenage boys was not possible." She talked about her struggles to a fellow wonk, Jolynn Shoemaker of Women in International Security, and Shoemaker offered her two cents on high-level foreign-policy positions: "Inflexible schedules, unrelenting travel, and constant pressure to be in the office are common features of these jobs." Slaughter acknowledges that it needn't be as difficult as all that: "Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, who shares the parenting of his two young daughters equally with his wife, made getting [secured access to confidential material] at home an immediate priority so that he could leave the office at a reasonable hour and participate in important meetings via videoconferencing if necessary. I wonder how many women in similar positions would be afraid to ask, lest they be seen as insufficiently committed to their jobs."

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Slaughter makes an important point here, though probably not the one she intended to make. Steinberg did what he had to do to make a difficult situation work better for him; Slaughter's contention that a woman wouldn't feel as comfortable making the same request may or may not be true, but it doesn't matter. The option was apparently on the table. Fight for it, don't fight for it—it's entirely up to the individual. But don't complain that you never had a choice.

In the end, isn't this what feminism was supposed to be 40 about? Not equality for equality's sake—half of all homes run by men, half of all corporations run by women—but to give each of us, men and women, access to the same array of choices and then the ability to choose for ourselves? And who's to say, whether for reasons biological or sociological, men and women would even want that? When the Pew Research Center asked working mothers and fathers to picture their ideal working situation, 37 percent of women would opt for full time; 50 percent part time; and 11 percent wouldn't have a job at all. (Compare this with men's answers: 75 percent say full time, 15 percent say part time, and 10 percent wouldn't work at all.) Assuming that women had all the flexibility in the world, one of every two working mothers would choose to work part time. Perhaps with guaranteed paid maternity leave, universal daycare, and generous after-school programs, more women would be freed from the constraints of child care and would want to work full time. Or, possibly, they're just happy working part time, one foot in the workplace and one foot in the home. Hard to say.

"I can't stand the kind of paralysis that some people fall into because they're not happy with the choices they've made. You live in a time when there are endless choices. . . . Money certainly helps, and having that kind of financial privilege goes

RICHARD DORMENT

a long way, but you don't even have to have money for it. But you have to work on yourself. . . . Do something!"

Hillary Clinton said that. Not me. And while she wasn't referring to Slaughter in her interview with *Marie Claire*, she offers valuable advice to anyone who's looking to blame someone, or something, for the challenges they face in life. Getting ahead in the workplace is really hard. Getting to the top is really, really hard. And unless you are very fortunate indeed, there will always be somebody smarter, faster, tougher, and ready and willing to take a job if you're not up to the task. It's a grown-up truth, and it bites the big one, but for anyone to pretend otherwise ignores (or simply wishes away) what generations of working men learned the hard way while their wives did the backbreaking work of raising kids and keeping house. Hearing Gail Collins grumble about changing the corporate mind-set (as if competition weren't the soul of capitalism, and capitalism weren't the coin of the realm) or reading Slaughter complain that our society values hard work over family (as if a Puritan work ethic weren't in our national DNA) makes me feel like channeling Tom Hanks in *A League of Their Own*: There's no crying in baseball! If you don't want a high-pressure, high-power, high-paying job that forces you to make unacceptable sacrifices in the rest of your life, don't take the job. Or get another job that doesn't require those sacrifices. And if you can't get another job, take comfort knowing that the guy who sits across from you, the one with kids the same age as yours and a partner who's busting his or her ass to make it work, is probably in the very same boat. We are all equals here.

Then again, I would say that. I'm a man, with a working wife and a busy schedule and a little boy and another baby on the way, and I live with the choices that I've made. That is all I've ever asked for, and it is all I will ever need.

Why Men Still Can't Have It All

Joining the Conversation

1. Why, in Richard Dornet's view, can men still not "have it all"? What in particular does he mean by "it all," and what evidence does he provide to support his position?
2. This article is a response to Anne-Marie Slaughter's "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" (pp. 534–54), and Dornet summarizes and quotes from that piece extensively. How fairly do you think he represents Slaughter's views? Cite specific examples from his article in your answer.
3. Dornet published this article in *Esquire*, which calls itself "the magazine for men." How can you tell that he has written his article primarily for a male audience? How might he revise the article, keeping the same basic argument, to appeal to an audience of women?
4. Imagine you have a chance to speak with Dornet about this article. Write out what you'd say, remembering to frame your statement as a response to what he has said. (See Chapter 12 for advice on entering class discussions.)
5. Dornet's writing is quite informal—colorful and in places even irreverent. How does this informality suit his audience and purpose? How does it affect your response? Choose a paragraph in his article and dress it up, rewriting it in more formal, academic language. Which version do you find more appealing, and why?