

# Murray Hill Institute

## *Women Transforming Culture*

### Newsletter

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#### Letter From the President

Dear Friends,

In December of last year, the United Nations launched the first of several international Congresses to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the *International Year of the Family (IYF+10)*. Through these and other events, the United Nations draws the attention of the worldwide community to the family and the role it occupies in shaping society and culture.

In conjunction with IYF+10, the *International Federation for Family Development (IFFD)*, an organization that promotes family orientation initiatives throughout the world, will hold its XVI Congress in New York City at the United Nations, October 29-30. In view of its mission to inspire and assist women in transforming culture, Murray Hill Institute has been invited to participate in this Congress.

The family is the foundation of society, yet the demands and intense pace of professional work oftentimes weaken the family unit, causing parents to neglect their first responsibility, that is, their own family life. This trend is harmful to both men and women, boys and girls. At Murray Hill Institute we believe that professional women have a vital role to play in making the workplace family-friendly, and we intend to address this topic at the IFFD Congress in October. Murray Hill Institute will host two workshop sessions that will deal with work/life balance issues and initiatives that contribute to making the workplace more respectful of the family. This is a very timely topic, as reflected in our *Feature Article*.

We invite you to attend the IFFD Congress and look forward to seeing you at our workshop sessions. For information, go to: [www.IFFD.org](http://www.IFFD.org)

Warm regards,  
Kathleen McGarry  
President

## Feature Article

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### *Reconciling Work and Family Life*

#### **Introduction**

Married women in the workplace some time ago realized how difficult it is to "have it all" as time constraints imposed by professional and managerial demands make it very difficult to juggle work and family, including spouse, children and even elderly parents. As a study reviewed in the last issue of this Newsletter indicated, women executives in particular are faced with more critical decisions in managing both careers and personal lives. Executive women reported that they delayed having children and a few decided not to have any. More men executives had children than executive women and 75% of executive men had a spouse/partner who was not employed.

#### **Educated women face greater responsibilities**

Between 1970 and 2002, the number of women in the US labor force doubled to 62.7 million, equal to 60% of the female population of working age. Not only have the numbers increased but so has the educational attainment of working women. Approximately half of all PhDs awarded to US citizens go to women. (The share falls under 50% when foreigners are included because a large number of them are men.) About half of medical school and law school graduates are women. Women MBAs lag somewhat, accounting for about one-third of all graduates. Women with a higher level of

education are more likely to work since an education is considered an investment. Moreover, the concomitant higher responsibilities result in more time spent at work. Those long working hours, whether due to completion of a mega merger or saving a patient in complicated surgery, imply time away from family.

According to the US Labor Department, about 80% of women will have children during their lifetime. Most high-level working women, though not all, indeed are married, and most of them have children.

Given that women comprise half the population, employers, often with legislative prodding, have become more understanding of the challenges facing working mothers. Besides maternity leave, many large corporations offer a range of benefits to new mothers such as flexible work hours, child care, telecommuting, job sharing, and networking opportunities with other mothers. A number of women's magazines even conduct periodic surveys to determine the best companies for working mothers.

As the talents and contributions of executive, managerial, and professional women have been recognized, they rightfully have moved up the ladder in the corporate world. Women who have achieved responsible positions possess highly-developed skills that are hard to replace should they abruptly decide to drop out of the labor force, even for a short period of time. The higher the position of responsibility, the greater is the

employer's loss. A Chief Financial Officer, Director of Marketing, or Head of Research generally does not have a replacement in waiting. Such positions often are filled only after a time-consuming and thorough executive search.

**To work or not to work (at the office):  
That is the question**

After childbirth a woman is faced with a profound choice: to return to work after a few months of maternity leave or remain at home full time for a much longer period to care for her newborn.

Statistics and anecdotal evidence indicate that more professional women are choosing to stay at home with their children or entering some arrangement where they can work part-time or work as much as possible from home.

In the US, each year the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the Department of Labor compiles a report: "Employment Characteristics of Families." The latest data, covering 2003, reveal some interesting facts.

According to this survey, there were 75.3 million families in the US in 2003, and 82% had at least one employed member. Family, it is worth noting, is defined as "a group of two or more persons residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.... Families are classified either as married-couple families or as families maintained by women or men without spouses."

In 2003, there were 35.4 million families with children under 18 years of age. Of these, 97% of married-couple families with children had at least one parent employed: in 60.7% of such families both parents were employed, in 30.5% only the father was employed and in 5.5% only the mother worked. The percentages indicating only one parent at work rose not only over the previous year but, according to the survey "were at their highest levels since the two series began in 1994." While the BLS offers no explanation for this phenomenon, the difficult labor market after the 2001 recession—both men and women have been victims of massive layoffs—and the persistently high divorce rate that shows half of all marriages breaking apart may have been contributing factors. More mothers may work if the father has lost his position and is having difficulty finding another comparable job to support his family.

The same survey also provides detailed data on working mothers. In 2003, there were 36.5 million women with their own children under 18 years of age of which 72.3% were in households where their husband was present and the remaining 27.7% were widowed, separated, divorced, or never married. Approximately two-thirds of these women held jobs and another 5.9% considered themselves unemployed, that is, looking for work. Of those who were employed 74% worked full time (35 hours or more per week). The rest held a part-time job, allowing mothers to have more time to spend with children at home.

The labor force participation rate (those women working or in search of employment) for mothers of children younger than a year old was 53.7% last year, a percentage that has declined nearly every year since 1998 when it was 57.9%. While no official explanation is given, most likely it is due to new mothers staying at home. Moreover, the comparison of data for 2002 and 2003 showed a decline in the employment rate of women with children. For example, 54.1% of all mothers with own children under three years old were employed in 2003, down from 55.4% the year before.

There is a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest that more mothers with very small children are choosing to stay at home or spend more time there. The Chief Economist of the US Labor Department, Diana Furchtgott-Roth, herself a mother of six, said in an interview that mothers who cut back on work to stay at home make "a valid choice" which should not be considered a "social problem," as some pundits would have it.

Maternity leave in the US varies according to employer. It is considered a "disability" and compensation during such leave "depends." The "Family and Medical Leave Act," enacted only in 1993, allows 12 weeks of unpaid leave to new parents working at firms with over 50 workers. This covers about two-thirds of the labor force but many smaller companies also offer this benefit. However, financially, some families simply cannot afford the loss of one spouse's income.

### **Fathers and families: The importance of their involvement**

More and more companies are granting time off to new fathers. Even though a man can take advantage of paternity leave, it is a given that he will return to his job. Father's Day 2000 saw the launch of a magazine called "Dads," a publication aimed at an audience of young fathers who are trying to come to terms with working wives, children at home, long work hours, and much more.

The struggle to manage parental and professional responsibilities is a topic frequently covered in a regular column in the Wall Street Journal. Sue Shellenbarger's "Work and Family" column usually appears on alternate Thursdays and a collection of past issues can be found online. There is no question that there are many issues to deal with: Ms. Shellenbarger has been writing her column for over 13 years!

In a recent column examining the stages that women go through from early motherhood to re-entry into the labor force, she highlighted an organization called "Mothers and More." According to its web site, the group describes itself as "a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of mothers through support, education and advocacy. We address mothers' needs as individuals and members of society, and promote the value of all the work mothers do." There are over 175 chapters throughout the US and one in London, England.

Earlier this year, an article about mothers

juggling work and family roles was followed by another on how fathers deal with the issue. Many dads had contacted Ms. Shellenbarger, eager to share their experiences and demand equal coverage.

### **Finding a balance**

In dealing with family and work issues parents have to set their own priorities, examine carefully their economic circumstances and decide what is in the best interests of all members. Employees of large corporations can take advantage of relevant company benefits and divide time between office and home. Some families simply may not be able to make ends meet without a second paycheck due to the high cost of living.

In certain cases, grandparents— especially if retired and living close by—can lend a hand in minding small children while parents work. Such an arrangement provides a family environment for the children and a useful outlet for grandparents' free time.

Women today are better educated than at any time in US history. As highly educated mothers, they are in a position to contribute significantly more to the upbringing of their children if they spend more time with them. As highly skilled, professional workers with a greater participation in the labor force, the entire economy has become more dependent on women and they are difficult to replace.

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Written by Vincenzina Santoro, M.A.,  
International Economist and former Vice  
President of JPMorgan & Co., Inc.

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### ***A Modern Role Model: Mother, Physician, Saint***

Recently in the news, Gianna Beretta Molla is an excellent role model for women facing difficult choices. Born in 1922 in a small town near Milan, Italy into a reasonably well-to-do family with several siblings, she was inspired to study medicine notwithstanding the difficulties of war-torn Italy in the early 1940s. She succeeded in becoming a physician, surgeon and pediatrician. She started her own practice, sharing an office with her brother, also a doctor. Dedicated to her patients, rich and poor, she treated all with respect, dignity and professional expertise.

At age 33, Gianna married an engineer, Pietro Molla, whose high-level corporate responsibilities demanded much time away from home. Their correspondence over the years helps readers understand their holiness and dedication to one another, family, and work. Soon Gianna became the mother of three beautiful and lively children. With assistance from a caring, trusted housekeeper and various members of an extended family, Gianna resumed her professional duties as doctor after the birth of her children. At times her husband accompanied her on emergency calls in the middle of night.

In her married life she enjoyed life's best—from concerts, theatre and opera at La Scala in Milan to skiing, hiking and

mountain climbing in the Italian Alps. But a critical moment awaited with her fourth pregnancy.

Knowing that she had developed a cancerous tumor, she agreed to an operation provided that the doctors—one of whom was her brother—would do no harm to the unborn child. The operation took place but was not entirely successful. With difficulty but serenity, on Holy Saturday, Gianna gave birth to a healthy baby girl, named after her mother, Gianna Emanuela. Following excruciating suffering the mother died on April 28, 1962, at age 39.

Gianna Beretta Molla was canonized in Rome on May 16, 2004, in the presence of her children and Pietro Molla, who at age 92 became the first living husband of a saint! The daughter, Gianna Emanuela, became a doctor herself, no doubt inspired by her mother whose virtuous life stands as a shining example of a wife, mother and professional woman.

The new saint's biography, *Una Vita per la Vita* (A Life for Life), is available in translation under the title: *Gianna Beretta Molla, A Woman's Life*.

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International Economist and former Vice  
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## Cultural Corner

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### *"Remember the Ladies"*

#### *A Review of Founding Mothers by Cokie Roberts*

At Murray Hill Institute our theme is "Women Transforming Culture." As we look forward to having a positive influence on the twenty-first century, it is good to remember the wives, daughters, sisters and mothers of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were called upon to create the culture of a new nation that was to be different from all the cultures of Europe. The United States was the first major republican nation. The women who were closely involved with our earliest government had to make many choices: How would we dress? How would the President's wife entertain? What kind of protocol would there be? While beginning with the practices of the courts of Europe, and rejecting anything inappropriate to a new Democratic society, Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Sally Jay (the wife of John Jay) and others set the tone for American Society.

While this cultural identity crisis is only a small part of Cokie Roberts' new bestselling *Founding Mothers, the Women Who Raised our Nation*, (William Morrow, 2004), her accounts of the fashions and protocol of the developing country are among the most fascinating parts of the book.

*Founding Mothers* is intended to be a popular history. In this book, Roberts follows the lives of about a dozen women who were

intimately involved with the birth of our country. She uses letters and diaries of the protagonists and their correspondents, and gives us many quotations so that the “ladies” (as they called themselves) are allowed to speak for themselves. (One wonders what those writing about the twenty-first century will do unless they can retrieve deleted e-mails.) Roberts paints these women as strong enough to take care of the family, the farm, and businesses while their husbands were at war risking their lives or overseas, for, in some cases, years. They bore the difficulties and dangers of childbirth and infancy, and yet were still interested in the politics and public life of their husbands’ great endeavor. The book is eminently readable, and flows well, even though Roberts has the difficult task of integrating a chronological sequence of history with individual narratives within it. For those of us who have not had an in-depth study of American History since eleventh grade, her telling of the Revolutionary period gives us the important facts—from the women’s point of view.

The women depicted differ widely in personality, but all are patriots (except for Mrs. Benedict Arnold.) The star is Abigail Adams, wife of our second President and mother of our sixth. She was separated from her husband for a total of about six years during the first twelve years of marriage. John Adams was involved in the Continental Congress, the war, and then was sent to France to negotiate peace with England. This separation gives us a lot of letters. Abigail was capable, intelligent, and unafraid to

speak up. She asks her husband, when setting up the laws of the new country, to “remember the ladies” (quoted on page 72.) In another letter she says, “If we mean to have heroes, statesmen and philosophers, we should have learned women,” (quoted on page 76.) She uncomplainingly does her duty as the wife of a public figure and mother from whom many sacrifices are required, and speaks up for the dignity of women.

There are a couple of flaws in the writing of the book. A good history is one that can be read for years without it seeming dated. Roberts has imposed some aspects of our own time on the text that will make it “dated” in a few years.

Many times Roberts responds to the text she has just quoted with sentence fragments such as “Amen, Sally,” (p. 172), “Fairly frisky stuff for a Puritan woman” (p. 182) or “Sounds like an interview today” (p. 21). These comments at first were amusing, but as they continued, they seemed patronizing, or more appropriate for a lecture.

As she writes for a feminist-conscious audience, she also seems too ready to condemn the words of the men, although they were often very open-minded for their time, and appreciated the capable, intelligent women to whom they were married. In fact, this book portrays men who actually seem resistant to treating their wives and daughters as inferior beings, to be coddled, perhaps, but not consulted. John Adams frequently asks for his wife’s opinion

and allows her to decide whether he should return to the Continental Congress in 1775 (p. 71). The father of Eliza Lucas (later Pinckney) put her in charge of his South Carolina plantation in his absence when she was only sixteen. John Adams writes of Abigail, "I wish some of our great men had such wives..." (p. 101). A Spanish observer writes of John Jay and his wife, Sally, "This woman, whom he loves blindly, dominates him and nothing is done without her consent, so that her opinion prevails" (p. 165). These examples demonstrate that when a man had self-confidence, he saw a capable woman as a partner rather than a threat.

One modern attitude which appears frequently in this book is the author's view toward pregnancies and children. She writes, "Though some women expressed their distress at the repeated pregnancies, it was what women expected, and the men didn't seem willing to do anything about it." (p. 176) "Despite the rapid onslaught of babies..." and "...even as she learned domestic gifts from her perpetually pregnant mother..." (p. 46), "...a houseful of children..." (p. 268). Her assumption is that these trials were something visited on the women by their husbands. While there will always be some women more open to having children than others, (Esther Reed writes after having her second, "I wish I could stop with that number, but I don't expect that" quoted on p. 120) the author doesn't seem to understand that many - dare I say "most" - women considered children a blessing rather than a burden. The high rate of infant

mortality made the child who lived to adulthood a sweeter blessing. The children were company and a help when their husbands were gone for months or even years at a time. In most cases there was a strong support system of extended family and hired help, which we no longer have. And Roberts seems to forget that at some point these same anonymous infants and toddlers grow into individuals that also have a part in the action, such as our sixth President, John Quincy Adams.

Other flaws are in the history itself. Roberts says, for example, that Kitty Greene (the wife of Nathanael Greene) "wanted nothing more than to be with her husband and to flirt with his friends" (p. 92) which implies an omniscience that is not possible. A friend who is an Adams scholar pointed out that the marriage of "Nabby" (Abigail junior) Adams is somewhat romanticized in the telling. Even a little fictionalizing can be dangerous, especially in a book to be read by non-experts who can't tell the difference.

One leitmotif that Roberts picks up on in the role of the "ladies" in starting our country, was that there was an implied mission for the women to "make the men behave." (The word "behave," in this instance, has a broader meaning than keeping them faithful. It means to be a civilizing influence.) As a mother, the woman takes the inherent role of forming her sons to have character, morals, and manners. The wives of the generals went to Valley Forge despite the cold and lack of food to boost the spirits of the troops by having

at least the semblance of a civilized social life. "The women...gathered in the Washingtons' little log dining room and encouraged everyone to sing, with the high-spirited Kitty Greene working especially hard to keep up morale." (p. 95). By her presence, Martha kept her husband George from gossip when he did such things as dance all evening with said Kitty Greene, the wife of one of his generals.

The glimpses of the search for an American culture are most interesting. Who knew that Martha Washington was first called "Lady Washington" in imitation of the English? Although George Washington was inaugurated in a plain brown suit, feathers were worn at the first Presidential soirées, unconsciously imitating the Court of St. James in England. At the time of the French Revolution, sympathetic Americans in Philadelphia called themselves "Citizen" and "Citess."

The occasional intrusion of Roberts' "we know better now, don't we" attitude is not enough to ruin a wonderful book, which opens a window into a world we should not forget, as women at a time when cultural roles of American women are being redefined. It is good to have heroic women as role models. Their struggles were not so very different: multi-tasking, balancing private (family) and public life, and, of course, "making the men behave."

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The **Cultural Corner** book review was written by Sarah Phelps Smith, Ph.D.

## Q & A

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Our online discussion continues with answers to Sarah M., who asked in our prior Newsletter:

**Q:** "I have been doing the same kind of work for many years (I work in a large corporation) and although I like my job, it is hard to retain the same level of interest and enthusiasm that I had at the beginning. What are some of your readers' best tips for avoiding burnout and continuing professional growth after one has 'maxed out' on upward mobility?"

**A:** *Katy S. of Yonkers, NY writes:*

"I was in a similar spot a few years ago, and investigated the training programs that my corporation offered. I took a seminar in contract negotiation, which I was interested in but had always tended to avoid. I began to negotiate simple contracts when I completed the course and now do it regularly—it provides variety and gives me an opportunity to meet more people from outside the corporation. Even if the new skill you are learning is not one that you can immediately put to use, it freshens your whole outlook to learn something new."

**A:** *Joanne S. from Dayton, Ohio, writes:*

"Is there a younger worker or intern in your department that you could help to train or mentor? If not, how about volunteering your job-related skills to help a non-profit enterprise that you would like to support? Using your skills in a new role or setting can

help you to appreciate them more, and the beneficiaries of your help will appreciate them too!”

Work and life balance is a concern for women and men alike.

**Q:** *Debbie Y. from Crystal Lake, IL asks:*

“Now that my children are in school, I am thinking about going back to work. The type of work I do is difficult to do part-time or from home—it would require a full 40-hour week with occasional overtime. What are some of the things I need to take into consideration in making this decision? I’d like to hear from other readers who have made this transition.”

Send your answers, and ideas for future questions to: [info@murrayhillinstitute.org](mailto:info@murrayhillinstitute.org)