Finding Time
by Heather Boushey

In *Finding Time: The Economics of Work–Life Conflict*, Heather Boushey uses the economics of supply and demand to make the case that work–family policies benefit the economy even as they meet the needs of working families. In discussing the latter, she avoids oversimplifications about the concerns and challenges facing working families. Instead, she provides facts and figures that illustrate how middle-class, low-income, and professional families have experienced the tectonic shifts in the economy over the past three decades. Readers can see themselves and their families in this book.

Using basic economic analysis, Boushey stands on its head the argument that policies intended to help workers get ahead on the job while making sure that their families are not being left behind are job killers. She makes a compelling case that, to the contrary, in an economy like the United States, where output and employment are driven by household consumption, it is families and their willingness and ability to spend on goods and services—not businesses—that are the real job creators. When consumers spend, businesses respond to household demand for their products by hiring workers and expanding production.

But families need income and they need economic security to be able, as well as willing, to be consumers. Firms, meanwhile, need families not only as consumers but also as suppliers of workers—and have become reliant on the women employed in their firms. Furthermore, companies need workers that are productive. The productivity of today’s workers, as Boushey points out, depends in no small measure on the care and nurturing they received as children; in the same way, the productivity of the nation’s future workforce depends on the ability of today’s adult workers to attend to the needs of their children.

Using an easy-to-understand, four-quadrant depiction of the economy, Boushey shows that demand—as well as supply—plays a key role in the economy. She organizes the policies families need to protect both their purchasing power as consumers and enhance their productivity as workers into four categories she labels *Here, There, Care,* and *Fair.*

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in driving economic outcomes. She uses this diagram to get across the fundamental ideas about how the economy works to people who have not studied economics and have no interest in simultaneous equations. The misleading argument put forward by opponents of work–family policies—that these policies are job killers—comes from a focus on the supply side of markets for goods and services that ignores the demand side of these markets.

Boushey makes a compelling case that when you bring in the demand side as well as the supply side, it becomes clear that policies enabling workers to provide family care are essential not just to the welfare of families but also to the health of the economy. What are these work–family policies? Boushey organizes the policies families need to protect both their purchasing power as consumers and enhance their productivity as workers into four categories she labels Here, There, Care, and Fair. The policies she considers have already been adopted by jurisdictions within the United States. Experience with these policies shows that, indeed, they are not job killers, and they are affordable.

Here (at home) refers to paid time-off-to-care policies that working families need when they must be home to recover from their own illness or to care for a sick child or family member. There (at work) refers to work schedules that allow workers to schedule their time at work and plan their time at home. Care (when you can’t be home) looks at the policies working families need to care for their families when they are at work. This category includes affordable, high-quality care for both the aging and children—which makes it possible for those with care responsibilities to work and to be reliable employees. Having shown that “helping families isn’t just about being nice; it’s about being serious about the performance of our economy,” Boushey asks, what’s fair (for women and men)?

Why don’t we have these policies for every workplace and worker? Why do workers fail to use these work–family policies even when they are available? The answer lies in the kinds of bias that workers with family-care responsibilities confront in the workplace. Fairness, she argues, dictates that caregiver bias in the workplace be eliminated.

Boushey makes a convincing case for the economic benefits of work–life policies that meet the needs of both families and firms. Finding Time is written for a nonspecialist audience that includes workers and employers who may not be aware of the importance of work–family policies and may not know that these policies are already working in cities and states in the United States. Her lucid explanation of how the economy works and why these policies are beneficial for the economy as well as families deserves to reach a wide audience.

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**Eileen Appelbaum**

Eileen Appelbaum is senior economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research and visiting professor in the Department of Management at the University of Leicester. She has 20 years of experience carrying out empirical research on the effects of public policies and company practices on outcomes for companies and workers. She studies work processes and work–life practices of organizations and their implications for organizational effectiveness and for the quality of jobs. Recent publications examine employers’ experiences with paid family leave in California and with paid sick days in Connecticut. Her book Unfinished Business, Paid Family Leave in California and the Future of U.S. Work-Family Policy, coauthored with Ruth Milkman, was published in November 2013. A new report with Milkman, “Good for Business: Connecticut’s Paid Sick Leave Law,” appeared in March 2014. Appelbaum’s current research examines the effects of private equity ownership and governance on companies and workers, and her latest book, Private Equity at Work: When Wall Street Manages Main Street, coauthored with Rosemary Batt, was published in March 2014.