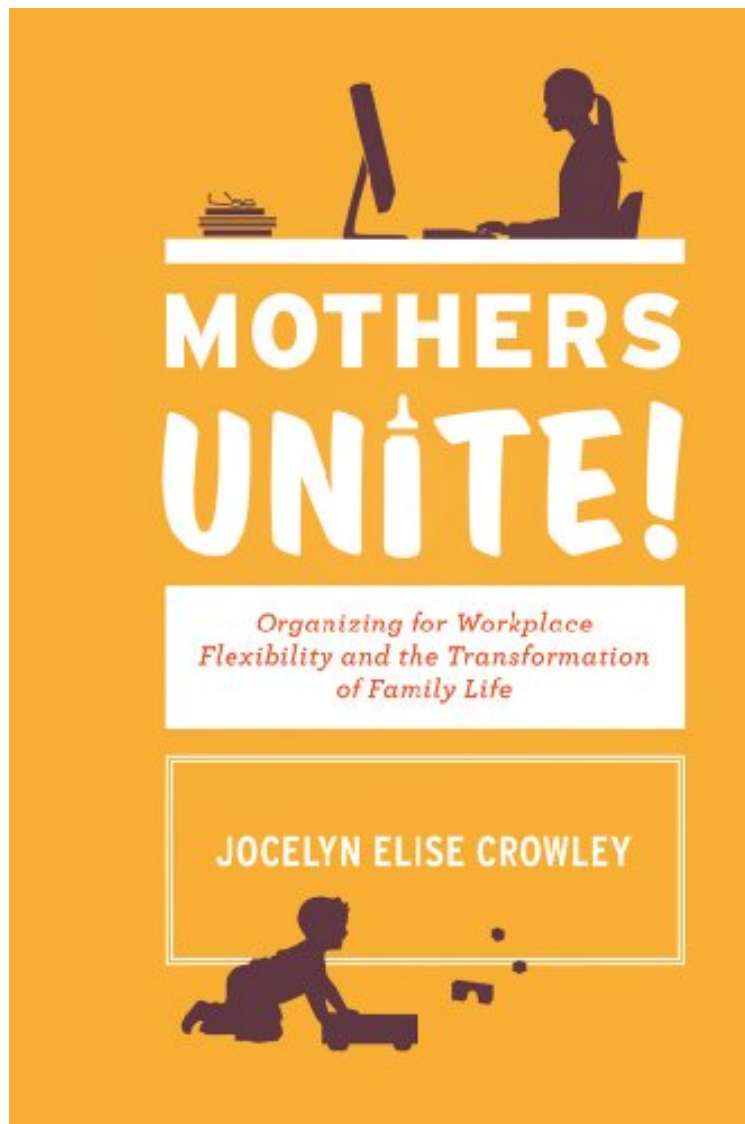


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Mothers Unite!: Organizing for Workplace Flexibility and the Transformation of Family Life

Jocelyn Elise Crowley

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Jocelyn Elise Crowley : Mothers Unite!: Organizing for Workplace Flexibility and the Transformation of Family Life before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mothers Unite!: Organizing for Workplace Flexibility and the Transformation of Family Life:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Relevant to womenBy Emily CarrGreat research and insight into women and mothers who struggle with motherhood and a professional identity. Important contribution to society.1 of

2 people found the following review helpful. Unite! By Hans G. Despain This book receives a 5 for what is included in the book regarding the concerns and needs of working American mothers, and a 2.5 for failing to recognize the structural design of the American system that generates the family-unfriendly work environments *The State of Working America* (An Economic Policy Institute Book). This weakness will circumvent the political thrust of the book. This book's primary point is simple: The American workplace is generally very unfriendly to families and in particular to mothers. Crowley describes the problems, constructs solutions, and suggests political organization and action. "Mother's Unite" is set upon five mother's groups currently active in the United States: Mocha Moms, Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), Mothers more, The National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC), and MomsRising. These groups have three primary commonalities: (1) they represent working mothers, (2) they provide interpersonal support to mothers attempting to find a balance between family and work, (3) each are in support to increasing workplace flexibility policies. "Simply put, workplace flexibility policies are any initiatives that provide workers with options regarding the structure of their work lives. More concretely, workplace flexibility can be broken down into three critical areas: flexible work arrangements; time-off options; and career exit, maintenance, and reentry pathways." Crowley outlines these "three critical areas" of workplace flexibility in detail. She provides great detail on the sociodemographics of mothers seeking interpersonal support groups and their desire for a better balance of family and work. She also argues that the so-called "Mommy Wars" between stay-at-home moms versus working-moms is predominately illusionary, most mothers are non-judgmental of one another, but quite supportive and empathic to one another's social situation. Nonetheless stereotypes do exist, Crowley is anxious to provide the analytical grounds of mutual understanding. Crowley demonstrates there is a great common political ground between various sociodemographic mothers struggling to balance family and workplace which is becoming more and more family-unfriendly. Nonetheless, these same working mothers desiring more flexibility at work express doubts in affiliating themselves with a political movement, let alone participating. Crowley urges that there needs to be greater effort to extend these groups and include mothers who are currently underrepresented. For example, hourly workers, part-time workers, and stay-at-home moms who would like to go to work if there was more flexibility. Moreover, Crowley insists that the balance between family and work is not an individual problem, but very much a social problem. As such the response cannot merely be individual employers becoming more flexible, but a social response at the national level. In this sense, it is important to recognize family-work policy includes not only mothers, but fathers and children too. Secondly, the problems facing mothers (and fathers and children) are hardly limited to families, but extend to American workers as a whole. The U.S. economy is failing to meet the needs of working families and consequently the children, elderly and disabled that depend upon them. Millions of American families lack the necessary means to be good employees and simultaneously provide adequate care-giving to their children, elderly parents, and disabled family members. When parents lack paid leave and work flexibility there is detrimental impact on test scores of their children. Children struggling in school with suspension, behavior problems, and scoring in the bottom quartile in reading, math, or vocabulary, are more likely to have parents who lack paid leave and work flexibility. Crowley's obtuse political agenda is very unlikely to have extensive success, unless there is far more effort than provided by Crowley to unite low-income and high-income mothers/families. Otherwise these two demographics may not currently see their work circumstances requiring the same political response and policy. 41 percent of high-income workers report they have two weeks or less of sick and vacation leave combined, compared to 84 percent of low-income workers. 28 percent of high-income workers have no vacation leave, while 58 percent of low-income workers lack vacation leave. 76 percent of low-income workers lack sick leave, and 71 percent cannot take days off for a sick child, compared to 34 percent of high-income workers. Also underanalyzed by Crowley is how other developed-economies offer far more family-friendly workplace policy. In Europe policy has emerged to address the tension between work and family life. For example in England mothers are allowed six months paid maternity leave, and additional six months unpaid. Legislation also allows workers to request flexible work schedules. Employers have strict procedures of granting or refusing such requests. France has perhaps the most extensive public-funded child care in Europe; every French child has access to child-care. Norway and Sweden are the most successful in providing social policy aimed at achieving a balance between work and family life. In Norway, maternity leave is 10 months full pay, or 12 months 80 percent pay. The father is entitled to the leave in place of the mother. In Sweden both mothers and fathers are allowed 18 months paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. In both countries child care has significant public funding and work schedules are commonly flexible for parents. Crowley should be commended for an excellent book addressing the needs of a particularly very important demographic, i.e. mothers. However, the political efforts to constitute workplaces that improve the quality-of-life need to be extended to include, fathers, children, families, and all American workers *The State of Working America* (An Economic Policy Institute Book). To initiate recognition of unfriendly American workplaces there is hardly a better demographic to begin with than mothers. However, the concerns and needs of mothers are quite similar to concerns and needs of all American workers. It is not merely a matter of greater flexibility, but democratization of the American workplace *Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism, After Capitalism: Economic Democracy in Action*.

In *Mothers Unite!*, a bold and hopeful new rallying cry for changing the relationship between home and the workplace, Jocelyn Elise Crowley envisions a genuine, universal world of workplace flexibility that helps mothers who stay at home, those who work part time, and those who work full time balance their commitments to their jobs and their families. Achieving this goal, she argues, will require a broad-based movement that harnesses the energy of existing organizations of mothers that already support workplace flexibility in their own ways. Crowley examines the efforts of five diverse national mothers' organizations: Mocha Moms, which aims to assist mothers of color; Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), which stresses the promotion of Christian values; Mothers More, which emphasizes support for those moving in and out of the paid workforce; MomsRising, which focuses on online political advocacy; and the National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC), which highlights community-based networking. After providing an engaging and detailed account of the history, membership profiles, strategies, and successes of each of these organizations, Crowley suggests actions that will allow greater workplace flexibility to become a viable reality and points to many opportunities to promote intergroup mobilization and unite mothers once and for all.

undefined (Publishers Weekly 2013-05-20) Analyzing five national mothers' organizations, Rutgers public policy professor Crowley (*The Politics of Child Support in America*) makes her case for workplace flexibility as the issue most likely to unite American mothers into a coherent, politically effective "Mothers' Movement." The groups profiled include Christian-based Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS); Mothers More, a support group for mothers moving in and out of the workplace; Mocha Moms, a support organization for mothers of color; the National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC), which offers childcare and activities for mothers and children; and MomsRising, an online group that discusses topics of national interest to mothers. Crowley shows that the participants in these groups are mostly looking for community and peer support, and are much less embroiled in the "Mommy Wars" than the media suggest. Both stay-at-home and working mothers see the value in having flexible career options. These groups' members are mostly middle-class, leaving out some lower-income women who might be most affected by broad policy changes, and aside from Mocha Moms, they are overwhelmingly white. Nevertheless, Crowley's data shows that these mothers are indeed interested in family-friendly workplace reform, and she optimistically posits that if the groups coordinated their efforts, they could become a force for change. (Publishers Weekly 2013-05-20) "What do mothers want? More specifically, what issue might be compelling enough to mobilize them politically? That's the question posed by Jocelyn Elise Crowley, a professor of public policy at Rutgers University. . . . All mothers want options. Crowley's guidelines for advancing this cause starting with groups recognizing their common ground and data charts sometimes make this more of a textbook than a call to arms, but its message is nonetheless inspiring." *BUST Magazine* (Oct/Nov 2013) "The book is well written and well organized. The language is easy to understand, making it accessible and useful to mothers who face such dilemmas, to policy makers, to employees, and to social service agencies. This book is particularly useful for those who wish to increase their knowledge of these issues, serving as an excellent reference." Karen Damiano-Teixeira, *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* (Dec 2014) "*Mothers Unite!* takes us beyond the Mommy Wars to paint a picture of hope: the prospect of diverse mothers' groups coming together to work for a better future. Jocelyn Elise Crowley intelligently unpacks abstract ideas about flexibility and mothers' solidarity (or lack thereof) to provide a clear road map for moving forward. Her book will open endless avenues for activism on behalf of families. She has made a truly meaningful contribution." Judith Warner, author of *Perfect Madness: Motherhood In the Age of Anxiety* "*Mothers Unite!* helps us understand an issue that completely puzzles citizens from other countries: why the over 70 percent of American women who work outside the home do not mobilize politically around issues of daycare, maternity leave, and flexible work practices. Better still, it offers a blueprint for change. A very interesting read!" Anne-Marie Slaughter, Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor of Politics and International Affairs, Princeton University, author of *The Idea that Is America: Keeping Faith with Our Values in a Dangerous World* "Kudos to Jocelyn Elise Crowley for addressing a question that few have dared ask: How can we bridge the real and illusory divides that separate employed and nonemployed women? While others focus on the putative mommy wars, Crowley shows clearly and convincingly that mothers from diverse backgrounds share common interests and possess the potential to become a powerful political force. This book is a must for anyone who cares about creating a more flexible, humane, and family-supportive workplace." Kathleen Gerson, Collegiate Professor of Arts Science, New York University, author of *The Unfinished Revolution: Coming of Age in a New Era of Gender, Work, and Family* "*Mothers Unite!* addresses a timely and important topic. The potential for mothers' mobilization takes on special urgency today. Contested images of motherhood play a prominent role in current culture wars, and mothers' vulnerability is heightened in the prevailing economic and political climate. Jocelyn Elise Crowley's research on mothers groups' stances toward workplace flexibility addresses a long-standing conundrum: why are policies that appear to offer benefits to employers and employees alike so infrequently implemented? Crowley's answer to that question is new and original." Pamela Stone, Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, author of *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* About the Author Jocelyn Elise Crowley is Professor of Public Policy at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of

New Jersey, as well as a member of the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Political Science and Affiliated Faculty Member of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies. She is the author of *Defiant Dads: Fathers' Rights Activists in America* and *Mothers Unite!: Organizing for Workplace Flexibility and the Transformation of Family Life*, both from Cornell, as well as *The Politics of Child Support in America*. Visit her website at jocelyncrowley.com.