Career Development of Women (2002)

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**Basic Concepts & Definitions**

In general, developmentalists discuss careers as being comprised of different stages, beginning with "pre-entry preparation" through "retirement." Among others, Bailyn (1989), Hall (1986) and Schein (1978) have contributed to the literature in this area. As organizations change, so do career trajectories. Hall (1996) and Greenhaus & Callanan (2000) have contributed to theory in this area.

It should be noted that research and theory development tends to reflect disciplinary focus. That is, counseling and clinical psychologists have largely been interested in individual development; industrial/organizational psychologists are largely interested in the individual as situation within specific social contexts. Sociologists and economics focus on development within societal contexts. Despite these differences, researchers in these disciplines may examine career development on either within-stage or cross-stage development.

**Importance of Topic to Work-Family Studies**

Most career development literature is "gender neutral," but many feminists feel that the existing body of knowledge tends to reflect the experiences of men. Limited theoretical and empirical attention has been paid to the similarities and differences in the career development of men and women, with the exception of two issues: glass ceiling/sticky floor and work-family experiences.

**State of the Body of Knowledge**

The majority of the literature about the career development of women has focused on:

1. career as it relates to role salience and identity
2. career and stress (especially as it relates to work/family conflict; women's adjustment to the workplace); or
3. the self-efficacy of women (see Betz, N.E., & Hackett, G., 1997, and Ozer, 1995)
Most of the career development research that has focused on women has concentrated on women's experiences and choices up until the point they enter the workplace. This literature examines issues such as the factors related to women's choice of career, the processes women use to locate and secure employment (see exchange theory), and women's adjustment to the workplace (see Dawis, 2000).

There has been limited research that has adopted a problem-focused perspective that concentrates on women's coping tactics and strategies (e.g., "How do you solve a problem?"). Most studies have used measures of coping that are emotion-focused, rather than measures that are either problem-focused or are indicators of cognitive and behavioral adjustments. From the emotional perspective, coping strategies are considered to reflect stable aspects of personality. However, women also cope by accessing resources available in the situation/social environment and in their relationships.

To date, the literature about the career development of women has not been especially well linked to theories about the overall adult development (see Erikson, 1963, Sheehy, 1977, Levinson, 1978, Marcia, 2001 for discussions of adult development). In the past decade, there has been more attention paid to the relationships between women's development and their career experiences (see, for example, Levinson, 1996).

**Implications for Practice and Research**

Academics, policy analysts and practitioners with diverse disciplinary backgrounds have been interested in the career development of women. The area of counseling psychology has devoted significant attention to the decisions and choices that individuals make about jobs and careers. Many of the studies conducted by counseling psychologists have included information about individuals' experiences, attitudes toward work and career, and aptitudes. Those with a background in organizational psychology have tended to focus on employees once they are at work. In general, organizational psychologists concentrate on the interactions/relationships between people and organizations. They often adopt a framework of "careers in organizations," particularly careers in certain types of organizations. Those with backgrounds in organizational studies and management tend to regard individuals from a human capital perspective. They focus on the skill sets needed by different types of employees if they are to be successful in particular types of careers and the attitudes they hold toward their careers and organizations. Management scholars in this are often interested in the opportunities that enable employees to develop knowledge and skills that are congruent with the strategic priorities of the organization.

In the future, researchers and theorists need to devote additional attention to the positive consequences of perceived conflicts between work careers and family careers (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).
References


Other Recommended Readings on this Topic:


Locations in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Studies

The Editorial Board of the Teaching Resources section of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared a Matrix as a way to locate important work-family topics in the broad area of work-family studies. (More about the Matrix ...).
Concepts related to adult development are relevant to all of the "Individual" domains in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Study. In addition, theories of adult development are relevant to Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings.

Note: The domain areas most closely related to the entry's topic are presented in full color. Other domains, represented in gray, are provided for context.

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Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains
About the Matrix

Sloan Work and Family Research Network

Resources for Teaching: Mapping the Work-Family Area of Studies

Introduction

It was appropriate that the members of the Founding Editorial Board of the Resources for Teaching began their work in 2000, for their project represented one of the turning points in the area of work and family studies. This group accepted the challenge of developing resources that could support the efforts of teaching faculty from different disciplines and professional schools to better integrate the work-family body of knowledge into their curricula. The Virtual Think Tank began its work with a vision, a spirit of determination, and sense of civic responsibility to the community of work-family scholars.

A fundamental challenge emerged early in the process. It became clear that before we could design resources that would support the teaching of those topics, we would first need to inventory topics and issues relevant to the work-family area of studies (and begin to distinguish the work-family aspect of these topics from "non work-family" aspects).

The members of the Virtual Think Tank were well aware that surveying the area of work and family studies would be a daunting undertaking. However, we really had no other choice. And so, we began to grapple with the mapping process.

Purpose

1. To develop a preliminary map of the body of knowledge relevant to the work-family area of study that reflects current, "across-the-disciplines" understanding of work-family phenomena.

2. To create a flexible framework (or map) that clarifies the conceptual relationships among the different information domains that comprise the work-family knowledge base.

It is important to understand that this mapping exercise was undertaken as a way to identify and organize the wide range of work-family topics. This project was not intended as a meta-analysis for determining the empirical relationships between specific variables. Therefore, our map of the workfamily area of study does not include any symbols that might suggest the relationships between specific factors or clusters of factors.
Process

The Virtual Think Tank used a 3-step process to create the map of the work-family area of studies.

1. **Key Informants:** The members of the Virtual Think Tank included academics from several different disciplines and professions who have taught and written about work-family studies for years. During the first stage of the mapping process, the Virtual Think Tank functioned as a panel of key informants.

   Initially, the Panel engaged in a few brainstorming sessions to identify work-family topics that could be addressed in academic courses. The inductive brainstorming sessions initially resulted in the identification of nearly 50 topics.

   Once the preliminary list of topics had been generated, members of the Virtual Think Tank pursued a deductive approach to the identification of work-family issues. Over the course of several conversations, the Virtual Think Tank created a conceptual map that focused on information domains (see Table 1 below).

   The last stage of the mapping process undertaken by the Virtual Think Tank consisted of comparing and adjusting the results of the inductive and deductive processes. The preliminary, reconciled list was used as the first index for the Online Work and Family Encyclopedia.

2. **Literature review:** Members of the project team conducted literature searches to identify writings in which authors attempted to map the work-family area of study or specific domains of this area. The highlights of the literature review will be posted on February 1, 2002 when the First Edition of the Work-Family Encyclopedia will be published.

3. **Peer review:** On October 1, 2001, the Preliminary Mapping of the work-family area of study was posted on the website of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network. The members of the Virtual Think Tank invite work-family leaders to submit suggestions and comments about the Mapping and the List of Work-Family Topics. The Virtual Think Tank will consider the suggestions and, as indicated, will make adjustments in both of these products. Please send your comments to Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes at pittcats@bc.edu

Assumptions

Prior to identifying the different information domains relevant to the work-family area of study, members of the Virtual Think Tank adopted two premises:
1. Our use of the word “family” refers to both traditional and nontraditional families. Therefore, we consider the term “work-family” to be relevant to individuals who might reside by themselves. Many work-family leaders have noted the problematic dimensions of the term “work-family” (see Barnett, 1999). In particular, concern has been expressed that the word “family” continues to connote the married couple family with dependent children, despite the widespread recognition that family structures and relationships continue to be very diverse and often change over time. As a group, we understand the word “family” to refer to relationships characterized by deep caring and commitment that exist over time. We do not limit family relationships to those established by marriage, birth, blood, or shared residency.

2. It is important to examine and measure work-family issues and experiences at many different levels, including: individual, dyadic (e.g., couple relationships, parent-child relationships, caregiver-caretaker relationships), family and other small groups, organizational, community, and societal. Much of the work-family discourse glosses over the fact that the work-family experiences of one person or stakeholder group may, in fact, be different from (and potentially in conflict with) those of another.

Outcomes

We will publish a Working Paper, “Mapping the Work-Family Area of Study,” on the Sloan Work and Family Research Network in 2002. In this publication, we will acknowledge the comments and suggestions for improvement sent to us.

Limitations

It is important to understand that the members of the Virtual Think Tank viewed their efforts to map the work-family area of study as a “work in progress.” We anticipate that we will periodically review and revise the map as this area of study evolves.

The members of the panel are also cognizant that other scholars may have different conceptualizations of the work-family area of study. We welcome your comments and look forward to public dialogue about this important topic.

Listing of the Information Domains Included in the Map

The members of the Virtual Think Tank wanted to focus their map of work-family issues around the experiences of five principal stakeholder groups:
1. individuals,
2. families,
3. workplaces,
4. communities, and
5. society-at-large.

Each of these stakeholder groups is represented by a row in the Table 1, Information Domain Matrix (below).

**Work-Family Experiences:** The discussions of the members of the Virtual Think Tank began with an identification of some of the salient needs & priorities/problems & concerns of the five principal stakeholder groups. These domains are represented by the cells in Column B of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individuals' work-family needs & priorities
- Individuals' work-family problems & concerns
- Families' work-family need & priorities
- Families' work-family problems & concerns
- Needs & priorities of workplaces related to work-family issues
- Workplace problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs & priorities of communities related to work-family issues
- Communities' problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs and priorities of society related to work-family issues
- Societal problems & concerns related to work-family issues

**Antecedents:** Next, the Virtual Think Tank identified the primary roots causes and factors that might have either precipitated or affected the work-family experiences of the principal stakeholder groups. These domains are highlighted in Column A of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individual Antecedents
- Family Antecedents
- Workplace Antecedents
- Community Antecedents
- Societal Antecedents

**Covariates:** The third set of information domains include factors that moderate the relationships between the antecedents and the work-family experiences of different stakeholder groups (see
Column C in Table 1).

- Individual Covariates
- Family Covariates
- Workplace Covariates
- Community Covariates
- Societal Covariates

**Decisions and Responses:** The responses of the stakeholder groups to different work-family experiences are highlighted in Column D.

- Individual Decision and Responses
- Family Decisions and Responses
- Workplace Decisions and Responses
- Community Decisions and Responses
- Public Sector Decisions and Responses

**Outcomes & Impacts:** The fifth set of information domains refer to the outcomes and impacts of different work-family issues and experiences on the principal stakeholder groups (see Column E).

- Outcomes & Impacts on Individuals
- Outcomes & Impacts on Families
- Outcomes & Impacts on Workplaces
- Outcomes & Impacts on Communities
- Outcomes & Impacts on Society

**Theoretical Foundations:** The Virtual Think Tank established a sixth information domain to designate the multi-disciplinary theoretical underpinnings to the work-family area of study (noted as Information Domain F).
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