Collecting Organizational Data to Strengthen Work-Family Research (2010)

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Basic Concepts & Definitions

Gathering valid and reliable data on the work side of work-family issues is essential to furthering knowledge on the conditions of work that matter in the lives of employees and to the bottom-lines of employers. The focus of this encyclopedia entry is on improving the rigor of work-family research by drawing on organizational documentation and multi-level survey data to develop meaningful measures of organizational processes, structures, and outcomes. Organizational documentation may include both published and unpublished documents. Published documents such as the organization’s annual report, press releases, and financial statements are used to inform the organization’s stakeholders, such as shareholders, potential investors, employees, community members, and the general public. Unpublished or internal organizational records such as employee handbooks, policies and procedures, personnel documents, and attendance records are typically used as a basis for decisions concerning employees. Although survey data tend to be at the individual level, they can be collected at multiple levels, such as the employee, supervisor, team, department, and executive levels. Multi-level studies that combine survey data across organizational levels allow researchers to address comparative questions and to examine cross-level relationships.

Importance of Topic to Work Family Studies

A common observation made in multiple reviews of work-family research is that much of the research thus far has used cross-sectional, self-report data (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kossek & Lambert, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; 1999). Although this type of data has been invaluable in identifying pressing work-family issues and patterns, the research questions emerging in the field require more sophisticated research designs that include data at multiple levels and from multiple sources. As Morio, Bryant, and Allen (2008) note, “The field would benefit from using more diverse methodological approaches” (p. 167). The purpose of this entry is to help expand the repertoire of work-family researchers by identifying and discussing methods of data collection that hold the potential to improve the
We focus primarily on two forms of data collection: organizational documentation and multi-level survey collection. When the goal is to capture organizational-level policies and processes, organizational documentation has the advantage of greater validity than self-report survey data; the downside is that it often contains inconsistencies that pose reliability issues for the researcher to resolve. The reverse tends to be true of survey data; although it is easier for the researcher to select survey measures that have strong reliability, the data may present certain validity concerns. Critical among concerns with using survey data is common-method bias that occurs when measures of both independent and dependent variables are collected with the same method and often from the same source, thus inflating observed associations.

Our discussion focuses on the merits and challenges of using organizational documentation and multi-level survey data to measure concepts of keen interest in the work-family field. In doing so, our examples focus exclusively on the work side of work-family issues. Specifically, we discuss how organizational documentation and multi-level survey data can be used to measure work-side outcomes and antecedents that are commonly investigated by researchers in the field. 1

State of the Body of Knowledge

Work-related outcomes

Work-family conflict has been defined as a bi-directional construct with spillover effects from one domain to the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). More recently, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggest that holding multiple roles in the work and family domains can also yield positive outcomes. Thus, work-family scholars often try to capture outcomes in both domains: work and home. When self-report data are relied on to collect data on both independent and dependent variables in both domains, a bias referred to as common method variance can interfere with the true relationships among observed variables. Common method bias is a concern because it can undermine confidence in conclusions drawn about the strength of observed associations. As we discuss below, organizational documentation and multi-level surveys present alternative ways of securing data on important work-family outcomes in the workplace.

Work-family outcomes in the workplace can take two primary forms: attitudinal and behavioral. By definition, attitudinal measures come from workers' self-report data, whereas behavioral measures may be developed from organizational documentation or surveys of "others," such as supervisors or coworkers. The current review focuses on a set of behavioral outcomes where work-family issues can manifest themselves in the workplace: absenteeism, employee health, turnover, career success and job performance, both in-role and extra-role performance (Lambert, 2006).
**Absenteeism**

Absenteeism can be examined from multiple angles including total days missed, unscheduled days missed, and partial days missed (partial absenteeism). Organizational records and surveying supervisors or employees are two common ways to measure absenteeism. Whether collecting absenteeism data from organizational documents or surveys, it is important for the researcher to consider what type of absenteeism is relevant to the research question posed.

For example, Boyar, Maertz, and Pearson (2005) were interested in whether conflict stemming from work-family issues caused employees to either come in late or leave work early. Based on this research question, Boyar and colleagues focused on unscheduled partial absenteeism. The authors augmented data collected from employees on work-family conflict and family-work conflict with company records of absenteeism. Boyar et al. calculated an average number of days missed over a 13-month period, excluding vacation days, jury duty, and military leave. They calculated a similar hourly average for partial days missed. Analyses revealed work-family conflict was positively related to partial absenteeism. Contrary to expectations, family-work conflict was not related to either type of absenteeism. The design of this study provides an example of how utilizing organizational documentation to provide multi-source data can minimize common method bias and enhance validity, making results more robust.

**Employee health and well-being**

Van Steenbergen and Ellemers (2009) focused on the relationship between work-family facilitation and sick days. They employed a longitudinal study including three data sources. At the beginning of the study, they collected survey data from employees on different types of work-family facilitation (energy, time, behavioral, and psychological) and gathered data on physical health from medical professionals including cholesterol levels and body mass index. One year later, the researchers used organizational records to collect the number of sick days used. They also used company records to collect the average number of sick days used for the three-month period prior to the study to correct for previous absenteeism. Analyses revealed that, compared with their counterparts, employees with greater energy, time, and behavioral-based facilitation had healthier cholesterol levels and body mass indices as well as fewer sickness-related absences. The multi-source, longitudinal design of this study enabled the researchers to better approximate causal relationships by ruling out a greater set of alternative explanations for observed associations.

**Turnover**

As with absenteeism, it is important for the researcher to distinguish between the different types of turnover, in this case, between turnover that is involuntary-initiated by the organization-and that is voluntary-initiated by the employee. The type of turnover measured should be linked to the purpose of the study, as demonstrated by Carr, Boyar, and Gregory (2008), Krackhardt, McKenn, Porter, and Steers...
Carr and colleagues (2008) were interested in assessing the extent to which turnover could be explained by a combination of work-to-family conflict and work-family centrality, defined as “a value judgment regarding the relative importance of work or family to an individual’s life” (p. 247). Because they were interested in employees’ choices regarding sustained employment, they focused on voluntary as opposed to involuntary turnover. One year subsequent to collecting survey data on employees’ assessments of work-family conflict and centrality, they drew on company records to identify employee-initiated voluntary turnover. Their examination revealed a positive association between work-to-family conflict and voluntary turnover. However, work-family centrality moderated the relationship such that the association between work-to-family conflict and turnover was lower among workers with high work-family centrality.

Krackhardt et al. (1981) were trying to identify the extent to which turnover was affected by supervisor behaviors. To achieve this goal, they employed a quasi-experimental design in a banking environment experiencing high turnover of bank tellers. Supervisors at the experimental branches attended two workshops on turnover and retention methods and received incentives to implement changes to retain tellers; the supervisors at the control branches did not attend the workshops. The authors reviewed turnover records one year later, revealing that turnover was reduced significantly at the experimental branches. Similarly, Allen et al. (2003) reviewed organizational records of voluntary turnover one year following employee surveys of perceived organizational support (POS) and turnover intent, finding POS to be linked to withdrawal behaviors.

In all three studies, the researchers clearly selected the form of turnover relevant to their research questions, a step that should not be overlooked when considering the use of organizational documentation. Moreover, using organizational documentation to measure turnover allowed these researchers to improve the rigor of their research design by transforming what would have been cross-sectional studies into quasi-experimental and longitudinal designs.

**Career success**

Minimizing common method bias and establishing causality are two challenges when studying employee attitudes and behavior, and career success is no exception. Lyness and Judiesch’s (2008) longitudinal study of the relationship between work-life balance and career advancement provide an especially good example of how multiple data sources can improve the rigor of work-family research. Lyness and Judiesch measured “career advance potential” with multi-level survey data from employees, their peers, and supervisors; data were collected in companies spanning 33 countries. Their findings revealed that managers with greater work-life balance were rated (by employees, peers, and supervisors) as having more career advancement potential. The richness of their multi-level survey data collected from numerous countries at different points in time enhanced generalizability of their results. Moreover, by collecting data
at multiple time points, Lyness and Judiesch were able to establish causal order, which is one of the most important criteria in establishing causal relationships.

Two additional career success studies by Lyness and Thompson (2000, 1997) illustrate how organizational documentation can be used in work-family research. Lyness and Thompson (2000) created a sample of 69 male and female executives matched on level in the management hierarchy, line or staff position, age, performance, and advancement potential. They collected survey data from the executives on perceived barriers and facilitators of career success. The authors utilized company documents to measure career history by classifying prior positions in terms of the quality of the jobs. Company records were also used to develop measures of employees’ demographic characteristics, the variables used to match the samples of men and women, and to capture career success. The findings provide support that (1) women encounter more interference with their career success from barriers than men, and (2) men experience more benefits to their career success from mentoring than women.

Lyness and Thompson (1997) also studied a matched sample of male and female executives collecting survey data on developmental opportunities, work-family conflict, career opportunities, and pay satisfaction. They tapped organizational documentation to measure salary, bonuses, stock options, and career mobility. Whereas the authors did not find significant differences between men and women in terms of salary, bonuses, and stock options, they did find that women were less likely to be married and have children than the male executives. Consistent with other research on gendered relationships in the workplace, these results caused Lyness and Thompson (1997) to question if women were more likely than men to make family sacrifices in order to succeed in their career. In both studies, Lyness and Thompson applied organizational documentation to minimize common method bias and enhance validity of their results.

**In-role job performance**
A key distinction scholars make in measuring job performance is between in-role behaviors and extra-role behaviors. In-role behaviors include tasks and roles that are expected as part of everyday work, such as showing up on time and completing assigned tasks, and are often measured via existing performance appraisal documents or surveys of supervisors. Extra-role performance includes behaviors that fall outside of employees’ stated job responsibilities but are closely tied to the organization’s success (i.e., organizational citizenship behaviors and contextual performance). These behaviors can also be measured with existing performance appraisals or supervisor surveys. Some researchers have also utilized organizational records to capture extra-role behaviors. Lambert (2000), for example, used number of suggestions made for company improvements as a measure of organizational citizenship behavior.

Most companies regularly evaluate the performance of individual employees. The validity of performance
appraisals depends on how closely appraisal items are related to the job and on the extent of supervisor bias. As Lambert (2006) points out, even if validity is questionable in terms of capturing employee behavior, supervisor ratings can be an important indicator of the extent to which a worker’s contributions are valued in the company. For example, Duarte, Goodson, and Klich (1993) found that the performance of workers who reported that they had a strong relationship with their supervisor received higher performance ratings than colleagues who reported less positive relationships with their supervisor but were more productive based on department productivity records.

Work-family researchers can benefit from the work of scholars in the broader organizational field in identifying strategies for capturing daily in-role performance. For example, in the study by Duarte et al. (1993) discussed above, measures of objective performance were derived from department records and were job-specific; performance of call operators was measured in terms of the average time taken to complete calls, whereas the performance of cable splicers was measured according to established standards for completion of daily work assignments.

Because retailers often track sales at the store and worker level, sales records are often available in these settings. For example, George (1991) used questionnaires to examine how positive mood at work promoted extra-role prosocial behaviors and then linked these prosocial behaviors to sales performance, measured in terms of workers’ average sales per hour in the month following the questionnaire. Benkhoff (1997) compared sales targets with actual sales records in an examination of the relationship between employee commitment and the performance of branches of a commercial bank.

Organizations often track the type of performance that is most meaningful in their industry (Lambert, 2006). Scrap rates are tracked in manufacturing, sales in retail firms, and rooms cleaned per shift in hotels. By indentifying critical success factors in the industry, as well as in the company or companies under study, researchers are likely to find company records that may produce particularly valid measures of performance.

Surveys of supervisors using task performance measures, such as those developed by Williams and Anderson (1991), can also be an effective way of capturing in-role performance. One challenge of surveying supervisors to provide assessments of their employees’ performance is that the researcher needs to be able to match these supervisor ratings with employee data. As we illustrate below, this extra layer of matching responses between employees and supervisors can impose additional logistical challenges, and also complicate the study time frames.

For example, consider that employees can be reluctant to participate unless granted anonymity, and the approval process for many institutional review boards is often more time consuming for data that are to
remain confidential but not anonymous. Therefore, data collection must be designed so that employees and supervisors never have access to each other’s responses. A common practice is to assign respondent identification numbers to employees, which are then written on the surveys. Benefits of this procedure are that it allows the researcher to match supervisors’ assessments to employees’ survey responses and also allows the researcher to contact non-respondents to encourage their participation in the study and to assess nonresponse bias to the survey, an important source of sample selection bias that undermines the rigor of many studies in the work-family field (Lambert, 2006).

An example of this procedure is research conducted by Muse, Harris, Giles, and Feild (2008), who secured the cooperation of two organizations on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For list (Levering, Moskowitz, Sung, Daniels & Spencer, 2001). Muse and colleagues had the organizations assign a number to each employee different from the company identification number. The employee surveys contained the assigned project number. The organization maintained the list of employee names and corresponding numbers; employees returned completed surveys to the researchers. Once data collection from the employees was complete, the researchers gave the list of project numbers for employees who had participated in the study to the organization, asking them to prepare supervisor surveys for those employees. Supervisor surveys included a cover sheet with the employee’s name to be evaluated. Supervisors were instructed to return the attached completed survey, which contained only the project number, directly to the researchers. This allowed the researchers to match the supervisor survey of performance measures to the corresponding employee survey, without needing the names of either party. The organization also did not have access to the completed surveys, thereby keeping all responses completely confidential. Using online survey administrators, such as SurveyMonkey, can also help facilitate linking surveys while providing confidentiality.

**Extra-role performance**
Lambert (2000) was able to capture behaviors outside of the employee’s job description, referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), using organizational documentation in her study of Fel-Pro employees. The purpose of the study was to examine workers’ use and appreciation of the menu of work-life benefits offered at Fel-Pro and their relationship to worker performance. A key finding is that the more workers appreciated the work-life benefits available to them, the more likely they were to submit suggestions for quality improvement and to participate in meetings on quality methods. These measures of OCB were selected because engaging lower-level workers in quality-improvement initiatives was an area of performance important to the firm and one for which workers obviously had some discretion, since participation at meetings and in the suggestion program was lower than managers desired and since work-units varied in their recording of scrap and delivery times (Lambert, 2006). Because the company cared about accurately tracking employees’ participation in these programs and, importantly, used this information in decision making, the documentation used to develop measures of participation in quality
A challenge of incorporating measures of extra-role behaviors into work-family research is that not all organizations have documentation useful for measuring performance that falls outside employees' stated job descriptions. Lambert (2006) explains how identifying and developing organizational documentation that would provide valid and reliable measures of OCB took extensive time and effort. Moreover, organizations that maintain such documentation may not be willing to share it with researchers. Consequently, many researchers have utilized supervisor surveys as a next-best alternative. Surveying supervisors can also provide the researcher with the opportunity to use more global measures of extra-role behaviors. In the study described earlier, Muse et al. (2008) found work-life benefit use and perceived work-life benefit value to have differential, indirect relationships with task and contextual performance. Netemeyer, Maxham, and Pullig (2005) examined how both work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC) are related to in-role and extra-role performance. They used supervisor surveys to collect data on both types of performance, finding WFC and FWC to be directly related to extra-role performance and WFC to have an indirect relationship with both in-role and extra-role performance. Netemeyer et al. (2005) employed a third data source by surveying customers concerning their intent to make additional purchases from the company, linking extra-role but not in-role performance to customer purchase intent. Witt and Carlson (2006) also used supervisor evaluations of job performance (task and contextual) in their study, which found support for a negative relationship of FWC with performance as moderated by conscientiousness and perceived organizational support. These studies demonstrate that supervisor and customer surveys, when utilized as additional data sources, can be an effective approach to measuring OCBs when organizational documentation does not exist or is inaccessible.

Work-Related Antecedents

Use of work-life supports provided by organizations

Many researchers have observed that often there is a disconnect between supports offered on paper and those available to workers in practice (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Eaton, 2003; Kossek & Lambert, 2005; Lambert, 2008; Lambert & Waxman, 2005). Organizational documentation can be a crucial source of information on employer practice, which includes how formal policies are implemented in daily organizational life as well as informal routines not covered by formal policy. For example, benefit participation rates can help reveal the extent to which benefits available as a matter of employer policy are delivered to workers as a matter of practice. Lambert and Waxman (2005), for example, draw on documentation of benefit take-up rates to look at the extent to which health insurance is distributed to lower-level workers; only a small fraction of workers in many of the lower-level jobs they have studied are
covered by insurance available in policy. Similarly, Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2005) reviewed organizational approval records of flextime to determine the extent to which flextime policies on the books were delivered in practice to workers technically eligible to participate.

Similarly, Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2006) utilized three sources of data in their study of telecommuting and work-family effectiveness. Company records provided documentation on formal use of telecommuting; employees were surveyed on the frequency of telecommuting, hours worked, turnover intent, and job autonomy; and supervisors were interviewed about employee overall performance using an existing survey. Kossek et al. (2006) found a positive relationship between formal use of telecommuting and performance. However, the extent to which telecommuting was used was not related to performance. Additionally, use of work-life benefits was negatively related to turnover intent but not performance.

Employee handbooks and documentation of work-life benefit use and approval are two prime sources of information that can be used to measure company policy and then practice. Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) measured work-family programs offered to employees by comprising a list from the organization’s employee manual and then confirming with HR managers that the programs existed. Employees were then surveyed about their use of the programs and supervisors were surveyed about their level of power in the organization. Results indicated that employees were more likely to use work-family programs if they had a powerful supervisor to “protect” them from negative ramifications.

The key to distinguishing organizational policy from everyday practice is not assuming the two are the same. Using company’s stated formal policy as a measure of benefits may have limited validity when trying to measure employees’ access to work-life supports, especially among workers in lower-level jobs who often do not qualify for benefits available to others in the same workplace. Lambert (2006) recommends a three-step process designed to systematically unpack organizational policy, everyday organizational practice, and workers’ experiences of both. This process requires data collection from multiple sources including employee handbooks and personnel policies, human resource records of benefit take-up rates, and interviews with or surveys of HR staff, front-line managers, and employees.

**Overcoming Challenges of Collecting Organizational Data**

Strengthening one’s research design by collecting organizational documentation or conducting multiple-level surveys does not come without a cost. Researchers have a few obstacles to overcome to bring such data collection to fruition. First and foremost is making the sales pitch to land the data collection opportunity. Not surprisingly, in gaining the participation of employers, it is important to focus on potential benefits to the organization for participating in the study. Discussion of potential benefits needs to be candid; over-selling the potential usefulness of the findings has the potential for backfire in the long run.
Next and probably most important, is developing trust with key people throughout the organizational structure (Lambert, 2006). Even if a CEO or other executive of the organization has authorized the collection, without the trust of employees at the level at which the data will be collected, the study may not be executable. Try to make a connection with how the study might benefit employees as well as the organization as a whole. Being sensitive to the confidentiality of all data, even basic organizational records can also help build trust. Give the organization the option of either disclosing the company name in the resulting publication or remaining anonymous. Emphasizing how data collected will be secured can also help ease concerns about the process. In a climate where time is money, be sure to clarify the estimated time commitment from the organization and make every effort to stick to it. Learning about data collection processes throughout the organization will help the researcher identify reasonable requests.

Finally, do not ask for more documentation than is needed for the study (Lambert, 2006). Collecting documentation that may not be used can be wasteful of the organization’s time, which may damage the long-term relationship and consequently interfere with future data collection opportunities.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

In conclusion, by incorporating organizational documentation and multilevel survey data into their research, work-family scholars may improve the rigor of their research by minimizing problems with common method variance and strengthening measurement validity. Moreover, organizational documentation can be used to transform an otherwise cross-sectional design into a longitudinal study, increasing the potential of the study to assess causal claims.

Although we have only examined the work-side of work-family measures here, these outcomes and antecedents can cross over to affect people at home. We encourage researchers to consider ways to extend these strategies to the family side of work-family issues by, for example, gathering data from family members and the community.

Incorporating the ideas discussed in this review will help strengthen the validity of measures of key antecedents and outcomes incorporated in work-family research, thus improving its rigor. Such steps are necessary if practitioners are to have a firm empirical base on which to design and implement formal and informal supports that assist employees as they combine work with other facets of their life.

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1 See Lambert, 2006, for additional discussion of issues of reliability and validity in work-life research.
References


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 ...]).

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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<th>Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives</th>
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<td>Family Antecedents</td>
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<td>Community Antecedents</td>
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<td>Community Covariates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal Antecedents</td>
<td>Societal Experiences</td>
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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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Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains