Work-Family Culture (2004)

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Basic Concepts & Definitions

An organization that would like to create a "family-friendly" workplace must consider four interrelated components (see the entry on family-friendly workplaces in the Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia for more detail). First, they must design and implement benefits, practices, and policies to help employees balance their work and nonwork lives (e.g., flexible work schedules, dependent care supports). Second, they must create workplace cultures and climates that reflect a concern for employees' lives outside of work. Third, they must encourage workplace relationships that are respectful of employees' nonwork responsibilities. Finally, they must revisit current work processes, systems, structures, and practices to determine which ones lead to work inefficiencies, which in turn may create unnecessary stress and overwork for employees. This entry will focus on what some experts consider to be the most important component, that of creating a supportive workplace culture.

Recent research suggests that it is not enough to implement family-friendly policies and practices such as extended parental leave and flextime to reduce employees' work-life conflicts (Allen, 2001; Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Employees are often reluctant to take advantage of these and other work-life programs, usually because of strong norms for "face time" and workaholic hours. In some organizations, it is not unusual to hear employees brag about working long hours, thus reinforcing norms for workaholism (Blair-Loy, & Wharton, 2002, p. 838). Employees also fear negative consequences for their career progress if they use work-life programs. In fact, Judiesch and Lyness (1999) found that taking a leave of absence was associated with fewer subsequent promotions and smaller salary increases. Thus, it appears that organizations spend time, money, and energy developing and implementing work-life benefits that employees don't use because of an unsupportive work-family culture. As a result, neither the organization nor employees benefit from the much heralded work-life programs.

Work-family culture has been defined as the "shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson et al., 1999, p. 394). Similarly, Warren and Johnson (1995) defined a company with a family-
friendly culture as one where "the overarching philosophy or belief structure is sensitive to the family needs of its employees and is supportive of employees who are combining paid work and family roles" (p. 163). Allen (2001) described a related construct, family supportive organization perceptions, as the "global perceptions that employees form regarding the extent to which the organization is family supportive" (p. 414). Lewis (1997) used Schein's (1985) explication of three levels of organizational culture (i.e., artifacts, values, and assumptions) to describe aspects of culture that affect an employee's ability to balance work and family. She argued that work-life policies and programs are "artifacts," or surface level indicators of an organization's intentions to be supportive. Values underlie artifacts, and might include, for example, prioritizing work over family or family over work. Basic assumptions underlie values. For example, it is often assumed that time spent at work is isomorphic with productivity, despite policies to the contrary (e.g., flexplace). According to Lewis (1997), it is the values and assumptions that get at the heart of workplace culture, and unless they are examined, change toward a more family-friendly culture will be impossible.

Although the definitions of work-family culture are quite similar, researchers differ greatly in how they operationalize it. Some have included both formal (e.g., actual benefits offered, degree of schedule flexibility) and informal (e.g., perceptions of support) elements in their measures (e.g., Clark, 2001; Warren & Johnson, 1995). Others have included only informal or intangible aspects of culture or climate (e.g., Allen, 2001; Jahn, Thompson, & Kopelman, 2003; Kossek, Colquitt, & Noe, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). As both organizational culture and climate have been defined in terms of employees' perceptions of expectations and norms for behavior at work, or what some authors have referred to as "the internal social psychological environment" (Denison, 1996), in this entry we will focus on employees' perceptions of the informal, intangible aspects of work-family culture, while recognizing that this culture is influenced, in part, by the formal benefits offered by the organization. It is also important to note that much of organizational culture is taken for granted and unacknowledged by employees. The following section will describe the various dimensions that make up a supportive work-family culture.

*Dimensions of Work-Family Culture*

Research by Thompson et al. (1999) suggests that work-family culture is comprised of three components: organizational time demands, career consequences for using work-family benefits, and managerial support. The first component, *organizational time demands*, refers to the extent to which there are expectations for long hours of work and for prioritizing work over family. Organizations that employ corporate lawyers and investment bankers are known for excessive time demands, with employees often working nights and weekends. Although these professional workers can choose whether or not to meet these expectations, refusing to do so often results in negative career consequences. The situation is bleaker for blue-collar workers, who often work in tightly managed, low-control occupations and face the unique demand of "mandatory overtime." Employees can be asked to work overtime with little warning,
and the employer can fire or demote workers for refusing to do so under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (Perry-Jenkins, 2003).

The second component described by Thompson et al. (1999), perceived career consequences, refers to the degree to which employees perceive positive or negative career consequences for using work-family benefits. Because of norms for visibility or “face time,” employees often believe that participating in work-family programs such as flexplace may damage their career progress as they will be less visible at work (Bailyn, 1993). The third component, managerial support, captures the extent to which individual managers are sensitive to and accommodating of employees' family needs. Other researchers have also included managerial or supervisory support in their definitions of a supportive culture (e.g., Bailyn 1997; Clark, 2001).

In addition to the dimensions described above, there are most likely other relevant dimensions to be considered to fully understand the nature of work-family culture. For example, Kossek and her colleagues (Kossek, Colquitt, & Noe, 2001) proposed that two dimensions of work climate are related to an employee's ability to balance work and family: climate for sharing concerns and climate for sacrifices. A work climate for sharing concerns encourages employees to discuss family concerns with supervisors and co-workers, while a work climate for sacrifices entails making sacrifices in the family role to support work role performance.

In addition, Kossek, Noe, and DeMarr (1999) proposed that organizations might have a climate for boundary separation, in which some organizations have loose boundaries between work and family (e.g., employees can bring children to work) and some have tight boundaries (e.g., employee are not allowed to take personal calls at work). Relatedly, Nippert-Eng (1996) argues that individuals have preferences for the degree to which work and family are integrated or separated (parallelizing Kossek et al.'s loose and tight boundaries) and that they do "boundary work" to create and maintain the desired degree of separation/integration. However, although individuals can influence the degree of integration and separation that exists, the culture of the organization often dictates the degree of permeability between the family and work roles. For example, formal and informal work norms may dictate that family pictures on one's desk are acceptable (integration) or that socializing with co-workers outside of work is not acceptable (segmentation).

Kirchmeyer (1995) suggested that respect for an employee's non-work life is an important component of a family-supportive organization. Through policies and practices, the organization sends a message to its employees that non-work activities are important and valued. Rather than implementing policies to take care of employees (e.g., daycare), the organization provides workers with the resources to fulfill obligations themselves. Examples of such measures include flexible work hours, alternative work arrangements, and policies that discourage work-related travel on weekends (Kirchmeyer, 1995).
Finally, research by Jahn, Thompson, and Kopelman (2003) suggests that employees' perceptions of organizational support have two components: tangible support, which is comprised of perceptions of instrumental and informational support provided by the organization, and intangible support, which is comprised of perceptions of emotional support, the organization's acknowledgement of an employee's family-related needs. While these components were not referred to as representing work-family culture, it seems likely that there is overlap between the constructs.

While there has been no comprehensive study to date that has investigated these multiple dimensions of work-family culture, the area is ripe for investigation. See Figure 1 for a summary of the work-family culture dimensions discussed above, along with their definitions and the researchers who have investigated them.

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

Because work-family culture has an important influence on the use of work-family benefits within an organization, and because use of benefits is related to job and life satisfaction (Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1994; Kossek, & Ozeki, 1998), it is essential that organizations understand the mechanisms through which work-family culture enhances or inhibits efforts to help employees achieve a balance between their work and non-work activities. In addition, researchers have found that a supportive work-family culture is related to employee health and well-being, as well as organizational productivity, through its relationship with work-family conflict, turnover intentions, stress, absenteeism, and organizational commitment (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999).

**State of the Body of Knowledge**

An individual's overall perception of a supportive work-family culture or climate has been associated with important work outcomes and employee attitudes. As mentioned earlier, research has demonstrated that perceptions of a supportive work culture are related to higher utilization rates of work-family benefits (Thompson et al., 1999; Allen, 2001) and have been associated with positive attitudes such as job satisfaction (Allen, 2001) and commitment to the organization (Allen, 2001; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco, & Judiesch, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999). In addition, perceptions of a supportive work-family culture are associated with negative work-related outcomes such as work strain (Warren & Johnson, 1995), work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Morgan & Wilson, 2002), and turnover intentions (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). Both Allen (2001) and Thompson et al. (1999) found that these relationships held after controlling for benefit availability, confirming the notion that a supportive culture has an influence on employee attitudes above and beyond simply offering work-life benefits.

Researchers have just begun to investigate the relationship between supportiveness of work-family culture and the extent to which employees actually use the work-life benefits offered. As noted earlier, even if benefits are available, they often are not utilized if the culture of the organization sends mixed
messages about whether it is acceptable to use them (Soloman, 1994; Perlow, 1995). Two recent studies found that employees were more likely to use work-life benefits when they perceived their organizations and supervisors as providing a family-supportive work environment (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999).

Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) also examined possible contextual factors that may influence whether or not employees use work-family policies and programs. In particular, they examined whether the existence of powerful supervisors and powerful co-workers would increase the utilization of family-care programs and flexible work policies. They argued that a social context with powerful individuals (e.g., with men being more powerful than women in many workplaces) would provide the support necessary to reduce the potential negative career consequences of utilizing work-family policies. They found that use of family-care policies (e.g., day care and paid/unpaid leave) was influenced solely by individual factors, with women, single individuals, and those with dependent care responsibilities more likely to use family-care policies. However, use of flexible policies (e.g., flextime, telecommuting) was affected by contextual variables that represent the amount of power that one's co-workers and supervisors have. For example, having a male, unmarried supervisor as compared to a female, married supervisor increased the probability of utilizing flexible policies by 50%.

The relationship between a supportive work-family culture and gender equity in the workforce has only recently been studied (Billing, 2000; Kelly, 1999). Even though men are increasingly becoming involved in child care responsibilities, the burden of child care still rests largely with women (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2003). Societal gender role expectations that women should carry the burden are reinforced by the greater earnings potential of men as well as organizational norms that give women permission to deal with child care problems but not men. In fact, researchers have found that the emphasis an organization places on gender equity when developing policies on work and family can influence the overall gender equality in the workforce. For example, Billing (2000) analyzed interview data from three Scandinavian companies and found that when an organization supported both women and men in their attempts to balance work and life, there were equal numbers of male and female managers in the organization. In contrast, organizational support of the male-breadwinner model was associated with a higher likelihood of male advancement in the organization. Similarly, when an Australian company integrated their work-family and gender equity policies, the number of women in management positions significantly increased and more women moved into traditionally male occupations (Squirchuk & Bourke, 2000).

The majority of research on work-family culture has focused on the positive or negative impact it has on employees and reinforces the "business case" for a family-supportive organization. However, it is also important to acknowledge other reasons, largely societal and legal in nature, that exist for the presence of work-family policies. For example, changes in sex discrimination laws led many companies to offer maternity leaves of absence, and corporate child care programs were established in response to government programs designed to help poor workers keep their jobs rather than quitting to care for their
children (Kelly, 1999). In addition, the Clean Air Act of 1990 prompted some organizations to place greater emphasis on telecommuting as a way to decrease pollution from long commutes. Other outcomes of work-family policies that are ignored by the "business case" include the impact on gender equity in the workplace (as discussed above) as well as the impact that policies have on an individual's self-determination. Kelly (1999) argues that including these societal implications when discussing the impact of work-family policies may decrease the tendency to equate work-family policies with "women's issues" and may help alleviate the backlash that sometimes surrounds these programs.

Finally, it is increasingly recognized that national context is important in understanding work-family culture, and in particular, the "overtime culture." In a cross-national study, it was found that Hong Kong employees were more interested in working part-time than their American and British counterparts (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002). The authors of the study attributed this finding to the Hong Kong Confucian culture which places family above all other concerns, including work. They also found that Americans were less likely than their British and Hong Kong counterparts to indicate a desire to work fewer hours. The authors suggested this finding might be the result of equating long hours with achievement and identity in American society. However, the persistence of an overtime culture, at least among Western Societies, is reflected in solutions aimed at reducing face time. For example, a company in the United Kingdom implemented a "Go Home on Time Days" campaign which challenged the notion that time at the office is an indicator of commitment and encouraged employees to work smarter, not harder. The campaign consisted of tips on how to achieve this outcome as well as management training on how to facilitate work-life balance (Brannen & Lewis, 2000). A Swedish firm implemented a more direct solution by instituting a policy to measure productivity via outputs (work completed) as opposed to inputs (time at work) (Hass & Hwang, 2000).

**Implications for Research**

Research to date suggests that a supportive work-family culture is related to important organizational outcomes such as increased commitment, higher job satisfaction, lower absenteeism, decreased work-family conflict, decreased psychological distress, fewer somatic complaints, and decreased role strain. What is unclear is the relative importance of each of the various cultural dimensions (e.g., negative career consequences, climate for sacrifice) for predicting these outcomes. Knowing which dimension is most predictive of positive outcomes would enable organizations to focus their change efforts on dimensions that matter. Clearly, certain dimensions would be salient in some contexts but not others. Furthermore, researchers should work to develop an accurate and comprehensive measure of work-family culture and to focus on understanding the range of dimensions analytically and not just descriptively. Ultimately, a psychometrically sound instrument would allow employers to more accurately assess the state of work-family culture in their organization, and would help researchers advance our understanding of the causes and consequences of an unsupportive culture as well as which dimensions are salient in a given context.
It would also be useful to determine how perceptions of work-family culture vary within an organization, as well as by occupation, industry, and organizational size. Recent research by the Families and Work Institute found that the extent to which an organization offered flexible work arrangements varied significantly by company size, industry, and percentage of executive positions held by women and minorities (Galinsky & Bond, 1998). There are probably similar predictors of a supportive culture, as well as other factors such as job level, production technology, product life cycle, and level of client demand. In addition, studying the reasons why employees work long hours (reasons other than mandatory overtime) might shed light on the importance of an organization’s culture. When Lewis (2002), for example, asked accountants about their reasons for working long hours, senior level managers reported "personal preference" whereas the junior accountants reported "company culture." She suggested that perhaps the senior managers had internalized the values and norms of both the accounting profession and their own company, while the junior accountants had not. Conversely, it is also possible that generational differences explain these findings. Longitudinal research that follows new employees over the course of their careers would shed light on the extent to which initial value differences versus company culture shape employees' attitudes and behaviors at work.

It is also important that the potential benefits of working long hours be considered in future research. Blair-Loy (2003) suggested that people differ in terms of their devotion to career, ranging from "career committed" to "family committed." In her interviews with women in the financial service industry, she found that women who were highly committed to their careers enjoyed the “rush” of work and of being consumed by the long hours and intensity of their work because it resulted in career success, camaraderie and credibility. Certainly there are many men who feel this way, too.

Finally, researchers should expand the nature of outcome variables studied in work-family research to include the impact on the family unit, community, and the government (Glass, 2002). The narrow focus on individual outcomes (e.g., stress) and organizational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and productivity) ignores the positive impact that businesses can have on family and community. Researchers should also consider the unique challenges that working class families face when trying to balance work and family. The current literature largely ignores these workers and, as noted by Perry-Jenkins (2003, p. 6), “…working class families face unique challenges when combining work and family life, challenges that will require unique solutions. We must be careful not to assume that the large literature on dual-career couples can inform us about the experiences of lower income families.”

**Implications for Practice**

Because workplace norms for long hours of work and for sacrificing family for work can have deleterious consequences for individuals, their families, as well as their employers, some organizations have begun to consider strategies for supporting employees' well-being, and "affirming the whole person...thereby, enhancing commitment, creativity and individual contributions" (Friedman & Johnson, 1996, p. 16). In
moving from simple programs to organizational culture change, work-life experts Dana Friedman and Arlene Johnson argue that work-life efforts should be linked to an organization's strategy so that work-life balance will be considered essential to business success. More specifically, an organization should consider linking work-life efforts to the strategic goals of increasing employee commitment, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and decreasing turnover, absenteeism, job strain, and other health symptoms of its employees. And as discussed earlier, work-life practitioners should also consider linking work-life efforts to the legal and environmental goals of gender equity and environmental stewardship.

Top level support is crucial for any culture change to take place. Top managers must embrace a vision for the organization that supports work-life balance, and then communicate this vision through the company's mission statement, intranet, newsletters, and email announcements. Furthermore, it would be helpful if top and mid-level managers modeled new behaviors. For example, in Ernst & Young's efforts to create a more balanced work-life culture, a managing partner on an assignment in Chicago flew home to New York midweek for his daughter's birthday, thereby demonstrating to other managers and his subordinates that certain family events have priority over work (Friedman, Thompson, Carpenter, & Marcel, 2001).

To reinforce the importance of a supportive work-family culture, Friedman and Johnson (1996) recommend that managers be held accountable. Some organizations reward managers for being supportive of their subordinates' efforts to combine work and family via performance reviews (Working Mother, October, 2002). Managers should also be given the training needed to create a supportive culture, and be encouraged to consider how they might be contributing to a culture of overwork. For example, managers should be encouraged to consider ways of measuring performance that don't include "face time," the common practice of equating work hours with productivity and commitment to the organization.

At the most fundamental level, organizations need to focus on work processes, and consider the ways in which outdated assumptions influence the total number of hours employees are expected to work, as well as where they work, when they work, and how they work (Friedman & Johnson, 1996; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). Ernst and Young have addressed work redesign by setting parameters around employee due dates, accessibility, and response time so that the clients have clear expectations about demands that are acceptable. In addition, deployment committees spread out work assignments so that any one individual is not overburdened, and consulting teams are encouraged to mark personal commitments on team calendars to help increase the organization's respect for nonwork obligations (Catalyst, 2003). Friedman, Christensen, and DeGroot (1998) maintain that managers should "continually experiment with the way work gets done, looking for approaches that enhance the organization's performance and allow employees to pursue personal goals" (p. 120). Only when this flexibility is achieved, according to Friedman, et al. (1998), will the "zero-sum game" between work and life end.

Figure 1. Work-Family Cultural Dimensions in the Literature
<table>
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<th>Culture Dimension</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Researchers who have used this dimension in measuring work family culture or climate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational time demands</td>
<td>The extent to which there are expectations for long hours of work and for prioritizing work over family.</td>
<td>Bailyn, 1993; Thompson, Beauvais, &amp; Lyness, 1999; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco, &amp; Judiesch, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived career consequences</td>
<td>The degree to which employees perceive positive or negative career consequences for using work-family benefits.</td>
<td>Bailyn, 1993; Fried, 1998; Lyness et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial support</td>
<td>The extent to which individual managers are sensitive to and accommodating of employees' family needs.</td>
<td>Allen, 2001; Bailyn 1997; Clark, 2001; Lyness et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work climate for sharing concerns</td>
<td>Work climate which encourages employees to discuss family concerns with supervisors and co-workers.</td>
<td>Kossek, Colquitt, &amp; Noe, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work climate for sacrifices</td>
<td>Work climate which encourages employees to make sacrifices in the family role to support work role performance.</td>
<td>Kossek et al., 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration vs. segmentation</td>
<td>The degree to which norms in the workforce support the combination or separation of work and family.</td>
<td>Kossek, Noe, &amp; DeMarr, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for an employee's nonwork life</td>
<td>The degree to which an organization values the nonwork roles of workers.</td>
<td>Kirchmeyer, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible and intangible support</td>
<td>The degree to which an organization provides instrumental, informational, and emotional support.</td>
<td>Jahn, Thompson, &amp; Kopelman, 2003</td>
</tr>
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**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 ...).

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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<td>Family Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
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<td>Workplace Covariates</td>
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<td>Community Antecedents</td>
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Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains
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).

Table 1: Matrix of Information Domains (9/30/01)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives</th>
<th>Domain B: Work-Family Issues and Experiences</th>
<th>Domain C: Covariates</th>
<th>Domain D: Responses to W-F Issues and Experiences</th>
<th>Domain E: Outcomes and Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Antecedents</td>
<td>Individual Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Individual Covariates</td>
<td>Individual Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Individual Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Antecedents</td>
<td>Family Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Family Covariates</td>
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<td>Family Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
<td>Workplace Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
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<td>Societal Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains**