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Basic Concepts & Definitions

Globalization and technology are intensifying the way the world’s managers work across vast spatial and temporal boundaries. These aspects of the 21st century workplace present interesting challenges to working globally and building global careers while based domestically and abroad. In addition, this has implications for how global organizations manage their workforce (McGregor & Hamm, 2008) and how individual actors manage their personal and family demands given 24/7 global work flows (Shortland & Cummins, 2007).

The term *international career* has been used in the literature to indicate building a career based on periods abroad and at home, typically between two countries. However, with globalization linking business across multiple countries simultaneously and the proliferation of different ways of doing global work, the term *global career* is more distinct and is becoming more prevalent (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005; Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007). A broad definition of a *global career* is “a career that takes place in more than one region of the world, either sequentially or concurrently” (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007: 351).

*Global work* can be described as conducting business that requires frequently crossing multiple cultural boundaries and time zones, with worldwide or multiple cross-border (not only domestic) responsibilities (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992; Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007). In terms of the global work performed over a global career, Peiperl and Jonsen (2007: 353) state that “what is meant by ‘doing global work’ must be included in the category of crossing cultural boundaries, a key activity for global managers”. As such, global work flows involve crossing multiple spatial and temporal boundaries either *physically* (via “expatriate” or “flexpatriate” assignments) or *virtually* (via technology).

Global assignments abroad are usually staffed by an *expatriate* (“expat”) or an “employee of a business or government organization [or Non-Governmental Organization] who is sent to another (non-native) country to accomplish a job or organizational goal for a specific, temporary timeframe” (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2008: 184). An expat is generally expected to relocate (with or without family) and live...
and work abroad from two to five years per assignment. Alternatives to expatriate assignments exist for
global managers in the form of short-term and commuter international assignments, frequent international
business travel (or flexpatriate assignments), and virtual global work. These alternatives are thought to
enable global managers to work globally and develop or maintain global skills in the workplace while not
uprooting their family and personal life (Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007; Mayerhofer, Hartmann,
Michelitsch-Riedl, & Kollinger, 2004). As such, global careers can be viewed in more broad terms beyond
international assignments abroad or the expatriate experience.

A prototypical “global careerist” today might be one whose career hinges not only on crossing one
physical border through a company-sponsored expatriate assignment but crossing several physical and
cultural borders within a series of multi-country focused work experiences, over a long-term global career
(Brewster & Suutari, 2005; Cerdin & Bird, 2008; Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007). Addressing the impact of global
careers on employees’ overall lives is an issue that researchers have highlighted as deserving more
attention (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010; Lirio, 2010; Meyskens, Von Glinow, Werther, & Clarke,
2009). In particular, it is not entirely clear to what extent alternative forms of global work are potentially
less disruptive to global employees’ lives than traditional expatriate assignments requiring relocation
(Collings et al., 2007; Thomas, Lazarova, & Inkson, 2005).

Importance of Topic to Work and Family Studies

Evidence suggests that the profile of an expatriate or global manager is changing with demographic shifts
in the workforce. It is shifting away from the traditional expatriate profile of a male senior-level executive
with a “trailing spouse” and family (Thomas et al., 2005). A recent survey by GMAC Global Relocation
Services (2008) shows the percentage of women expatriates climbing to 18%, significantly up from the
1980s, when it was estimated that less than 3% of all expatriates were women (Adler, 1984). Moreover,
according to Thomas et al., “the pool of candidates . . . is mainly composed of younger employees of both
genders, in dual career families, who have different concerns from those of the jet setting corporate
trouble-shooters of the recent past” (2005: 343). This evolution in the global profile could largely be due to
a shift among individuals and organizations toward the importance of global experience in career
development today as well as a growing prevalence of global aspects in many jobs today (Cullen, 2007).

While scholars are increasingly investigating international work-family issues (cf. Poelmans, O’Driscoll,
& Beham, 2005) and comparing work-family issues across cultures (cf. Lirio et al., 2007), very little research
exists yet on work-life issues across a global context. Work and family norms are different across
countries given varying cultural and other macro-level socioeconomic factors operating. For example, in
one culture, working long hours may be perceived as contributing to the family well-being (securing
resources such as income, position, etc.) and in another it may be viewed as detracting from family well-
being (depleting resources such as time otherwise spent caring for children). So who defines “work-life balance” in a global context? Work-life policies are increasingly being exported globally, largely driven by the salience of the issue within the United States and Canada (Lewis, Gamble, & Rapoport, 2007). But it is not clear to what extent global organizations are truly recognizing the local work-family issues of each country context where they are operating in concert with the overall set of global work-life policies. In fact, the kind of issues that might be universal and, therefore, broadly applicable to a “global” work-life policy still need to be researched closely (Poster, 2005).

Bardoel and De Cieri (2006) say that the challenge for HR professionals working in global organizations lies in defining a global work-life strategy that establishes shared guidelines for communicating across office locations worldwide, while still allowing for local differences. Effective management of a global workforce includes a global work-life strategy that will support both globally mobile employees and those employed in the local offices of the organization. Bardoel and De Cieri (2006) note three issues that are common challenges for employees around the world in balancing work and family: (1) a lack of flexible work policies and practices, (2) the availability and affordability of dependent care, and (3) the negative impact of work overload and long working hours. These three factors could guide the formation of an effective global work-life strategy for a global organization.

Work-life researchers have called for future research that focuses on how global organizations can be inclusive of work-life issues in multiple cultural contexts (Gelfand & Knight, 2005; Poelmans, 2005; Poster & Prasad, 2005), as research has not kept pace with practice. In making recommendations for investigating international work and family issues, Poelmans (2005) concludes there is a need for more research that involves case studies of international companies to explore the impact of globalization on developing work-family policies and practices. Similarly, Gelfand and Knight (2005: 411) state that a key challenge for future work and family research is to understand the dynamics of change brought about by globalization and to understand how global organizations operating across country borders “contend with satisfying the work-family needs of a heterogeneous workforce”.

Poster (2005: 375) also advocates a transnational perspective toward examining work-life research, “which is one that recognizes the increasing connectedness of social institutions on a global scale as a result of factors like advancing technology and communications, global capitalism and international governance bodies”. Trends such as global work flows, the increased presence of firms abroad, and global talent and mobility make work-life issues important to investigate from a larger perspective. Poster (2005) points out that the work and family field can also benefit by approaching issues from a methodological standpoint that takes a global perspective. Along this vein, Poster and Prasad (2005) conducted a transnational case study examining work-family relations in three high-tech workplaces in the United States and India (a U.S.-based global corporation and its Indian subsidiary and a local Indian
competitor corporation). Here, they found that work-family norms for boundary management were not similar. In the Indian context, whether it was the local organization or global subsidiary, professionals preferred to segment their work from their family space, whereas the norm in the United States was to strive to integrate the two. These findings challenge the work-life field to not assume “one-size fits all” with global policies. In fact, they may even reveal underlying assumptions within global work-life policies that run counter to local norms and thereby undermine the aim of the policy to relieve strains between the employee’s work and personal life (Poster, 2005: 386).

Somewhat akin to Poster’s (2005) work, Shortland and Cummins (2007) show how work-life policies may have different meanings in a global context for several groups within the same organization. They report on two studies conducted by ORC Worldwide on the perceived effect of global work-life policies among HR professionals based domestically and expatriate employees abroad. Results were mixed across the two groups: The majority of HR professionals felt the policies had a positive effect on performance and employee’s lives, whereas only one-fifth of expatriates were able to even identify whether or not policies were available to them, let alone whether they were beneficial. A large percentage of expatriates actually felt that work-life policies were not available for them but rather for their colleagues in the home office. These results suggest a substantial disconnect between the organization’s efforts and the perceived benefit to the employees. Given the associated costs of global mobility for both the employee and the organization, close attention should be paid to the communication and implementation of policies across all locations in a global organization.

State of the Body of Knowledge

Historically, the literature on global careers and family has centered on the expatriate and a “trailing spouse” (or partner) and family that relocates abroad during the international assignment. Now, with globalization bridging communication between colleagues and clients from around the world, the literature has expanded to consider global work experiences centered on international business travel and the effects on the family when the global manager is away and the family maintains life at home. Not as much is known currently about the effects of virtual global assignments on the personal and family life of global managers (Collings et al., 2007; Lirio, 2010).

Viewing global work and global careers through a lens of expatriation. Most of the literature on expatriates has focused on the selection, training, and adjustment of expatriates in international assignments and expatriation without necessarily being contextualized within a larger international career (Tung, 1998). However, researchers have recently begun to examine the notion of international or global careers developed across multiple assignments over a long-term horizon (Cerdin & Bird, 2008; Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007; Suutari, 2003) as well as occurring outside of the boundaries of organizational development and
initiated by individual career actors (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005; Banai & Harry, 2004).

From an organizational standpoint, expatriate assignments represent vehicles to send key staff abroad for high-potential career development and to coordinate global lines of business, as well as transfer organizational knowledge, expand into new markets worldwide, and/or manage an international subsidiary (Adler, 2008; Roberts, Kossek, & Ozeki, 1998). However, expatriate assignments can be costly endeavors for organizations due to special compensation packages, housing and relocation costs, pre-departure training, and so forth. Although the data on high expatriate failure rates has been challenged as misrepresentative in evaluating expatriate assignments (Harzing, 1995), research has consistently shown that cross-cultural and family adjustment are factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the expatriate’s presence abroad (Adler, 2008; Collings et al., 2007; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005).

For individuals, expatriate assignments have meant opportunities and challenges both on the job and personally. The assignments provide the novelty and excitement of moving to another country and operating in a different cultural environment. They can also provide an opportunity to acquire new language skills, develop cultural understanding, and see new parts of the world (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002). However, adjusting to a new country can prove difficult on an expatriate and his or her family. In the literature to date, we mainly see family considerations cited as a driving reason for declining an expatriate assignment or for failure of the expatriate to complete the assignment (Harvey, 1997; 1998). The family may be a more convenient and, therefore, frequent reason given on the part of an employee, as open and ongoing communication between organization and employee is often absent when expatriate assignments are first being arranged and even later when the expatriate is on assignment (Adler, 2008). In addition, despite advancements in knowledge on reintegrating and retaining repatriated employees (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), questions may still remain for individuals as to how international assignments fit into their overall career development and relate to intra-organizational career success (Bolino, 2007; Yan, Zhu & Hall, 2002). Important to consider would be the type of organization and its international operations, as well as whether or not international experiences are valued within the organization (Adler, 2008; Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009).

**International assignments abroad and personal life.** Family and personal life are important to associated work and career outcomes in a global context such as expatriate adjustment, expatriate success, and international relocation (Cerdin & Bird, 2008). The impact on the spouse/partner’s career and existing family routines factors into decisions surrounding the acceptance of international assignments (Adler, 2008) and, in some cases, for the dissatisfaction of an assignment if accepted (Harvey, 1998). Most of the research conducted on expatriate relocation and the family has centered on adjustment issues of the trailing spouse, the spouse’s influence on the expatriate’s acceptance of an international assignment, and perceived organizational support provided for the expatriate and family (Harvey & Moeller, 2009).
Recently, Konopaske, Robie, and Ivancevich (2009) went deeper to understand antecedents for managerial willingness to undertake three types of global assignments (e.g., short- and long-term assignments abroad and international travel assignments) using a multifactor model based on reasoned action and family systems theories. Their results showed how managers evaluated the various assignments given different personal and family-related factors. Konopaske et al. (2009) found that the presence of children was negatively related to taking up international travel assignments and short-term assignments abroad. Although the age of the children was not assessed in the model, the reluctance to undertake these kinds of assignments came from the concern over being away from their immediate family for extended periods of time.

Konopaske et al.'s (2009) finding that spouse willingness to relocate was associated with managerial willingness to accept an expatriate assignment supported the existing expatriate literature (Harvey, 1998); this also extended to managerial willingness to accept a short-term assignment. In the study, external rewards and benefits were associated with managerial willingness to expatriate but not to take up short-term international assignments or international travel. The authors suggested that the expatriate managers were likely accustomed to traveling already as part of their job and, therefore, did not assume additional compensation for this type of international work. Also, because there was no relocation of the family involved, they likely did not expect a differentiated compensation package as might be normally arranged for expatriate assignments.

In one of the few global career studies to go beyond the challenges for family when considering expatriate assignments, Suutari (2003) presented data on the positive impact for the family in living abroad. Benefits to the family, and children in particular, were seen by the expatriates as: (1) exposure to multiple cultures, (2) opportunity to learn another language, and (3) gaining self-reliance and a larger worldview.

Studies on short-term international assignments are only just beginning to emerge. Starr and Currie (2009) focused on the global workers' perceptions of their personal lives while on a short-term international assignment. The article showed how family and personal concerns can be implicated in these types of assignments even when the family is not uprooted. Due to the absence of accompanying family, Starr and Currie (2009) reported that family support (although from afar) became critical, perhaps even more than would be for traditional expatriates on long-term assignments. Also, they uncovered discourses around choosing to undertake a short-term assignment as a means to gaining international experience abroad without the fuller, long-term commitment of an expatriate assignment. A significant contributing factor to this was the global worker’s strategizing around family needs at home and, in the case of the women interviewed, planning around pregnancy. Their research suggests that concerns for the extended family also apply to those who undertake short-term assignments, not only those who relocate for longer periods of time.
Some interesting theorizing has begun on the work-family interface in relation to global assignments. Lazarova et al. (2010) conceptualized a model of expatriate work and family role performance using both job demands-resources theory and contagion theory. Bringing the domestic work and family literature together with the international management literature helps further clarify the construct of expatriate adjustment in considering also the expatriate’s family role adjustment. The model illustrates the influences of organizational context as well as spillover and crossover between partners on the expatriate’s work role and family role performance. Although the model is outlined for expatriate assignments, Lazarova et al. (2010) contend that it can easily be modified for those on short-term as well as international travel assignments. This paper represents a significant move toward stronger theorizing about the work-family interface and links to assignment performance for expatriate and global managers.

In addition, Meyskens et al. (2009) laid out a 2x2 model for determining the ideal type of international assignment, considering the multinational enterprise’s (MNE) goals for the subsidiary relative to the candidate’s preferred state of work-life balance while on assignment. When the assignment called for greater MNE control over operations in the subsidiary location, more of a fixed presence from a MNE representative (the candidate) would be required in the subsidiary location. The suggested assignment types for the candidate in this case would be either a long-term (expatriate) or short-term assignment, depending on whether a low or medium level of work-life balance was personally desired. If there were not as much need for onsite control over the subsidiary, the options would be between a frequent flyer and commuter assignment. This, in turn, depended on whether a low or medium level of work-life balance was desired by the candidate.

While this model makes a first attempt in the literature to introduce the concept of work-life balance in relation to both traditional and alternative international assignments, Meyskens et al. (2009) make assumptions about the possible levels of work-life balance attainable by limiting the options to only two levels (low or medium). They state that “the literature and practice have demonstrated that no form of international assignments provides an optimal or high level of work-life balance” (Meyskens et al., 2009: 1444). However, another study by Lirio (2010) that exclusively examines global work and family issues through frequent international travel and global virtual work, suggests that high levels of work-life balance can also exist among those working globally. In-depth interviews with 25 global Generation X managers in dual-career families (“Global Gen Xers”) uncovered that almost half reported high levels of work-life balance. Having discretion to manage global travel relative to personal demands contributed to a high level of work-life balance within the sample. Moreover, these Global Gen Xers typically worked for organizations with a flexible work environment that supported managers working offsite and addressing global work flows with the assistance of technologies such as smartphones.
Although not a great deal of research has been conducted on dual-career couples in a global context, research by Adler (2008) and Moore (2002) address the particularities of accommodating another career when one spouse/partner’s work is relocated abroad. Both Adler (2008) and Moore (2002) debunk gendered notions surrounding the suitability of candidates for international assignment who are in dual-career families. Adler (2008: 330) says, “companies today select both women and men for global assignments and, in both cases, their spouses often have careers of their own”. She asserts that the most progressive companies address the career concerns of the trailing spouse by providing career counseling and executive search services. In addition, couples in a dual-career family may find it easier rather than more challenging to maintain a household, family, and career while abroad, due to the availability of affordable domestic help in the new location (Adler, 2008: 333).

Moore’s (2002) findings suggest that not only women managers might rethink relocation abroad or excessive travel but that more men are now struggling with global work-life issues (Moore, 2002: 62). Overall, her study revealed that the majority of dual-career expatriates surveyed had never turned down relocation (regardless of gender), hence challenging the notion of conflict for dual-career families and global careers. Among the recommendations Moore (2002) makes to organizations to facilitate international assignments among dual-career couples is to provide flexible career paths for those wishing to go global but are fearful of career consequences should they pass up an expatriate assignment when offered.

Approaches for investigating how family factors into the uptake of international assignments abroad are mixed. What does seem consistent, however, is that considering the implications for the “trailing spouse” (or partner) and the family as a whole affects the acceptance, expatriate adjustment, and ultimate success of international assignments abroad. Adler (1984, 1986) had surfaced myths that certain groups (e.g., women, young workers) are not interested in international assignments and that these myths are being used to explain their under representation in such postings in global organizations. Yet a good deal of the literature assumes gender neutrality when discussing international assignments abroad. However, Harris (2004) has suggested that work-family issues will likely have more impact on female expatriates due to differing gender role expectations in both the home country and host country.

Although international management scholars have been slow to research specific work-family strategies related to international assignments abroad, some have suggested that with the appropriate accommodations, international assignments abroad and family life are not de facto incompatible (cf. Adler, 2008; Starr & Currie, 2009; Suutari, 2003). Increasingly, understanding the impact on the family and personal life will need to be considered whether or not the manager is abroad or does global work through other means.
Global managers anchored at home: Performing global work through (alternative) physical and/or virtual means. In turning away from the limited notion of expatriation as depicting a global career, what is our understanding of how global work is otherwise accomplished? Viewing global managers more broadly than simply expatriate managers allows us to enter into the discussion of what it means to do global work without uprooting the manager and his or her family from the domestic home location. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, organizations are increasingly utilizing alternative forms of international assignments. These forms specifically include: (1) short-term international assignments of one year abroad or less; (2) commuter assignments requiring one- to two-week stays in another country punctuated by shuttling back and forth to home; (3) discrete episodes of frequent international business travel ("flexpatriates"); or (4) global virtual work using information and communication technologies (cf. Mayerhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch, & Kollinger, 2004; Starr, 2009; Welch, Worm, & Fenwick, 2003).

A notable article that specifically addresses global work done by those working in their domestic home location is Tharenou’s work (2005: 476) on Australians working “domestic international jobs”. These jobs are loosely described as overseeing international operations or developing business networks abroad; the focus of the study measures the amount of international content in the work and identifies the major reasons those surveyed would take up domestic international jobs. In measuring the amount of international work performed in domestic jobs, Tharenou (2005) operationalized this using a composite of the time spent on international activities, the number of years in the domestic international job, and the current amount of international travel involved in the job. The largest amount of international work was done by senior managers working in global organizations. Tharenou (2005) found the salient drivers for those taking up domestic international jobs to be money, professional development, and challenging work. However, the managers expressed concern over the disruption these kinds of jobs might have in their personal lives, particularly in regard to fulfilling their family commitments.

International business travel and personal life. The dominant discourse in the international management literature has been one of seeing alternative international assignments such as those represented by flexpatriates as providing the answer to the problem of expatriate unwillingness to relocate; however, the overall benefits to the family remain to be fully understood. Caliguiri and Lazarova (2005) view flexpatriate assignments as potentially bringing difficult conditions to global workers such as health ailments from constant travel, social isolation, and work and family strain. They question the ability of these alternative international assignments to improve work-life balance of employees who work globally and suggest that they need to be managed carefully in order to reconcile work and family demands. This literature has, in fact, focused on problems, almost to the exclusion of benefits.

Work-related travel (whether local or global) presents challenges to the personal and family lives of employees (DeFrank, Konopaske, & Ivancevich, 2000; Gustafson, 2006; Mayerhofer, Hartmann, &
Herbert, 2004). These challenges can take many forms, such as: (1) interruptions in regular family routines; (2) added responsibilities for the spouse and/or parent at home when travel is frequent; (3) strain on the traveler and family due to irregularity and length of travel; and (4) lack of family social support during extended periods of time away from home.

Such pressures of traveling were reflected in a report in the U.S. press on a growing trend of American fathers resisting business travel (Armour, 2007). An online study cited in the article found that one in four fathers was dissatisfied with his work-life balance because of travel-related work demands. Younger men in particular, it was reported, "are increasingly asking for concessions, such as negotiating travel schedules, the ability to take family members along on trips or greater flexibility from their companies when it comes to work-life balance" (Armour, 2007: 5B). Armour (2007) stated that employers wishing to retain these travelers were responding through renegotiating travel and experimenting with technology use in place of travel. This report brings to light the gender of the flexpatriate as a potential issue to investigate further and which appears as a common thread throughout the following studies on international business travel and family.

In a case study of flexpatriate career management issues in Europe, Mayerhofer, Hartmann, and Herbert (2004) found that flexpatriates strategized their global careers in relation to their personal lives, typically with little support from HR management. While both male and female flexpatriates recognized the need to manage work and family demands, how they accommodated their international travel differed. Women mentioned curtailing travel for last-minute family illnesses or emergencies, whereas it was inferred that men were less likely to do so. As such, Mayerhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch-Riedl and Kollinger (2004) suggested that female flexpatriates are more likely to have family issues to manage than men flexpatriates while building a global career. In fact, the women stated consistently that they would discontinue international travel altogether if necessary for their family, whereas no men flexpatriates in the study mentioned this.

Gustafson (2006) examined the relationship between work-related travel, family situation and gender using data from national travel surveys of Swedish workers. The study presented evidence that the amount of travel that workers undertake is partially determined by their own desires to adapt to their current family situations and by effects of gender-typing in the workplace. Results indicated that both family situation and occupational position had an impact on travel activity and that women and men differed in how much travel was undertaken. The men traveling internationally did so on average twice as much as women, regardless of family situation. Moreover, when there were young children in the home, women tended to restrict their travel more relative to men. Gustafson (2006) suggests that even in a gender-egalitarian country such as Sweden, gender segregation exists in the workplace as do particular gender role expectations in society for men and women when in parental roles.
Westman, Etzion, and Gattenio (2008) also found gender effects in their study of work-family issues related to international business travel. Using a small sample of Israeli international business travelers who traveled abroad at least three times per year, Westman et al. (2008) examined changes among work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC), and burnout at three distinct periods: before, during, and after international business trips. Results showed gender differences across WFC, FWC, and burnout related to the international business travel, such that women had more WFC and FWC pre- and post-trip but not while traveling; the men’s levels remained constant throughout the three periods. The research indicated that the women experienced overall changes in well-being throughout the travel process, whereas the men did not. Westman et al. (2008) suggested that for both men and women the international business trip provided a respite from daily home and family obligations (maybe more so for women) as well as the intense 24/7 culture of the workplace.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

Today’s workplace presents interesting and important challenges for research in the emerging field of global work and global careers. A gap exists in the international work and family literature regarding how alternative forms of international assignments are pursued and how this affects one’s family (Collings et al., 2007; Meyskens et al., 2009). Given demographic trends of more equal gender representation in the workforce among younger managers and increasing desires for work-life balance, much remains to be researched around these phenomena (Lirio, 2010).

While we are beginning to better understand some of the issues surrounding family life and traditional expatriate careers (Lazarova et al., 2010; Moore, 2002), there remains little exploration into the issues surrounding family life for those who pursue alternative forms of global work (Lirio, 2010; Meyskens et al., 2009). In particular, we do not know much about those managers who may pursue global work and a global career, yet do not wish to relocate abroad continually over the course of their career. In addition, among those who may have prior expatriate assignment experience (perhaps gained prior to starting a family) we do not know what kind of accommodations they make in their global work once they have a spouse or partner and children.

Research examining the interaction between business travel, whether domestic or international, and family life is still nascent. More research particularly on the effects of international business travel, which tends to be of longer duration, on the personal lives of global workers is needed (Westman et al., 2008). The knowledge gained could benefit flexpatriates and HR management by informing both parties on how international travel assignments can be structured to effectively meet the business objectives of the organization while also considering the personal and family life of the frequent traveler. Also, more
research is needed to address how virtual work and/or virtual international assignments, if combined with international business travel, may allow a global manager to effectively manage global work with a stable family life (Collings et al., 2007; Lirio, 2010).

We know little about how work-life policies are implemented in a global context and what strategies are useful when one’s work and life has “gone global”. Further research should examine how the issue of work-life balance in particular is being interpreted in the context of global careers. For example, is work-life balance a more or less complex issue due to reliance on technology in today’s global careers? We see that employees are increasingly adept with technology, but are they using technology to ease the demands of work and facilitate living the way they want, or is technology contributing to work and family tensions due to a blurring of boundaries?

Also, we don’t know how a global careerist’s conception of work-life balance is shaped by those with whom they do business globally. For example, how much collaboration exists across global actors to realize project timeframes that are mutually synergistic with all collaborators’ life rhythms? Are there particular culturally dominant dynamics at play? With pressures brought on by global business demands, whole workforces in Asia, for example, might be accommodating the working hours of the North American market (e.g., working night shifts in their local time zone) at the expense of the time normally spent with their families. Who sets the working norms in a global context will increasingly become an important issue for further investigation.

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**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 work-family 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 Work-Family Issues and Experiences</th>
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