Sloan Network Encyclopedia Entry

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment (2004)

Author: Jane Williams, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis- Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Date: May 22, 2004

Basic Concepts & Definitions

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment are two of the most prominent work attitudes examined in the work and organizational literature. These constructs also receive much attention within the more specific work-family literature. Researchers have often included both constructs in their examination of the relationships between work-family issues and work outcomes. Therefore, this entry will concurrently review both job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is defined as "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (Spector, 1997, p. 2). This definition suggests job satisfaction is a general or global affective reaction that individuals hold about their job. While researchers and practitioners most often measure global job satisfaction, there is also interest in measuring different "facets" or "dimensions" of satisfaction. Examination of these facet conditions is often useful for a more careful examination of employee satisfaction with critical job factors. Traditional job satisfaction facets include: co-workers, pay, job conditions, supervision, nature of the work and benefits.

Reliable and valid measures of both global and facet job satisfaction have been developed. Typical measures used include: The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1997); the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969); the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967); and the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman & Olham, 1975).

Organizational Commitment: Meyer and Allen (1994) state that organizational commitment is "a psychological state that a) characterizes the employee's relationships with the organization, and b) has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization" (p. 67). Other researchers use similar definitions that refer to an employee's attachment, goal congruency, identification, loyalty and allegiance to their organization.

Researchers generally agree there are three "foci" used to classify types of organizational commitment. The three types of commitment are affective, continuous, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to employees' perceptions of their emotional attachment to or identification with their
organization. Continuous commitment refers to employees' perceptions of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Finally, normative commitment refers to employees' perceptions of their obligation to their organization. For instance, if an organization is loyal to the employee or has supported his/her educational efforts, the employee may report higher degrees of normative commitment. This three-pronged classification allows for identification of the underlying basis for each type of commitment and researchers have clarified the unique antecedents and outcomes related to each type (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Like job satisfaction, reliable measures of the three types of commitment have also been developed and validated (Meyer & Allen, 1994).

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

Job satisfaction may be the most frequently measured organizational variable in both research and applied settings. There are multiple reasons for interest in this work attitude. First, organizations are interested in simply assessing the current state of employee job satisfaction. Organizations often want to know the state of employee morale over time and thus, some form of job satisfaction measurement is generally included in employee opinion surveys.

Second, much work has been conducted to understand the antecedents of job satisfaction. Interesting lines of research have focused on whether job satisfaction can best be understood from a dispositional (Arvey, Bouchard, Segal & Abraham, 1989; Ilies & Judge, 2003; Staw & Ross, 1985), situational perspective (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Loher, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985), or interactionist perspective. All perspectives have received support in the literature. For instance, research from the situational perspective has provided evidence that job and organizational characteristics have an impact on job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Hulin, 1991; Loher et al., 1985). Using twin studies, Arvey et al. (1989) presented interesting work supporting a genetic influence on job satisfaction. Following up on this work, Ilies and Judge (2003) attempted to identify personality traits that might mediate the relationship between genetics and job satisfaction. They found that personality traits only partially mediated this relationship and suggested that perhaps other heritable traits, such as intelligence, may better explain this relationship.

Finally, understanding the correlates and outcomes related to job satisfaction are important to researchers and organizations. For instance, theories about the relationships between job satisfaction and important work variables such as life satisfaction, family satisfaction, work-family conflict, performance, withdrawal behaviors, and organizational citizenship have been developed and empirically examined (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1994; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Judge & Wantanabe, 1993; Organ & Ryan, 1995).
Organizational commitment is important to researchers and organizations because of the desire to retain a strong workforce. Researchers and practitioners are keenly interested in understanding the factors that influence an individual's decision to stay or leave an organization. While turnover is related to all three types of commitment, research suggests there may be unique relationships between the three types of commitment and other work-related outcomes (e.g., absenteeism, organizational citizenship behaviors, performance). Affective commitment tends to be most highly related to these outcomes. A review of the research suggests that researchers have typically focused on organizational outcomes and correlates of commitment. However, more recently, researchers are beginning to examine more individual-level correlates of affective commitment like stress, well-being, and work-family conflict (Meyer et al., 2002). This shift in focus is relevant to the current work, as work-life programs are often instituted to positively affect these individual-level constructs. (Murphy & Sauter, 2003).

State of the Literature

The overarching goal of the work-family literature is to examine the work-family interface and better understand the reciprocal influence that each domain has on the other. Within this literature, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have generally been examined as outcome variables, although some work does study them as important mediators of organizational processes. This entry focuses on four main areas of the research literature and as such is organized into 4 sections: organizational context, work-family conflict, alternative work schedules, and dependent care issues.

1. The Effects of Organizational Context: Researchers recognize that the degree to which employees' organizations are supportive of work-family issues has a significant impact on an employee's ability to balance work-family roles. One way researchers examine this issue is by assessing employees' perceptions that their organization is supportive of efforts to balance work and family. Researchers predict that positive perceptions of one's environment will be related to important work and individual outcomes. They argue that measuring perceptions of the environment as well as objective elements of the environment (e.g., family supportive programs and policies) is important, as the effects may differ. For instance, while organizations may have policies and procedures in place to support family-work balance, the underlying culture of the organization may not support actually utilizing those benefits. Thus, employees' perceptions of the organizational context may be more highly related to individual and work outcomes than objective elements of the organization.

Thomas and Ganster (1995) examined the effect of two contextual elements, family-supportive policies (e.g., flexible schedules) and family-supportive supervisors on work-family conflict and individual level strain variables (e.g., job satisfaction, depression, absenteeism). They found direct and indirect support for the effect of family-supportive supervisors on job satisfaction. Their findings indicate work-family conflict and control partially mediated the relationship between the contextual elements and job
satisfaction. Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness (1999) continued this line of research by developing a work-family culture measure and examined its relationship with a host of outcomes measures (including affective commitment). They defined culture through three factors; managerial supportiveness, career consequences and organizational time demands. They found employee perceptions of work-family culture were positively related to affective commitment after controlling for benefit utilization and demographic variables. Specifically, perceptions of lower organizational time demands were related to higher levels of affective commitment.

Allen (2001) extended the work of Thomas and Ganster (1995) and Thompson et al. (1999) by developing a family supportive work environment (FSOP) measure. Allen's measure assesses three elements of the environment: family-supportive policies, family-supportive supervisor, and family-supportive organization. Consistent with previous work, she found FSOP was positively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment, after controlling for benefit availability and supervisor support.

A recent study by Behson (2002) examined these effects a bit more closely. He sought to determine whether the specificity of the supportiveness measures influenced the outcomes. This study examined whether general measures of organizational supportiveness and more focal supportiveness measures (i.e., work family culture and perceptions of family supportiveness) differentially predicted important organizational outcomes. He argued that previous research has not considered these measures simultaneously and predicted that the general measure of organizational supportiveness would more strongly predict global outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and affective commitment) and the focal measure would predict specific outcome (e.g., work to family and family to work conflict). The results suggest that, as predicted, the more specific measure of supportiveness did account for variance in work-family specific outcomes. However, the specific measure did not account for variability in job satisfaction and affective commitment beyond the more general measure of organizational supportiveness. This finding was supported for both men and women and parents and non-parents. On a related note, Casper, Martin, Buffardi, and Erdwins (2002) also found a significant relationship between perceived organizational support (a general measure of support) and both affective and continuance commitment.

Finally, Berg, Kalleberg, and Appelbaum (2003) examined whether a high-commitment environment would positively impact work-family balance, in part through its affect on organizational commitment. In their study, a high-commitment environment was defined as one that provides intrinsically rewarding jobs, has supportive supervisors and high performance work practices (which are more likely to include family friendly practices). They found affective commitment did partially mediate the relationships between high-commitment organizational practices and work-family balance.

Taken together, these results suggest employees' perceptions of their work environment are critical predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Interestingly, across all definitions of a
“supportive context”, supervisor support was identified as an important component of the environment in each of the above studies. These results provide more evidence for the criticality of the supervisor for facilitating the balance of employee’s work and life roles.

2. Work-Family Conflict: Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined as a form of inter-role conflict by which the pressures from the two domains create conflict in the other. For instance, pressures from the role of parent negatively impacts the employee role and vice versa. The direction of the conflict is a meaningful one and researchers now examine work to family conflict (WIF) and family to work conflict (FIW) as distinct, but related, concepts.

A great deal of research has examined the relationships between both general measures of work-family conflict and directional measures of conflict with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In general, researchers find that work-family conflict is significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Casper et al., 2002; Frone et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Perrewé, Hochwarter, & Kiewitz, 1999).

Meta-analytic Reviews • The results of individual studies are strengthened by three important empirical reviews. First, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) conducted a meta-analysis and found, based on 32 sample groups, that WFC, WIF and FIW were negatively correlated with job satisfaction (-.31, -.27, and -.18 respectively). Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) conducted a meta-analytic review to examine the effects of work to family conflict on employment (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, turnover, performance, and absenteeism), non-employment (e.g., life, marital and family satisfaction), and stress related outcomes. They identified 38 studies which examined the relationship between work to family conflict and job satisfaction, with individual study correlations ranging from +.14 to -.47 and six studies which examined the relationship between work to family conflict and organizational commitment with individual study correlations ranging from -.06 to -.42. The un-weighted mean correlations of -.23 and -.18 for job satisfaction and commitment respectively. Finally, Meyer et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analytic review of the organizational commitment literature. They report the average correlations between affective, continuance, and normative commitment (based on 9 studies) and work-family conflict as -.20, .24, and -.04 respectively.

Work-family Interface • Much of the early work-family conflict research focused on either the work or family domain. More recent research examines the reciprocal nature of the two spheres and acknowledges their mutual influences (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Frone et al., 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Job Satisfaction plays a central, mediating role in many of these models. Frone et al. (1992) developed a model of the work-family interface that jointly considers the effects of WIF and FIW on both domains. In their initial model, they examined the unique antecedents of both WIF and FIW, the reciprocal relationship between the conflict measures, and examined job distress (i.e., job dissatisfaction)
as a mediator of the relationship between job factors, FIW, and depression. They found that FIW and WIF were reciprocally related and FIW was related to job distress. In addition, job distress was a significant mediator of the relationships between job factors, FIW, and employee depression. A cross-cultural study, conducted by Aryee, Luk, and Fields (1999), provided additional support for this model.

More recently, Frone et al. (1997) re-conceptualized the model to include both proximal and distal predictors of conflict. Again, they found that job distress (dissatisfaction) played a critical role in the model. Specifically, job dissatisfaction mediated the relationship between FIW and WIF. Interestingly, there was not a significant relationship between job dissatisfaction and work behaviors. In related work, Adams et al. (1996) found that job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationships between WIF and job involvement with life satisfaction.

Facet Satisfaction • Most of the literature reviewed above examined the relationships between WFC, FIW, and WIF on overall job satisfaction. Recently, two studies investigated the relationships between conflict and facet satisfaction. First, Boles, Howard, and Donofrio (2001) examined the relationships between WIF and FIW and facet satisfaction (e.g., pay, work, promotion, co-workers, supervision). They predicted both types of conflict would be significantly related to facet satisfaction. However, when considered together, Boles et al. believed WIF would be the more important predictor. Results suggested WIF was significantly related to all facet measures except satisfaction with co-workers and that FIW was significantly related to all facet measures except satisfaction with promotion. They concluded that WIF conflict more strongly predicts facet satisfaction than FIW.

Bruck, Allen, and Spector (2002) conducted a study with the goal of more carefully analyzing the relationships between specific types of conflict (i.e., time, behavior, or strain based) and global and facet job satisfaction (pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work and communication). In general, their results support a negative relationship between WFC, WIF, FIW and both global and composite job satisfaction. In addition, they concluded that the relationships between FIW and WIF and composite satisfaction were higher than those for global satisfaction. Moreover, the results support the hypothesis that behaviorally based conflict (when behaviors in one role cannot be modified to be compatible with another role) has the strongest relationship with job satisfaction. Finally, Bruck et al. (2002) also examined whether there would be differential relationships across the job satisfaction facets. These tests revealed no significant differences across facets for any of the conflict measures. These results provide important implications for practitioners who are implementing organizational interventions designed to combat work-family conflict. It appears the focus should be on those interventions that may influence behaviorally based conflict.

Work-family Facilitation • Although the majority of research has focused on the negative outcomes associated with employee's attempts to manage dual roles, an emerging focus in the literature has been
to examine the integrative or facilitative effects of managing multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2004a). Specifically, this work examines how participation in multiple roles can actually expand, rather than diminish resources and lead to increases in well-being. For instance, Greenhaus and Parasuranman (1999) discuss how work-family integration can have positive effects through increased role experiences, involvement, and attitude spillover. Barnett & Hyde (2001) also discuss the benefits of multiple roles and provide evidence that holding multiple roles improves the mental, physical and relationship health of workers. In addition, it appears that there is a buffering effect, such that success or satisfaction in one role may buffer the stress or dissatisfaction that evolves from another role. Finally, other positive outcomes such as increased income, benefits, social support, and self-efficacy may also develop as a result of managing multiple roles (Wayne et al., 2004a). In a recent empirical study, Wayne, Musisca, and Fleeson (2004b) examined whether there may be some beneficial effect of the dual roles. They predicted that, consistent with previous research, role conflict would be negatively related to outcomes. However, they also predicted there would be some facilitation or benefit derived from the dual roles. In support of this prediction, they found that WIF was negatively related to job satisfaction while work family facilitation was positively related to job satisfaction. Researchers are only beginning to provide theoretical models of the types of gains and benefits derived from one's multiple roles. Future research will certainly be conducted to more fully understand the complex outcomes that arise from the work-family interface.

**Organizational Commitment** • The amount of literature examining the WFC - organizational commitment literature is limited. In addition, the research that has been conducted has typically not examined the multidimensionality of either WFC or commitment. However, a recent study conducted by Casper et al. (2002) did examine these specific relationships for a group of working mothers. They found that WIF was positively related to continuance, but not affective commitment and that FIW was not related to either type of commitment.

**3. Alternative Work Schedules**: Organizations offer alternative work schedules to employees as a means to improve balance between work and non-work roles. Alternative work schedules are typically defined as any work schedule that has varying hours or is completed in less than five days a week. More specifically, alternative work schedules vary on the number of days a week an individual works (e.g., compressed work weeks) or by the time an individual starts or stops their day (e.g. flextime). Anecdotally, there are a whole host of other schedules that have developed in individual organizations, but typically research focuses on the effects of flextime and compressed work weeks. The impetus for using these schedules is they would promote better and easier work-life balance by providing either more time in the non-work role, or more flexibility with how and when time is distributed across the two roles.

Golembiewski and Proehl (1978; 1980) conducted some of the earliest work to review the effects of alternative work schedules on employee attitudes. They reported evidence suggesting alternative work
schedules have positive effects on job satisfaction. Similarly, McGuire and Liro (1986) reported positive effects of flexible schedules on job satisfaction. The gender make-up of the workforce has changed greatly since that time (i.e., women now make up 49% of the workforce) (2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce). Thus, recent studies have re-examined the effect of alternative work schedules on employee outcomes within this new workforce.

In general, research supports the positive effects of alternative work schedules (e.g., flextime, compressed work-weeks) on job satisfaction (Christensen & Staines, 1990; Olafson, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and affective commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Grover and Crooker (1995) reported that flexible scheduling had a positive effect on affective commitment. Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, and Neuman (1999) conducted a meta-analysis to assess the impact of flexible and compressed work schedules on work-related criteria, including job satisfaction. Results of this study suggest flexible and compressed work schedules positively influence employee job satisfaction.

Employee perceptions of usability and control have emerged as important factors in the outcomes related to alternative work schedules. Control refers to either the actual or perceived control an employee feels they have over their work schedule. Adams and Jex (1999) examined perceived control as a mediator of the relationship between time-management behaviors and job satisfaction. They found support for the mediating role of perceived control and also found that it indirectly influenced job satisfaction through FIW. Behson (2002) reported that the ability to make informal work accommodations for family moderated the relationship between FIW and work stress, which predicted job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In addition, control over schedule predicted informal work accommodations. Most recently, Eaton (2003) examined the effects of the formality of the policy and perceptions of usability on organizational commitment. In her study, when employees perceived that flexibility policies were not truly available to them, they reported lower organizational commitment. Similarly, she found support for the effect of perceived control over schedule on organizational commitment.

The empirical support for the effects of these schedules on employee attitudes, while positive, is limited. Continued research in this area seems warranted, especially for the effects on affective commitment. In addition, organizations continue to implement new ways to structure work (e.g., virtual office, telecommuting) and this will require continued research on both individual and work outcomes (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003). Finally, research is also beginning to acknowledge that employee’s actual or perceived control are important factors when considering family-responsive policies like alternative work schedules (Glass & Finley, 2002).

4. Dependent Care: One of the primary roles that impacts work-family conflict is that of caregiver. Whether this care is being given to a child or an elder, the responsibilities that result from this role have an impact on employee's ability to balance work and family (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Researchers
acknowledge that the number and age of the dependents may have an impact on conflict. Thus, some research has included the level of family responsibility as a critical factor (Rothausen, 1999).

Rothausen (1994) was among the first to examine the job satisfaction of parent and non-parent workers. She argued that depending upon one's parental status, the factors that influence or determine job satisfaction would differ. For instance, due to family involvement and increased family responsibility, she predicted non-traditional facets (e.g., flexibility) would better determine overall level of job satisfaction for parents. As predicted, Rothausen reported unique factors do appear to determine overall job satisfaction for parent workers.

Grover and Crooker (1995) examined the effect family-responsive policies (alternative work schedules, family-leave policies, and child care assistance) had on affective commitment and intentions to leave. They examined these affects for all employees in the sample as well as for those who would benefit greatest from the majority of the policies (i.e., caregivers, young parents). They found the existence of these policies did significantly predict affective commitment. However, this effect was primarily driven by the influence of flexible scheduling. When they considered the role of individual, Grover and Crooker found that individuals with young children who were eligible for child-care information (e.g., referrals) reported the highest affective commitment.

Buffardi and Erdwins (1997) examined the impact that employer sensitivity to child-care needs and child-care satisfaction had on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employed women. Sensitivity of employer refers to issues like flexible work hours, accepting phone calls related to child-care, missing work due to child's illness and overall attitude toward child-care needs. Child-care satisfaction was defined by three factors: caregiver communication, dependability and attentiveness. The results clearly suggested employer sensitivity to child-care needs was strongly related to affective commitment and job satisfaction. Further, it appears that caregiver attentiveness (amount of attention given, physical facilities) may also be a significant predictor of both job attitudes.

In subsequent work, Buffardi, Smith, O'Brien, and Erdwins (1999) examined the impact of child and elder care on facet job satisfaction. They considered both the number of dependents, age of children, and gender of the caregiver. Results suggested individuals providing elder care were significantly less satisfied in a number of areas (e.g., support, pay, leave, and work-family balance). Interestingly, individuals with children reported lower satisfaction in only two areas: satisfaction with leave benefits and work-family balance. They concluded that elder care may be a more recent issue, compared to child-care, and thus there may be fewer organizational supports for individuals providing such care. Buffardi et al. also identified some significant interactions with gender, which suggested these relationships were stronger for women than men. This finding is not surprising, given that women still provide the majority of care for children and elders.
Implications for Policy and Practice

The evidence presented above clearly suggests that work attitudes are important factors in work-family integration literature. Aspects of the context, supervisory behavior, organizational interventions and family friendly policies have all shown to be important predictors of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Although research has predominantly focused on the negative aspects of balancing work and family, research is beginning to acknowledge that the integration of these roles may also be beneficial for individuals (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Wayne et al., 2004b). Research is needed to more fully understand the positive impact of the dual role from this “expansionist theory” (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). For instance, we need to understand more clearly the facilitation construct (Wayne et al., 2004a) and how it relates to work attitudes as well as attitudes towards one’s family and individual’s well-being.

In addition, although some research has examined how the work-family interface process may differ for men and women, more research is needed to explicate these findings (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). For instance, does the process of facilitation and its outcomes differ for men and women? Are certain factors more crucial to facilitation for men than women and what are the effects on work-related and other-related attitudes? In addition, continued research is needed to understand both the positive and negative effects of family-responsive policies like alternative work schedules on a larger set of work attitudes (i.e., beyond job satisfaction). Finally, job satisfaction has been included in this body of work to a greater degree than organizational commitment. Additional research that incorporates the multiple dimensions of organizational commitment is encouraged and warranted.

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.

<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>
<td>Family Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Family Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
<td>Workplace Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Workplace Covariates</td>
<td>Workplace Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Workplace Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Antecedents</td>
<td>Community Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Community Covariates</td>
<td>Community Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Community Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Antecedents</td>
<td>Societal Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Societal Covariates</td>
<td>Societal Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Societal Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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>
<td>Family Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Family Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
<td>Workplace Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Workplace Covariates</td>
<td>Workplace Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Workplace Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Antecedents</td>
<td>Community Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Community Covariates</td>
<td>Community Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Community Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Antecedents</td>
<td>Societal Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Societal Covariates</td>
<td>Societal Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Societal Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>