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Sloan Network Encyclopedia Entry

Measurement of the Work-Family Interface (2010)

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Date: April 13, 2010

Basic Concepts and Definitions

There are many ways social science scholars examine the connections between people's work and home lives. The term work-family interface is used to broadly describe the body of research investigating this relationship. Within the *work-family interface*, scholars examine the nature of the work-family relationship using a variety of terms and concepts, such as *work-family conflict*, *work-family spillover*, and *work-family balance*. The focus of this entry is to explore how several of these work-family interface constructs are measured and operationalized.

We begin by defining some of the more common work-family interface constructs examined in the literature today. These constructs have particular formal definitions as well as varying cultural meanings and metaphors associated with them (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Of these, the concept of *work-family conflict* is central. Greenhaus and Singh (2003) define work-family conflict as occurring when "simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect, such that meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role." In addition to the presence of conflict, scholars also try to identify the direction and dimension of the conflict. Directionality refers to the direction in which the conflict travels: *work-to-family conflict* refers to work-related stressors and demands negatively affecting functioning in the family domain, whereas *family-to-work conflict* refers to family-related stressors and demands negatively affecting the work domain. *Dimensionality of conflict* refers to the nature of the source of the conflict, such as whether the conflict stems from time-based stressors or from behavior-based stressors. Conceptually interchangeable with work-family conflict, negative spillover involves the transference of stress and conflict from one domain to the other. Like work-family conflict, *negative spillover* is conceptualized as traveling in two directions- "from family to work and from work to family.

Although negative spillover and work-family conflict are concepts directed toward the negative side of the work-family interface, concepts related to the positive end have more recently come to the fore in work-family research. Concepts in the positive vein include work-family facilitation, enrichment, and positive spillover. Grzywacz et al. (2007) define *work-family facilitation* as the extent to which an individual's engagement in one social system such as work or family contributes to growth in another social system (p. 559). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) define *work-family enrichment* as "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role" (p. 73). Finally, the concept of *positive spillover*, perhaps the most commonly used construct of the positive interface, suggests that "participation in both work and family can lead to better health and well-being and possibly better functioning in the other domain" (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000: 338). Similar to negative spillover and work-family conflict, these concepts directed toward the positive side of the work-family interface are conceptualized as bidirectional (e.g., positive spillover can flow from family to work and from work to family).

Work-family balance and work-family fit are two additional dimensions of the work-family interface. According to Kalliath and Brough (2008), *work-life balance* can be defined as "the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities" (p. 326). *Work-family fit* is related to but conceptually distinct from balance. Voydanoff (2005b) thinks of work-family fit in terms of demands and resources, arguing that the extent to which people feel there is a "fit" between their work and family domains depends on whether there is a fit between work demands and family resources and between family demands and work resources.

Finally, the concepts of *domain boundaries* and *role blurring* have only recently been introduced into the work-family interface scholarship. The boundaries between work and family are viewed on a continuum ranging from segmentation to integration. High segmentation means that the boundary between employees' work and family roles is impermeable; that is, work and family exist as two distinct spheres. By contrast, high integration is when "no distinction exists between what belongs to the 'home' or 'work' and where they are engaged" (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 567). Another related concept involves "work-family role blurring." Desrochers, Hilton, and Larwood (2005) define *role blurring* as "a subjective, cognitive phenomenon involving perceived integration of work life and home life that is situated in a highly interdependent work-family context such as the simultaneous work and family demands that can be present when people bring their paid work into the home" (p. 449).

Now that we have introduced how these concepts are defined, we dedicate the remainder of this entry to how they are typically measured and operationalized in the work-family literature.

Importance of Topic to Work and Family Studies

The work-family interface is of enormous significance to the daily lives of workers and family members as well as to policy makers and scholars. Work-family conflict research, in particular, has become a central topic in many disciplines, including sociology, family science, organizational psychology, and management studies. In part because the demand for research to better understand the needs and challenges of working parents and dual-earner households has become so great, it is imperative to be able to measure concepts reliably, consistently, and in a valid manner. Variation in measures leads to variation in findings, which in turn impedes knowledge accumulation and effective policy development (Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005).

State of the Body of Knowledge

Measuring Work-Family Conflict and Negative Spillover

There are a wide variety of instruments for measuring work-family conflict. They range from indices of closed-ended items in large nationally representative datasets, to open-ended interview questions, to qualitative diary methods, to ethnographic fieldwork.

Most work-family scholars take a quantitative approach to the study of the work-family interface. Quantitatively-oriented survey-based methodologies typically use scales, ranging from 3 to as many as 43 items, according to a review of work-family measures by Kossek and Ozeki (1998). As research on the work-family interface progresses, scholars are calling for research to conceptualize and measure conflict with more specificity. Distinguishing among the dimensions and directions of conflict are two ways of further specifying the concept that are often, though not always, included in current scales. The question of directionality has been debated in the literature. Some question whether to separate family-to-work (FTW) and work-to-family (WTF) conflict given the high degree of statistical correlation between the two directions (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). However, most researchers contend that statistical correlation does not necessarily imply conceptual correlation; for example, although performance on verbal and numerical ability tests are often highly correlated, they are designed to measure two quite different intellectual abilities. Thus, the conceptual distinction between the two work-family conflict directions is thought to be considerable enough to warrant separate measures (Byron, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Scales that are bidirectional ask questions about respondents' WTF and FTW conflict separately. For example, Grzywacz and Marks (2000) use bidirectional conflict measures to investigate the association

between work-family conflict and adult drinking behavior. Work-to-family conflict is measured using a four-item scale that asks about the frequency with which job stressors interfere with home life (e.g., "How often does your job reduce the effort you can give to activities at home?"). Family-to-work conflict is measured using a four-item scale asking about the frequency with which experiences at home interfere with work life (e.g., "How often do responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job?"). These survey items are included in the Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS) questionnaire. The MIDUS survey, along with the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), include closed-ended Likert-scale items and are two commonly used large nationally representative datasets employed in work-family conflict research.

Dimensionality of conflict is frequently incorporated into conflict measures. As with directionality, scholars have emphasized the importance of methodologically distinguishing between the dimensions because they each have unique antecedents and are thus considered to be substantively distinct constructs warranting distinctly designed measures (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three dimensions of conflict—"time-based, strain- or affect-based, and behavior-based conflict"—which are widely regarded as the standard dimensions of conflict. Time-based conflict stems from the time pressures an individual feels in one role that make it physically and/or cognitively impossible to fulfill the expectations of another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 78). An example of a time-based WTF conflict survey item is: "I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities" (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Strain-based conflict arises when strain symptoms (e.g., tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, irritability) in one role affect one's performance in another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 80). An example of a strain-based WTF conflict survey item is: "I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family" (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Finally, behavior-based conflict arises when a person experiences behavioral incompatibilities within role domains (e.g., a manager is expected to be aggressive and objective at work but warm and nurturing at home with children) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 81-82). An example of a behavior-based WTF conflict survey item is: "The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home" (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Of Greenhaus and Beutell's three dimensions, behavior-based conflict has received the least empirical attention and is neither substantively nor psychometrically well understood yet (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000).

Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) constructed a multidimensional scale of work-family conflict containing 18 Likert-scale items. They include items directed at measuring time-, strain-, and behavior-based conflict in both directions (WTF and FTW). According to the authors, they were motivated to construct a bidirectional, multidimensional scale because most existing measures do not examine both directions of conflict and/or do not consider the multiple dimensions of work-family conflict. They point to

the 10-item scale constructed by Netemeyer et al. (1996), which measures conflict in both directions but fails to attend to three forms of conflict, as well as to the WTF conflict scale constructed by Stephens and Sommer (1996), which recognizes three forms of conflict but is unidirectional.

Open-ended survey items and in-depth interviews are important qualitatively oriented ways of investigating people's work-family experiences. This type of approach allows researchers to pursue depth and nuance in assessing conflict, but, due to often small sample sizes and the nature of qualitative data, this approach does not allow for generalizability or systematic comparison of findings from other studies. Becker and Moen (1999) use open-ended interview data from the Cornell Couples and Careers Study to assess balancing strategies employed by dual-earner couples. In addition to questions about work hours, ideal family life, and spouse's disposition and work schedule, questions more explicitly geared toward balancing problems and strategies were also asked of the 117 participants. For instance, participants were asked, "When you think about how you manage work and family right now, are there any persistent problems you don't seem able to solve?" They were also asked: "What are some of the things that really work for you, the 'best practices' you and your spouse use to manage work and family, or that you see others using?" Qualitative studies like Becker and Moen's (1999) allow researchers to not only assess the extent of work-family conflict but also to explore the processes for accommodating or resisting it, a substantively valuable approach not easily accomplished with closed-ended survey items.

Time-use and event-based measurements of conflict are not frequently employed in studies of work-family conflict but offer promising directions for future research. Poppleton et al. (2008) use qualitative time diaries to address the positive and negative aspects of the work-"non-work relationship of employees from two contrasting organizational contexts-"a progressive governmental organization and a traditional manufacturing organization. In addition to having the respondents recall the events and activities of the last 24 hours (a standard time diary data collection procedure), Poppleton and her colleagues ask them to then describe the ways in which the events listed affected their personal and professional lives in both positive and negative ways and their emotional responses to these events. The greatest advantage to an event-based approach is "the advantage of immediacy" (Poppleton et al., 2008: 485). That is, diaries tend to be less subject to recall bias given that they capture people's relatively immediate response to particular events linked to work-family conflict.

The Experience Sampling Method (ESM) is another way of collecting time-use data that reduces the likelihood of recall bias (Schneider, 2006). Studies using ESM to collect time-use data supply study participants with beeper-type devices, page them periodically throughout the day, and have them record what they are doing and feeling at that moment. Schneider and Waite's (2005) 500 Family Study employed, among other methodologies, the ESM to collect data on how working families balance work and life domains. Findings from the ESM data collection indicated that mothers spent less time in work-

related activities and more time in social activities than fathers, although mothers and fathers spent comparable amounts of time in leisure activities. Like Poppleton et al. (2008), the 500 Family Study also had respondents document their feelings when signaled, finding that mothers report feeling more worried and less relaxed than fathers. The time-diary and event-based approaches, like open-ended interview items and in contrast to closed-ended survey items, solicit participants' evaluations and interpretations of particular events (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). According to Poppleton et al. (2008), asking event-oriented rather than global survey questions should "facilitate more immediate and accurate judgments of the relative importance of key mechanisms such as conflict and spillover, based on real and experienced events" (p. 483).

Assessing work-family conflict ethnographically is a less common yet potentially very informative method for examining work-family conflict. Charles Darrah (2006) is an ethnographic anthropologist who studies families as a participant observer. As he explains, ethnographic studies of families, and ethnography in general, can be very time-consuming, logistically complicated, "messy, and profoundly frustrating," but the insights gained from watching people for extended periods of time in their "natural settings" are often powerful (pp. 373-374). In one study, Darrah and his colleagues (2001) were in the field participating in the day-to-day lives of 14 dual-career families for a little more than a year, shadowing family members' daily routines and joining them in family activities. Their observations led them to reconceptualize the work-family interface, framing it not in terms of "balance" or "juggling" but in terms of work-life "busyness" (Darrah, 2006: 383). Although Darrah admits ethnographic field study is not clear-cut, he argues that it is precisely through one's participation in the messiness of people's everyday lives where the "possibilities of genuine insight" are realized (p. 384).

Measuring Positive Aspects of the Work-Family Interface

The work-family literature has a "preoccupation with conflict and stress" (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006:72) and should devote more research to the positive "synergies between work and family" (Grzywacz et al., 2007:569). Less research has been done on the positive side of the work-family interface compared to the negative construct of work-family conflict, even though the domains of work and family can be positively associated as well (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Concepts in the positive vein include *work-family facilitation*, enrichment, and positive spillover. Recall that these concepts broadly refer to a state in which the experiences in one domain increase satisfaction and improve quality of life in the other domain. They are conceptually similar but have defining features that distinguish them from one another. Work-family facilitation refers to the extent to which an individual's engagement in one social system contributes to growth in another social system (Grzywacz et al., 2007: 559). Similarly, *work-family enrichment* is "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality

of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006: 73). Finally, the concept of *positive spillover* suggests that “participation in both work and family can lead to better health and well-being and possibly better functioning in the other domain” (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000: 338).

Scholars specializing in these concepts argue that they capture unique dimensions of the work-family interface, including having unique antecedents and independent associations with an array of emotional or health outcomes, and consequently should be assessed with specifically designed instruments rather than one global measure of work-family symbiosis (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Carlson et al., 2006; Grzywacz et al., 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hanson et al., 2006; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Measuring the positive side of the work-family interface is still a relatively young body of research and assessment, and future research on construct-specific instrument design is needed. The state of the field has been described as “a conceptual and measurement hodgepodge” (Carlson et al., 2006: 134).

Instrument styles range in much the same way as conflict instruments (e.g., scales, singular items, qualitative diaries), and, as with conflict, scholars have urged that measures assessing the positive side of the interface be designed to take directionality and dimensionality into account (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006; Carlson et al., 2006). Carlson et al. (2006) and Hanson et al. (2006) have begun addressing this lag in instrument development by constructing and validating multidimensional and bidirectional scales to measure enrichment and positive spillover, respectively. The MIDUS and NSCW datasets, in addition to including conflict/negative spillover items, also include items assessing the positive side of the work-family interface. Voydanoff’s (2004) work on facilitation uses data from the 1997 NSCW data to examine the antecedents and effects of work-family facilitation. The measure of work-to-family facilitation she uses from the NSCW includes the following two items: “In the past three months, how often have you had more energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?” and “How often have you been in a better mood at home because of your job?”

Although work-family facilitation and enrichment are less commonly examined than positive spillover, the calls for more sophisticated and conceptually specific measurement of each construct of the positive work-family interface are growing louder among scholars (Carlson et al., 2006; Hanson et al., 2006). As these instruments continue to be developed, research employing these concepts is likely to yield new insights.

Work-Family Balance and Fit

Many family-friendly policies have been implemented in recent years in an attempt to enhance work-life balance and fit, but “in the absence of a well developed measure of work-family balance, assessing

impact of such interventions empirically becomes problematic” (Kalliath & Brough, 2008: 324).

Like positive construct instruments, debate continues on the precise substantive definitions of balance and fit, as well as how to reliably and validly measure them (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Voydanoff, 2005b). Although multi-item measures are methodologically more powerful than single closed-ended items (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), most balance measures are single items that ask for respondents’ general appraisals regarding the extent of balance in their life (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Voydanoff, 2005b). For instance, the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) and the 2000 National Survey of Parents (NSP) asked “How successful do you feel in balancing your paid work and family life?” Given the limited psychometric power afforded by single-item measures, it is important that well-defined multi-item measures of balance be constructed and validated (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008: 67).

Domain Boundaries and Role Blurring

Boundary maintenance and role blurring are concepts developed relatively recently in the work-family literature whose measurement continues to be refined. Clark (2002) quantitatively assesses “permeability” of the work domain to the family domain with items such as “My family contacts me while I am at work” and “I stop in the middle of my work to address a family concern.” Permeability means that things going on in one domain more easily penetrate the walls between work and non-working life. Similarly worded items measure the permeability of the family domain to the work domain. Clark also assesses “flexibility” of the border around work with items such as “I am free to work the hours that are best for my schedule” and “My employer allows me to carry out non-work projects during spare time at work.” Flexibility of the border around family is measured with comparable items such as “I am free to carry out my family responsibilities during the hours that are best for my schedule” and “My family allows me to carry out work projects during spare minutes at home.” Simply put, flexible borders may provide people with more leeway for managing the sometimes competing demands of work and non-work life, although its effects are not always positive (Schieman, Milkiem & Glavin, 2009).

Role blurring items include the following: “It is often difficult to tell where my work life ends and my family life begins,” “I tend to integrate my work and family duties when I work at home,” and “In my life there is a clear boundary between my career and my role as a parent.” An individual who performs work at home or engages in work-family multitasking is embedded in a high integration context; this elevates the likelihood that individuals switch between work and family roles when necessary. The potential downside of this role-blurring activity entails more interference or interruptions of role-related responsibilities. One important dimension of the work-family interface involves multitasking- or the frequency that individuals try to engage in work- and home-related activities simultaneously when they are at home (Voydanoff,

2005a). Work-family multitasking represents a consequential form of role blurring because it increases the likelihood of distractions and interruptions between work and family domains. Researchers involved in the 2002 NSCW included this single item to assess the frequency of multitasking: "How often do you try to work on job tasks and home tasks at the same time while you are at home?" (for examples of published research that uses this item, see Schieman & Glavin, 2008; Voydanoff, 2005a, 2007). Diary data, such as that collected in the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) can measure multitasking by examining primary and secondary activities within the diary format.

Implications for Research and Practice

What concepts are measured and how well they are assessed has critical implications for building knowledge in the interface between work and family. In this section, we detail some promising and important ideas for measurement of the work-family interface for future research. Four conceptual innovations and refinements are discussed, followed by two key sampling issues that are important for measurement in this area.

One avenue for future research is to measure and study conflict between work and non-work roles-"that is, roles other than those involving family-related responsibilities and activities (Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). In a recent article, for example, Schieman, Milkie, and Glavin (2009) examine work-"non-work interference, which includes work that spills over to leisure as well as family roles. Individuals fulfill many non-family roles that also demand time, energy, and attention. Among younger adults, these may involve student role responsibilities; and irrespective of age, individuals may have roles related to leisure, civic or "citizen" roles, voluntary associations, neighbor roles, and religious roles. Typically, these roles are either ignored in the existing research on work-family conflict or are combined into a more general "nonwork" category (Frone, 2003). Moreover, the antecedents and consequences of these forms of conflict might be quite distinct from work-family conflict processes.

A second area that might be further developed methodologically involves individuals' perceptions of ideal allocations between work and family. Although there is some evidence about these perceptions (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004), there is room for conceptual and empirical innovations associated with ideal work-family allocations. The bulk of research on this topic appears to ask basic questions about the percentages of desired time for work or family pursuits. It is not surprising that men and women tend to report that they wish they could devote more time to family and personal pursuits and less time at work. In fact, Jacobs and Gerson (2004) have concluded "if workers could act on their wishes, it appears that they would create a new balance in which work would occupy less time and family life would get more attention" (p. 89). To our knowledge, however, the current state of measurement in this area leaves gaps of knowledge

about the levels of “family” versus “nonfamily” time preferences. Innovations in measurement might help scholars shed greater light on preferences about work time. When some individuals report a desire to spend “less time at work,” they may be conveying information about the desire for specific types of work. For example, work may be dull, repetitive, and boring; in that case, the individual may actually prefer to work the same or even more hours-“but not in a routinized work environment.

Even less is known about the ways that preferences about time or balance between spheres are conceptually distinct from feelings about time pressures and reports about the generalized sense of feeling rushed for time (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003; Schieman & Glavin, 2008). The current “state of the art” measure on feeling time pressure appears to be the item found in the General Social Survey: “In general, how do you feel about your time? Would you say that you . . . always feel rushed to do things you have to do, only sometimes feel rushed, or almost never feel rushed?” Although this is a solid measure with good variation, there is room for innovation with respect to a multi-item index of time pressures that provides information about role domains.

The issue of sample selection is a critical aspect of valid measurement of the work-family interface, the importance of which has not been fully acknowledged in the current work-family literature (Bianchi & Milkie, forthcoming; Casper et al., 2007; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Byron, 2005). Much research has focused on individuals (and less frequently on couples) in dual-earner partnerships; however, we believe that also focusing on single-earners can provide great insights into how a homemaker may facilitate work-family balance for the target respondent (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Indeed, it is clear that, particularly for couples with children, reducing paid work hours or opting out of the paid workforce is a decision women make to avoid harms from work-family conflict not only for themselves but also to facilitate their husbands’ smooth work-family interface (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). Moreover, including both dual-earner and single-earner households allows, conceptually and empirically, for an assessment of the work-family interface as a process, not a static entity that it is sometimes assumed to be. For example, individuals and couples respond and react to problems across work-family domains by actively making adjustments that sometimes include reductions in work hours or changes in other role domains. By ignoring those that move from dual-earner to single-earner households during the survey period or prior to it, vital information about the process of balance for mothers and across partners is lost. Indeed, the question about whether women or men have more conflict should grapple with the fact that many more mothers have opted out of the labor force entirely and thus do not become part of researchers’ samples (see Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009).

Finally, including data from members of the respondent’s network is a promising avenue for future research (Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Bellavia and Frone (2005) urge scholars to move beyond research based on an individual as representing a single work-family system toward a

“third generation model” of the work-family interface where members of the respondent’s work and family domains would be included (p. 136). For instance, spouses’ reports of the target participant’s experiences may: (1) validate the reports of the target respondent; (2) provide an alternative perspective about the levels and effects of work-family conflict, facilitation, and time pressures on both household processes and individual health and well-being; and (3) provide opportunities for empirical analysis of the mediators and moderators of work-family conflict, facilitation, and time pressures that derive from sources other than the target respondent. Recent evaluations of the state of current knowledge underscore that information from multiple sources in the household is a core part of the next “generation” of work-family research (Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Moen & Yu, 2000).

Conclusion

Researchers have made great strides in measuring the work-family interface in recent years, from incorporating directionality and dimensionality into instruments to constructing measures that assess the positive side of the interface and to using innovative qualitative approaches. With growing scholarly and policy-maker interest in how the interaction between work and non-work domains influence people’s lives, it is critical that measurement construction and refinement continue growing along with conceptual developments. Without the continued improvement of work-family interface measures, the effective accumulation of knowledge and the development of useful work-family policies will be hindered.

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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 ...](#)).

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.

Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives	Domain B: Work-Family Issues and Experiences	Domain C: Covariates	Domain D: Responses to W-F Issues and Experiences	Domain E: Outcomes and Impacts
Individual Antecedents	Individual Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Individual Covariates	Individual Decisions & Responses	Individual Outcomes & Impacts
Family Antecedents	Family Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Family Covariates	Family Decisions & Responses	Family Outcomes & Impacts
Workplace Antecedents	Workplace Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Workplace Covariates	Workplace Decisions & Responses	Workplace Outcomes & Impacts
Community Antecedents	Community Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Community Covariates	Community Decisions & Responses	Community Outcomes & Impacts
Societal Antecedents	Societal Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Societal Covariates	Societal Decisions & Responses	Societal Outcomes & Impacts
Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains				

About the Matrix

Sloan Work and Family Research Network

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Purpose

1. To develop a preliminary map of the body of knowledge relevant to the work-family area of study that reflects current, "across-the-disciplines" understanding of work-family phenomena.
2. To create a flexible framework (or map) that clarifies the conceptual relationships among the different information domains that comprise the work-family knowledge base.

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

Process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Assumptions

Prior to identifying the different information domains relevant to the work-family area of study, members of the Virtual Think Tank adopted two premises:

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

2. It is important to examine and measure work-family issues and experiences at many different levels, including: individual, dyadic (e.g., couple relationships, parent-child relationships, care giver care taker 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)

Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives	Domain B: Work-Family Issues and Experiences	Domain C: Covariates	Domain D: Responses to W-F Issues and Experiences	Domain E: Outcomes and Impacts
Individual Antecedents	Individual Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Individual Covariates	Individual Decisions & Responses	Individual Outcomes & Impacts
Family Antecedents	Family Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Family Covariates	Family Decisions & Responses	Family Outcomes & Impacts
Workplace Antecedents	Workplace Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Workplace Covariates	Workplace Decisions & Responses	Workplace Outcomes & Impacts
Community Antecedents	Community Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Community Covariates	Community Decisions & Responses	Community Outcomes & Impacts
Societal Antecedents	Societal Experiences: Needs & Priorities; Problems & Concerns	Societal Covariates	Societal Decisions & Responses	Societal Outcomes & Impacts
Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains				