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Work, Family, and Organizations: An Untapped Research Triangle

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WORK, FAMILY, AND ORGANIZATIONS: AN UNTAPPED RESEARCH TRIANGLE

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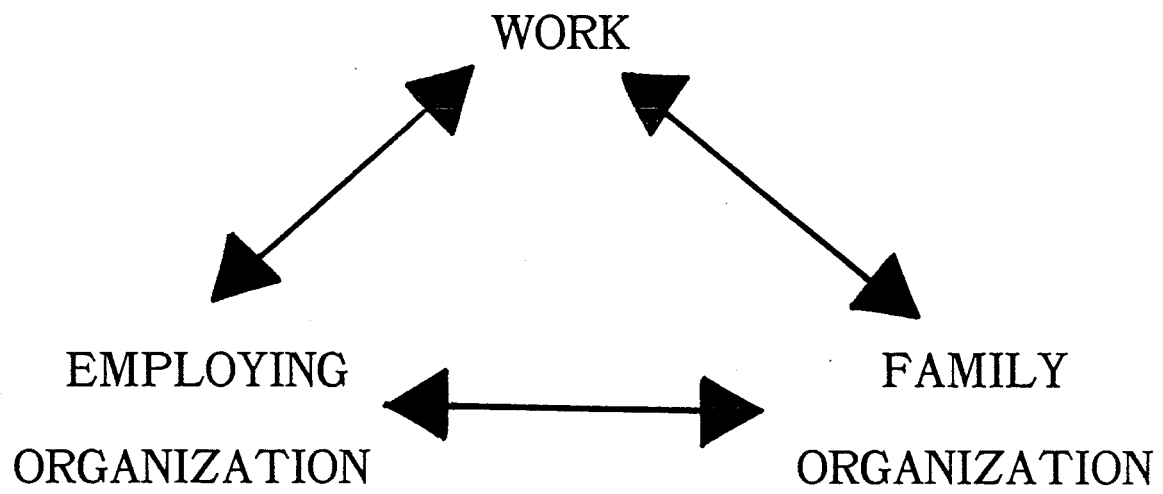
Today, I want to talk about an area of study in which I have no research to present (i.e., no data), an area with which I am (or was) unfamiliar, and an area that Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychologists, in general, have ignored. It is this latter fact that I want to emphasize and perhaps change by presenting this address, -- i.e., I/O psychologists generally are ignoring an area of research study that is important, relevant, and one to which we can bring our skills and expertise. If you leave with anything today, it is my hope that I will have interested you in pursuing and conducting some meaningful research in an area we have generally neglected.

What is this area and problem that I believe sorely need our attention? I will state my message now, at this point: I want I/O psychologists to study the relationships between work, family, and organizations. From my view, this is an untapped research triangle for I/O psychologists. There is a literature on work and family, but we are not part of it and it needs some of our efforts. The thesis of my presentation, and therefore my conclusion, is that (1) families and employing organizations are environments; (2) that tasks, or work, are done in each environment, and (3) that if we want to study how people's attitudes and/or behavior in one environment influence attitudes and/or behavior in the other environment, we should focus on the tasks performed and their meanings in the two environments. That is, we need to understand one's relationship to each of his or her environments before we look at the relationship between environments. Note here that I think the "work-family" rubric for this area of research is incorrect; we should not be talking about work-family relationships, but rather we should be talking about work in families and work in employing organizations. The framework that I will offer to study this is one that, for want of a better term, is referred to as a transactional model, in which the employing organization-family connection is the unit of analysis.

Given my view that I/O psychologists have generally ignored this area of research, what I want to do today is the following:

- (1) state the nature of the research issues as currently studied;
- (2) offer reasons why the area needs study, and in particular, why I/O psychologists should be involved,;
- (3) very briefly indicate who has been studying the issues;

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1. This paper was presented, in part, as the Presidential Address, Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, American Psychological Association Meetings, August 29, 1987, New York City.



(4) and because the field is unknown to most of us, I will present an overview of how the problems have been studied, the variables measured, and the theories espoused to explain results. I will do this without citing many, if any, specific research findings or results, and

(5) finally, offer a framework by which to study the problems.

As I go through these parts of the address, I will be posing a number of questions that I believe need research.

#### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

As I/O psychologists, we have traditionally and typically studied work behavior; we are interested in why people work, how they work, how to select those who will work, how to train people to work better, how to motivate to work, how to retain workers, and such similar concerns. We have studied variables such as attitudes, behaviors, needs and values. With regard to these variables, we have obtained descriptions, perceptions, expectations, and desires/wants, and studied valences and choice behavior. Most of what we study is assumed to take place in a work environment, an employing organization. The fact we need to acknowledge is that there are other environments in which "our" subjects function and "our" variables are of interest. In addition to the work sphere that we concern ourselves with, there is (1) the family sphere, (2) the personal sphere -- which includes hobbies, leisure activities, health activities, and personal growth activities -- and (3) other non-work spheres such as community, religious, and social involvements (Sekharen, 1986). Each of these spheres involves a set of demands, roles, and especially activities. It is my contention that we as I/O psychologists need to go beyond our work sphere and examine these other environments -- how people function in them and how the functioning in these environments relates to functioning in the work sphere. For today, I will only speak to the first two spheres, the commonly referred to work sphere and the family, or in my terminology, to the employing organization and family. I will ignore issues of dual careers, impact of unemployment on family, leisure, career socialization issues and the like. My focus is basically on the family organization and the employing organization.

Given that there are these two spheres of interest, what is the problem that has been studied? For now, let me simply state that the traditional work-family literature has addressed three general problems: (1) Does work impact family?; (2) Does family impact work?; and (3) Do work and family affect each other? Note here that I am talking in the traditional sense of work and family. Again, my thesis is that we need to talk about work in the employing and family organizations or spheres.

#### WHY STUDY THE PROBLEM?

There are a number of compelling reasons to study the problems, regardless of the rubric or specific statement of the

problem. It has been argued that, today, employing organizations and family are the two most central institutions impinging on the life of a person (Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986). In the past the structure of adult life was rather homogeneous -- career and family choices and structures were rather fixed and obvious, but in the last 10 to 20 years there has been greater diversity and variation (Osherson & Dill, 1983). The past assumed separateness between the employing organization and family, but the present needs to assume that there is a natural relationship between employing organization and family experiences. As I go through this address, just think of the ways in which your family and work lives are intertwined. Think of how choices of whether to take a job or not are contingent on the geographical location of the work and the effect the city will have on family life. Think of how the age of your children affect whether you will take a promotion, or move to a different job or company, because of the financial burden of college tuition. Think of who your intimate friends are -- are they your neighbors or colleagues at work? All I ask is that as I go along, think of examples from your own spheres and the need for studying the connection between the two spheres will become obvious. Even if we could keep the spheres separate, we must admit that we do not shed family roles, relationships, and experiences the moment we put on work shirts, business suits, etc. (Crouter, 1984; Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1980).

There are other reasons why we need to study the work-family relationship. First, there is evidence that the form of the family is changing, as are the roles and relationships among family members, such that there are now smaller families, higher divorce rates, and more single parents (Kamerman & Hayes, 1982). These facts lead to more people needing and wanting to work, to people having greater or lesser mobility, depending on their family situation, and most importantly, to changes in what people want from and give to work. Second, the growth of female participation in the work force (Kanter, 1977) and dual career families (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Nieva, 1985) are additional reasons for us to broaden our research view. The work environment has changed and the family dynamic has also changed. Given these new situations, the demands and pulls with regard to work in both the family and the employing organization have increased.

Aside from these demographic concerns, there are more qualitative signs for the need to study the connection between employing organization and family. Commentators have argued and presented data that there is greater interest today in quality of life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and in linking work, private life, and leisure (Kanter, 1977). From the perspective of the individual, there is greater interest in and value for self-expression and in finding new things to pursue (Nieva, 1984, 1985) and also in changing expectations regarding self-fulfillment (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) such that career striving may no longer be the measure of individual success (Kanter, 1977).

Legislation and programs dealing with day care, part-time

work, maternity and paternity leave, executive transfers, spousal involvement in career planning, and organizational involvement in treatment of family disturbances (such as employee assistance programs) also suggest the need to examine the connection between the employing organization and family spheres (Kanter, 1977). There is also an increased interest in the ways in which people are shaped by and manage their multiple involvements in private as well as organizational lives (Kanter, 1977). In addition, there appears to be a value shift in our culture towards greater family involvement by the male (Pleck, 1985).

Finally, the increase in family owned and operated businesses, employee stock ownership plans, and use of computers for business purposes in one's own home suggest that where we work for a living and our responsibilities for organizational survival require a greater meshing of work in organization and family life.

All of these factors indicate that we can no longer talk about the male breadwinner, the female housekeeper, traditional family roles, traditional value systems, and traditional organizational systems. There is a new breed of worker such that work in an employing organization takes its equal place along side other life goals and interests (Nieva, 1985).

#### WHO STUDIES THE ISSUES?

You should not take the above to mean that the issues have not been studied. They have, and by some accounts there is an extensive literature and even a number of reviews on the topic (c.f., Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Kanter, 1977; Near et al., 1980). In general, we find the articles written by family sociologists, occupational sociologists, economists, demographers, industrial analysts, family therapists, community psychologists, child and marriage specialists, and vocational psychologists. Many of the articles are imbalanced in terms of concentration and sophistication. For example, the family therapist focuses on the family side of the relationship while the occupational sociologist focuses on some dimensions of work. Much of the clinical literature on families ignores the world of work, at least as we would treat it, and instead treats it as a dimension of life that has very little or no relevance to what happens in the psycho-social interior of families (Piotrkowski, 1978). Thus, work and the family, in effect, have each been studied by different academic disciplines (Guttek, Nakamura, & Nieva, 1981).

This section on who has studied the area is not meant to be critical of other disciplines. Rather it is provided to illustrate a general glaring omission. Few I/O psychologists are studying the problem.

We, I/O psychologists, need to devote more attention to the research questions in this area because (1) the family sphere has an impact on the variables we study, and (2) we are trained to focus on job tasks and organizations -- and it is my contention,

to be elaborated later on, that a family is an organization in which there are activities to be performed that we can call work. I have already mentioned the variables we study -- attitudes, behaviors, values, needs, goals, etc. If we claim to study work and understand it and its impact on other behaviors in the work environment, we should be able to extend "our" variables to another environment, the family, and study these variables there, too. If the boundaries between the employing organization and the family are in fact being broken down and eliminated by societal conditions, then there is no reason for us to maintain academic/research boundaries.

We have skills in analyzing jobs and organizations. My thesis, as I have stated, is that not only is a family an organization, but that many activities in the family can be labeled as work. We need to apply our skills to analyze the work in families. For many of us, the first step in our research is a job analysis so that we understand the job and so that we can describe it in meaningful terms such as found in the following:

"Supervises and coordinates activities...informs new employees of employer's desires and gives instructions in work methods and routines. Assigns duties, ... adjusting work activities to accommodate ... members. Orders ... keeps record of expenditures. May hire and discharge employees..."

You may wonder what job is described above; is it (1) a first line supervisor, or (2) a personnel administrator, or (3) a psychology department head or chair. Which job is described is unimportant; rather I will be arguing that we need such descriptions of jobs in other spheres.

#### HOW HAVE THE QUESTIONS BEEN STUDIED?

In general, we have had an "either-or" approach to the traditionally referred to "work-family" relationship. Researchers have generally assumed that work impacts family or, to a lesser extent, that family impacts work. Regardless of the direction postulated, most of the research has been correlational, cross-sectional, and questionnaire self-report.

Work to Family. In general, the basic question has been: What impact do work and work factors have on family variables? Another way of phrasing the question is: How does work affect attitudes toward life and behaviors in extra-work roles? Note here that the focus is on work and its assumed impact on attitudes and behaviors in roles outside the work environment. Related to this concern for the impact of work on non-work are questions such as: Does work life affect the quality of life in the family?; and How does participation in work influence behavior in the family (Mortimer et al., 1986). Note that all that I've referred to as the independent variable is the term "work." I have not defined it, indicated what it represents, or how it is operationalized. Others are guilty of these same omissions. This lack of systematic attention to "work" in this

literature is one of the problems with the research.

A review by Burke and Greenglass (1987) indicates that there are considerable research findings illustrating the effects of work on family, and most of these generally show negative findings such that family life is negatively affected by problems in the work environment. Features of work that have received particular attention include the nature of the work experience itself, job stress, emotional spillover, work schedules and shiftwork, and the impact of paid employment on family variables. Work demands that providers be separated from their families in time and/or space. Thus, the family does not have available the full physical, intellectual, and emotional resources of the provider to be expected on a host of family tasks (Brief, 1987).

Family to Work. Those researchers who have focused on the impact of family on work have generally concentrated on sociological, structural, or developmental aspects of the family and its members and their impact on reactions to work. Specifically, does the quality of family life affect one's work? Or, to what degree do structures associated with life outside the workplace affect attitudes toward work and behaviors in the workplace? (Parenthetically, I should note here that it is rare that a work behavior such as performance is incorporated in the research design.)

Kanter (1977) has discussed the ways in which culture shapes who works where and when, how family status influences children's career decisions, and how family situations define work orientations, motivations, energy and demands brought to the workplace. Some have viewed family life as a "shock absorber" in that, if home life is positive, it blocks disappointment at work (Crosby, 1984). Others (e.g., Crouter, 1984) view family responsibility as a key determinant of work absenteeism, tardiness, and efficiency.

Family-Work Interaction. Very few studies examine the potential bi-directional nature of the problem. Those that have, however, see work and family as interacting, and if there is any causality, it is based on one's idiosyncratic perceptions and needs (Renshaw, 1976). Another view of the family-work "interaction" concerns the compatibility-incompatibility of family-work relations and its impact on other processes such as role transition (Jones & Butler, 1980).

From this brief overview, we can see that the basic questions are: Does work affect family or does family affect work? As I continue, I will be arguing that the key question should be: How do the different spheres of life experience, i.e., an employing organization and the family, interpenetrate and mutually effect one another (as posed by Mortimer et al., 1986). Or, to what extent is an individual's behavior, position, perception, involvement, and commitment in each sphere dependent on what is happening in the other sphere? This is the issue of a bi-directional relationship between work and family. There is no doubt that every employed person is faced with the task of



defining the relationship between work and family in his or her life (Bailey, 1978). The spheres are interdependent, but because of tradition and history, they have been viewed as complementary spheres, and in addition, frequently viewed such that each sphere belongs to one gender only (Gutek et al., 1981).

#### VARIABLES MEASURED IN RESEARCH

Regardless of the focus of the research; i.e., to establish the kind of directional relationship between work and family, it is useful to note the types of variables used in such research. On the "work" side of the equation, we find such variables as:

- (1) the employment status of the subject, usually the female, and whether she is employed or not,
- (2) global job satisfaction (Barling & Rosenbaum, 1986; Rice, Near, & Hunt, 1980; Staines, Pottick, & Fudge, 1986),
- (3) Work as a central life interest (Near et al., 1980),
- (4) Specific job factors such as job comfort (hours), challenge, financial rewards, promotion, resources (equipment), and co-worker relations (London, Crandall, & Seals, 1977; Staines et al., 1986); these factors include time and timing of work (Kanter, 1977; Mortimer et al., 1986), work schedules and hours (Staines & Pleck, 1984),
- (5) Work role conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983) and pressures (Mortimer et al., 1986),
- (6) Work role expectations (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984),
- (7) Job involvement (Barling, 1986),
- (8) Career satisfaction (Osherson & Dill, 1983),
- (9) Occupational status (c.f., Piotrkowski, 1978),
- (10) Separation and travel as a result of job (Nieva, 1985),
- (11) Work structure and social participation (Near et al., 1980)

The variables studied can be grouped into objective factors such as pay or physical aspects or subjective factors such as attitudes (Near et al., 1980). Another way in which the variables have been grouped is by employment status, times and schedules, or job demands/gratifications (Nieva, 1984).

As you can see, satisfaction measures are used. However, though on a macro level we assume that job satisfaction is related to family variables, the job satisfaction measures used do not necessarily contain items that would be expected to relate to any aspect of family life.

On the "family" side, we find variables such as (see Rice et al., 1980, for a review):

- (1) marital tension index,
- (2) family-home satisfaction,
- (3) community satisfaction,
- (4) spouse satisfaction,
- (5) leisure satisfaction,
- (6) family/friend activity satisfaction

- (7) global well-being (Pleck, 1985),
- (8) family role sharing and bargaining (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Pleck, 1985),
- (9) amount of time spent in carrying out family responsibilities (Staines & Pleck, 1983),
- (10) wife abuse (Barling & Rosenbaum, 1986),
- (11) children's behavioral problems (Barling, 1986),
- (12) family size (Near et al., 1980).

In general, the "family" variables are either of the affect type, or if they are task activities, they are confined to specific housekeeping tasks and child care (Kessler & McRae, 1982; Staines & Pleck, 1983). These latter tasks are viewed in terms of responsibility for money matters, kitchen chores, and daily tasks concerned with children (Mannheim & Schiffrin, 1984). There have even been dimensions of housework (Lein, 1984) such as "dirty vs. clean work," "flexibility" in performing tasks such as putting off floor washing while not being able to put off meal preparation, and "social" tasks vs. tasks performed alone, such as interacting with others vs. scrubbing the bathroom floor. My point will be that there are more enriched ways of describing tasks in the family than to refer to childcare, cooking, cleaning, and the like.

From my perspective, there are a number of problems with the use of both the "work" and "family" variables as means by which to understand the relationship between the employing organization and family. First, many of the variables are gross variables that ignore processes or the quality of the experience; they do not capture the relationship of the individual to the environment. For example, to simply ask whether the spouse is employed -- yes or no -- does not provide as much meaningful information as would a question such as "why do you work?"; is it out of economic necessity?; or is it because of boredom in one environment? We should be focusing on the nature of the work that is done rather than the fact that some work is being done. It is the nature or quality of the experience that is important and not necessarily the experience per se.

As for global measures of satisfaction or quality of life, they do not provide information with regard to the source of the satisfaction or the quality. Furthermore, relationships between life and job satisfaction or marital satisfaction are not surprising since job and marital satisfactions are part of life satisfaction.

Perhaps of most importance to my thesis, is the fact that most measures call for descriptions or statements of affect. Few, if any of the measures, deal with what is sought or derived from the environment. What I mean here is that we do not know why the person entered the environment, what they were seeking, what was salient, and whether they were being fulfilled in their particular environments. This is crucial to my thesis since I propose that in order to understand the relationship between environments, we need to understand one's relationship to each environment. If we are interested in establishing a relationship

between two spheres, we need to understand and define dimensions in the spheres that are potentially overlapping with each other. Thus, our concentration needs to be on dimensions, or task clusters, that are appropriate for each individual in his or her environments.

#### MODELS/THEORIES TO EXPLAIN WORK-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Regardless of which variables have been studied, or whether work's impact on family or vice versa have been studied, six models/theories have been offered to explain the relationships, or lack of relationships between work and family (see the following for detailed descriptions of these theories: Burke & Bradshaw, 1981; Champoux, 1978; Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Kando & Summers, 1971; Kanter, 1977; Kanungo & Misra, 1984; Payton-Miyazaki & Brayfield, 1976; Piotrkowski, 1978; Rice et al., 1980; Staines, 1980). I will briefly describe the theories and their basic underlying assumptions.

1. Spillover Theory: This theory asserts that there is a similarity between what occurs in the work environment and what occurs in the family environment (Staines, 1980) such that happiness at work leads to happiness at home. In addition, there is the notion that a person's work experiences influence what he or she does away from work (Champoux, 1976). Not only is there a focus on experiences, but it is also assumed that attitudes at work become ingrained and carried over into home life (Kando & Summers, 1978) or that these work attitudes affect a basic orientation toward the self, others, and children (Mortimer et al., 1986). Each sphere induces similar structural patterns in the other spheres (Parker, 1967). In other words, there are no boundaries for one's behaviors.

In general, spillover is determined by positive correlations between work and family variables such that if you are satisfied with work, it will enhance family life.

The essence of spillover theory has also been described by the following labels: similarity, extension, generalization, familiarity, identity, isomorphism, continuation, and congruence (Staines, 1980). Note that this theory generally assumes that the direction of influence is from work to family.

Most of the research in the work-family arena has been done on this theory and it has resulted in some refinements. Payton-Miyazaki and Brayfield (1976) have suggested several extensions to spillover theory. For example, they discuss the following explanations: (1) additive notion such that feelings about a job are a component of feelings about life in general, thus satisfaction with the job increases life satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the job lessens general satisfaction; (2) alienation notion, which poses that feelings about a job directly influence feelings about life in general. When a person feels belittled by his or her job, he or she will belittle him or herself or others; and (3) a cognitive/behavioral view that states that a job is a socializing force where the worker learns

skills, values, expectancies, self-concepts, and social philosophies that carryover into family interactions.

Whereas I have generally discussed spillover in terms of positive relationships, it is also possible to have negative spillover (Piotrkowski, 1978). Job stresses can displace the potential for positive family interactions, while requiring family members to expend their personal resources in assisting the worker to manage the stress. Or, the spillover can be such that there is an "energy deficit" which is applied in situations where the work is boring or monotonous, thereby making the worker "lazy," which in turn leads to not doing certain things at home or with family members.

2. Compensation Theory: This theory is the one most often contrasted with spillover. It postulates that there is an inverse relationship between work and family such that work and non-work experiences tend to be antithetical (Staines, 1980). Furthermore, it is postulated that individuals make differential investments of themselves in the two settings (Champoux, 1976) such that one is a way of making up for what is missing in the other (Evans & Bartolome, 1984). These notions also are found under the labels of contrast, complementarity, opposition, competition, regeneration, and heteromorphism.

Here, too, we have had some elaboration and refinement (Kando & Summers, 1971). Supplemental compensation occurs when desirable experiences, behaviors, and psychological states that are insufficiently present in the work situation are pursued in family activities. Another form of compensation, reactive compensation, occurs when undesirable work experiences are redressed in a non-work setting. For example, resting from fatiguing work or seeking leisure activities after work are examples of reactive compensation. The essence of these forms is that deprivations experienced in work are made up or compensated for in non-work activities.

3. Segmentation Theory: This theory postulates that the two spheres are distinct such that an individual can be successful in one without any influence on the other (Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Payton-Miyazaki & Brayfield, 1976; Piotrkowski, 1978). The two spheres exist side by side and for all practical purposes are divorced from each other. The separation in time, space and function allows one to neatly compartmentalize his or her life. The view is that the family is the realm of affectivity, intimacy, and significant ascribed relations whereas the work world is impersonal, competitive, and characterized by being instrumental rather than expressive (Piotrkowski, 1978).

The above postulates have resulted in segmentation theory being referred to as separateness, compartmentalization, independence, and neutrality theory; it is the null hypothesis of the work-family relationship.

The three models or theories cited are the major ones in the work-family arena. There are, however, three other

models/theories which are not necessarily mutually exclusive from the first three, and which I will briefly cite.

4. Instrumental Theory: One sphere is a means by which things are obtained in the other sphere. For example, work outcomes lead to good family life and are means by which to get some of the pleasures of life (Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Payton-Miyazaki & Brayfield, 1976).

5. Conflict Theory: Satisfaction or success in one sphere entails sacrifices in the other; the two spheres are incompatible since they have distinct norms and requirements (Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Payton-Miyazaki & Brayfield, 1976).

6. Integrative Theory: A view that work and family are so closely fused that it is practically impossible to consider them separately.

The theories cited are generally post hoc descriptions of obtained results from studies that had measures on work and family variables and that found their way into a correlation matrix. There have been few empirical attempts to contrast the theories on an a priori basis and where it has occurred, it has been to compare compensation and spillover explanations (e.g., Champoux, 1978; Staines, 1980). Staines (1980) reviewed the literature and assessed three variables: (1) the degree of involvement (which included time and energy); (2) types of activities (such as choice, complexity, and autonomy), and (3) subjective reactions (satisfaction) in a work and non-work sphere. He concluded that there was support for both spillover and compensation, but under different conditions. These conditions pertain to type of measure used, i.e., subjective vs. objective measures, and demographics. In another contrast of spillover and compensation, Champoux (1976) also found support for both theories, depending on the work orientation of the subjects.

Support for both theories is not surprising given the lack of clarity and refinement of the theories. Analysis of the theories shows that their fundamental units of study vary from affect, behaviors, activities, and success. The basic question to be raised is: What should be carried over, compensated for, or maintained as separate? Can some activities be compensated for while other activities spilled over? Do we need to be consistent in what we spill over? For example, is there a problem for the theory if we do not discuss, when we get home at night, the problems we had with subordinates because we were segmenting, but then later at night, excuse ourselves and go into our study to review the latest budget statements for our unit? Another inconsistency for a theory can be found in this example: Should my family's annual vacation coincide with the time and place of these APA meetings (spillover), but I do not permit my graduate students to call me on the weekends since it interferes with my family life (segmenting)?

The models exist but they need refinement so that we can ask meaningful questions such as:

(1) Do people actively compensate and are they actually compensated? With regard to segmentation, is it intentional or is there active adjustment by the individual to keep the spheres apart? In other words, what role do intentions and behaviors play in each of the theories?

(2) Are relationships between work and family variables linear for all sets of variables or linear for some variables, non-linear for others, and zero for yet others? Furthermore, if someone is fully gratified in the employing organization, does he or she need to spill over?; is it possible to spill over in such a circumstance?

(3) Can more than one explanation be appropriate for the same individual? That is, for some aspects of the employing organization or family, there would be spillover, but for others there would be compensation.

(4) If there is more than one applicable theory for an individual, can the theories function simultaneously or must they be sequential? That is, before there is compensation for some factors, do other factors need to have been spilled over?

(5) Do the theories hold at different times or stages for individuals? Career and work stages are very important; what is the impact if stages such as start-up, maturity, and disintegration in employing organization life are or are not synchronized with similar stages in family life?

(6) Can the members of the units of study, the family members, have different approaches (e.g., one member is spilling over and one is compensating)? How do matches among family members in terms of similarities/dissimilarities in approach affect each other?

As presently found, there is no simple picture of the relationship between work and family. All of the theories hold. Why is everything supported? The answer is somewhat obvious. The theoretical rationales or the underlying psychological mechanisms of the models are not clearly formulated (Kanungo & Misra, 1984). Research has confused the forms of work (activities) with the meanings of work (Kando & Summers, 1971). Similar forms of work have different meanings for people. For example, writing an article for a psychologist may have the personal significance of contributing to science whereas an analyst's writing of a technical report in an organization has the personal significance of fulfilling an organizational requirement. Thus, within employing organization environments, we have two similar activities, writing articles or reports, but each with a different personal meaning. Likewise, different forms of work have similar underlying meanings for an individual. For example, the individual responsible for data analysis on a research project may experience the same "contribution to science" feeling as the psychologist who wrote the article. The point is that research in the "work-family" arena has not distinguished between meanings and forms and has not studied meanings of work in the family organization. The question to be raised is whether we react to the form or activity or to the

significance/meaning of the activity and whether similar activities have different or similar significances and meanings for us within and between environments.

It seems that if only activities are considered, there may be support for the compensation model; if the content of the activities are considered, there may be support for the spillover model (Champoux, 1978; Kando & Summers, 1971). Instead of trying to focus on a single model to describe the relationship, we need to understand the social and psychological factors associated with the different ways individuals experience relationships.

### FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY

Given the review that I have presented, and some of the problems that I have identified or alluded to, I want to suggest a framework by which the relationship between family and employing organization could be studied. To elucidate the framework, I need to define the concepts of my triangle; admittedly, some of the definitions will be simplistic, but they should be sufficient.

1. Work: Though many simply define work as activities for which one is paid, the definition has been extended to include non-market and volunteer work (Kanter, 1977). For others, work is a set of prescribed activities that an individual performs while occupying a position in an organization (Kabanoff, 1980). For still others, work is any physical and/or mental activity performed with the intention of meeting some job, work, or organizational objective of providing goods and services (Kanungo & Misra, 1984). Given some of the constraints posed in these definitions, I want to state that I will simply treat work as a set of tasks performed with an objective or goal in mind. This definition poses no restrictions on where the work is performed.

2. Organization: Organization has been defined as a purposeful, open, dynamic system characterized by a continuing process of input, transformation, and output (Katz & Kahn, 1978). More simply, an organization exists when two or more people get together with a purpose in mind to obtain some goal (Zedeck & Blood, 1974).

3. Family: This has been defined as two or more people interacting, responding to, or having the capacity to influence one another for the purpose of accomplishing some goal and with a sense of shared identity (Burke & Bradshaw, 1981). In some family literature, it is considered a small group, continuous in time, composed of interdependent roles and people who interact according to implicit rules of psychological and social interactions (Piotrkowski, 1978).

From these last two definitions, of organization and family, you can see that there is no major difference between the two. If anything, family is the realm of affectivity, intimacy, and significant ascribed relations whereas the employing organization world is more competitive and characterized by the instrumental

rather than the expressive (Piotrkowski, 1978). (I am not sure this distinction is accurate anymore.) But work, which is tasks or activities, takes place in both the family and the employing organization.

Thus, the first point in my framework, which reiterates an earlier one, is that family and employing organizations are both organizations; they are two spheres in which people exist and function. The second point is that work is a set of tasks or activities that can be performed in any type of organization. Given these two points, we should not be talking about the relationship between work and family, but should be examining the relationship between work in the family and work in the employing organization. Thus, as indicated in the triangle, there is a family organization and an employing organization, and the apex or link for them is the concept of work. The common denominator is this concept of work, and it is this concept that I will elaborate on as I pursue by framework.

Before I go on, however, I want to return to my concern that I/O psychologists need to study the family organization. We study work in organizations -- its meaning, its performance, the satisfaction derived from it -- yet we have not studied work in the family organization. It is important that you be convinced that "work" is also performed in family organizations. Work in the family is commonly referred to as housework. This notion that "work" in the family is work is not new (Kanter, 1977). Kanter indicated that the terms "management" and "administration" have been used interchangeably in the home for a long time and quotes from a 1929 source:

"The well-ordered home of today, like the other efficient enterprises, is run according to accepted principles of good management, even though the objectives for homemaking are human satisfactions and development rather than increased production or sales... Homemaking ... is a composite occupation, where the homemaker is both a worker and a manager, planning the daily routine and carrying out these plans."

Furthermore, Richard Hall (1986) in his book, Dimensions of Work, indicated that the most obvious and common example of work that often is not thought of as work is housework. Curiously, Hall classified housework under the rubric of "blue-collar" work.

To show you that housework is considered a job by some, I take you back to the earlier job analysis example. That example is the DOT (Dictionary of Occupational Titles) description of a "housekeeper:"



"Supervises and coordinates activities of household employees in a private residence: Informs new employees of employer's desires and gives instruction in work methods and routines. Assigns duties, such as cooking and serving meals, cleaning, washing, and ironing, adjusting work activities to accommodate family members. Orders foodstuffs and cleaning supplies. Keeps record of expenditures. May hire and discharge employees. Works in residence employing large staff."

Finally, if you are still not convinced that housework is work as we commonly know it, keep in mind that housework has economic value in its own right -- all housework activities can be purchased!

If you accept my position that there is work in a family, we can move on to my third point in the framework and that is: We need to understand one's relationship to the employing organization sphere and to the family sphere. I suggest we pursue this understanding by focusing on the meaning of the work in each environment. Furthermore, rather than focus on the task level, I suggest we focus on the broader dimension level. This will take us away from thinking of family work as only cleaning, cooking, etc. For example, in the home, there is meaningfulness to helping and seeing a child do well in school and getting admitted to a good college. Is this the same kind of meaning derived from the task activity of developing an employee and seeing him or her get promoted? In both activities, there is a development focus. What meaning does this development focus have for us? Or, for another example, does managing a departmental budget, and finishing the fiscal year in the black yield a similar reaction in the manager to managing his or her family budget and avoiding going into the poor house? For still another example, consider a worker who exercises discretion over his or her productive activities at work; i.e., controls how much effort and skill he or she will apply towards different projects. Doesn't this worker also exercise discretion in the kinds of activities engaged in off-the-job such as involvement in different organizations, active in sports, building a summer house, etc. These examples may be trivial, but my point is that we have found that dimensions such as complexity, degree of routinization, responsibility, self-direction, control, independent judgment, etc. are important ones as we study work in the employing organization. I am arguing that in the family, too, we have the opportunity for responsibility, autonomy, decision-making, challenge, etc. and we may seek or express these dimensions in the family organization as a function of whether they exist in another sphere or not. We need to focus on dimensions and not tasks; there is responsibility in both spheres, though the tasks for which we are responsible may differ. The psychological impact of day-to-day work experiences is tied not to a specific task or activity, but to the nature of the work process and the conditions under which the work is performed. Thus, work of substantively different content can

have similar meanings, and work of the same content can take on different meanings for different people (Schooler, Miller, Miller, & Richhtand, 1984). My point is that work in the family environment has meaning and that we should study that meaning and try to relate this meaning to the meaning of similar/equal dimensions in the employing organization in order to determine the spillover, compensation, etc. effects.

I am not so naive as to suggest that there is no distinction between family or housework and organizational work. I think Schooler et al. made a clear distinction between the two spheres when they wrote:

"On an interpersonal level, household members are more mutually dependent for a wider range of personal needs than are fellow employees. Thus, the interpersonal relationships found in the home are generally more intense than those in the workplace. The motivation for performing the work may also be quite different in the two contexts; for example altruism may be a stronger motive in the household than in the workplace. These interpersonal factors may affect the meaning and impact of work for the worker in the household. At the organizational level, the family differs from usual work organizations in both its internal and external relationships. Family relationships are marked by an absence of formal definitions of supervisory roles and job responsibilities. Although societal sex-role norms obviously affect the assignment of household tasks, in most families the division of labor is not as explicit as in a paid-work setting. Furthermore, except by remote analogy, it makes no sense to specify a houseworker's hierarchical position in a formal supervisory structure or to think of the level of bureaucratization in a family. ... In fact, in the home it is unclear what work must be done (e.g., is cleaning under the beds necessary?) and what standards must be met (e.g., are water-spotted glasses necessarily unacceptable?). ... Thus some important dimensions of paid work cannot be applied to housework. It is even difficult to fix the boundary line between housework and leisure-time activities. At what point do cooking, gardening, or furniture repair cease being household chores and become hobbies?"

The above quote focused on typical "work" dimensions and on the difference between work in the employing organization and work in the family. However, for me, the quote recognizes that both spheres can be discussed in terms of similar dimensions such as interpersonal relationships, altruism, division of labor, hierarchical position, and other such concepts that we have typically confined to activities in employing organizations. I would argue that the ways people accomplish tasks and respond to "production" in the family can be highly congruent with the ways they approach production tasks in an employing organization. The ways people orient themselves to one another in their employing organization can be highly congruent with the ways these individuals orient and express themselves in the intimate realm,

in the family (Kanter, 1977).

Even if you do not think there is dimension overlap between the two spheres, at the very least, I hope you accept the notion that the family organization is an important organization to study. Why not borrow some of the approaches from clinical researcher colleagues and study some processes in the family organization. Shouldn't we expect that if one cannot deal with his or her children, he or she may have difficulty dealing with subordinates? If one discusses the decision to buy a summer home with family members, does one use the same decision style and discuss the purchase of a new plant with peers or subordinates? On a different level, there are different stages of family development. Will understanding these stages facilitate understanding career stages? For yet another issue, if we understood reactions to divorce and death, would we have a better understanding of reactions to mergers, divestitures, downsizing, RIF's, and terminations? My point is that the family is a useful laboratory to study problems in which I/O psychologists have traditionally been interested. But, again, a more elaborate analysis considers the overlap in dimensions.

In essence, I am arguing that we should study the meaning of work in both family and employing organization spheres as processes and not structures. It has been argued that wives and husbands experience their family roles as far more psychologically significant than their paid work role (Pleck, 1985), yet we as I/O psychologists continue to view the work role as the central role in life. We consider work to be instrumental; family work may also be instrumental (Piotrkowski, 1978). We are concerned with job involvement and the characteristics of jobs that absorb individuals. We need to now study work absorptiveness and its meaning for the worker and his and her role as spouse, parent, and household worker (Nieva, 1985).

My recommendation for how the meaning of work should be studied in the two spheres is as follows:

(1) Identify the task dimensions in both environments, those that are similar and those that are different;

(2) I would borrow some of the concepts from the international project concerning the "meaning of working" (MOW International Research Team, 1987) which was a study in eight nations on the meanings people attach to their work. This project specifically excluded housework, which is only one aspect of family work, since they focused on paid employment. The measures I would use from this project and extend to the dimensions in both the employing organization and family spheres are:

(a) work centrality, or the general belief about the value of working in one's life. This measure focused on a value orientation toward working as a life role, and in addition, involved a decision orientation about preferred life spheres for one's behavior. We should look at working in a family as a life

role, too.

(b) societal norms, a focus on obligations, personal responsibility or internalized norms of duty, and social commitment. Questions here should focus on what ought to be done in the two spheres.

(c) we should examine valued outcomes and goals that one can expect from either of the spheres.

(d) we also need to assess the importance of the goals and outcomes from each sphere.

This set of variables allows us to assess each sphere in common denominators. The notion of looking at common denominators is not without example since Yogeve and Brett (1985) studied the concept of involvement in an employing organization and in family. They studied the identification with the job and with the family and the importance of the job and family roles to self-image and self-concept.

The fourth point in my framework deals with the causality of the relationship between work organizations and family organizations. There has been some research conducted seeking the "true" relationship (e.g., Orpen, 1978). If one does not want to take sides in the direction debate, however, one can assume that the relationships are bi-directional and recursive situations can be postulated. My position is similar to one taken by Yankelovich in 1974, which is that the "controversy" over whether work influences family or family influences work is bogged down in fruitless debate. They both effect each other. It is a complex, multifaceted problem.

What then is the solution to the causal debate? My first position is to ignore causality and be content to simply study the strength of the relationship among the relevant variables that I have postulated, but I want to suggest another alternative and that is that we can take the family-employing organization link and extend it to another level. To do this, I will borrow from my colleague, Dick Lazarus, based on his work on stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; in press) and adapt his transactional model, which views a person and the environment in a conjoint relationship such that in this new relationship their independent identities are lost in favor of a new condition or state. For the arena of work, family, and organizations, I suggest that the person in one environment, with his or her preferences, behaviors, etc. and that same person in the other environment, with his or her preferences, behaviors, etc. in that environment, are in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal, bi-directional relationship. What happens in one environment can be a consequence of or antecedent to what happens in the other environment. Use of transaction implies a newly created level of abstraction in which the two environments are joined together to form a new relational meaning. Now, rather than being concerned with how one part affects another, we could be studying how the conjoined situation (i.e., one's place in both the family and employing organization) impact other variables such as performance, decisions, choice behavior, and even behavior in the individual spheres. At the higher level of abstraction, we can

also examine how the transactional relationship is impacted by changes in either of the environments. The point is that the focus should be on the transaction or relationship as a unit of analysis.

### CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, what I attempted to do today is look at an area of research that has focused on the relationship between two environments and how one influences the other. Regardless of what is doing this influencing, we have explained the results by postulating that the subject is spilling over, compensating, or segmenting. What I have suggested is that we need to have a better understanding of what to study in both environments before we can tackle models or explanations of results. Rather than look at global measures or categorical, qualitative indices, we need to try and assess both environments on similar dimensions. It is possible for one to seek outlets for responsibility, autonomy, and decision-making, or to seek outlets for needs such as affiliation, achievement, power and the like in both environments. Furthermore, one can spill over with affiliation and compensate for achievement. Employing organizations, the family, and work have a number of specifiabile characteristics. These characteristics need to be identified, defined, and analyzed. I suggest we start with characteristics of work and their meaning.

So, as we are about to adjourn to the social hour, where some will segment and relax and ignore this message while others will spillover and talk research and where yet others will be interested in having a good time and compensate for the day's activities, I leave you with this message:

- (1) Let us do research that concerns family and employing organization activities,
- (2) Let us study the relationship of the individual to each environment, with particular focus on the meaning of work, and
- (3) Let us look at the family-employing organization relationship in transactional terms; i.e., as a dynamic, mutually reciprocal unit of analysis. The problems of employing organizations and family are really part of the same problem and a careful consideration of the issues involved suggest that we are unlikely to go far in solving the problems in one without tackling the other sphere. I suggest we go a step further and study these relationships conjointly.

Is it important to study the relationship? From my perspective, the problems and issues related to work in an employing organization and family are not separate and compartmentalized. Since we know very little now about the relationship, perhaps more will be gained if we study the relationship as a unit per se.

THE END

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