



# DON'T STOP AT THE BORDERS

## Dynamic and Contextual Approaches to Theorizing About Work and Family

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**F**rustration is the mother of this chapter. The isolation and fragmentation of the research literatures that guide the authors of this chapter—even though we all study families and work—are frustrating. Despite repeated calls for greater inclusiveness (Gerstel, Clawson & Zussman, 2002, Gerstel & Gross, 1987, Kelly, 1989; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti & Crouter, 2000), research on macro and micro influences on work and family, paid and unpaid work, and poor and minority families still are conducted by largely different sets of scholars, published in different places, and unevenly attentive to theory.

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### PROBLEMS WITH ESTABLISHED THEORY

According to the recent decade review in *Journal of Marriage and Family* (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti & Crouter, 2000), three of the

major foci in the literature on families and work are multiple roles, maternal employment and work-related stress. We agree with other scholars that—although seldom acknowledged—each of these streams of research continues to be influenced by structural functionalist propositions (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993) But the winds of change that have swept over U.S. society have eroded the utility of this ‘ancestral’ theory, making it progressively less—forgive the pun—functional (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

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### RESEARCH ON MULTIPLE ROLES

Virtually all research on multiple roles has roots in structural functionalism, which conceptualizes roles as the fundamental building blocks of social systems. By embedding the concept of role within the notion of the social system, Talcott Parsons melded symbolic interactionism with his new propositions about structures and functions (Broderick,

1970, p. 4). The focus on roles has bequeathed three tendencies to current research. The first is an atomistic rather than holistic approach (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). That is, scholars have posed many more questions about individual roles than about systems of roles even though well-being or stress are logically products of the entire role system. The second tendency is to assume (and not test) that individuals' role identities are typically organized into a stable priority order. Although respondents in many studies have reported such hierarchies, closer examination reveals that they usually were only complying with researchers' requests to produce a ranking (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). The final and perhaps most persistent tendency is to assume that resources expended in one role are no longer available for use in others. This hydraulic model of resources is the well-known 'scarcity' hypothesis (Marks, 1977), which persists despite considerable evidence that it does not uniformly apply (Daly, 1996; Marks, Huston, Johnson & MacDermid, 2001).

### *Research on Maternal Employment*

The most-discussed legacy of functionalism is the notion of "separate spheres," which has persisted despite pointed criticism for at least 25 years (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Kanter, 1977). In this view, the fundamental building blocks of well-functioning families and societies are specialized gender roles, where husbands specialize in instrumental activities such as market work and wives specialize in expressive activities like domestic work (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993). Research on mothers' employment stemmed in part from concerns about the implications for children of mothers stepping beyond their expressive roles to participate in paid work (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). Seven decades of research revealed few if any reliable differences between the children of employed and nonemployed mothers; instead, findings showed that employment status interacts with

process factors like parental responsiveness to produce effects on children (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993).

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### HISTORICAL REALITIES

Like individuals, theories are partially products of their time, and a very particular period in history produced structural-functionalism. Other scholars have observed that the decade prior to the publication of Parsons' 1951 classic volume was a period of 'return to normalcy' (Doherty et al., 1993). We think it might be difficult to overestimate the uncertainty generated by the trajectories of change during those years. WWII was the second world war to be fought within a single generation. It caused the size of the active duty military force to explode from 1.8 to 12.1 million troops between 1941 and 1945, then fall back to 1.4 million in 1950. In 1945, with a total U.S. population of about 140 million, almost 1 in every 10 Americans was on active duty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). The birth rate plunged to an historic low of 76 births per 1000 women of childbearing age in 1936 (compared to 103 a decade earlier; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), and then rocketed from 86 to 102 in only one year from 1945 to 1946. The divorce rate more than doubled from 2 per 1000 population in 1940 to 4.3 in 1946, subsiding to 2.6 in 1950 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). During the war, women flooded into the labor force, raising their labor force participation rate from 28% in 1940 to 36% in 1944, then dropping the rate to 30% as most left the labor force by 1946 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). On the horizon after WWII were the cold war abroad and the civil rights movement at home (Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm & Steinmetz, 1993). After the war, many married women left the labor force, the divorce rate dropped, the birth rate rose, the economy did well, and family incomes rose. Perhaps it is not surprising that Parsons concluded that societies benefit from gender specialization!

## ● THEORY SPOTLIGHT

## CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

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**D**uring the last twenty years a particular attention was being paid to possible interaction which could occur between work and family, its problems being theoretically and practically important in USA and many other countries. The main source of this concern has been a great number of women taking jobs out of home thus creating a significant change in family roles and a new set of problems in family functioning. The main question posed is does the job engagement of both marital partners have an effect on the family and how the new family relationships could influence the area of work. Also, will the mutual influence be negative, or maybe positive, will the work and family roles be in conflict or in mutual enhancement. The research data showing that for most employed persons family satisfaction has a priority over job satisfaction (Kiecolt, 2003), we shall limit our attention to work influencing family.

Many studies are aimed at finding out the antecedents of WFC (Kossek & Ozeki (1998) or the consequences of WFC (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). The consequences are found to be negative outcomes in individual and family processes in majority of studies. The antecedents cover mostly the individual level variables, while higher level variables are completely ignored. Attention should be also drawn to the fact that most of the studies were performed in USA social and cultural context. Some valuable attempts at systematizing and theoretical integration and model elaboration were performed (Voydanoff, 2002), but all are valid mostly for European and North American social context. Obviously, an enormous variation exists between countries in relevant parts of socio-cultural context (work ethics, job involvement, family values and family commitment) so it is a questionable fit between the models offered and the reality of various cultures or societies. If an unambiguous picture of WFC is desired, the full gamut of socio-cultural variables should be incorporated into it. The ecological cross-cultural approach could be possible answer.

The proposed approach should include three levels of variables: macro, mezzo and micro level. The macrolevel variables comprise social context. The specific societal value systems differing especially along individualistic/collectivistic dimension (Hofstede, 1980) could seriously affect WFC in particular society. The social policy aimed at securing family integrity (maternity leave, financial aid for children, accessible preschool and after-school institutions) could be a strong buffer against severe WFC. Work legal infrastructure includes all the relevant laws and regulations at the society level and define the power and position of the unions. These could regulate working hours and work overload, two major causes of WFC.

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● **THEORY SPOTLIGHT** *continued*

Further, it could be assumed that all three groups of variables could influence micro-level variables i.e. both work and family involvement of the individual employees, the collectivistic societies, producing probably higher family than work involvement. It is also plausible to expect individual work involvement to be strongly influenced by work legal infrastructure and family social policy. And it is well evidenced that both work and family involvement influence the intensity of WFC (Frone et al.,1992).

It could be further supposed that the influence of macro-level variables would be mediated by two mezzo-level variables: family support and work context (type of job, peer, management's and supervisor's support). Also, the system of values could influence family support affecting indirectly WFC, and family social policy and work legal infrastructure of the society could affect work context variables and indirectly WFC too.

If we start from the results obtained from the data explaining the WFC in USA cultural context and elaborate them using the ecological cross-cultural approach, the important new insights into mechanisms of work-family conflicts could be possibly gained. •

Today's demographic realities are different — and no more likely to return to the configuration of the 1950's than the configuration then was to return to that of the 1890's. The industrial revolution has given way to the information age which soon will be overtaken by some just-emerging technology. Lives are longer and families are smaller. The population is more racially diverse but gender roles in both paid and unpaid work have become more similar. The labor force has bifurcated into a privileged class of highly educated workers whose wages have been rising and a disadvantaged working class whose wages have been stagnant or declining (Perrucci, XXXX). Within this new present we must theorize for a new future and be judicious and explicit about the elements of the ancestral theories we take with us.

The list of gerunds we generated fall into three distinct approaches to building theory (see Table 1). Each approach or mode includes two “gerund strategies” that have characterized theorizing about families and work in recent decades:

- Axiomatic theory construction (explaining and building);
- Interactive theory construction (integrating and transferring); and
- Critical theory construction (surfacing and problematizing)

In the following three sections, we discuss these modes in detail.

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**NEW VISIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY  
THEORIZING ABOUT WORK  
AND FAMILY LIFE**

The first theme is that of borders. Researchers and theorists must carefully consider the borders of each phenomenon to be studied, and explicitly acknowledge the quadrants of the landscape that will and will not be considered. This is especially important because of how difficult it is to define the borders of the field of families and work itself. Many scholars, in fact, have admitted that the field has developed in spite of a “lack of language”

● **METHOD SPOTLIGHT****METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES  
IN THEORIZING WORK-FAMILY  
COMPLEX**

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Suraj Commuri

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**O**f all the methodological challenges that await a theorist in work-family complex, three challenges rise to the top. First, given the undefined boundaries of the domain, a theorist must become accustomed to handling a wide variety of theories. Second, given the many subtle and yet unexplored interactions between work and family, a theorist must use emergent research designs. Finally, given that sometimes the roles played at work may be incongruent with those played in families, a theorist must use multiple lenses in examining any phenomenon.

**Theories as Building Blocks**

As MacDermid, Roy, and Zvonkovic (current volume) remind us, work-family complex is characterized by undefined boundaries. This threatens the reliance a theorist may place in any one theoretical paradigm, for it can be easily challenged by a new interpretation of what constitutes work-family complex. On the bright side, this very characteristic makes work-family complex a fertile ground for theoretical development. In dealing with undefined domains such as work-family complex, a theorist must make a habit of collecting theories from overlapping domains and colliding them against each other. However, theories are often taught as if they are serious and infallible, resulting in “theory obfuscation” (Klein & White, 1996, p. xv) and “theory worship” (MacDermid et al., current volume, p. --). On the contrary, theories are inherently playful. They are building blocks and, therefore, are cast with creative and playful uses in mind. A budding theorist must first learn to take a theory apart, turn it upside down, use it out of context, and collide it against other theories. This promotes in the theorist levels of confidence and comfort that are critical for theory building and it reveals to the theorist various gaps that are in need of new theoretical explanations. (EXAMPLES ON WEBSITE).

**Emergent Research Designs**

In work-family complex, the iterative effects of the dynamism of one sphere on the other are often not readily apparent. Therefore, unlike in the case of what is common in theory testing, a theorist should pause to analyze, interpret, and plan the next step after each and every case/data point. In other words, building theories in multifaceted domains such as work-family complex involves a persistent dialogue between the theorist and the data, even as those data are being gathered. A theorist working in this domain must cast away rigid research designs and be prepared to defend bold decisions made along emergent research designs. (EXAMPLES ON WEBSITE)

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● **METHOD SPOTLIGHT** *continued*

**Multiple Methods and Multiple Lenses**

In navigating a role-system (Marks & MacDermid, 1996), wives and husbands sometimes feel a need to disguise the baggage of work from the family and vice versa, especially when the activities in one sphere bear the potential to disturb equilibrium in the other. Such cases require multiple methods of data gathering and multiple lenses of interpretation to aid any meaningful theory construction. For example, today, about a third of all wives earn more than their husbands. Surveying such households only via a pencil-and-paper task will cripple theory construction. This is because while the wives may perceive the status as normal, many husbands view the situation as transient (Commuri, 2003). Further, while one pattern of power sharing is declared overtly, investigations of behind-the-scenes money management reveal a very different picture (Commuri, 2003). In order to build a theory, a theorist needs all this information. The told and the untold are both important, as are the wife's narratives and the husband's narratives. Similarly, interpretations of family from the vantage of work and vice versa are also equally important. Not just because multiple perspectives have to be represented, but the difference between these perspectives often turns out to be the crux of a new theory. (EXAMPLES ON WEBSITE) •

(Hattery, 2001, p. 3) to describe the actual contours of work and family life. This struggle with language reflects a larger discomfort with inflexible assumptions about what work and what family actually are. As Thorne (2001, p. 373) argues,

The study of work and family is a hybrid field that is narrowly framed and in need of more theoretical integration. Note the telling vocabulary and syntax that organize this area of research: two nouns linked by a hyphen and by an array of other words signaling connection ("work-family nexus," "relations between work and family," "balancing work and family," "juggling work and family")...Most of the literature on work and family takes these categories

to be self evident, using them in ways that gloss complex, contradictory, and shifting realities even as the categories continue to order perceptions of the world...The connecting, hyphenating "linkage" vocabulary of work and family research, including the circus imagery of individual performers "juggling" and "balancing," signals a field that has been cut off from its historical and contextual moorings.

As Thorne goes on to suggest, explicit attention to assumptions and realities of our choices of definitions of the borders of work and family will go a long way to establishing a common ground for communicating about theories of work and family life.

## CASE STUDY

## THE INTERFACE OF ELDER CAREGIVING AND PAID EMPLOYMENT

**W**hen analyzing the interface of paid employment and elder caregiving, it is important to look at the role the employer plays in the relationship. The workplace may make demands, such as overtime, that limit a family member's ability to provide care; at the same time, it may offer support and benefits, such as flextime or referral services, that enhance the employee's ability to take care of a relative. Understanding the complexities of the workplace in helping or hindering elder care is increasingly important, as many family caregivers are in the labor force. Likewise, there has been tremendous growth of the aging population, as well as a longer life expectancy. The oldest-old, those age 85 and older, is the fastest-growing proportion in our population, and it is these individuals who are most likely to require assistance.

What are the effects of elder caregiving on paid employment and vice versa? How can one's employer assist an employee to remain in the workforce while simultaneously providing care for an aged family member? This case study will examine some of the methodological and theoretical challenges one may face when attempting to address these questions.

### METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES WHEN RESEARCHING WORK AND FAMILY

McDermid, Roy, and Zvonkovic discuss the frustration by the research methods used in the field of families and work, particularly with the "one-shot survey administered at a single workplace to the small percentage of employees who volunteered or agreed to participate." I concur, and I optimistically (unrealistically?) thought I could overcome this pattern and contribute something new and unique to the studies of paid employment

and elder caregiving. I attempted this, and I will give a word of warning: One will encounter far more obstacles than even the most creative mind could imagine!

I wanted a large amount of data for my study on elder caregiving and the interface with the caregiver's paid employment; this would enable me to analyze the breadth of elder caregiving among paid employees considering various factors, including full- and part-time status, different industries, numerous size categories (i.e., number of employees) of companies, diverse occupations, and a variety of demographic items. The cross-sectional survey method, though limited in presenting changes over time, would serve the purpose of collecting at one time the large volume of data I needed.

To combat the single workplace setting found so often in studies, I planned to survey a stratified, cluster sample of companies, using the local chamber of commerce listing as a sampling frame. The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) categories were treated as clusters, and the size groupings (number of employees per firm) were treated as the strata. I chose three SIC groupings to investigate, and I categorized each SIC by the number of employees at each company. I collapsed the size categories into three groupings: 50-99 employees, 100-249 employees, and 250 or more employees to differentiate among small, medium, and large companies. I would randomly select one company per industrial classification in each size category, giving a total of nine companies for the study. This process did not seem difficult—or so I thought. The first snag I encountered was finding companies willing to participate in the study. I predicted neither the time it would take to finalize the sample nor the difficulty in asking employees about their use of company-spon-

**CASE STUDY** *continued*

sored benefits to assist them with caregiving. One of the most time-consuming processes involved contacting the appropriate person in the company and getting the study approved or disapproved. Since this was a random sample, I had not established relationships with the companies. In fact, the whole sampling method was somewhat like a cold sales call. Typically, I first contacted the human resources director, and from there proceeded to higher level positions to obtain an answer. Companies expected to review the questionnaire, and rightly so, and wanted to meet with me personally to discuss the research procedure. This process could take eight to ten weeks, and often resulted in upper management's refusal to participate in the study. This, in turn, led to my randomly selecting another company and starting the whole process over again. In hindsight, if I had mailed a detailed letter of explanation before the initial phone contact, I may have had more success.

After six months of trying to acquire the sample, I proceeded with seven companies, not nine. I still had three different industrial classifications, but not three separate size categories for each. Then, before the study began, two companies withdrew from participation for reasons that had nothing to do with my research methodology. One withdrew because of a union attempt, and the other because of changes in personnel. I was left with five companies, but at least I still had three industrial classifications.

Companies that declined to participate in the study cited two common reasons. One was that human resource (HR) directors believed that there were no job-related problems in their company due to eldercare. In other words, if the HR director had not been told of elder caregiving concerns on the job, then surely they did not exist. Another reason given was that HR directors were concerned that a survey dealing with employees' non-work-related responsibilities as well as company-sponsored benefits would "stir up" things in the workforce. One HR director

said, "I don't want to deal with the issues that this topic may bring up." Two other directors were concerned that a union attempt would emerge if workers really analyzed their current benefits. In fact, one company that refused to participate asked me if I was working for a union. I never dreamed that someone would envision me as Sally Field's character in "Norma Rae"!

Another challenge I encountered in this research was the limited access I was given to employees. I was not allowed any means of identifying employees (companies would participate only if the study was completely anonymous!), so I took a census at each company and distributed a questionnaire to each employee with his/her paycheck. At each of the five companies, I was permitted to send only one follow-up postcard with paychecks to all employees, three weeks after the initial distribution. This anonymous approach eliminated any hope I had of extending the study later by interviewing caregiving employees and their care recipients to look at their reciprocal relationships. It is impossible to compare the reciprocity between caregiver and care recipient and between employer and caregiving employee if the parties are not identified. A blend of qualitative and quantitative methods could have provided a wealth of information about such relationships, but it was not permitted in this study.

My research method was further affected in that the original questionnaire was changed dramatically due to restrictions imposed by the HR directors and their superiors at the two largest companies. These companies refused to participate if I questioned all employees about job performance. I was permitted to ask job performance questions of caregiving employees only, because the companies assumed the number of these employees would be minimal. Both companies were concerned, however, that employees would be threatened by a survey that asked about their attendance, distractions, missed appointments, overtime declined, and so on,

**CASE STUDY** *continued*

in addition to those that focused on work satisfaction and loyalty to the company. By this time, my sampling frame nearly was exhausted. Hence, in order to maintain large companies for the survey process, I eliminated most questions on company loyalty and work satisfaction. In addition, although I retained all job performance questions directed specifically at caregiving employees, I eliminated all but two of those measures for questions directed at all employees. This essentially crushed my attempt to compare non-eldercare providing employees with the eldercare providing employees on specific job issues.

### **THEORETICAL CHALLENGES WHEN RESEARCHING WORK AND FAMILY**

There is little in the quintessential work and family theory that is related to the interface of elder caregiving and paid employment. I rooted this particular study primarily in social exchange theory, a theory seldom used in work and family. The reciprocity it presents provided the grounding for this study, particular in the domain of employer and caregiving employee. The reciprocity of the exchange between employees providing production and employers providing wages might seem to be a sufficient enough exchange. However, in a competitive labor market, the exchange of money from an employer to an employee may not be enough to continue the exchange process from employee to employer. Benefits and support

enhance the exchange process for employees, encouraging their continued production with one company versus another. However, it becomes difficult to assess some of this reciprocity, such as the outcome of loyalty to the company, when the researcher is not permitted to ask such questions!

An alternative approach to social exchange theory for this research design could have been systems theory. By looking at the issue of elder caregiving among paid employees, one could focus on the multiple systems impacting the social environment of all parties in these situations. For example, an individual may be a caregiver to both an older person and a child; multiple family members may serve as caregiver to a single older person; or a caregiver may hold more than one paid job. Many systems come into play when dealing with this issue, and there is an interrelationship of systems and their components. For example, an older parent's condition may worry the caregiving adult child so much that he or she becomes distracted at work, potentially contributing to tensions with fellow workers or superiors and a poor job performance. That adult child, in turn, may feel so distraught over work conditions that he or she places unrealistic demands on his or her spouse, creating problems in the marital system. The possible cycle of events is endless among the different systems.

Researching work and family issues has its challenges. However, there are many approaches yet to be tried, and the knowledge gained from attempting these will no doubt be inestimable.

## DISCUSSION &amp; EXTENSION

## SUGGESTIONS FOR A MULTILEVEL REFRAMING OF WORK-FAMILY THEORY

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**M**acDermid and colleagues outline and provide exemplars of different approaches to theory building and they push scholars, seasoned and novice alike, to advance dynamic and contextual theories of families and work. We agree with MacDermid and colleagues' contention that most families and work scholarship is based on "ancestral" views and assumptions, and we contend that viable theory building requires breaking out of conceptual "ruts" that preclude clear vision of families and work. In this "Discussion and Extension" we suggest that consistently lamented gaps in the work-family literature (for recent reviews from different disciplines, see: Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000) result from perceptual blocks that preclude clear theorizing. We then offer four suggestions for breaking out of these conceptual ruts with the hope of helping scholars reframe families and work theory.

Adams' (1986) treatise, *Conceptual block-busting: A guide to better ideas* (entering its fourth reprint in 2001), outlines several blocks to clear conceptualization, three of which are exemplified in the work-family literature. The first block, seeing what we expect to see, is driven by deeply entrenched beliefs that work and family are inherently at odds with each other, and is exemplified in an almost exclusive empirical focus on conflict and strain (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002) as well as enduring quests to locate the harmful effects of maternal employment on marriage and children. The next block, the tendency to delimit an issue too closely, was taken up by MacDermid and colleagues (and

others, e.g., Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) who argued that "work" and "family" have been defined too narrowly. The tendency to define "work" as paid activity through an employer systematically omits the activities of the complete corps of volunteer workers as well as 15% of the adult labor force participants who are self-employed or engaged in various "nonstandard work" arrangements. Likewise, the dominant focus on dual-earner couples with children suggests that "family" is exclusively about maintaining the marital dyad and parenting. The last perceptual block, the inability to see an issue from other points of view, is reflected in the tendency of work-family scholars to examine the experiences of highly valued professional and middle-class workers (who tend to be white and highly educated) and to overlook populations on the margins of society. Advancing comprehensive theories of families and work requires breaking out of conceptual ruts that tend to: (1) view work and family as inherently conflicted; (2) use narrow conceptualizations of "work" and "family"; and (3) focus on the experiences of a single segment of society.

Identifying the ruts that contribute to persistent limitations in the work-family literature is easy, but identifying and executing solutions is difficult. There are comprehensive literatures devoted to critical and creative thinking, as well as published works offering an array of strategies for "getting out of conceptual ruts" (e.g., Adams, 1986), that one of us was exposed to while taking a class on theory building (an experience we now see as uncommon based on MacDermid and col-



DISCUSSION & EXTENSION *continued*

leagues' observations). In the remaining space we offer four broad suggestions for breaking out of conceptual ruts that we see as essential for the genesis of comprehensive work-family theories that "don't stop at the borders."

*Question the assumption that the domains and responsibilities of work and family are inherently conflicted.* Marks (1977) challenged the scarcity of resources and role strain hypotheses by arguing that synergies are created by engagement in multiple activities and life spaces, and a small but growing body of literature is examining the possibility that work and family, while occasionally conflicted, are also allies. Barnett and colleagues' (see Barnett & Hyde, 2001) research, for example, has been advancing role enhancement theory for nearly twenty years and their evidence indicates that people (frequently trained professionals) report that the benefits of combining work and family outweigh the strains. Likewise, concepts such as positive spillover (Crouter, 1984) and work-family facilitation (Grzywacz, 2002; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004) are gaining increased attention. Although some theoretical ideas are further evolved than others, this issue is fertile ground for theorizing because it remains overshadowed and underdeveloped.

*Remember that social-structural and cultural contexts matter.* Work-family scholarship frequently follows macro-level changes such as the growth of women's labor force participation, and more recently the shift toward a 24/7 economy and changes in the structure of families. These changes cannot be viewed a-contextually because macro-level changes are more pronounced for members of some social-structural groups than others. For example, while segments of the world may benefit from the 24/7 economy, the cost of the benefit is disproportionately borne by women, the poorly educated, and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Additionally, macro-level changes cannot be viewed as culturally universal. Belief systems and patterns of behavior surrounding "work"

and "family" vary across cultures and are shaped by both physical attributes of the broader environment (Suburban Boston is very different from rural Appalachia or the Sub-Sahara) as well as regulated local customs regarding such things as appropriate care of children and adults' responsibilities to the larger community (Harkness & Super, 1994). The clearest theorizing about families and work will emerge when both social-structural and cultural variations are examined.

An important methodological strategy for emphasizing context is to *deliberately expand sampling* (whether sampling observations or units of analysis such as individuals, families, or workplaces) to reflect the widening diversity of work and family situations emerging in the U.S. and around the world. Work-family theory to date has been primarily driven by small samples of people in specific occupational (i.e., professionals) and familial (i.e., nuclear families) arrangements. While clearly important, these observations reflect only a portion of the universe of possible observations. To the extent that theories arise from the analysis of observations: if observations systematically omit segments of a given universe, the resulting theory will have limited internal and external validity.

*Consider ethnographic techniques* such as cultural immersion, community observation, and in-depth personal interviews. When aptly applied, ethnography circumvents conceptual ruts by elucidating the meanings that real people ascribe to "work" and "family" as well as their beliefs about the relative separateness between work and family. Evidence from anthropologists operating through several of the Sloan Centers on "Ethnographies of Daily Life" suggests that the conventions frequently imposed by the quantitative study of work and family do not map onto people's everyday lives. For example, Darrah (2003) reported that while people can clearly discern work activities from family activities (filing is, after all very different from changing diapers), they viewed the worlds of work and family as sim-

DISCUSSION & EXTENSION *continued*

ply elements of a larger whole with myriad interconnections. That is, just as people can discern the difference between minutes and seconds, they are also keenly aware that both are elements of the broader concept (i.e., time) and that they differ more in degree than in substantive meaning. These types of insights are essential for forming and refining comprehensive theories.

Finally, *identify and focus on processes that link different levels of analysis*. Symbolic interactionists argue that interaction and negotiation, and ideological work are the mechanisms that link macro-level expectations such as those imposed by economic conditions or cultural norms with micro-level phenomenon (La Rossa & Reitzes, 1993). This enactment is made visible in the strategies that families and workplaces develop to address the dilemmas associated with combining responsibilities, commitments, and activities from two domains that until recently have been considered as separate from each other. For example, Hattery's (2001) recent work demonstrated how mothers negotiated the dominant socially sanctioned motherhood ideology which suggests that "good mothers" are primary caretakers for their children. Hattery found that all women in her study endorsed motherhood ideology; however, the strategy employed to enact the ideology (e.g., working non-overlapping shifts with spouse,

working from home) was shaped by situational circumstances. By identifying and focusing on strategies that individuals, families and organization use to "do work and family," theorists can gain a better understanding of the linkages between macro- and micro-level phenomena.

In the lead "Families and Work" chapter, MacDermid and colleagues call scholars to engage in dynamic and contextual theory building. To aid this call, in this "Discussion and Extension" we echo the criticisms of the lead the chapter by arguing that theorists and scholars need to break out of conceptual ruts, and we offered suggestions for accomplishing this. These suggestions included (1) directly questioning entrenched views that work and family are inherently conflicted; (2) placing context at the center of the theory building and deliberately expanding the view of work and family by widening the sampling of "work" and "family" observations; (3) using ethnographic techniques for forming and refining theoretical ideas; and by (4) identifying and focusing on activities reflecting the connections between macro- and micro-levels of analysis. These suggestions, of course, are not new but we are hopeful that our repackaging and reframing of these ideas will stimulate dynamic and contextual theories of families and work that, in the language of the lead chapter, "doesn't stop at the borders."

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