WORK-FAMILY: BALANCE, CONFLICT, HARMONY, PASSÉ?

Work-family issues have been the subject of empirical research for the past 25-30 years. During this time research designs have been fragmented in approach and used different operational definitions, producing inconsistent and sometimes contradictory results. I propose that the current approach utilized in the empirical research is passé. Changes in the workforce demographics and the nature of work itself render the research designs and results obsolete. I also propose that, contrary to the view that the adoption of work-family policies can benefit both the individual and the organization; work-family policies in organizations are passé. The recent experience of a public accounting firm is used to illustrate my second proposal.

Introduction

Research in the area of work-family issues has been on-going for approximately 25-30 years. During this time the research results have been inconsistent and in some cases, contradictory. Several meta-analyses and critiques of this body of research have addressed these disparities (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Rothausen, 1999). The focus of the analysis has been directed at inconsistent operational definitions for key variables, such as family and the construct of work-family conflict; the use of single-item or untested measurements and the use of convenience samples e.g. single source, homogeneous.

The existing body of research is fragmented with respect to focus. While some research examines the source and direction of conflict or the effects of such conflict on an individual’s job and life satisfaction or performance at work, other research examines the role of the organization and the design and implementation of organizational policies. For example, topics in the research literature have addressed: source of conflict for an individual (Hammer, Allen & Grigsby, 1997; Kelloway, Gottlieb & Barham, 1999); effects of family supportive work environments (Allen, 2001; Casper, Martin, Buffardi & Erdwins, 2002); organizational responsiveness to the adoption of work-family policies (Goodstein, 1994; Milliken, Martins & Morgan, 1998; Osterman, 1995); introduction of specific policies such as flexible work arrangements (Barham, Gottlieb & Kelloway, 1997; Kossek, Barber & Winters, 1999; Rau & Hyland, 2002; Scandura & Lankau, 1997); and effects of organizational culture on work-family balance (Clark, 2001).

Research results concerning the benefits to the individual and the organization of implementing work-family policies and practices is inconclusive. Yet, increasingly, organizational resources are being allocated to the design and development of work-family policies (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). The changing demographics of the workforce, with an influx of women, more dual-earner couples and the emergence of family arrangements that do not resemble the traditional gender-based roles (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999;
Lewis & Cooper, 1999) have contributed to the identified need to develop work-family policies and practices in the organization.

In summary, the empirical research with its fragmented approach to the work-family area has generated inconsistent results and contradictory evidence. Thus it isn’t possible to conclude whether or not the implementation of these policies results in reduced work-family conflict for the individual and the desired results for / benefits to the organization.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, I propose that the research, both in terms of approach and results is passé. That is, the current approach / focus is outdated and does not appropriately reflect and address the current work and family environments. Recent research studies do not appear to have made any efforts to address the limitations identified by such researchers as Kossek & Ozeki (1998, 1999), thus limiting the contribution to the existing body of knowledge. I draw on the results of my review of approximately 40 research articles published in the past ten years to support my proposal.

I also propose that the design, implementation and use of work-family policies in work organizations are passé. While there is empirical evidence that the implementation of work-family benefits can positively contribute to the organization’s performance through increased productivity and reduced absenteeism, other research indicates that not all organizations are implementing these policies. Other factors not directly related to bottom-line performance may be taken into consideration (see for example, Osterman, 1995). Further, the nature of work, itself, has changed such that, the targeted audience for these work-family policies may not exist within the organization (Lewis & Cooper, 1999).

I draw on the experience of a Canadian public accounting firm (the “Firm”) to support my second proposal. This Firm identified a need to address human resources issues in 1992. Since then they have worked to implement and sustain a set of work-family policies. It is my view that the challenges encountered since 1992 can be explained within the contexts of conflicting definitions and terminology related to “family”, the problematic of the rapidly changing nature of the workplace e.g. public accounting and the design and implementation of policies that are accompanied by mixed messages regarding availability. Therefore, continued efforts directed towards revising and sustaining the policies will not produce the desired organizational results.

**Work - Family Research: Passé?**

The majority of the research studies reviewed for this paper were empirical in nature. This research provides the foundation for my proposal that the work-family research, as currently designed and executed is not adding to the body of knowledge in the area of work-family issues. Key topics addressed in support of my proposal are: research terminology and operational definitions; the construct of work-family conflict; the nature and role of work in the research and the perceived benefits to organizations implementing these policies.

**Family**

While there have been dramatic changes in both work and family during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, most theories that guide research and clinical practice in family relations date from the 1950s, a time of remarkable sex segregation, gender asymmetry, and stability in work and family patterns (emphasis added, Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 781). Nowhere is this more evident than in the research of work-family conflict and the resulting effects on the individual and the organization.
“Family” is one of these outdated constructs. 32 empirical studies published between 1985 and 1994 focused either on work attitudes and behaviours or the understanding of how the family may impact work attitudes and behaviors. These studies yielded a variety of measures of “family” with little overt consideration of how such measures implicitly defined it (Rothausen, 1999, p. 818).

Generally the family construct appeared as measures of an individual’s level of responsibility for the care of others (usually children) or the family structure (usually related to their spouse) (Rothausen, 1999, p.822). In many studies, the family measurement adopted was almost always that of the legal, nuclear definition (ibid, p.833). This narrow definition of family continues to proliferate in the research. I reviewed 12 articles that had an explicit research focus on work-family conflict. They focused on the nuclear, monogamous, patriarchal family (see for example: Allen, 2001; Bruck, Allen & Spector, 2002; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992; Hammer et al., 1997; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). Nine (75%) of the studies defined the construct of family and selected the relevant sample on the basis that the potential participant was currently married or living as married, or had one or more children living in the home or both. Absent from these articles was any reference or research related to responsibilities for elder care or the care of a spouse or disabled adult child. With one exception the articles were silent on the sex of the “married” participants and the gender-orientation of the participants. The implicit premise was that participants were heterosexual and involved in a traditional male-female relationship. None of these studies acknowledged that the nature of the family has changed e.g. fewer two-parent nuclear families, existence of same sex parents, etc.

The use of a narrowly defined construct of “family” in the existing research has implications for both researchers and practitioners. It presents challenges in comparing results across studies. It may guide practitioner decisions regarding policy design such that implementation of policies are ineffective or misdirected because they aren’t relevant to today’s workforce with respect to work-family issues. More importantly, if the research continues in this current vein, it is not representative of the current family structures in the workplace population, thus rendering the results meaningless, except, perhaps, for a subset of the workplace population.

Despite the identified limitations associated with a narrow definition of family in the work-family research, its usage continues. I reviewed six studies that were published subsequent to Rothausen’s (1999) call for a broader definition. Five restricted participation in the study to individuals who were married, living as married or had at least one child living at home (Bruck et al, 2002; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Clark, 2001; Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Collins, 2001; and Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). Perry-Smith & Blum (2000) did not include a definition of family in their research on HR bundles of policies.

**Sample Composition**

Many studies have been structured to examine very homogeneous and specific groups and work contexts (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Restricting the range of a single study to a specific gender, job group or marital situation limits the generalizability of the findings (ibid, p.141). Although minority, multi-racial and single-parent households are dramatically increasing in the labour market, representation of these groups in general studies of satisfaction and conflict have been extremely limited (ibid, p.146). There was a preponderance of women in the empirical studies I reviewed, even though the studies did not explicitly state the focus was on WFC experienced by women.

**Balance, Conflict and Harmony**
With very few exceptions, the research reviewed for this paper focused on work-family conflict ("WFC"). However I noted two other terms have been utilized or referred to in the literature.

Clark (2000) introduced and tested a new theory relating to work/family balance. She defined “balance” as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p.751). This suggests that balance is achievable when an individual is able to manage the conflict that can arise as the result of having more than one role in life.

The Firm that is discussed later in this paper initially referred to their human resources initiative as “Work-Life Balance” thus giving recognition to the fact people have multiple roles outside of work. However, they subsequently changed the terminology and now refer to it as “work-life harmony”. Harmony does not appear to have made its way into the academic research related to work-family issues.

**Construct of Conflict**

Individuals who work are faced with managing multiple roles in the performance of their daily activities. Everyday life is increasingly mediated through formal roles in organizational settings, one of which is work (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). The question then, becomes one of whether or not the existence of multiple roles creates tension and conflict within the individual that then impacts her ability to successfully manage and execute different roles e.g. work and family.

In their seminal research published in 1985, Greenhaus & Beutell defined work-family conflict as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role” (p.77). The conflict can be time-based, strain-based or behaviour-based. Although their definition incorporated interrole conflict it was the authors’ stated intention that it [the definition] was not intended to imply any causal direction of the role conflict (p.84).

In subsequent research, Frone et al. (1992) and Frone, Yardley & Markel (1997) examined the bi-directional nature of the conflict i.e. the work role causes conflict with the family role and vice versa. Specifically, the authors proposed that if the demands and responsibilities associated with one role frequently interfere with the enactment of a second role the quality of life associated with the second role may suffer (Frone et al., 1992, p.74). Their findings led them to the proposition that family related factors appeared more likely to influence the quality of work life rather than the other way round. This proposition supports the introduction of work-family policies that will allow employees to manage family issues thus producing better results at work.

Despite the abundance of research examining both the causes and the consequences of WFC, there is still ambiguity regarding the nature of the construct, the measurement and its relationship with other variables (Allen et al., 2000). Netemeyer, Boles & McMurray (1996) noted the lack of consistency with which the WFC construct has been operationalized makes it difficult to argue that all measures are associated with a core construct.

All of the work-family conflict research is underpinned by the premise that the existence of multiple roles creates conflict, which is harmful to an individual. However, multiple roles may not be harmful; they may in fact be beneficial for *women and men* as reflected in mental health, physical health and relationship health (emphasis added, Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p.785). A consequence of the benefits arising from multiple roles is that performance in each role is facilitated so that strong commitment to work does not preclude strong commitment to family and vice versa (ibid, p.786).
In summary, the empirical research has proceeded under the assumption that the existence of multiple roles creates conflict, which may not be true in all cases. Further the operationalization of the construct has been inconsistent, contributing to contradictory findings and limiting the generalizability of the results.

**Work**

Work is an instrumental activity in which a worker participates as a member of a market or organization and for which the worker is compensated for her participation in the production of goods and services (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). The development and implementation of work-family benefits occurs within the context of the work organization. The perceived success or failure of work-family policies cannot be appropriately assessed outside the context of work. Early research on work and family implicitly, if not explicitly, regarded work as a stable and unproblematic force (Lewis & Cooper, 1999, p.385).

The period from the mid 1990s has seen the most profound changes so far in the nature of work (Lewis & Cooper, 1999). Globalization, increasing sophistication of and reliance on technology, the growth of sub-contracting, out-working, part-time, casual and non permanent work and the move towards flexible and contingent workforces are all impacting the construct of work (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996; Lewis & Cooper, 1999).

The workplace of the 21st Century bears little resemblance to the workplace of the 1970s, 1980s or even the early 1990s. The dramatic changes resulting from globalization, increasing use of more sophisticated technology and increasing organizational demands to do more with fewer resources render the old construct of secure, permanent, full-time jobs, often with one employer, obsolete. Consequently, the desired outcomes from the implementation of work-family policies by the organization may be unattainable.

**Organizational Work-Family Policies**

The organization is typically viewed as a place where work-family policies are established to help employees manage tension and conflict arising from multiple roles. The policies may address such matters as child or elder care, family leave and flexible work scheduling.

Work-family benefits are a means of maintaining a competitive advantage (Allen, 2001); raising morale, improving job productivity (Clark, 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999); and attracting a dedicated workforce in today’s turbulent environment (Allen, 2001). In a nation-wide independent survey of Canadian workers, Gallup found that companies with high levels of employee satisfaction generated increased sales, improved productivity and bottom-line profitability.1 Milliken, Dutton & Beyer (1990) recommended that organizational decision makers start thinking strategically about the meaning and significance of work-family changes for the design of jobs, careers and human resources practices (p.92). Perry-Smith & Blum (2000) found a link between bundles of human resource work-family policies and several dimensions of organizational performance. It was their view that HR bundles providing employees with the flexibility, the information, the convenience and the financial assistance to better manage their non-work lives can be considered strategic (p.1115).

On the other hand, Lewis & Cooper (1999) believe that the dwindling numbers of those in relatively secure employment are the only ones who can enjoy many of the so-called family-friendly policies. Thus the discussion and utilization of these policies becomes irrelevant for employees for whom

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1 As cited in an internal Deloitte & Touche email message, March 11, 2000.
a steady income and time to spend with families are the most basic prerequisites for family life but remain elusive (ibid, p.385).

In a comprehensive review of the work-family literature, Kossek & Ozeki (1999) noted the research evidence allowed for cautious optimism that work-family policies do make a positive difference (p.25). Higher levels of individual job productivity and favourable attitudes towards work appeared to be related with more flexible schedules and a sense that the organization cares. Flexibility and dependent care benefits also appeared to reduce turnover and increase commitment, at least in some instances (emphasis added, ibid, p.25). The researchers noted a consistent relationship between access to or use of work-family policies and job satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, p.146). It is implied that individuals with a high degree of job satisfaction will be better workers to the benefit of the organization.

The literature relating to the organizational benefits that accrue from the implementation of work-family benefits would suggest that every organization would develop and implement this type of human resource policy. However, there is empirical research that suggests the adoption of work-family policies is not automatic (Goodstein, 1994; Milliken et al., 1998; Osterman, 1995). Osterman (1995), in his study on the presence of internal labour market practices found that work-family programs were less widespread than the popular press had led one to believe.

Goodstein (1994), using a framework of institutional pressures and strategic responsiveness found that large organizations were more likely than small organizations to pursue responsive strategies and that the presence of a high proportion of competitors and industries operating in the same geographic area adopting work-family benefits significantly increased an employer’s responsiveness. Both Milliken et al. (1998) and Osterman (1995) had similar findings.

The nature of dependencies, particularly for female employees was a critical determinant of adoption, as was the likelihood of conformity in adopting policies in industry groups where unemployment among women was relatively low (Goodstein, 1994). Milliken et al. (1998), however, found no support for the percentage of women in the organization in explaining the variance in work-family responsiveness. The presence of women or people with experience in dual-career families or elder care responsibilities on the senior management team did not result in any significant effect on responsiveness. Adding to this apparent contradiction are the results from Osterman’s (1995) study. He found that the percentage of the core labour force that is women is a positive and significant contributor to an organization’s responsiveness until occupational controls are included in the analysis. At that point, he found the percentage of females lost significance, to be replaced by the nature of the occupations. Those organizations whose core employees were professional or technical workers were significantly more likely to provide work-family programs.

Organizations are merging, amalgamating, integrating, downsizing and re-engineering. Governments at all levels are privatizing many of their services. What happens to the design and implementation of work-family policies and practices in this fast-paced, changing work environment? For example, do legacy policies survive; do existing policies get enhanced or are they eliminated? Does the “new” organization introduce work-family policies and practices where none existed before? If the existence of such policies provides a positive contribution to organizational performance as suggested by some of the research, it is reasonable to expect policies would survive and perhaps be enhanced in the “new” organization. The changing nature of organizations and the effects of the change on employees should be made a high priority for future research in the work-life area.

**Work-Family Policies: Passé?**
In this section of the paper I make the argument that the use of these policies, as they are currently designed and implemented provide benefits to neither the organization implementing them or the workers in the organization. I draw on the literature reviewed in the previous section of this paper and use a Canadian public accounting firm to illustrate my key points.

**Background**

The Firm is a Canadian public accounting firm offering a variety of audit, tax and related services to both Canadian and multi-national organizations. It operates as a partnership. In the early 1990s, when the first efforts were taken to adopt a human resources strategy and implement appropriate human resources policies, approximately 5,000 people worked for the Firm in offices located throughout Canada. The integration with another Canadian public accounting firm in 2002 added an additional 1000 people. It is now the largest public accounting firm in Canada as measured by number of professional staff.

The Firm introduced a series of Human Resource Policies (the “Initiative”) beginning in 1995 that were designed, in part, to provide work-family supports for their professional and administrative staff. The success of the Initiative has been mixed at best. Since launched in 1995, the Initiative has undergone name changes, lost its main senior management champion and been re-launched at least twice in an effort to maintain its profile. Although firm-wide communication has been issued through a variety of media as to the purpose, objectives and policy content, anecdotal evidence suggests confusion still exists as to the purpose of the Initiative and availability of benefits. At the present time, it is once again on a “back-burner” as management reviews and re-examines the priorities of the Initiative. Yet “… we are under no illusion that attracting and keeping top talent will be a key success factor” (senior partner, internal publication, 2003).

While the Firm’s senior management publicly acknowledge the importance of their human resources and the need to provide policies and practices to support their people, they continue to struggle with the embedding of such policies and practices into the culture of the Firm. There are several potential explanations for the challenges encountered in sustaining the practices, particularly those directed towards work-family issues. I explore these explanations in the following sections of this paper.

**The Firm’s Approach**

In the early 1990s, the Firm recognized that their human resources were their primary competitive advantage and that human resources would be one of the key distinguishing features for them in the marketplace (Christie, 1997, p.14). The advisory committee that was struck to explore a variety of issues related to human resources investigated and provided recommendations that would result in the Firm being a “leader in the retention and advancement of women” (ibid, p.14). It was subsequently determined that “women’s issues” were everyone’s issues. The Firm recognized that individuals had multiple roles outside of work, not just family. Consequently, the Initiative and specific policies referred to “work-life” rather than “work-family”.

**Discussion**
Role Boundaries. Boundary theories refer to the physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive and relational limits that define entities as separate from one another (Ashforth et al., 2000, p.474). A role boundary refers to whatever delimits the perimeter and therefore the scope of a role. Work and family boundaries are asymmetrically permeable, with work causing family conflict significantly more prevalent than family causing work conflict (Eagle et al., 1997).

According to Perlow (1998), ¼ of all new jobs currently created in the United States are either professional or technical (p.330). Managers cannot easily or directly measure the work output or involvement of these so-called knowledge workers, thus they turn to hours as an indicator of both productivity and commitment (ibid, p.331). Control of the hours employees work controls the temporal boundary between work and outside life. The managerially valued knowledge worker in today’s world – a world that demands responsiveness, adaptability, flexibility and creativity in responding to global markets and to customers – demonstrates total devotion to work (emphasis added, p. 331). This form of boundary control is becomingly increasingly prominent and problematic (ibid, p.352).

Many organizations have made the relatively easy changes to the borders i.e. adding flextime, flex-place and leave policies. This action fosters greater integration between home and work, although this high degree of integration may compromise the integrity of home, work and third places (emphasis added, Ashforth et al., 2000, p.487). At the same time the organizations have not made the analogous changes to the domain’s culture and values because they are much more difficult (Clark, 2000, p.765). Not surprisingly, many organizations have created these flexible work policies to serve their own interests and not those of their employees and families. This eventually leads to unrealized expectations and disillusionment (Regan, 1994, as cited in Clark, 2000, p.765).

Harmony is achieved through the integration of the many demands of work and personal life while exceeding client expectations within a challenging service environment (emphasis added, Fine Art, December, 1999). This would appear to be an unattainable goal, particularly in an organization that prides itself on being “Client Obsessive”.

Turnover. Voluntary turnover rates in the public accounting profession are in excess of 20% (Greenhaus et al., 2001, p.91). Greenhaus, Collins, Singh & Parasuraman (1997) found that while women were more likely than men to leave public accounting it was because they had less of a desire to be admitted to the partnership and not because of work-family conflict (p.264). In fact, both women and men left public accounting for reasons that were more likely to be work related than family related (emphasis added, ibid, p.264).

Firm Policies. Individual employees must experience a policy as enabling enhanced role integration before job performance and attitudes are favourably affected. Introduction of programs such as greater flexibility and dependent care supports should be well thought out and fit with the needs of both employees and the organization (emphasis added, Kossek & Ozeki, 1999, p.25). The one-size fits all approach does not work (ibid, p.26).

As the result of the integration with a competitor public accounting firm, certain human resources policies have been revised. Revisions to the “Family Care Days” policy included a change in name and an increase in the number of days allocated for “family matters” from two to three. While every staff member is entitled to three family days the Firm reserves the right to designate usage of one or more of them. In 2003, the Toronto office designated January 2, 2004 as one of these days in order to “close” the office and “provide” an extended holiday period. Management’s message was quite clear that if a staff member had used the three-day allotment she would be required to take either a vacation day or a day without pay (A. McGibbon, December 2003, personal communication). This policy, as administered, “punishes” the administrative staff, the majority of whom are women. The professional staff have access
to informal policies related to “rolling time”, which would allow them to take the day off without loss of pay or a vacation day. This creates a conflicting message as to whether the Firm is truly supportive of family matters.

Responses to the Human Resources survey (1992) indicated a need to find ways to allow staff greater flexibility in performing their work. Potential work arrangements to address this need included flextime, alternative work arrangements and continuing part-time (Christie, 1997 p.17). “Creating Your Balance” provided guidelines for individuals to negotiate special work arrangements, based on the needs of the individual and the office (emphasis added, ibid, p.18). In 1996, one year after its introduction, 4% of the staff were on leave or engaged in a variety of flextime and alternative arrangements. The majority of the program participants were women.2

Alternate work arrangements (“AWA”) can take one of several forms, including “flextime, compressed work week, job sharing, part-time, working from home and unpaid leave of absence (Barham et al., 1997). Behson (2002) distinguishes between informal work accommodations and formal work accommodations, where the former is a set of behaviours in which employees temporarily and informally adjust their usual work patterns in an attempt to balance their work and family responsibilities. While they may modify how, when or where work gets done, the work output remains relatively unchanged and the work structure is not permanently altered (p.326).

Flexibility, as it relates to work arrangements can be temporal (flexible work scheduling) or operational (flexible work processes) (Clark, 2001, p.349). Bailyn (1997) defined operational flexibility as control over the conditions of work, such as having the autonomy to decide how work is to be done without unnecessary monitoring or restrictions (as cited in Clark, 2001, p.350).

We’re [the Firm] providing flexible, individualized working arrangements for our people, and reaping the benefits with happy, focused, loyal employees” (Advancement & Retention of Talented People, 2000). “Team planning meetings should address client service objectives and the particular needs and objectives of each team member. This will now be discussed at the beginning of each engagement, with a view to planning in a way that supports individual’s needs while providing excellent client service” (Deloitte & Touche, FineArt, May 2000, p.2).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that either this planning is not being done or the plans are being overridden to accommodate clients once the engagement starts. The GTA offices recently announced a new policy requiring employees to manage/ limit the number of days of vacation carried forward to the next fiscal year, accompanied by a statement that staff should be taking their earned vacation on an annual basis. In my informal discussions with staff about this new policy it was noted that, in many situations, the significant vacation accruals could be attributed to the Firm; i.e. vacation plans were frequently changed to accommodate a client request and failure to do so resulted in informal sanctions.

Behson (2002) concluded that the use of informal work arrangements could reduce the stress associated with family interfering with work conflict, thereby resulting in increased productivity or a more positive work affect. Interestingly, Clark (2001) found that temporal flexibility was unassociated with any of the work-family balance measures in her study (p.362). Rather, she found that operational flexibility explained the bulk of the variance. She also found that the presence of flexible arrangements did not help individuals in dual-career partnerships, individuals with many dependents or individuals working long hours any more than they helped individuals without these characteristics (p. 362). Dunham, Pierce & Castenada (1987) noted that those employees who switched to a flex-time schedule actually reported more interference with personal activities involving family and friends, while those

2 The Firm was unable to provide an updated statistic when requested.
employees who worked a 4 day / 40 hour schedule reported less interference (as cited in Kossek & Ozeki, 1999, p.14).

If flexible working arrangements don’t help employees working long hours [another characteristic of public accounting firms] the benefits to the individual and the organization are questionable. Although overload and stress are probably inevitable in a profession that emphasizes billable hours, it is possible that job re-design can reduce stress and work-family conflict, at the same time increasing the level of work effectiveness (Greenhaus et al., 1997, p.267).

Thus, almost ten years after introducing the Initiative with its focus on “work-life harmony” and a program of “flexible” work arrangements, the concept is still not embedded in the culture. In fact I would suggest that the work environment is regressing to the situation of the early 1990s, perceived and actual benefits related to flexible work arrangements are declining and many staff view the current work environment as not being “family-supportive”.

Conclusions

A review of the empirical research performed in the area of work-family issues indicates it is outdated and not relevant to the current workforce and work environment. A new approach is required; an approach that recognizes the needs and issues of all members of the work force, regardless of gender, marital status and type of employment. The experience of the Firm during the past 10 years illustrates many of the limitations identified in this paper. That is, the design and implementation of work-family policies are not benefiting either the individuals or the organization. Thus, a new approach to the design and implementation of work-life policies is required.
References


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