The Interface of Work and Family Life

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Dramatic changes in the workforce and workplace contribute to the need for a synthesis of knowledge on the interdependence of family life, work, and the vocational development of children, adolescents, and adults. Four prominent themes in the work and family literature are reviewed with the intention of providing guidance for all applied psychologists. These include (a) the meaning of work embedded in people's lives, (b) multiple life roles, (c) work and family navigation, and (d) supportive family systems.

Keywords: work and family, career development, vocational psychology, relational context of career and work, life roles

Sustained research on the interface of work and family life has been inspired by dramatic transformations in the composition of the workforce (e.g., large increases in the number of dual-earner families and single parents) and the structure of the workplace (DeBell, 2006; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Labor market changes have been shown to have deep and unsettling effects on the lives of individuals and families (Rubin, 1994; Sennett, 1998; Wilson, 1996). The structure, pace, and experience of work have intensified at the same time that family structures have weakened in their ability to buffer workers from the stresses of the economy (Lambert & Kossek, 2005). Shifting demands and the fluid nature of work in the 21st century fuel a compelling need for a synthesis of knowledge on the interdependence of family life, work, and the vocational development of children, adolescents, and adults. This need was recently documented in a report of the American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential Initiative on Work and Families (APA, 2004). This report acknowledged the challenges faced by working families and their employers, and the subsequent need to realign the world of work with the realities of working families.

Not only have neat boundaries between work and family been unsubstantiated in the extant literature within the social sciences (e.g., Firth-Cozens & Hardy, 1992; Hazan & Shaver, 1990), such boundaries fail to depict the lived experience of working people

(Blustein, 2001). For example, research on work–family conflict has demonstrated the association between extensive conflict and dissatisfaction and distress within both work and family domains (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Although the salience of work–family concerns has drastically increased in the past 25 years (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999), many applied psychologists' knowledge of the vocational and counseling psychology literature is not consistently adequate to enable them to effectively deal with work and family aspects of clients' lives (Juntunen, 2006).

The false schism between psychotherapy and career counseling has long been noted in the psychology literature, as have fervent calls for the integration of clients' work lives into psychotherapy practice (e.g., Betz & Corning, 1993; Blustein & Spengler, 1995; Fassinger, 2000; Hackett, 1993; Juntunen, 2006; Richardson, 2002). The purpose of this contribution is to point to the need for applied psychologists to be knowledgeable about the work–family interface so that they might more effectively address the role of work in the psychological health of their clients. I review the current knowledge base to disseminate information and to stimulate evidence-based practice that integrates both work and family concerns, with the intention of providing guidance to help all applied psychologists.

I review four prominent themes in the work and family literature. Practice implications consistent with the extant literature are theoretically derived and offered within each theme. The four themes are (a) the meaning of work embedded in people's lives, (b) multiple life roles, (c) work and family navigation, and (d) supportive family systems. Despite the growing percentage of women in the workforce, there has been little modification in the strength of gender-based role expectations held by society regarding men and women in work and family roles (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Hence, I examine the interface between work and family within the context of gender. Prior to reviewing these topic areas, I establish an inclusive definition of family.

An Inclusive Definition of Family

Although much of the extant literature on work and family life has either explicitly or implicitly implied a traditional view of family as a married couple with children, all people who live

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interconnected communal lives are affected by these challenges. The traditional two-parent family, in which a man and a woman are married to one another and raise their own children (including shared biological, step, or adopted children), represents only 23% of all households and less than 50% of family households (United States Bureau of the Census, 2001). Thus, this traditional view of family does not accurately describe the lived family experiences of most people in this country. Instead, a more inclusive definition of family that recognizes enduring intimate relationships of various structures must be recognized and validated in discussions of work and family life. Fassinger (2000) suggested that couples and families may be seen as social entities whose forms and functions are regulated both formally (e.g., in laws governing marriage and sexual expression) and informally (e.g., in religious and community beliefs about the place of women or men in the family). An inclusive view of family, such as the one proposed here, would include lesbian, gay, and bisexual couples, single parent families, unmarried life partners with and without children, and other unions in which some form of family or home life emerges (Fassinger, 2000). Moreover, lesbian, gay, and bisexual couples and families, single parent families, and others from underrepresented groups must negotiate the work and family interface within the context of stigma, isolation, and invisibility, adding to the challenges they face (Fassinger, 2000). Throughout this article, an inclusive definition of family is incorporated.

The Meaning of Work Embedded in People's Lives

The meaning of work embedded in people's lives is reflected in contemporary views of the psychological experiences of work by incorporating the notion of embeddedness in social, familial, and cultural contexts (Schultheiss, Blustein, & Flum, 2003). More specifically, a sense of embeddedness is a feeling of belonging and of being included in some sort of social network. Thus, a sense of embeddedness is a subjective link with others as a social group. To avoid social isolation, individuals need to belong or, in other words, to experience embeddedness (Flum, 2001). For some people, work is a significant means of experiencing a sense of embeddedness in their culture; for others, it is a place of alienation and disconnection (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004). For some, the work role promotes belongingness by linking them to a work-defined community, a group with which one shares interests and values. Yet others experience the absence of embeddedness by feeling lost or alienated in work. These experiences are critical in understanding the life context of clients' presenting concerns and issues. Work cannot be divorced from the client's social, familial, and cultural life contexts or presenting concerns. The boundaries between work and personal life are artificial ones that become obscured or disappear when we consider work embedded within social structures. Rather than consider development and life concerns within separate life domains, practitioners are encouraged to consider a broader, more holistic set of intertwined life contexts as major arenas for developmental growth and change (Richardson, 2002).

It has been suggested that relationships both represent and reproduce the culture in which they are embedded (Jordan & Walker, 2004) and that relationships and culture are mutually embedded and defined (Schultheiss, 2005c). Viewing the work–family interface from a culturally embedded perspective signifies an understanding of work and family dynamics as a complex pluralistic process versus a primarily interpersonal encounter (Walker, 2004). This perspective acknowledges that relationships do not exist as units separate and distinct from the larger culture (Jordan & Walker, 2004). Although it is generally accepted that work and family systems operate within, influence, and are influenced by cultural norms, values, and gender-role ideology, the work and family literature generally has overlooked the role of the cultural context (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). It is clear that people from underrepresented groups often experience unique career issues, such as stereotyping, restricted advancement opportunities, attributional biases, and other stresses that are likely to contribute to the meaning of work within the broader context of their lives (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). The apparent lack of attention to the cultural context of the work and family interface leaves a gap in psychologists' knowledge that future researchers are encouraged to fill. Similarly, differences in the work–family interface that are associated with socioeconomic status also have been overlooked (Allen et al., 2000).

The literature on work and family also is circumscribed by a lack of attention to unmarried individuals and same-sex couples (Allen et al., 2000). Added to this, literature on sexual orientation and the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals is often not available to, or accessed by, psychologists (Fassinger, 2000). Lesbian and gay couples experience many of the same issues faced by heterosexual couples, including challenges associated with the work–family interface. However, lesbian and gay couples face these challenges within the context of stigma, isolation, and invisibility (Fassinger, 2000). For example, a woman in a lesbian relationship might face the additional strains of a lack of understanding and support from her coworkers when caring for her partner's aging or ailing parent.

An understanding of the unique meanings of work embedded within an individual's social, familial, and cultural context is needed to effectively comprehend the interdependencies of work and family life and to guide an integrated therapeutic practice (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2005; Richardson, 2002). To accomplish this, practitioners are encouraged to first assess the meaning of work in clients' lives by inquiring about their conceptualizations of work. Questions to explore with clients include the following: What does work mean to you? How did you learn about work through your family? What roles does work play in your life? Practitioners can collect stories and narratives from therapeutic material offered by clients and can use this to clarify and examine recurring themes in clients' work and personal lives and in the interface between work and family relationships. Practitioners can consider the following: What dominant stories about work emerge in client stories and narratives? How do these stories assist or hinder the client in experiencing a meaningful life? What supports and barriers become evident? What implicit messages might there be about gender, race/ethnicity and privilege within work and family relationships? One can look for prevailing themes, such as those of self-definition, affirmation, or deprecation.

Second, practitioners are encouraged to recognize work as a potent source of social connectedness or alienation that impacts life functioning. Questions to consider include the following: Does the client describe stories or narratives of belongingness in terms of work? Does he or she connect with coworkers and share common interests, values, and goals? Does the client describe a

sense of alienation and isolation at work? In working lives that result in considerable alienation and denigration, psychologists might help clients to reshape the way that they conceptualize work. For example, therapeutic intervention might be directed toward helping clients to find meaning in the work that is available to them. Clients also might be encouraged to nurture work relationships to improve their sense of connection with others. Third, therapeutic interventions can identify common and overlapping themes across life domains, such as a recapitulation of family roles and dramas in the workplace (Chusid & Cochran, 1989), issues related to work and family conflict, and the balancing of multiple life roles. Fourth, practitioners can assist clients in weaving together the interconnected strands of work and relationships (Hansen, 2001). This can be accomplished by exploring how decisions about work affect family, and how family influences one's work decisions, motivation, and performance.

Multiple Life Roles

Broad-based considerations of work highlight the importance of multiple roles as originally introduced by Super (1980) and further highlighted by more recent work (e.g., Blustein et al., 2004; Richardson, 1993, 2002). Within the life span dimension of his model, Super (1980) established the foundation for a more explicitly integrative view of career development in which the occupational role is viewed as one particular role nested within a framework of other mutually influential life roles (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Multiple roles are interconnected not only within, but also across individuals (MacDermid, Leslie, & Bissonnette, 2001). For example, balance between work and family is sometimes accomplished by one person in a couple focusing more on paid work, while the other focuses more on unpaid domestic work, caregiving, and tending to the emotional and social aspects of family life. The notion of multiple life roles highlighted by recent scholars recognizes caregiving and other unpaid work as vital work roles (Schultheiss, 2003b, 2005c). Despite this, unpaid work (such as homemaking, child and elder care, volunteer work, and student work) resides outside of formal structures, rendering it invisible within formal economic frameworks (DeBell, 2006). Parker and Almeida (2001) took an assertive political stance by suggesting that to achieve work–family balance, equity, and justice, society must shift social consciousness and build an inclusive ethic of caring. This means that parenting, caregiving, and other unpaid work in the private domains of life would be given credence as serving valid working functions.

Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) suggested it is likely that individuals who are actively involved in work and family domains experience gratification of both their mastery needs (i.e., successful negotiation of life tasks leading to a sense of industry) and their intimacy needs (Kofodimos, 1993). I hypothesize that satisfaction of these needs cuts across the public and private domains of a person's life. Hence, needs for mastery can be satisfied through market work and personal work, as one's needs for intimacy can be satisfied through relationships in both of these realms. People's needs for love, belonging, admiration, and mutuality can be met not only within personal domains, but also in the daily interactions of life in the public domain of market work. Thus, both market and personal work provide opportunities not only for societal contributions and connections to a social network, but also for the satisfaction of basic life needs.

It is helpful here to refer to Richardson's (1993, 2002) work in which she defines work as inclusive of both market and personal work. She defines market work as paid work in the occupational structure and defines personal work as unpaid work that people do for themselves, their families, and their communities. Both market and personal work are then distinguished by their respective locations in the public and personal domains of life. The privileging of work in the public domain and the marginalization of work in the private domain sustains gender-based inequities (Abel & Nelson, 1990; Richardson, 2002; Williams, 2000). The domination of middle and working class cultural norms masks the work, such as caregiving, that exists outside of formal structures (DeBell, 2006). Parenting and caregiving work are not just invisible but can be barriers to paid employment and success in competitively based work practices.

Reconceptualizing the two-career family as a three-career family, with the third career being family and relational life, places domestic life on par with work and offers an expanded frame of reference inclusive of all life domains (Levner, 2000). The inclusion of three equal spheres of activity opens the possibility of therapeutic practices that encourage both partners in a relationship to own both the instrumental and relational domains of work and family life (Levner, 2000). This broadens the therapeutic dialogue from one of negotiating daily life tasks to one in which equal significance is assigned to work and family in the lives of both partners.

Recent work by Barnett and Hyde (2001) cited the fast pace of change in the work and family roles of women and men in the United States as responsible for rendering the underlying assumptions of the classical theories of gender and multiple roles obsolete. Specifically, functionalist, psychoanalytic, and sociobiological/ evolutionary psychology theories assume the pervasiveness of significant gender differences in personality, abilities, and social behaviors, thus justifying a highly gender-segregated division of labor in the family and workplace. Barnett and Hyde argued that empirical evidence from systematic studies has failed to support claims of large-scale gender differences posited by these classic theories. In response, they proposed an expansionist theory of gender, work, and family based on the notion that multiple roles, in general, are beneficial to mental, physical, and relational health. They cited various processes and conditions that contribute to these beneficial effects (i.e., buffering, added income, social support, increased opportunities for success, expanded frame of reference, increased self-complexity, increased similarity of experiences for women and men, and gender-role ideology).

Elsewhere, Fassinger (2000) argued that it is not gender per se that exerts powerful influences in everyday life, but instead the use of gender and gender differences to maintain systems of power and oppression that restrict people to narrow roles and opportunities. Gendered segregation of the labor market and significant wage gaps continue to exist at all levels of educational attainment, and women continue to bear the burden of primary homemaker and parent while working outside of the home (DeBell, 2006). A recent review of the literature clearly demonstrated how inequalities in the workplace and in the home create very different circumstances for men and women, thus presenting men and women with different challenges for managing work and personal life (Kossek &

Lambert, 2005). Similarities and differences in the life courses and life circumstances of men and women need to be studied and acknowledged to develop an understanding of the factors that shape the ways in which individuals construct their work and personal lives, and to develop interventions that can help both men and women succeed as workers, partners, parents, and citizens (Lambert & Kossek, 2005).

Gilbert and Sher (1999) presented a framework for conceptualizing gender that has useful applications for understanding the role of gender in work and family. They offered four levels of analysis including: gender as difference, gender as organizer or structurer, gender as language and discourse, and gender as an interactive process. Gender as difference refers to the assumption that one set of characteristics, abilities, and interests belongs to one sex, and that another set belongs to the other sex. Gender as organizer or structurer includes the implicit and explicit norms, policies, laws, and organizational structures that reflect assumptions about opportunities, rights, and roles for male and female members of society. Work and family are clearly social contexts in which gender is inextricably linked to social norms and power structures implied and imposed by social mores. This manifests as barriers to women's and men's personal desires and goals across work and family domains.

Gender as language and discourse refers to the power of language in reinforcing traditional assumptions about gender and maintaining nonconscious views about women's and men's nature and behavioral expectations. Assumptions about gender embedded in everyday language form the discourses that dominate people's understanding of the world and serve to maintain oppressive power structures. Gilbert and Sher (1999) provided an example of gendered language by highlighting the common use of the term *working mother*. They noted the use of this term to refer to women who are employed outside of the home and rear children and noted the absence of a parallel term, *working father*, to describe men. As Gilbert and Sher suggested, this tells us a great deal about gender ideology with regard to the family: Women who work outside the home are identified by their parental roles; men who work outside the home are not—they are simply employed men. This language not only diminishes the work role salience of women, it keeps men's connection to their children invisible and maintains stereotypic views about the separation of employment and family in men's lives. These discourses, or views, about gender also are embedded in the language practitioners use in therapy and in the psychological theories that guide therapeutic work (Gilbert & Sher, 1999). Imagine, for example, the meanings implied by therapists who use the common discourse of working mothers in their work with clients. This can impose gender role stereotypes and imply limits that should be placed on either work or childbearing if a woman is to be an effectively functioning person and partner.

Gender as an interactive process includes internalized societal constructions of women and men and the process of being encouraged and rewarded for playing them out in interpersonal interactions. Practicing psychologists are encouraged not to preserve societal views of women's and men's roles and responsibilities. Following the previous example, a woman considering having another baby while navigating work and family life could come away from a therapy session, in which the discourse of working mothers was communicated, assuming that her solution was to align her priorities by preserving the traditional societal view of what women should do (i.e., not bear another child while continuing to work outside of the home).

Working from this knowledge base of gendered multiple roles across work and family, I suggest the following recommendations to guide therapeutic practice. Psychologists are encouraged to identify and validate multiple life roles and inclusive definitions of work, thereby empowering clients to counter the risks of marginalization of personal work in their lives (cf. Richardson, 2002). Thus, practitioners are encouraged to recognize issues of power, privilege, and oppression by using a contextual lens sufficiently broad to recognize multiple, interacting socioeconomic roles and relationships. Psychologists might do this by intentionally asking questions to raise the client's awareness of the connection between his or her concerns and the distribution of power, privilege, and oppression in relationships and in society where paid work has its central location (Parker & Almeida, 2001). Topics to explore with couples include the following: how much money each earns, how resources are allocated, who makes decisions, who accommodates, how household and caregiving responsibilities are distributed, and who maintains the family's connections to family, friends, and other community support systems (Parker & Almeida, 2001). Questions also could include those that reveal the family's social location—their perceptions and experiences of race, social class, and relative privilege.

Practitioners might help clients to replace traditional perspectives with new metaphors, such as that of the three-career family, to make it possible for work and family relationships to be on equal footing. Psychologists might work to empower couples who face the power of traditional, gendered, and socially dominant beliefs that prescribe very different roles for men and women and might attempt to broaden each person's sense of competence across life domains.

Psychologists are encouraged to help people to deal with discontinuities in market work (DeBell, 2006) by helping clients appreciate the importance of personal work as a source of self-esteem. Thus, practitioners might sensitize clients to the broad range of work in their lives to better enable them to navigate increasingly complex multiple life roles (Richardson, 2002).

Finally, psychologists are encouraged to help those involved in personal work, such as caregiving, to foster a perspective of lifelong learning, flexibility, and adaptability. Practitioners might encourage these clients to recognize their accomplishments and contributions, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy for the exploration of new domains and the acquisition of new skills. This could be particularly important if circumstances find them, by choice or default, squarely situated in the market workplace.

Work and Family Navigation

The motivational and conflictual nature of work and family relationships can function to stimulate or inhibit career progress, work-related tasks, and healthy family functioning (Blustein et al., 2001). An extensive literature base has been established on the interdependencies between the world of work and family life (Barling & Sorensen, 1997; Fassinger, 2000; Greenhaus, 1989; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). A number of concepts have emerged to explain the relation between these two dominant spheres of life, including spillover, work–family conflict, work–family enrichment, work–family integration, and work–family bal-

ance. Perhaps the most widely used and contested term in the literature is that of *work–family balance*. Work–family balance refers to the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in—and equally satisfied with—his or her work role and family role (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Greenhaus et al. (2003) identified three key components inherent in this balance: time balance (i.e., equal time devoted to work and family roles), involvement balance (i.e., an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles), and satisfaction balance (i.e., an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles).

Difficulties in achieving balance across domains has led some to question if balancing family and work is a sustainable metaphor (Bacigalupe, 2001). The discourse of balancing work and family not only implies that such a balance is possible and attainable, it creates increasingly stressful demands on individuals who are embedded within social and economic structures that make a successful work–family balance precarious at best (Bacigalupe, 2001). An alternative metaphor of navigation has been suggested to represent staying the course, as opposed to focusing on the final destination of a perfect balance (MacDermid et al., 2001).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) established a theoretical framework for research on work–family conflict that they defined as friction in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. Thus, participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). They proposed that work–family conflict is intensified when either work or family roles are salient and central to the person's self-concept. The research on work–family conflict has contributed valuable insights into the interdependencies between work and family life. For example, it is apparent that extensive conflict can produce dissatisfaction and distress within work and family domains and can adversely affect quality of life (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Rice, Frone, & McFarlin, 1992).

Research has explored the bidirectionality of the interference between work and family roles. Thus, at times work demands interfere with the quality of family life (work–family conflict), and at other times family pressures interfere with responsibilities at work (family–work conflict; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). A recent meta-analysis providing evidence for adequate discriminant validity between measures of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict suggests that they are distinct constructs (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Another meta-analytic study providing evidence that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict have unique antecedents might further suggest that these conflicts require different interventions to prevent or reduce their occurrence (Byron, 2005).

Although a major strand of research on work–family linkages is based on a conflict perspective, it has been said to provide an incomplete view of the relationships between work and family. Opportunities for enhancement or integration between work and family roles are reflected in the work–family integration literature (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Marks (1977) suggested that participation in multiple roles can enhance (versus deplete) resources and energy, thereby enriching overall well-being. Thus, work–family integration occurs when positive attitudes in one role spill over into the other role or when experiences in one role serve as resources that enrich one's life in another role. It has been suggested that conflict and integration may be independent dimen-

sions of the work–family interface. Hence, individual, work, or family roles can at the same time conflict with one another in some respects and enrich each other in other aspects (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999).

It would be remiss to consider work and family navigation without considering the social, economic, cultural, and political contexts within which families and work are embedded. As the workforce becomes increasingly multicultural, value differences regarding the primacy of work and other life roles takes on growing importance (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Although some scholars have recognized the influence of these contexts on social norms and values, gender-role ideology, and public policy, little research has assessed these multicultural dimensions in the work–family interface (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). For example, family obligations and expectations might differ among ethnic groups, which in turn might affect work life. Likewise, culturally embedded values and work ethics might be reflected in family expectations and work and family commitments. Furthermore, cultures differ in beliefs about whether balancing work and family is a collective or an individual responsibility (Lewis, 1999).

On the basis of the literature in this area, I offer the following recommendations. Psychologists are encouraged to assist clients in reframing the work and family interface from a metaphor of balance to one of navigation and staying the course (MacDermid et al., 2001). This reframing may free clients to think more creatively and holistically about their life situation and may provide an effective means of managing work and family stress. Psychologists are encouraged to help clients focus on an inclusive view of life planning to facilitate the development of a satisfying work–family interface and a more harmonious relationship between the demands of diverse life roles (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Hansen, 2001). This might be accomplished by helping clients articulate long-term goals relative to the interaction of work and family life and align time and resources with their established goals (MacDermid et al., 2001).

Opportunities for decreasing conflict and increasing integration across the domains of work and family could be explored. For example, options for workplace flexibility (e.g., reduced work hours, flextime) and the distribution of work in the home could be examined. Basic behavioral strategies that help people to organize and manage their various roles also have been suggested (MacDermid et al., 2001). These strategies include problem-solving approaches to either strengthen or weaken boundaries between roles and identifying circumstances of low and high personal control in each role. Once circumstances and consequences of low control are recognized, coping strategies can then be developed to identify resources and areas of role flexibility or to pair situations of low control with situations of high control (MacDermid et al., 2001).

Researchers are encouraged to continue to study the processes (e.g., moderators and mediators) through which multiple roles are beneficial to mental, physical, and relational health, and those conditions that limit or negate presumed beneficial effects (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). These findings will become important as psychologists continue to integrate work and family domains in their practice.

In the workplace, psychologists are encouraged to advocate for relationally based incentives and opportunities for connection and networking that can lead to more meaningful social engagement

and interpersonal connection, thereby intercepting the stresses of the workplace that can spillover to the family (Fletcher, 2000; Hall et al. 1996; Schultheiss, 2003a). Psychologists could promote awareness that achievement occurs within a network of connection and support, and that the short-term costs of maintaining relationships are an investment in the long-term potential for growth and effectiveness (Fletcher, 2000).

Psychologists are encouraged to consider the multicultural contexts of their clients as they help them to navigate the work and family interface. Values, belief systems, and culturally based rituals and practices can be explored together with options for optimizing holistic life planning.

Supportive Family Systems

Multidimensional support and the availability of others as a secure emotional base prepares individuals to deal effectively with stressful situations, such as those encountered at work and in the career development process (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995). The vocational psychology literature has much to contribute to our knowledge of the role of relationships on career development and occupational choice factors. A considerable literature on family-of-origin influences on career development has recently been integrated by Whiston and Keller (2004). This review demonstrates that families do influence individuals' career development in specific and predictable ways. A realistic view of the individual embedded within a family system is fundamental to understanding how people develop and implement their plans for work (Blustein, 2001; Savickas, 2002).

Research suggests that family relationship factors, such as parental attitudes and expectations, identification with parents, open communication, parenting styles, parental attachment, psychological separation, direct parent involvement and assistance, and multidimensional aspects of social support exert an influence on adolescents' vocational identity, vocational interests, career maturity, career decision-making self-efficacy, work values, and vocational exploration and decision making (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Although parents seem to have the most prominent influence on their children's career development, other family members, such as siblings and extended family, also exert some of these same important influences (Schultheiss, Palma, Predragovich, & Glasscock, 2002). There also is a considerable literature suggesting practitioners can intervene to assist parents in influencing their children's career development (e.g., Young et al., 1997). It is becoming clear that family influences on career development are multidimensional and interactional, suggesting that applied psychologists should view these constructs from a progressively holistic perspective (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

The prominent function of social support in work domains is clearly supported by empirical research from various theoretical perspectives, including attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), social support theory (Cutrona, 1996), social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), and feminist relational perspectives (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Josselson, 1992). The importance and function of interpersonal connection in navigating challenging terrain, such as the space shared by work and family life, is becoming clear. Those individuals who have the benefits of consistent, accessible, and reliable others are better

equipped to negotiate challenges and manage the anxiety that sometimes accompanies facing the overlapping demands of life's domains. A growing body of research suggests that in addition to family members, emotionally and instrumentally supportive counselors, significant others, coworkers, and supervisors also provide the type of active and supportive relational environment that contributes to effective career progress (Schultheiss, 2005a). Social constructionist thought has been proposed as one paradigm to facilitate the complex weaving together of relational and working themes to better understand the role of supportive family systems in the work and relationships space (Blustein et al., 2004).

A number of recommendations emerge from this body of literature. From their comprehensive review of family influences on career development, Whiston and Keller (2004) set forth key recommendations relevant to applied psychologists. They include encouraging psychologists to serve as psychoeducational consultants with parents, reinforcing the relevance of relational factors. Psychologists also could develop direct intervention programs for parents to help facilitate their children's career development. Within individual and family therapy, practitioners could facilitate an exploration of family influences on children's career development process and make suggestions for more purposeful, goal-directed behaviors to enhance children's development and growth within the career domain. A therapeutic goal of improving interpersonal relationships among family members can have long-term vocational benefits for family members. Given the substantial evidence that family expectations exert a significant influence on occupational aspirations and expectations, family interventions could explicitly address the pervasive influence of the family's expectations. Thus, a consideration of vocational outcomes is suggested when examining the effectiveness of family interventions.

Recommendations beyond those suggested by Whiston and Keller (2004) include using the therapeutic alliance as an important source of support and empathic empowerment and, hence, as a secure base for the exploration of life domains, including vocational contexts. Thus, applied psychologists might consider the implications of the therapeutic relationship not only for intrapsychic change, but also for providing relational security to facilitate self- and vocational exploration and growth. Practitioners could help clients examine how they rely on others and how others involve themselves in their approach to career and work tasks to gain a better understanding of how clients' connections are interdependent with their work world (Phillips, Christopher-Sisk, & Gravino, 2001; Schultheiss, 2003a). Specifically, psychologists are encouraged to explore the positive/facilitative relational influences as well as any neutral, negative, or conflictual factors in family relationships (cf. Schultheiss, 2005b). Practitioners also could use interventions to help people become better equipped to face relational and career dilemmas, thereby effectively drawing on relationships with others as a resource in the career process. Interventions directed toward assisting clients in becoming more attuned to their work and relational strivings, and the role these strivings play across developmental domains, would effectively broaden the sphere of resources available to clients as they traverse the interconnected pathways of life.

Summary

In summary, the vocational psychology literature supports the notion that work and family issues should not be viewed as distinct and unrelated constructs. Work and family are interwoven. In addition, a more inclusive view of work that recognizes caregiving and other unpaid work as vital work roles is not only timely, it makes sense. The literature on work and relationships that was reviewed here can be used to map effectively the landscape of work and family life. This growing knowledge base can provide guidance for all applied psychologists.

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