

## **PART IV: Advancing Policy and Organizational Change**

### **Introduction: Cultivating Organizational Change and Advancing Public Policy**

Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes  
*Boston College*

Ellen Ernst Kossek  
*Michigan State University*

Stephen Sweet  
*Ithaca College*

The contours of the work-family area of study have been dynamically shaped by business practitioners and policymakers as well as by academics. Each of these different stakeholder groups has contributed unique perspectives and different types of leadership that have enhanced our understanding of work-family phenomena.

The importance of linking academic research to social change in organizations and to public policymaking is a long-standing tradition in the work and family field. In fact, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 1977 seminal monograph, *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*, includes chapters that consider "Research and Policy Agenda" and "Social Policy Innovations and Experiments." In these chapters, Kanter makes a range of recommendations, such as expanding the availability of flextime/flexible working hours, community-based supports and services, and different types of short- and long-term paid leaves of absence.

Many of the preceding chapters in this handbook comment on the extent to which the lives of working families are significantly impacted by employer policies as well as by public policies. These authors understand that the findings of work-family research can contribute to informed decision making by leaders at the workplace as well as by government representatives. Section IV of this handbook introduces readers to the work of several scholars who have stepped outside of traditional academic settings in an effort to link academic inquiries to the work of business leaders and policymakers.

In chapter 29, Ellen Kossek and Alyssa Friede consider different business cases for implementing family-responsive practices. Focusing on the concerns of managers, Kossek and Friede provide a nuanced discussion about employers' perspectives of work-family issues and

different decision-making rationales for responding to them. The authors identify three basic dimensions of employer support for work and family: formal work and family policies and practices, employment conditions and the way jobs are designed, and occupational and organizational cultures. They then pose one of the most important questions related to social change at the workplace: What are the motivations behind employer adoption of work and family policies? Kossek and Friede indicate that there are multiple business cases or management perspectives that help to explain workplace responsiveness to work-life issues and managers' approaches to them, in addition to the more standard argument that work/life policies can add to a firm's competitive advantage. These business cases include: change management orientations, the dual agenda, work/life bundles, high commitment work systems, social exchange, and diversity and employer-of-choice perspectives. Kossek and Friede provide descriptions of each of these approaches, offer examples of scholarship that reflect these management perspectives, and include analytic observations about the strengths and limitations of each. They close with some important and provocative suggestions and also caution academics and managers against making the misassumption that organizations with work and family policies on the books must be family-friendly.

Although it has long been acknowledged that work-family issues are affected by public policy (and therefore relevant to policymaking), few academics are formally trained to move scholarly discourse about work-family issues into the public policy arena. It can be a challenge to mobilize research to advance the development and analysis of law. In chapter 30, "Legislatures, Agencies, Courts, and Advocates: How Laws Are Made, Interpreted, and Modified," Chai Feldblum and Robin Appleberry illuminate the hurdles as well as some of the strategies of policymaking. Using the passage and implementation of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act as a detailed case study, Feldblum and Appleberry connect legal research, legal advocacy, and lawmaking activities. The chapter begins with a reminder of the roles that each of the three branches of government can have in policymaking at both the state and federal levels. The authors then weave together descriptions of the lawmaking process with analytic comments about the opportunities for academics and advocates to participate in the process. A key message embedded in this chapter is that scholars who are interested in contributing to lawmaking need to understand the importance of engaging in persistent conversations with policymakers in all three branches of government. They stress that ongoing dialogue and relationship building is critical when different versions of bills are considered during different congressional sessions, when the bills are discussed during the comment periods for proposed regulations developed by executive branch agencies, and when laws are interpreted by the courts. The authors offer significant insight into the behind-the-scenes politics that influence both the pace and the outcomes of policymaking activities. This chapter concludes with some nuts and bolts assistance offered to scholars not trained in the law about strategies for conducting legal research.

In chapter 31, "Work-Family Interventions & Experiments: Workplaces, Communities, and Society," Lotte Bailyn, Ann Bookman, Mona Harrington, and Tom Kochan present a compelling case for using work redesign as one intervention that can result in meaningful and sustainable change at the workplace. Focusing on projects at the MIT Workplace Center, these authors discuss the strategies they have used to coordinate the goals of traditional research with the priorities of businesses. As a result, their projects advance a dual agenda of creating interventions that simultaneously improve organizational effectiveness *and* the integration of family and personal life. The work of the MIT Workplace Center creatively connects research with action, a synthesis that catalyzes a model for change at three levels: the workplace level, the association level, and the state level. The process that Bailyn, Bookman, Harrington, and Kochan utilize reflects the Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR) model, a method that contextualizes the needs of a specific workforce group in the conditions present

at their workplace. On working families are public solutions" The members of the research the iterative stages of can use virtually every in the experiment (e.g. conducted by the MIT they demonstrate how employers recognize on employees' performance note that the MIT Workplace studies beyond the organizational professional associations ideas for positive social sector.

Brad Harrington and the handbook about Excellence in Work- They start with a basic What are the most appropriate make toward greater instrument developed work-life managers, the unique aspects of of guiding principles principles of Excellence infrastructure, account Harrington and James about organizational organizational change evidence of the potential between the Boston C

Arbitration is and chapter 33, "The Arb Ormiston focus on a su used to resolve content rights, and responsibility ally limited to employ arbitration discourse a The research presented and explores how the The authors contend th and examining the ext places accommodate considerable ambiguity and that different employment interpretation of a leg cent arbitration decision Ormiston outline the a

at their workplace. One of the key assumptions of the CIAR model is that “the issues faced by working families are social, not individual, problems requiring broad social responsibility and public solutions” This CIAR method involves cultivating collaborative relationships between members of the research team, employers, and employees. In the chapter, the authors discuss the iterative stages of interventions based on the CIAR model. They emphasize that researchers can use virtually every interaction as an opportunity for a micro-intervention with their partners in the experiment (e.g., employees and business leaders at the workplace). Drawing on studies conducted by the MIT Workplace Center in the health care sector as well as in other industries, they demonstrate how their involvement as researchers has helped both the employees and employers recognize the negative impact that some taken-for-granted work practices can have on employees’ performance at work and on their lives outside the workplace. It is important to note that the MIT Workplace Center places a premium on disseminating the findings of their studies beyond the organizational boundaries of the workplace to key stakeholders, including professional associations, employee representatives, business groups, and policy leaders. Thus, ideas for positive social change can cascade into different industry sectors and into the public sector.

Brad Harrington and Jacquelyne James continue conversations started in other chapters of the handbook about academic–business leader partnerships in chapter 32, “The Standards of Excellence in Work-Life Integration: From Changing Policies to Changing Organizations.” They start with a basic but complicated question posed by the business leaders themselves: What are the most appropriate and effective measures to chart the progress that organizations make toward greater responsiveness to work/life issues? Harrington and James describe the instrument developed by the Boston College Center for Work & Family in partnership with work-life managers, The Standards of Excellence in Work/Life Integration Index. One of the unique aspects of The Standards of Excellence Index is that it rests on a foundation of guiding principles that address organizational effectiveness through a work/life lens. The principles of Excellence are operationalized in seven elements of the Index: leadership, strategy, infrastructure, accountability, relationship building, communications, and measurement. The Harrington and James chapter illustrates how scholarly theory and constructs, such as theory about organizational learning, can be relevant to practitioners’ interest in promoting effective organizational change. The development and use of The Standards of Excellence Index is evidence of the potential power of practitioner–academic partnerships, such as that established between the Boston College Center for Work & Family and its corporate members.

Arbitration is another approach used to advance family-responsive workplaces. In chapter 33, “The Arbitration of Work-Family Conflicts,” Benjamin Wolkinson and Russell Ormiston focus on a subset of workplaces—unionized workplaces—and explain the processes used to resolve contentious interpretations of employer and employee contractual obligations, rights, and responsibilities. As they point out in the chapter, access to arbitration is virtually limited to employees who are union members (approximately 17 million workers), but arbitration discourse and decisions can resonate beyond the specific organizational confines. The research presented in this chapter offers tremendous insight into the arbitration process and explores how the resolution of arbitration can affect decisions made at the workplace. The authors contend that changing contractual arrangements between workers and employers and examining the extent of conformity to legal mandates will, ultimately, affect how workplaces accommodate family needs. However, Wolkinson and Ormiston reveal that there is considerable ambiguity about the interpretation of specific statutory and regulatory provisions and that different employers may utilize different definitions of legal concepts, such as the interpretation of a legitimate absence from the workplace. In a comprehensive review of recent arbitration decisions concerning parental absences for child-care needs, Wolkinson and Ormiston outline the approach arbitrators use to determine if employers exercise “just cause”

in disciplining employees. This process entails examining factors such as contractual agreements, past practice with other employees, existing laws that are external to the contract, the specifics of particular situations, duties of the employee to act responsibly, past attendance histories, extenuating circumstances, and employer operational needs. But, as much as the authors argue for the potential of arbitration as a means of creating reasonable resolutions to discordant opinions, Wolkinson and Ormiston also consider situations where employees and employers were unable to identify common ground.

The last chapter in this handbook, "Leadership in Action: A Work and Family Agenda for the Future," encourages readers to reflect on the origins of the work-family field as well as consider the future directions of work-family research, policy, and practice. Kathleen Christensen, currently the Director of the Workplace, Workforce and Working Families Program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, was one of the early scholars in the work-family area of study and has had firsthand opportunities to observe how the intricate intersections of the academic and the practice roots of the work-family field have created a healthy tension between *what we know*, *what we need to know*, and *what we do*. It is of particular interest to note the linkages that Christensen makes between the results of research conducted in the 1990s and the possibilities for reaching out to employers and policymakers in the 21st century. Since 1994, Christensen has served as the Foundation's in-house leader in the area of work-family. In that capacity, she has played a key role both in articulating a vision for the work-family area of study and in developing and implementing grant-making strategies that have made it possible for numerous academics to contribute to that vision. This chapter provides commentary and analytic insight into the influential roles that scholars can assume outside of university settings, such as at a national foundation. Christensen's chapter describes her analysis of the evolution and purposive development of the work-family area of study from mid-1990s to the present, and then uses these observations to chart some of the areas that will be needed for continued progress as scholars add their voices and contribute their insights to the work of business leaders and public policymakers.

Each of the chapters in Section IV contributes to the articulation of new types of collaborations between researchers from different disciplines, business practitioners, and policymakers. Ultimately, efforts such as those described in this last section of the handbook will not only increase the insightfulness of the findings of research studies but, in the end, will also increase the relevance of work-family investigations to a range of stakeholders. Thus, this concluding section of the handbook extends the tradition of linking work and family scholarship to social change.

## REFERENCE

- Kanter, R. (1977). *Work and family in the United States: A critical review and agenda for research and policy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

## The Persp

In this chapter, we c  
adopting, and man  
ing work-family is  
together in an ente  
in accomplishing t  
toward maximizing  
take a rational and  
firm and its workfo  
and external enviro  
havior, which is mu  
to understand beha  
interorganizational  
have been viewed a  
more cognizant of t  
management field i  
issues, work and fa

Kossek (2005) r  
be organized into s  
*impact* stream. Res  
of analysis and exa  
and work-life respo  
Research from the  
analysis, with regar  
by various demogr  
gender, age, numbe  
use relates to indivi  
of management str