Health Implications of the Work-Family Challenge:
A Literature Review of Canadian Research

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1.0 **Introduction**

The "work and family challenge" is a key issue facing Canadians as we enter the next century. Issues that stem from profound changes in modern economies, in the structure and functioning of families and in the role of governments confront us as individuals, as family members, as employers, as community members and as citizens (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1998).

These changes have had an enormous impact on family life. Challenges have arisen in addressing the "balance" between work and family responsibilities. The traditional roles of women and men have been brought into question. Concerns have been raised about the capacity of families to provide care for dependants. For many families, issues of time management — coordinating schedules, or simply finding time to meet the demands of work while fulfilling family responsibilities — have been raised. Both men and women are vulnerable to the impact of work and family conflict, although women experience more role overload, more interference from work to family and more interference from family to work (Duxbury et al., 1992b; Pleck, 1985). The balance between work and family life is consistently ranked as important by employees, employers and human resource professionals when addressing practices in the workplace that would create a positive, productive work environment.

There is an increasing body of knowledge about the social and environmental factors that give rise to healthy populations. Many, if not all, of the identified determinants of health — such as income and social status, employment and working conditions, social support networks and the physical environment — can be situated within the ongoing social relations that constitute family life. As such, research that examines the health implications of the work and family "balance" is an important contribution to our understanding of the linkages between a variety of health determinants.

For example, it is important to consider the extent to which stress and health outcomes are related to parents' employment and to unpaid work obligations, such as housework and care for dependants. If parents are highly stressed in their work environments and facing difficulties juggling their time between caring for their families and meeting the demands of work, what is the impact on their mental and emotional health as well as the health of their children? Do families from different socioeconomic strata experience the challenge of work and family differently? Is their health affected differently? What is the impact of balancing work and family on relationships within the family and on the health and well-being of the family? Do different patterns of employment result in different amounts of stress?

2.0 Purpose and Methodology

This research paper is intended to describe the Canadian research relating to work and family — in particular, to the outcomes of stress and health — that has been undertaken over the last decade. The goal is to describe the context of work and family in Canadian society, as reported in Canadian literature, and to specifically examine the impact that the challenge of managing work and family has on the health and well-being of Canadians — both at the individual and at the family level. The literature review involved two major sources of information: published academic research, and published research undertaken by federal and provincial governments. The appropriate databases were searched (see Appendix 1), focussing on "Canadian" literature; this included publications with Canadian content authored by both non-Canadian and Canadian authors and published in both Canadian and non-Canadian journals. Key international studies were also included. The search was limited to documents published over the last decade.

The search strategies were constructed by combining those key words appropriate to each database relating to **work and family** with **stress**, including family stress, personal stress, financial stress, relationship stress, child stress, environmental stress and workplace stress. In addition, the key words **work and family** were combined with **health outcomes**, including emotional health and well-being, mental health and physical health.

3.0 Framework of Analysis

The literature that was identified through this search has been organized into two general content areas: trends relating to work and family issues (Section 4.0), and the interaction of work and family in Canadian society (Section 5.0).

The trends comprised the largest proportion of the literature and described primarily the economic trends influencing the Canadian labour market and families (Section 4.1); the social trends that have been unfolding over the last decade (Section 4.2); and the trends in the role of government in Canadian society, particularly as that role relates to work and family (Section 4.3).

The interaction of work and family describes the phenomenon of the "work-family challenge." This literature identifies the scope of the problem — to what extent does the work-family connection present a challenge to Canadians (Section 5.1)? It goes on to examine the impact of the work-family challenge on individuals (Section 5.2) and on families (Section 5.3). Finally, the literature examines the interplay between the work-family challenge and the community — both the role of social support in reducing the conflict between work and family and the impact of balancing work and family on community participation (Section 5.4).

4.0 Trends in the Canadian Society Relating to Work and Family

The majority of the research reported in Canada focusses on the broad macro forces that shape the lives of Canadians at work and in the family. In particular, the research looks at three important areas: the economy, society and government. In general, this research has focussed on:

- general economic indicators, as well as trends in income, job and workplace characteristics;
- sociodemographic trends, such as changes in the structure of families (including the division of labour), immigration patterns, mobility, and attitudes towards work and family; and
- the changing role of government, including the level and adequacy of services and other community supports.

4.1 Economic Trends

4.1.1 Women in the workforce
The face of the Canadian labour force is changing. Perhaps the most notable trend over the past 30 years has been the large-scale influx of women into the labour force. In 1998, 58% of women over age 25 worked in the paid labour force, making up 45% of the total labour force (Statistics Canada, 1999). The increase in labour force participation has been particularly significant among women with children: in 1995, 72% of mothers with children at home were in the labour force, up from 52% in 1981. This trend is evident even among mothers with young children: two-thirds of mothers with at least one child under age 6 are in the paid labour force (Logan and Belliveau, 1995: 25). In addition, many more mothers are working full-time: 70% were employed full-time during most or all of the weeks they worked in 1990, up from 64% in 1980 (Logan and Belliveau, 1995: 26).

4.1.2 Economic restructuring and jobs
The face of the Canadian economy is also changing. For some, economic restructuring has presented new opportunities; for others, it has caused terrible uncertainty about the stability and predictability of employment.

The 1990s have been characterized by slow economic growth, picking up only after 1997. The rate of unemployment remains stubbornly high, dipping only recently to pre-1989 levels (7.8% in January 1999). Many families have experienced bouts of unemployment — in 1994, at least one family member in 32% of families experienced a period of unemployment (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 57).

Job growth averaged 1.17% per year between 1990 and 1998, while output expanded at 2.1% per year between 1990 and 1997. Almost all of net job growth during this decade is due to self-employment. As well, there has been significant growth in non-standard forms of employment, raising concerns about the quality of jobs created.

Of the jobs that have been created, a growing number are part-time. Between 1991 and 1996, part-time employment grew by 2% annually, whereas full-time employment grew by only 0.9% annually (Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre, 1997: 23). By and large, women continue to be over-represented in part-time work, in large part because of competing responsibilities for family and home.

While children no longer have much influence on whether there are one or two earners in the family, the presence of children does influence the likelihood that women will work part-time (Marshall, 1994). In 1994, 21% of women in dual-earner couples without children worked part-time, compared with 30% among women in dual-earner families with children at home (Charrette, 1995: 10).

Temporary and contract work has also risen in the 1990s, from 5% of paid employees in 1991 to 11% in 1997 (Statistics Canada, 1998c). There has also been an increase in the prevalence of flexible working arrangements: shift work, flextime and telework (Lipsett and Reesor, 1997). While the increase in flexible work arrangements holds out the potential for easing work and family obligations, data indicate that the increase is due in large measure to employer, not employee, preferences (Lipsett and Reesor, 1997: 12).

Job quality is deteriorating for many that do not work in full-time, permanent jobs, and benefits are lacking. While an employer-sponsored pension, health or dental plan covered 60% of employees with permanent or full-time jobs in 1995, these benefits were available to only 20% of non-permanent or part-time workers (Akyeampong, 1997: 50). Since women are more likely to be employed in part-time, temporary or low-wage work, they are less likely to receive non-wage benefits (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 59).

4.1.3 Working hours
Working hours are also becoming more polarized. There are more workers who are working part-time. In addition, full-time workers are working more hours on average, and part-time workers fewer hours. The proportion of people working a standard work week of 35 to 40 hours declined from 65% in 1976 to 54% in 1995. The share of workers working fewer than 35 hours per week increased from 16% to 24%, while those working more than 40 hours per week rose

from 19% to 22% (Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre, 1997: 23). Surveys indicate that concern about job security is one of the reasons employees are working longer hours (Duxbury et al., 1992a).

Only one-third of employees (33%) now hold a "typical" job, one that is full-time, permanent, Monday-to-Friday, nine-to-five (Lipsett and Reesor, 1997: 8).

Most dual-earner couples work a combined work week of between 60 and 89 hours, regardless of the presence of children. About 20% of dual-earner couples work more than 90 hours per week (Charrette, 1995: 9).

4.1.4 Decline in income

Overall, real incomes have been falling over this period, and the rate of poverty — a key measure of income inequality — has remained very high.

During the economic recovery, real incomes have fallen — between 1991 and 1996, real disposable income per person declined by 0.7% per year (Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre, 1997: 23). The average family income has declined as well. In 1990, the national average family income was $57,300 (in 1995 dollars); by 1995, this had fallen to $54,600, a drop of 5% (Rashid, 1998: 54).

4.1.5 Polarization of income

The gap between the incomes of poor families and the incomes of well-off families has grown over the past decade. In 1989, the average income of the richest 10% of families was 9.1 times that of the poorest 10%. In 1996, this gap had widened to 10.2 times (Campaign 2000, 1998: 7).

Growing proportions of the poor are young families with children, while falling proportions are elderly. In 1970, elderly families accounted for 27% of families in the lowest income decile; this proportion dropped to 6% by 1995. Younger families have since become most common in this decile. This proportion increased from 18% in 1970 to 27% in 1995, reflecting in part the disproportionately large growth of single-parent families headed by a female (Rashid, 1999: 14).

The most dramatic increase in the risk of poverty among families with children occurred among two-parent families with only one earner. In 1980, 17% of these families lived in poverty; by 1995, this had risen to 27%, a 65% increase in the risk of poverty. The risk of poverty, however, remains greatest among single-parent families: 53% were poor in 1995 (Frieler, 1998: 21).

Paid employment does not necessarily protect families against poverty. In 1995, more than half of low-income families were in the labour force but remained poor (Frieler, 1998: 23).

4.1.6 Reliance on women's incomes

For many families, dual-earning couples are now an economic necessity in Canada. In 1991, it took 65 to 80 hours of work to sustain a Canadian household. In 1970, it took 45 hours a week (Wolff, 1994).

Therefore, women's incomes are more important than ever to the financial security of the household. In 1995, in nearly half (46%) of all families, the woman's earnings made up between 25% and 49% of family income; in one in four families, the woman contributed half or more of what the family earned (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 53). Without a female partner's earnings, the 1996 low-income rate among dual-earner families would have more than tripled (Statistics Canada, 1998a).

Declining or static family income has been particularly problematic as the cost of raising children has risen. According to the home economics section of Manitoba Agriculture, "the basic goods and services necessary to maintain physical and social well-being" of a child from birth to age 18 was roughly $160,000 in 1998 (Folbre, 1994; Manitoba Agriculture, 1998).

4.2 Social Trends

4.2.1 Families and work

Changes in Canadian families have parallelled changes in the Canadian economy over the past 30 years. The dual-earner family has displaced the traditional family with a male breadwinner and a female homemaker. In 1994, both spouses worked in 7 out of 10 married or common-law couples (under age 65), up significantly from about one-third of couples 30 years ago. Only one in five couples relied on a single male earner in 1994. Even among couples with children under age 7, 70% are dual earners (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 52). In almost half of dual-earner families (48%), both partners worked full-time all year in 1996, marking a steady increase over the past decades (Statistics Canada, 1998b). A significant number of workers are raising children alone: 4% of workers in 1995 were single parents (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 8).

4.2.2 Issues of dependant care

There have been significant demographic changes in the Canadian population — in particular, the aging of the Canadian population — that are raising critical dependant care issues for families. As a result of declining birth rates and a large but temporary increase in the number of births after the Second World War, it is estimated that 20% of Canadians will be over the age of 65 by the year 2021. Many more workers will find themselves caring for aging relatives (Conference Board of Canada, 1994: 4).

As a result of declining fertility rates, these demands of meeting dependant care needs are falling on smaller families. In 1995, the average family size was 3.01, down from 3.67 in 1971 (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997). Therefore, smaller families will increasingly be supporting larger numbers of aged family members. The fact that people are living longer suggests that many more adult children, at increasingly older ages, will have living parents who may need care.

Furthermore, while families are having fewer children in general, young people are delaying family formation and childbirth; for example, the average age of first marriage for women was 26.3 in 1995, roughly 4 years older than in 1961 (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997). As a result, families are more likely to have caring responsibilities for young dependants as well as for older family members.

Added to these demographic changes is the reality that Canadians have become much more mobile. Many Canadian families often live far away from other family members and friends, further complicating their efforts to support each other. We know from the 1996 Census, for example, that one in five Canadians moved a significant distance between 1991 and 1996. Approximately 44% of Canadians live 100 km or more away from their parents (Alvi, 1995: 2).

4.2.3 Families with caregiving responsibilities
We have evidence that families are often called upon to pick up responsibility for the care of their members. According to the 1991 Survey on Aging and Independence, two-thirds of older seniors (over the age of 75) rely on family members for help with housework, cooking and personal care (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 38).

Other estimates of those providing elder care range from 12% to 26%, including those providing assistance with daily activities like shopping and those involved in providing personal care (see Gorey et al., 1992, for U.S. estimates). The 1996 Census found that one in six Canadians (over age 15) provided some care to seniors. Those in the age group 45 to 54 years had the highest proportion of individuals (23%) providing unpaid care to the elderly (Statistics Canada, 1998d). A 1992 Canadian survey of more than 5,000 employees revealed that about one-third of respondents had caregiving responsibilities solely for dependants under 19 years, one-fifth had only elder care responsibilities, and one-quarter had responsibility for both child care and elder care (Canadian Aging Research Network, 1993).

The Conference Board of Canada (1994) estimated that by the year 2000, 77% of workers would have some type of responsibility for elderly relatives.

4.2.4 Women's share of the work
Although men have steadily increased their share of household work, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of responsibility for domestic and caring labour. In 1992, husbands spent on average 18.1 hours per week on household work, compared to 32.5 hours spent by wives (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 41).

Even when both mothers and fathers (aged 25 to 44 years) work full-time, mothers spend nearly two hours more per day doing housework (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 42). Looking specifically at child care, fathers in two-parent families who are employed full-time spend on average 0.9 hours per day looking after their children, while mothers working full-time in the paid labour force spend 1.3 hours per day providing child care (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1997: 42).

4.2.5 Attitudes towards women's roles

Despite the influx of women into the labour market, there remains a great deal of ambivalence among the public about the proper role of women. In 1997, the majority of Canadians — 73% of women and 68% of men — said women should contribute to family income. Yet 51% of women and 59% of men also said that dual-earner families damage preschool children (Ghalam, 1997: 16).

4.3 Trends in the Role of Governments

Just as families and workplaces are changing, so too is the role of governments in our lives. At a time when the dependant care needs of families have risen sharply, the scope of government activity has narrowed substantially.

4.3.1 Results of deficit reduction

Governments across Canada have tackled financial deficit through the 1990s. This endeavour has come at the cost of important supports for families. Funding for key community supports such as child care and home care has not kept pace with demand. Increasingly, these programs are being offered on a fee-recovery basis.

Similarly, spending on income support programs such as employment insurance and social assistance has been substantially cut back, eroding the financial security of many Canadian families. Average transfer payments have declined since 1994, reflecting, in part, an improved economy for some and restrictions in eligibility and benefit levels for others (Statistics Canada, 1998a).

Satisfaction with government performance has declined over the past decade. Canadians are specifically concerned that governments are not listening to their concerns and desires for the future. In November-December 1998, roughly one-third (34%) of Canadians thought that the federal government was doing a good job, while 4 out of 10 (42%) thought that their provincial government was performing well (Ekos Research Associates, 1999: 22). A significant majority of Canadians (72%) continue to feel that governments have lost sight of the needs of average Canadians (Ekos Research Associates, 1999: 32).

4.3.2 Supply of child care

With regard to work and family issues, families are deeply concerned about the supply, quality and cost of child care available in communities. Forty per cent of Canadian children aged 0 to 5 years attended some form of non-parental child care while one or both parents worked or studied in 1994, according to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. These children were in a variety of care arrangements for an average of 27 hours per week. Families continue to rely on non-parental child care as children enter their school-age years (6 to 11 years). One out of four children (26%) were in non-parental child care for some time during the week; 10% of these were cared for by a sibling, whereas about 3% looked after themselves while their parents were at work

or study (analysis of 1994-95 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth data by Canadian Council on Social Development).

Demand for child care services — especially licensed spaces for infants and school-age children — continues to outstrip supply. Less than one-third of the 1.5 million children under age 12 who needed child care in 1994 were in regulated programs, including home-based child care facilities (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1997). Parents have difficulty finding suitable child care. Often parents are forced to settle for an arrangement that is not wholly suitable or put together a patchwork system of care that tends to fall apart (Duxbury and Higgins, 1994: 31). The cost of available child care is also an issue, especially for families who do not qualify for subsidies and simply cannot find or afford licensed care to cover their working hours (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1998).

4.3.3 Supply of health and community support services
Many Canadians are worried that the health system and existing community supports are not up to the task of caring for a growing population of seniors. Recent cutbacks in home care and the loss of many long-term and acute care hospital beds have shifted the onus of responsibility for caring back onto families and communities (Canadian Home Care Association, 1998). Although home care varies across the provinces, the public home care system is generally being taxed. Home care costs have grown by more than 20% a year in each of the past two decades. It is estimated that home care costs reached $2.1 billion in 1998 (Coyte and McKeever, 1999: A15). Professional services remain free, but most provinces now charge user fees for support services (i.e., homemaking services), and non-profit/volunteer organizations are straining under the demand for service. Although for-profit alternatives are springing up in many provinces, questions remain as to their affordability and quality. There are serious concerns about the ability of families to take on home care responsibilities (Coyte and McKeever, 1999).

5.0 The Interaction of Work and Family: Key Issues

The second major area of research that has been reported in Canada is that which describes the interaction of work and family. The division in many families between men and women, between the world of paid work and the world of caring and domestic labour, has been impacted by recent economic and social changes. While historically it was assumed that the household could make ends meet by expanding or contracting women's unpaid labour within the home, the dramatic increase in women's labour force participation has undercut this arrangement. Today's families are stressed by the pressures of work and family demands. At the same time, governments have reduced community services and supports over the past decade. While many businesses recognize that their employees are leading increasingly stressful lives, progress has been slow to implement family-friendly work policies. Taken together, the confluence of social and economic trends has challenged individuals' and families' abilities to cope with the demands of integrating work and family life.

Much of this discussion in Canada (and elsewhere) centres on the "work-family conflict" as the key variable that links the world of paid work and the world of the family. More specifically, recent papers make the distinction between the extent to which work interferes with family life (work-to-family conflict) and the extent to which family life interferes with work (family-to-work conflict). In both instances, conflict is understood to arise when an individual has to perform multiple roles, such as worker, spouse and parent. Each of these roles imposes demands on their incumbents, requiring time, energy and commitment. The cumulative demands of multiple roles (as caregivers, as workers, as community members) can lead to two types of conflict: conflict arising from overload and role spillover (too much to do, too little time), and conflict arising from interference or schedule incompatibility (conflicting demands between different activities, at the same time, in different locations) (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998: 14-15). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) talk about these two types of role conflict as "strain-based" and "time-based" predictors of work-family conflict.

Stone (1994: 35) offers a somewhat broader definition of work-family conflict, one that includes the strain that occurs when individuals take on a variety of roles — as family members, as workers and as community members. He suggests that "job/family conflict results from the interplay between work-related sources of stress and supports, family stresses and supports, and the extent to which community-based resources such as child care services effectively meet individual and family needs."

Researchers have approached this topic in a number of ways. Work and family studies have moved from an initial preoccupation with the separate worlds of work and family, along with efforts to identify the spillover from work to family and from family to work (Pleck, 1979), to the most recent research, which attempts to illustrate the interactive effects (both direct and indirect) of these worlds and other life roles. Drawing on quantitative survey research, newer research attempts to establish the interconnections — the feedback loops — between work and family (Bronneberg, 1996; Chow and Berheide, 1988; Frone et al., 1992, 1997; Hammer et al., 1997; Voydanoff, 1988a). Personal well-being, for instance, which is influenced by characteristics of life off the job and by workplace characteristics, in turn influences employee outcomes at work (i.e., job performance and retention) (Bond et al., 1997: 18-19). Case studies, often historical in nature, bring greater nuance to quantitative studies, highlighting the fact that there is nothing natural or inherent about work and family conflict, that specific historical circumstances have come together to foster conflict that reflects concrete differences in work situations, personal resources, cultural traditions and the like (Coontz and Parson, 1997).

This literature review attempts to summarize some of the key findings of the latest research on work and family, identifying the consequences of conflict for individuals and families. For the most part, this work looks at *individual outcomes*. The focus on individuals highlights the importance of *identity*. In different ways, these studies reveal that an individual's or family's ability to cope is directly related to the resources they have (or do not have) at their disposal. Who you are, where you live, what values you hold, the size of your bank account — all of these factors affect the success of balancing work and family. For instance, we know that women feel work-family

pressures most acutely (see Duxbury et al., 1994; Pleck, 1985). Gender influences the ability to balance work and family in a variety of ways. Not only does it act as a direct predictor of work-family conflict, but it may also act as a moderator of conflicts: how it is perceived, what coping skills are called for and how the conflict is manifested. Similarly, it is important to recognize the relevance of racial and cultural diversity in Canada; while the studies we review below tend to focus on the general responses of men and women, work-family conflict has different meanings in different cultural contexts.

4.1 Work-Family Conflict: Scope of the Problem

The majority of the literature regarding work-family conflict focusses on the scope of the problem. A number of studies over the past decade have revealed that many Canadians have difficulty balancing work and family. In a large survey of employees, the Conference Board of Canada found that almost two-thirds indicated that juggling their various roles was at least "somewhat difficult" to accomplish. One in five employees stated that it was "difficult" or "very difficult." Almost four in five reported experiencing stress or anxiety resulting from work-family conflict (MacBride-King, 1990a).

A 1992-93 study of 27,000 Canadian workers found that over one-third of employees perceived high levels of work-family conflict. For both men and women, parents experienced significantly greater work-family conflict than non-parents. Forty per cent of working mothers and 25% of working fathers experienced high levels of work-family conflict (Duxbury and Higgins, 1996; Duxbury et al., 1994). Women report significantly more work-family conflict than men, regardless of job type, work sector or parental status. There are several reasons for this. First, many women who are employed take on work obligations with no concomitant decrease in family responsibilities and thus experience increased role overload. Second, several studies have found that women's work and family demands are simultaneous, while men's are sequential. For example, a mother may be called at work regarding a sick child (simultaneous demands); on the other hand, unless the demands are urgent, the father can fulfil family role obligations after work hours (sequential demands) (Duxbury et al., 1992b).

Managing family time, or finding enough time to do all of the things required by families, was also a problem. Half of all parents reported difficulty in managing their family time (Duxbury and Higgins, 1996; Duxbury et al., 1994). Women have significantly more difficulty managing family time than men. Parents experience significantly more difficulty managing family time than non-parents, mothers more so than fathers. Both men and women in managerial and professional positions have greater difficulties managing their family time than do technical or clerical employees (Duxbury et al., 1992b).

A more recent study of more than 5,000 Saskatchewan workers discovered that half of respondents reported high role overload. Twenty-six per cent experienced high interference from work and family (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998).

These findings are consistent with those of the 1992 General Social Survey, which found that a significant proportion of Canadians experience some degree of time stress. Women were consistently more time stressed than men, regardless of age or stage in life. About 45% of women and 41% of men had some degree of time stress. Sixteen per cent of women and 12% of men had severe time stress. Time crunch stress was highest for those aged 25 to 44, individuals who are in their prime childbearing and childrearing years. About 53% of these adults were time crunched, with 19% reporting severe time crunch stress. In particular, parents in dual-earner families reported the highest levels of time stress. About 57% of these couples reported feeling time crunched, while 22% were severely time crunched. However, there was a striking difference in time stress levels between men and women in these relationships. Over 28% of women employed full-time and in dual-earner families were severely time crunched, compared with less than 16% of their male counterparts (Frederick, 1993: 8). The presence of young children contributed to feelings of time crunch stress among women, but not among men. Among women employed full-time and in dual-earner families, 34% of those whose youngest child was under age 10 were severely time crunched, compared with 25% of those with only older children or without children. In contrast, similar proportions of men working full-time in dual-earner families whose youngest child was under age 10 (16%) and other men in dual-earner families (15%) were highly stressed for time.

Similarly, the National Child Care Survey found that two-thirds of parents reported moderate or severe tension on a daily basis ("feeling tired or overloaded because of your job" and "difficulty maintaining a balance between job demands and family responsibilities") (Statistics Canada and Health and Welfare Canada, 1992).

Work-family conflict has been clearly shown to be more prevalent among working parents than among employees without children. In addition, the age of the youngest child in the family, whether the working parent had a full-time job, marital status, financial security and the kinds of child care used while the respondent was on the job were all factors that contributed to work-family tension (Galinksy et al., 1996; Lero et al., 1993; MacBride-King, 1990a). The amount and scheduling of working time and job demands are also strongly linked to work-family conflict. Research has shown that these factors contribute additively to such conflict (Burke, 1988; Voydanoff, 1988a).

4.2 Impact Work-Family Conflict on the Individual's Health and Well Being

Previous Canadian research has attempted to link the conflict between work and family to a variety of individual outcomes. These include health and well-being, family and personal relationships, and life satisfaction, as well as employee outcomes, such as job performance, absenteeism and commitment to employer (Duxbury et al., 1992b). The review of the literature reveals a number of key issues:

- Work-family conflict, resulting from role overload and work-to-family/family-to-work interference, is associated with poor mental and physical health.

- Women continue to spend more time than men, in total, on work and family activities and experience higher levels of stress and depression related to work-family conflict. This is especially true if they have young children.

- Stress and poor health outcomes are related not only to problems in balancing work and family, but also to caring work responsibilities.

- An individual's control over work and family-related demands influences his or her experience of conflict and its negative consequences.

- Work-family conflicts can restrict job and personal opportunities.

5.2.1 The work-family challenge and mental and physical health

Over the last decade, Canadian research has focussed primarily on the link between work-family conflict and stress and on the ramifications of high stress levels for individual physical and mental health. The health consequences of stress documented in the literature include elevated diastolic blood pressure, serum cholesterol level and heart rate, as well as gastrointestinal disorders and cardiovascular disease. Excessive stress can also produce dysfunctional outcomes in the work and family domains (Duxbury et al., 1992b; Higgins et al., 1993).

In 1990, the Conference Board of Canada published a study of more than 7,000 public and private sector employees (MacBride-King, 1990a). They found that one in five employees regarded the juggling of their various roles as "difficult" or "very difficult." Almost four in five reported experiencing stress or anxiety as a result of having to manage both work and home responsibilities, and over one-quarter said that they felt "a lot" or "a moderate degree" of stress. Gender, marital status, type and degree of dependant care responsibilities and spouse's employment status all played a role in the stress individuals felt in coping with their various demands. A greater proportion of women than men reported experiencing at least some stress, and women were about twice as likely to report higher levels of stress. Married, separated, divorced or widowed persons were more likely than their single counterparts to report stress. Having additional responsibilities at home and whether or not one is a parent of a young child were strong determinants of stress. Although both single-parent and two-parent families reported experiencing at least some stress as a result of managing work and home, a significantly greater proportion of single parents (54%) reported feeling "a lot" or "a moderate degree" of stress than did dual parents (33%).

In Duxbury and Higgins' (1998) study of Saskatchewan workers, the authors looked at a number of different indicators of mental health: job stress, perceived stress, burnout and depression. Thirty per cent of workers reported high levels of job stress, compared with the 20% of respondents reporting high job stress in a similar national study conducted by Duxbury, Higgins and Lee in 1992-93. Managers and professionals are significantly more likely to experience high levels of job

stress (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). In addition, job stress is related to workplace flexibility — if workers have high workplace flexibility, 22% have high job stress; if workers have low workplace flexibility, 42% have high job stress (Duxbury et al., 1992b; Higgins et al., 1993).

These authors have concluded that high work stress is linked to poor physical and mental health, high family stress, marital conflict, poor performance of work and family roles, and low work morale, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Duxbury et al., 1992b; Higgins et al., 1993).

Individuals who are exposed to stressors may not necessarily perceive the situation as stressful. Personal resources significantly affect the way in which people interpret the environment and respond to stressors. Effective coping (e.g., by modifying the stressful environment) and the mobilization of social support from the work or family domain can also reduce perceived stress and can directly improve well-being. In Duxbury and Higgins' (1998) study, over 50% of workers reported high levels of perceived stress. Women and employees in non-professional positions were significantly more likely to report high levels of perceived stress. That is, while professionals reported more stress related directly to the responsibilities of their jobs, non-professionals *perceived* that they had more stress, which is related to such factors as lower levels of job mobility and higher job insecurity. The higher perceived stress levels for women are consistent with previous documentation of higher levels of role overload and role interference and greater responsibilities reported by women in the study.

Duxbury and Higgins (1998) also studied depressed mood. One-third of respondents reported high levels of depressed mood, 43% had moderate levels of depressed mood and 22% had low levels of depressed mood. Women in this sample reported significantly more depressed feelings than did men. Non-professionals were also more likely to report high levels of depressed mood. This is not surprising, since 71% of the non-professionals were women. This is also consistent with higher levels of stress, role overload and role interference characterizing the employees in this group.

Work-family conflict impacts not only mental health, but physical health as well. U.S. research has shown that it is an important causal factor in physical problems such as elevated blood pressure and serum cholesterol levels, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular disease, allergies and migraines (Schlussel et al., 1992). Less work has been done in Canada regarding this issue. In the Saskatchewan study, workers experiencing work-family conflict were also more likely to report poor health and to have visited a doctor in the three months prior to the study (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). Brisson et al. (1999) found that the combination of high-stress work and childrearing responsibilities results in a higher incidence of high blood pressure among women.

5.2.2 The impact on women

Studies have repeatedly confirmed that women are much more likely than men to experience work-family conflict — specifically, role overload, work-to-family interference and family-to-work interference. Not only is gender a direct predictor of the sources of conflict, it influences how conflict is perceived, what coping skills are used to address problems and how the conflict is in fact manifested (Higgins et al., 1994). This has been attributed to a number of factors, including the

greater number of hours that women continue to devote to paid and unpaid labour compared with men and expectations about women's primary role in caring for family and home (Davies and McAlpine, 1998; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Gutek et al., 1991). It has also been linked to the type and level of demands that women face at home and at work, the amount of control they have over these demands (Karasek, 1979) and whether they are parenting alone.

Not all researchers agree about the importance of gender, however, as it relates to stress, depression and work-family conflict. Frone et al. (1996), for instance, argue that both fathers and mothers experience depression, poor health and heavy alcohol consumption in situations when work interferes with family life and family life interferes with work. What this study finds, though, is that women are more strongly affected by the interference imposed by work on family, while men are more adversely affected by family life interfering with work (Frone et al., 1996; Loscocco, 1997). This point is consistent with research that finds that work-family conflict tends to hold different meanings for women and men. Men and women tend to hold different views of work-parent conflicts (the value of spending more time with children, for example) and of their own performance as parents and spouses (Simon, 1995).

5.2.3 The impact of caring work
Poor mental and physical health is not solely confined to workers juggling the demands of work and family. Another body of work clearly illustrates the link between symptoms such as depression and caring work. Women who have high-intensity caring roles (i.e., single parents) are prone to poor health (Guberman, 1988; Schofield et al., 1997; Stephens et al., 1997). Conversely, women who participate in paid activity have better health. The "well-worker effect" has been documented in Canadian and international research (Davies and McAlpine, 1998; Haavio-Mannila, 1986; Lennon and Rosenfield, 1992; Reviere and Eberstein, 1992; Ross et al., 1990; Simon, 1995). This work suggests that women who work in the paid labour force may well be subject to poor mental and physical health as a result of the strain involved in balancing work and family, but that, overall, they tend to enjoy better health over the long term than women who are not in the paid labour force. A recent Ontario longitudinal study found that stay-at-home mothers, whether married or single, reported more symptoms of depression than their counterparts who juggled outside jobs and heavy family demands. This is true even of married mothers who define themselves as "homemakers" as opposed to "unemployed" mothers. Employed women reported significantly lower rates of depression and distress scores than did women who work in the home or who are unemployed. Among single women, the highest scores were among those who defined themselves as homemakers. Among married mothers, the highest distress scores were among those who reported themselves as unemployed (Davies and McAlpine, 1998).

5.2.4 Individual control
The literature indicates that conflict does not stem just from individual circumstances; it is also associated with individuals' work and family-related demands and the amount of control they have over those demands. Consequently, workers employed in non-standard forms of employment and low-wage jobs are much more likely to experience conflict and its negative consequences than those with highly skilled, financially secure employment.

Individual control over one's actions at work, at home and in the community has been identified as key in much of this work. Research by Karasek (1979) has suggested that workers' stress levels are associated with both the number of demands they have as well as the amount of control they feel they have over those demands. Karasek's "job demands perceived control model" posits that two sets of conditions are stressful: those in which the demands on employees are high but their ability to control the situation is low; and those in which the demands of the job are low and control is low also (dead-end work). Conversely, employees can cope with work and family demands if they have the resources and authority to effect change (Karasek, as cited in Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). Control over the timing of employment or choice regarding child care, for instance, fosters individual well-being, whereas lack of control has been linked to poor mental and physical health (Duxbury et al., 1994; Lennon and Rosenfield, 1992). Davies and McAlpine (1998) found that there was a strong negative relationship between perceived control and distress, such that higher levels of perceived control are associated with lower levels of distress.

Not surprisingly, the degree of control that people exercise over their lives is closely linked with the resources that they have at their disposal. Managers or highly educated employees tend to have greater control over their working lives than non-professionals or blue collar workers. While workers in these positions experience high work demands, they are also in a position to negotiate working conditions. Perceived control over the work situation acts as a buffer, reducing the negative consequences of work-family conflict (Bond et al., 1997; Voydanoff, 1988b). The ultimate expression of control is being able to leave an untenable situation for another job. Those with little economic security cannot always afford to exercise their right to exit.

Control, however, is not just an issue for the workplace. The ability to exercise choice within and beyond the home is equally relevant to efforts to balance work and family. Likewise, these choices stem from an individual's and a family's resources: time, money and power. A woman with earnings is in a better position to negotiate a more equitable division of domestic labour or even a voice in household decision-making (Hertz, 1986; McFarlane et al., 1998; Pahl, 1989). An economically secure family can afford additional home care for an elderly relative. It is precisely these types of negotiations within and between individuals and families and work that we need to know more about. How do they negotiate a balance between work and family? What resources do they draw upon? What constraints do they face?

5.2.5 Job and personal opportunities

As seen in the above discussion, high work-family conflict takes its toll on individual health and well-being in a variety of ways. In addition, it can carry very high job opportunity costs as well as personal costs. Employees with heavy dependant care responsibilities often report that they are thwarted in their career ambitions because they are not in the same position to take on activities that can promote their careers, such as taking job-related courses after hours, taking on extra projects or extra hours, going on business trips or even accepting promotions. Almost one-third of respondents in a Conference Board of Canada survey reported that their caring responsibilities limited job advancement (MacBride-King, 1990b).

Similarly, a study by the Canadian Aging Research Network (1993) found that survey respondents with dependant care responsibilities were five to seven times more likely to report job opportunity costs associated with caregiving. They were even more likely to report that caring responsibilities cut into their personal time, resulting in reduced volunteer activity, personal leisure, continuing education, socializing, housework and sleep.

5.1 Impact on Work-Family Conflict on the Family's Health and Well Being

The consequences of work-family conflict are not just confined to the individual workers who are struggling to meet competing demands on their time and energy. Long hours spent at work are felt by all members of the family, as well as by employers and others in the community.

Furthermore, not all families or households are affected in the same way. The experience of work-family conflict in single-parent families, for instance, will differ from the experience in two-parent families. Similarly, the perception and experience of conflict in families that subscribe to a strict sexual division of labour will be quite different from those in families in which men have taken on more domestic and caring labour. That said, four overarching issues touch all families:

- Work-family conflict affects family and marital relationships.

- Women's participation in paid labour has resulted in men assuming greater responsibility for unpaid labour. However, women continue to be responsible for a disproportionate share of domestic and caring labour.

- New Canadian research shows that the key issue for healthy child development is the availability of quality care for the child, rather than the employment status of the mother.

- While lack of quality care for dependants is a critical issue for all families, it is especially so for those struggling to make ends meet.

5.3.1 Marital and family relationships

High levels of work-family conflict negatively affect family and marital satisfaction. Research illustrates that work is much more likely to interfere with family life than vice versa.

Competing demands of work and family take their toll on individual family members and the family as a whole. Workers, for a variety of reasons, often sacrifice hours with family to accommodate demanding jobs, particularly in instances of job insecurity. Not surprisingly, this type of conflict influences family and marital relationships (Frone and Rice, 1987; Lambert, 1990; Matthews et al., 1996; Sears and Galambos, 1992).

Duxbury and Higgins (1998) reported that 4 out of 10 workers claim that the demands of work often (negatively) influenced the hours spent with a spouse/partner and with children. Managers and parents were more likely to report negative spillover from work to family, as measured by reduced time spent with spouse/partner, time spent with children, time spent in leisure and time spent in

volunteer activity. These findings are supported by the 1992 General Social Survey, in which 32% (equal proportion of men and women) stated that they were worried that they did not spend enough time with their family and friends (Frederick, 1993: 7).

The research by Duxbury and Higgins (1998) and others highlights the degree to which work interferes with family life. Indeed, several studies indicate that work tends to interfere much more frequently with family than vice versa (Frone et al., 1992; Leiter and Durup, 1996; Pleck, 1979). Loscocco (1997) agrees that this is especially true among women. Together, these findings confirm the importance of distinguishing between work-to-family and family-to-work conflict when investigating the reciprocal relations between work and family (Frone et al., 1997). This has implications for policies and programming.

5.3.2 Hours in paid and unpaid labour
Another interesting facet of intra-family relations that has been studied in the work-family literature is the ramification of conflict for the division of labour in the home. Although women in dual-income families are clearly working longer hours at home and at work, men are starting to increase their hours of domestic and caring labour. In particular, time use data reveal that men are increasingly involved in child care. Men are also as likely as women to report that work demands interfere with their family lives (Duxbury and Higgins, 1996).

While many men are changing their patterns of domestic labour, they are not necessarily doing so willingly. Canadian research suggests that men are more likely than women to say that work negatively affects sharing of family responsibilities; women, on the other hand, are more likely to feel that their work situation has a positive impact on the sharing of family responsibilities (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998; McFarlane et al., 1998). This finding suggests that one group of men (typically those who have historically pursued their careers unhindered by responsibility for domestic or caring tasks) may view a more equitable division of household work as negative or a source of stress (see Frone and Rice, 1987). Conversely, women may see work-family conflict as a means to a positive end, in that it can lead to a renegotiation of the division of domestic and caring labour. Individual situations in this instance are clearly related to cultural attitudes about the appropriate sexual division of labour and the relative balance of power and responsibility within specific relationships (Coontz and Parson, 1997). That said, a more equitable division of domestic and caring labour, and spousal support more generally, has been shown to mediate the negative relationship between work and family conflict and marital adjustment (Burley, 1995; Hochsfield, 1989).

5.3.3 The impact on children
While many studies look at the consequences of work-family conflict for individual workers and for employers, attention is increasingly being focussed on the consequences for children. In this regard, employment is critical for the well-being of children. The impact of family poverty on children is unequivocally negative. Additionally, research points to the importance of parents spending time with their children in order to provide the emotional and social support that they need for healthy development (Hochschild, 1997; Mackin, 1997; Mattox, 1991).

With the influx of women into the labour market, the debate about child development has become heated. Much of this debate has focussed on the contentious issue of working mothers. As stated above, the 1994-95 General Social Survey revealed that 59% of men and 51% of women agreed, or strongly agreed, that a preschool child is likely to suffer if both parents are employed. At the same time, 59% of men and 67% of women also agreed or strongly agreed that an employed mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay (Ghalam, 1997: 16).

While a variety of studies have examined the impact of working mothers on children, few have examined the impact of paternal labour force participation. This would seem to suggest that there is something inherently wrong with women who work in the labour force. In fact, it is an economic necessity, and reality, for most families.

In Canada, new research based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth reconfirms previous work that highlights the critical importance of parents spending quality time with their children. Children who experience higher levels of "parental engagement" have fewer behavioural disorders and difficulties in school. However, parental engagement is *not* strongly related to the mother's employment status (although it does appear to be related to the child's age) (Cook and Willms, 1998: 2). The issue for children, then, is *quality* care — at home and in other settings, like child care. Studies have shown that participation in high-quality child care, for example, increases children's linguistic, cognitive and social skills; the benefits for low-income children are particularly notable (Kohen and Hertzman, 1998: 1).

This is not to say that the issue of working parents is not an important child development issue. Paid employment *per se* is not associated with negative child outcomes. However, the stresses related to balancing work and family — the financial deficit and time deficit — do affect children (Hochschild, 1997). A child living in a family in which one or both parents are unemployed, for instance, is clearly at risk of negative outcomes, despite the fact that a parent is in the home on a full-time basis. A child growing up in a family that does not have reliable, affordable child care may also face developmental challenges. The research is conclusive on the point that families need assistance today in balancing these demands, to foster the most secure and caring environment possible in which to raise healthy children.

5.3.4 Care for dependants

Providing quality care for dependants contributes to the work-family challenge. Simply stated, people cannot come to work, or focus on the tasks at hand, unless their dependants are cared for. Difficulties in arranging dependant care is not just an issue for working families; it is very much a business issue, as those employees with the most difficulties also experience more frequent work interruptions and higher levels of absenteeism (Johnson, 1994; MacBride-King, 1990a). One Canadian study found that elder care involvement was significantly related to interference with work, especially for women. Among women, family interference with work was related to job dissatisfaction and absenteeism; among men, it was related to job costs and absenteeism (Gignac et al., 1996).

Galinsky and Stein (1990) note four sources of stress concerning both child care and dependant care in general: 1) it is hard to find; 2) some arrangements are more satisfactory than others; 3) employees are often forced to put together a patchwork of arrangements that tends to fall apart; and 4) dependant care is expensive, placing families under great financial stress. All of these sources of stress have been compounded recently, as community supports and services have been cut back or have not kept pace with the growth in demand.

There is evidence that families struggle to find good child care and elder care. Available data indicate that the supply of child care in Canada is inadequate to meet the care needs of families with pre-school-age and school-age children. Similarly, families have difficulty finding elder care options in the community — particularly if family members live at a distance from one another, as is often the case (MacBride-King, 1990a). In sum, most employees who provide care for dependants feel that they have little control over dependant care. Duxbury and Higgins (1998) found that families struggle with the cost of care and are particularly challenged when it comes to finding emergency care arrangements, especially in smaller communities. Dependant care is a perennial source of stress in the lives of working families, one that is key to job, family and life satisfaction. This is especially true among women (Burke, 1988).

4.1 Interplay of Work-Family Conflict with Community

The study of community supports is not well documented in the existing research on work and family issues, with the exception of specific supports like child care and elder care. This literature review has revealed the following overall findings:

- Social support is very important.

- Community supports are needed to help families cope at home and in the workplace. Recent cutbacks in publicly funded supports have shifted additional caring responsibilities onto families and compounded difficulties in securing needed supports.

- Other forms of community involvement, related to leisure activities and volunteering, are also affected when balancing work and family.

3.0.1 Social Support

Social support at home, at work and from friends and extended family has been linked to improved health and well-being, healthy family functioning, improved employee outcomes and reduced work-family conflict. Individuals and families draw upon extended family and friends for support in their personal lives and their work lives. Social support of this kind has been identified as serving as a direct source of health and well-being and as a buffer to the negative effects of caregiving, work and family role strain (Cohen and Wills, 1995; Hobfoll, 1988; Lechner, 1993).

Looking specifically at work and family studies, recent research has demonstrated the positive value of social support in the workplace and at home. A supportive manager, for instance, has been

found to reduce the incidence of work-to-family conflict (MacBride-King, 1990b). Similarly, the support of a spouse and other family members mediates family-to-work conflict (Adams et al., 1996). While there is an ongoing debate about the nature of the relationship between social support and well-being in the presence of stress, various studies have concluded that diverse social networks contribute to well-being (McMullin and Marshall, 1996). In particular, women draw upon social support at home and at work as a coping strategy in dealing with conflict (Greenglass, 1993).

3.0.2 Community supports

The availability and quality of community supports, including dependant care services, are critical to the efforts of all families juggling work, family and community demands. Current social, economic and government trends have created tremendous pressure on the community sector and, by extension, on the families who rely upon these supports. Demands for supports have never been higher, according to front-line workers and community planners, while budgetary cutbacks at all levels of government have precipitated a scaling back and consolidation of community supports — everything from recreational opportunities for children to adult day programs to public transportation. The health and viability of communities are likewise a concern for business — directly, as they affect their base of economic activity, and indirectly, as they affect the well-being of their workers and their families.

There are still relatively few studies of the consequences of cutbacks in community supports for Canadians and their families. While families have always shouldered the lion's share of responsibility for domestic and caring labour, the public-private boundary has shifted again. Despite assertions about the need to bridge the "separate spheres" of work, family and community, these actions work to reinforce existing boundaries.

Studies that look at the restructuring of health and social services make the point that the impacts of these trends are felt mainly by women who serve as formal caregivers in the workplace and as informal caregivers at home. A study of health care restructuring in Quebec found that the transfer of aspects of care delivery from health facilities to patients' homes has resulted in greater responsibilities for relatives or close friends, the vast majority of whom are women. These volunteer caregivers must provide a growing and increasingly complex range of treatments. This has had repercussions in terms of their financial security, their health and general well-being (stress, anxiety, insecurity and exhaustion) and their personal, family and professional lives. Restructuring and cutbacks have also had a direct impact on the quality of care provided: caregivers are overworked, and patients' relatives are not always qualified to deliver, or capable of delivering, the necessary care (Côté et al., 1998; Coyte and McKeever, 1999). At a time when the population is aging and living longer, dependant care needs are on the rise. At the same time, the hours of paid employment have increased. Therefore, families need more assistance, rather than less, in balancing work and family.

3.0.3 Other community involvement

Much of the work and family literature has focussed on concerns with work in the paid labour force and at home. Yet non-work responsibilities take many forms. Work-family conflict can stem from the competing demands of paid work and volunteering, leisure or even friendship.

To read the literature on work and family, one gets the sense that people shuttle back and forth between work and home on an endless treadmill. Yet people live their lives in a broader world of friends, extended family, community activities, leisure and recreation. Just as work-family conflict influences the worlds of family and paid employment, it similarly affects the world of friends and community. While community demands can serve as a source of conflict (role overload; community-to-work or community-to-family interference), more often than not the obligations of these broadly defined community activities are sacrificed when time is tight and stress is high.

The recent Canadian survey of volunteering indicated that while the proportion of Canadian volunteering has increased slightly over the last 10 years, the number of hours that Canadians are giving has decreased (Hall et al., 1998). While there is not a great deal of research into this area, existing survey and anecdotal evidence reveals that individuals tend to cut back on social, leisure and community activities in order to cope with high levels of work-family conflict (Frederick, 1993; Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). People give up going to the gym or just getting out to visit friends as often as they would like. This has consequences for the individuals involved, in terms of social support, health and well-being. But it also has consequences for community groups, such as sports teams or local food banks, who depend on volunteers. Work-family conflict creates a vicious circle in this way: individuals cut back on community activities and friendships in order to accommodate heavy demands at work or at home, which, in turn, undercuts the supports that they need — not only to balance work and family, but to lead healthy, happy lives. The consequences of work-family conflict on community clearly demand more research.

1.06 Summary

This literature review has found that issues relating to the "work and family challenge" have had a considerable focus in the last 10 years in Canadian research and the resulting literature. The literature documents that this is an important issue in the lives of Canadians, and the trends demonstrate that it will continue to be an important issue as we enter the next century.

The research in Canada over the last 10 years has focussed on the following main areas:

- the social, economic and, to a lesser degree, government context of the work-family challenge;
- the scope of the issues related to work and family;
- the impact of the work-family challenge on stress;
- the impact of the work-family challenge on health and well-being outcomes relating to
- the individual and the family; and
- the interplay of work and family and the community.

The majority of the research in Canada has focussed on the context of the work-family challenge and the scope of the problem. The majority of outcome studies have examined stress; few have examined health and well-being outcomes, and even fewer have looked at the interplay with the community.

Furthermore, most of the research on work and family has regarded the spheres of work and families in isolation, as two separate entities. They have been examined and analysed apart. Far less work has been done to examine and explore the nature and importance of the relationship between work and family and how individuals' activities at work and family relationships interact and affect each other. This kind of analysis will be increasingly important in order to craft policy and program responses that foster individual and social well-being in the face of the often-conflicting obligations of work and family.

There have been many descriptions in the literature regarding the economic, social and government context for the work and family challenge. Significant changes have taken place over the last 10 years with regard to the labour force participation of Canadians, the economy of Canada, the demographics of our population and the role of government.

The Canadian labour force is changing dramatically. One of the most striking trends has been the increased participation of women, including women with children, in the labour force. This, perhaps, has been one of the most significant contributors to the "work-family challenge." In addition, there have been significant changes in the Canadian economy. There has been growth in non-standard forms of employment. In particular, there have been increases in part-time employment, temporary work and contract work — especially among women. This, in turn, impacts on benefits. Finally, the hours of work have become more polarized — with full-time workers working more hours on average, and part-time workers fewer hours.

What has been the resultant impact on the income of families? Real incomes have fallen. The rate of poverty has remained very high, and child poverty has increased. Growing proportions of the poor are young families with children, while falling proportions are elderly. The incomes of women have become crucial for family economic security.

The structure of the family is also changing. The dual-earner family is now the norm — in 1994, 70% of couples with children under age 7 were dual earners. The size of the family is shrinking, owing to the declining fertility rate. The Canadian population is aging. In addition, Canadians are becoming more mobile, so that family members are often dispersed across the country. This raises critical dependant care issues for families, which impact on their work life. And this is further compounded by the changes in the role of governments in our lives. At a time when the dependant care needs of families have risen sharply, the scope of government activity has narrowed substantially. Families are called upon to pick up more responsibility for the care of their members.

In Canadian society, in spite of participation in the paid labour force, women do most of the unpaid work and are responsible for most of the domestic and caring labour. Public opinion is ambivalent

about women's roles — while the majority feel that women should contribute to family income, more than half feel that dual-earner families damage preschool children.

What is the impact of all of these changes? A number of Canadian studies have revealed that many Canadians have difficulty balancing work and family. For example, the Conference Board of Canada found that almost two-thirds of employees reported that juggling their various roles was at least somewhat difficult to accomplish. One in five employees stated that it was "difficult" or "very difficult" (MacBride-King, 1990a). Another survey found that 40% of working mothers and 25% of working fathers experienced high levels of work-family conflict, and that half of parents reported difficulty in managing their family time (Duxbury and Higgins, 1996; Duxbury et al., 1994). In a more recent study of more than 5,000 Saskatchewan workers, half of respondents reported high role overload — they had too much to do in too little time (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998).

The literature has identified that there are a number of factors that contribute to work-family conflict: the presence of children, the age of the youngest child in the family, full-time versus part-time employment, single-parent status, the financial security of the family and the kinds of child care used. The amount and scheduling of working time and job demands are also strongly linked to work-family conflict, as is the type of job that the parents have. The research indicates that these factors interact and have a cumulative effect.

What is the impact of the work-family challenge on individuals and families? Less research has been done in Canada linking the conflict between work and family to outcomes. The work that has been done reveals a number of key issues:

- Work-family conflict is associated with stress. Women are more likely to experience high levels of stress. There are a number of factors that appear to mediate this stress, including social support and control over one's work responsibilities, work arrangements and personal situation. As a result, workers who are in non-standard forms of employment and low-wage jobs are much more likely to experience conflict and stress than those with highly skilled, financially secure employment.

- Work-family conflict is associated with poor mental and physical health. It contributes to increased depression, poor self-reported health, increased visits to a physician and increased physical problems, such as high blood pressure and resultant cardiovascular disease.

- Women continue to spend more time than men, in total, on work and family activities. They spend a disproportionate amount of time, compared with men, on family caring activities. As a result, they experience higher levels of stress and depression related to work-family conflict. This is especially true if they have children. Stress is not related exclusively to problems in balancing work and family. Women experience high levels of stress related to their caring work.

- High levels of work-family conflict negatively impact family relationships and satisfaction with marital relationships. The literature indicates that individuals are more likely to take time away from family to meet work obligations than vice versa.

- Work-family conflict impacts negatively on job opportunities and opportunities for advancement in the workplace. In addition, dependant care responsibilities result in job opportunity costs.

- Research is now being done in Canada on the impact of work-family issues on children. The research indicates that it is not parental employment *per se* that is important, but the quality of care for the child — this is what impacts healthy child development. And lack of quality care for dependants is a critical issue for all families, especially those who are economically insecure.

What is the relationship between the conflict of work and family and the community? This area has been far less studied in Canada. The social, economic and government trends identified above have created increased pressure on the community sector and on families. The literature review revealed the following:

- Social support is critical. It has been associated with many positive outcomes, including improved physical and mental health, healthy family functioning, improved employee outcomes and reduced work-family conflict. Individuals can find social support both in the workplace and at home.

- There are few studies on the impact of the reduction of community supports on families. However, studies that look at these issues do identify that at times of cutbacks, responsibility for caring labour tends to fall on the shoulders of women. The availability and quality of community supports, including dependant care services, are critical to the efforts of all families juggling work and family demands.

- There are also few studies regarding the impact of the work-family challenge on leisure activities and community participation. The research that is available tends to indicate that Canadians are cutting back on these activities to deal with work and family.

1.04   Directions for Future Research

Historically, "work and family" literature has tended to treat the worlds of paid employment and the family as separate and distinct; moreover, it has been almost entirely silent on the question of community, both in terms of social support (i.e., extended family and friends) and as a source of support services. Newer research is attempting to bridge these divisions by illustrating the connections between work and family. Drawing on large- and small-scale surveys and detailed case studies of individual workers, families and firms, this work is providing insight into the

increasingly complex lives of Canadians. There are gaps in knowledge, however. The following directions for future research are described below.

7.1 Sociodemographic Profile

There is nothing new, natural or inherent about work-family conflict. Families, especially women, have always combined paid employment and caring labour. A further understanding is needed of the tremendous variation in the ways in which domestic and caring labour has been integrated and alternated with other forms of work. While current research is making headway in identifying women's and men's experiences of work and family, we need more detailed information about the experiences of men and women, by age, by ethno-racial group and by socioeconomic group.

- **Age:** How does the experience of work and family change over the life cycle? Are the experiences of younger workers — who have a higher prevalence of job insecurity — very different from those of middle-aged workers? Do older workers with elder care responsibilities need different sorts of supports compared with those workers with young dependants?

- **Ethno-racial Group:** How do the experiences of combining work and family vary across cultures? Is work-family conflict prevalent across different ethno-racial groups? What form does it take? How does membership in a minority group contribute to (or mediate) work-family conflict? What types of coping strategies do members of various ethno-racial groups employ in dealing with pressures?

- **Socioeconomic Group:** There are important differences in the experiences of workers employed in "good jobs," or jobs within which workers have control and some level of flexibility and are paid adequately, as opposed to "bad jobs," or jobs that do not have these qualities. More research is needed to detail these different experiences of combining work and family, as well as the strategies best suited to mediate work-family conflict.

- What is the impact of growing forms of non-standard employment for highly skilled workers and for those employed in more marginal occupations? Do people with higher levels of education experience more conflict and stress, or is the combination of low levels of education and low-wage employment more stressful?

7.2 Impact on Individuals and Families

7.2.1 Impact on individuals
Survey research has begun to shed light on the impacts of work-family conflict on individuals in terms of their physical and mental health, selected job outcomes such as job satisfaction and work absenteeism, and their attitudes about combining work and family. Future research on the impacts of work-family conflict for individuals should explore differences and similarities in outcomes, as

stated above, by age, by ethno-racial group and by socioeconomic status. In addition, we need to track how changing social and economic forces are influencing individuals, families, workplaces and communities.

7.2.2 Impact on families
Assessing the impact of work-family conflict on families (as well as workplaces and communities) is much more difficult than studying its impact on individuals, given the limitations of existing methodologies. Household or organizational outcomes, by definition, are more complex than individual outcomes and, consequently, more difficult to isolate and access. This signals the importance of devising new ways of understanding the dynamics of family life and its relationship to employment. Research should explore the following topics:

- **Dividing Paid and Unpaid Labour:** How do families accommodate competing demands between family and employment or between individual family members? How are responsibilities shared among members? How are these decisions reached? Are resources such as labour, finances, time and energy shared equally within the household?

- **Caregiving:** We need to know more about the interaction of caring labour with other domestic tasks and employment. Informal caregiving has been identified as very stressful labour, compared with many types of paid employment. What aspects of caregiving precipitate negative outcomes?

- **Downloading Caring Labour:** Families have been asked to shoulder greater responsibility for caregiving. What is the capacity of households to absorb this demand? What are the long-term consequences as the work of caregiving and the intimacy of interpersonal relations are increasingly mixed? What are the costs in terms of increased stress, family violence and caregiver burnout?

- **Children:** We still know very little about the consequences of work-family conflict for children. How does the general trend towards longer hours of employment influence child development? Are the consequences of low family income more damaging over the long term? What do children feel about these trade-offs? Can we pinpoint an optimal balance of work and family involvement of parents for the healthy development of children?

7.3 Interplay with Communities
Current social, economic and government trends have highlighted the critical role that community plays in the lives of Canadians as they juggle employment and family responsibilities. Yet we know relatively little about the interface of community, family and paid employment and, specifically, how the dynamics of community life influence work-family conflict. This particular area demands more study, as it will provide important information for crafting supportive policies and programs.

- **Social Support:** There has been little study of what unpaid services people provide for others in their household, extended family, friendships, neighbourhood networks or communities. There is no real consensus about the content of responsibilities within families

or between friends. How much social support are people receiving or extending? At work? At home? To friends? To extended family? What kinds of support do people want in their efforts to balance work, family and community? What do people see as their responsibility and as the responsibility of others, including family members, communities, public services and private corporations? How do relationships mediate or aggravate the experience of work-family conflict?

- **Community Supports and Services:** Cutbacks and restructuring at the community level have been two of the factors contributing to increasing levels of work-family conflict. What are the ramifications of government cutbacks for individuals, families and workplaces? How has the offloading of caring labour onto families exacerbated conflict and stress? Have different communities managed this process in a more supportive way? Are there minimum levels of service required for healthy work and family life? What are the social and economic costs involved in reducing community supports and services?

Appendix 1: Databases Searched

ABI - Inform - business and management
Canadian Education Index
Canadian Institute for Advanced Research publications
Canadian Policy Research Network publications
Carl Uncover - catalogue and document delivery services
CBCA - Canadian Business and Current Affairs
CINAHL (Nursing and Allied Health)
Conference Board of Canada publications
EAI - Expanded Academic Index (interdisciplinary)
Econolit
ERIC - education
Health (policy)
Legaltrac
Medline
Microlog - Canadian Government Publications
Oribs - catalogue of University of Ottawa
PAIS - Public Affairs Information Service
Psyc-Info
Social Work Abstracts; Psych-info
Sociofile
Statistics Canada publications
Swetscan - catalogue and document delivery service of National Research Council
Websites of all provincial/territorial governments
Websites of Statistics Canada, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada
Women's Resources International Geography

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