Community-University Research Alliance on work-life articulation over the lifecourse (CURA-WAROL)

WORK-FAMILY BALANCE MEASURES
AS A SOCIAL INNOVATION IN CHILDCARE CENTERS:
IS THIS SECTOR MORE SUPPORTIVE BECAUSE OF ITS MORE
PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT?

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L'Alliance de recherche université communauté sur la Gestion des âges et des temps sociaux (ARUC-GATS) s'intéresse aux dispositifs existants de conciliation emploi-famille, et de gestion des âges et des temps (retraites, préretraites, temps de travail et horaires de travail notamment), ainsi qu'aux positions des acteurs sociaux concernant ces modalités et toutes autres qui pourraient être expérimentées. Elle s'intéresse également aux réalités d'emploi et aux aspirations de la main-d'œuvre. Dans ce cadre, l'ARUC-GATS cherche notamment à connaître les positions des acteurs sociaux et à déterminer quels aménagements seraient souhaitables pour accroître le taux d'activité, mais aussi pour offrir de meilleures conditions de travail aux salariés vieillissants ou ayant des personnes à charge (c.-à-d. enfants ou personnes âgées avec incapacités).

L'ARUC-GATS comprend trois axes de recherche principaux à savoir :

Axe 1. Conciliation emploi famille (CEF)

Axe2. Vieillissement et Fin de carrière (FIC)

Axe 3. Milieux de vie, Politiques familiales et municipales (VIE)

La présente recherche s'inscrit plus spécifiquement dans ce dernier axe. Dans ce Chantier d'action partenariale (CAP) sur les milieux de vie, on s'intéresse au rôle de l'acteur municipal ou régional, en ce qui concerne le rôle du milieu de vie dans la vie familiale et l'articulation entre les responsabilités professionnelles et la vie personnelle. Dans ce cadre, l'ARUC analyse les pratiques et politiques en place au Québec, mais effectue aussi des comparaisons avec le reste du Canada et l'international.

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Abstract: This article analyzes social innovations in the form of work-life balance measures and policies offered in the childcare centers that are part of the social economy (i.e., excluding the private childcare centers) in Québec. Upon observing that the social economy sector is more supportive, the authors set out to determine whether organisational context can be a mediating variable and more specifically whether the social economy sector, with its explicit mission and management approach (participatory decision-making process) can influence organizational support to work-family (WFB) or work-life balance (WLB) and the perception of WLB-related issues. While the quantitative data show that this subsector is more supportive than others which we studied, the qualitative part of the research supports the idea that the specificity of the social economy sector, i.e., mission and participatory management, would explain the development of social innovations in the form of stronger support of WLB in that subsector.

Keywords: organisational support, work-family conflict, work-life balance, childcare, early childhood centre, daycare, social economy.

INTRODUCTION

Work-family balance has been the object of much research over the last two to three decades. Historically, research centered on the difficulties facing parents of young children (Guérin *et al*., 1997), but has now come to examine the measures and policies developed by organisations to support work-family articulation (Fusulier *et al*., 2006). Certain studies (Haas *et al*. 2002; Lewis 2001) also analyze the organisational culture and the attitudes and behaviour of colleagues and managers, and we think these elements can be analyzed as social innovations in these organizations.

Social innovation
As mentioned in the call for papers, the nature of social innovations can vary from one study to another, as well as their developmental process or the actors at stake (Maruyama et al., 2007; Moulaert et al, 2005). Also, social innovation can be found in organizations of all kinds and we centered here on childcare centers. It is clear that the childcare centers are social innovations in themselves (Bellemare and Briand, XX) but we wanted to center in this research in the social innovations (or organizational social innovations) that these organizations introduce to help their employees with work-life

evaluated according to the social value they create, and clearly the social innovations that take the form of work-life measures do translate into *"the creation of benefits or reductions of costs for society – through efforts to address social needs and problems – in ways that go beyond the private gains and general benefits of market activity"* (Phills et al, 2008, p. 39)

In our paper and research, we refer to the Katarsis definition of social innovation, ie. social innovation as a social relation, as collective agency, as empowerment. Our paper will show that social innovation is about improving social relations and tackling social problems or meeting social needs, in this case, the issue of articulation of private and professional life.

As mentioned in the call for papers, our paper will address the following questions: how is social innovation managed by social economy organizations such as childcare centers? Some research has indicated that social innovation can be developed by organizations as well as within organizations and we will see here that both can be found here, since childcare centers have developed social innovations in order to support their employees, and these social innovations are found within the organization itself (e.g. work organization to make workers participate in the management , and develop the required measures.

Social innovation in the context of work-life issues

Some research has highlighted the fact that large firms and public organizations might be more favourable to work-life balance, yet Guerin *et al.* (1997) observed that organisational culture does influence the degree or extent of work-family conflict. It appears that organizations can play a favourable mediating role in the development and implementation of family-friendly practices and policies (Fusulier *et al.*, 2008). However, while some comparisons have been made between various organisations, we have seen no attempt to test the idea that a participatory management style (found in the social economy) could have an influence on the management of work-family articulation. We therefore decided to analyze some organizations of the social economy. Our research centers here on Québec early childhood centers that belong to the social economy sector, since it appears that these environments are particularly productive in social innovation development. These are called *Centres à la petite enfance* (CPE), to distinguish them from private daycare centers, known as *garderies* (daycare). When speaking of childcare centers, we will refer only to these social economy organisations (CPE)—known as early childhood centres.

We set out to investigate the incidence of organisational culture on the perceptions of work-life articulation in organisations with a social mission and more democratic management style. We focused on the study of social economy early childhood centers to find out whether their social mission and management style had an influence on the development of these specific forms of social innovation s related to work-life balance. First, let us get acquainted with the social economy sector and our early childhood centers.

1. **The social economy sector and early childhood centres**

The social economy sector is a substantial provider of jobs in Québec. According to data from the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* (a social economy association), the

sector includes 6,254 businesses comprised of 2,313 cooperatives and 3,941 non-profit organizations; together, they provide 65,028 jobs.

1.1.   The social economy sector

According to a CSMO-ESAC[1] survey conducted in 2000, the social economy sector's workforce is predominantly feminine and distributed as follows: 76% work in non-profit organizations and 44% in cooperatives. In these enterprises overall, women held 63% of management jobs. In another 2005 study carried out by the *Centre de formation populaire* (CFP) and *Relais-femmes*, it appeared that women hold 80% of all jobs in community-based agencies and organisations.

Social economy enterprises display unique characteristics. Originally created to cater to the needs of individuals and local communities, community-based agencies and organisations are involved in economic development based on human values. In these businesses, rules and operational processes are designed to recognize and take into account the social dimension that should permeate economic development. The rules and principles that guide the social economy are as follows (from the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* website):
  - The purpose of a social economy enterprise is to serve its members or the community rather than simply generating profit or securing return on investment (ROI)
  - Management is independent from the State
  - Statutes and the operations include *democratic and participatory decision-making* processes that involve both users and workers
  - In the distribution of its surpluses and revenues, the firm promotes the primacy of persons and of work over capital
  - Activities are founded on participatory principles, self-empowerment, and on individual and collective responsibility.

The social economy is therefore a sector in which social values are strongly conveyed within the mission statement and objectives. They account for a large proportion of women in management functions and even more so in the early childhood sector. We identified the social economy sector for investigation in order to determine whether a democratically managed work environment is more receptive to work-family issues and concerns.

2.2. Childcare centers

The early childhood centers (CPE, belonging to the social economy sector) are part of the global offer of educative daycare services offered by the government of Québec.

The social economy childhood centers (CPE) are in fact one of the three types of daycare services offered in Québec. They are presented here to distinguish them from the other types of services. Our analysis is nevertheless concerned with the organisations that are part of the social economy sector and characterized by a democratic or participatory mode of management.

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[1] CSMO-ESAC: *Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre, de l'économie sociale et de l'action*

The first type of daycare services is the CPE (i.e., early childhood centres) which offers spaces in facilities able to admit up to 80 children. A CPE may, however, include several facilities. The CPE is a non-profit organisation yet a private and autonomous social economy enterprise headed by a Board whose members must be user-parents in the proportion of two-thirds or 66% (Robitaille, 2009).

Home day care centres (HDC) are the second type of childcare services. The services are offered by a person in a private residence for gain. The person responsible for a home day care centre may admit up to six (6) children, including a maximum of two (2) children under the age of 18 months. Where another adult attends to the children, the facility may admit up to 7 or 9, including a maximum of four (4) children under the age of 18 months (Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine; 2007). The persons who establish HDCs are self-employed workers and a Coordinating Office is responsible for managing home day care. The Coordinating Office has a not-for-profit organizational structure.

Finally, most daycares are profit-oriented enterprises that offer childcare services although some are non-profit. Each daycare has a duty to appoint an advisory committee composed of five (5) user-parents. A good number of daycare centres are able to offer spaces at $7 if they entered into a subsidy agreement with the Ministry. Non subsidized daycare centres may require their users to pay fees as they see fit and prices can differ considerably (Robitaille, 2009).

CPEs are therefore differentiated from the other groups by their philosophy. This should be underscored, especially with regard to the social economy dimension and that of work-family issues of concern to the author.

Now since CPEs are social economy enterprises, yet private and self-standing, their purpose is to serve the community and not to make profits. In addition, they operate under democratic decision-making processes and their activities are based on participation and collective management, and individual and collective responsibility (Robitaille, 2008).

The mission of CPEs is to contribute to the war on poverty, if only by providing facilities that allow parents of young children to enter or re-enter the labour market. Over the last decade in Québec the number of mono-parent mothers living below the poverty line dropped from 60% to 30% which, according to some, results from the availability of low-cost early childhood services. CPEs also contribute directly to the development of young children, be it through early stimulation, acquisition of language skills, or even early detection and referral to specialised resources in the network.

As indicated by Robitaille (2009): "The community-based concern within the CPEs mission is entirely contained in the network's catch line — Our CPEs: More than a daycare service! Actually, CPEs are driven by the desire to succeed in serving all the young children and their parents, in partnership with the community, whether community-based organizations, municipalities, schools, public health services, social services, etc." Where all CPEs are not yet entirely community-wide, it is nevertheless

The mission of CPEs draws on three principles. The first principle is universality; there is a universal user fee of $7 per day for a quality service that is the same across the province. The second principle is accessibility; this principle conveys the idea that childcare and education services cater to approximately 90% of the needs. The third principle is about quality of services; the quality of services offered is not only state-regulated, but controlled by the parents that sit on the board of directors, ensured by personnel qualification requirements (two thirds of the employees must hold a college level diploma), and promoted through training and development strategies brought to the fore by the CPE network (Robitaille, 2009).

Like the rest of enterprises in the social economy, CPEs promote social values that are akin to their own mission, purposes and objectives. They account for a large proportion of women in management positions. The percentage of women performing management functions is even higher in the early childhood services sector than elsewhere in the social economy.

Our intention is to compare how work-family balance unfolds and is managed in different environments, especially where comparisons can be established between typically male and female environments, including sectors where women hold executive jobs. Hence our focus on a sector where the management of human resources relies on more democratic work organisation principles (the Board where parents and employees sit together to work things out, mission and values).

2. Methodology

Our investigation was carried out in 2009 using qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark 2006; Patton 1990). We first conducted a quantitative survey requesting participants to answer an online questionnaire, followed by a qualitative investigation using semi structured interviews.[2]

The online questionnaire consisted of questions on existing measures or policies within the organisation and on measures that respondents expected from the organisation. We wanted to capture the respondents' perception of the support available from both management and colleagues in the workplace regarding family responsibilities, considering this as an important social innovation. Participants were also surveyed on different aspects of leave for family reasons and on parental leave.

The design of the online questionnaire and interview chart was inspired by several prior studies, namely those dealing with WLB (work-life balance) measures most appreciated by working parents (Caussignac 2000; Guérin *et al*. 1997). Further, studies by Chevenier (1996), Behson (2005), and by the Families and Work Institute (1998) also included questions on the support available to parents from both management and colleagues as a crucial factor in taking up the leave measures. Other studies (Tremblay, 2008) have shown that adequately designed measures, taken up by workers, do contribute to reduce work-family conflict. We received hundreds of

[2] At the conclusion of the online questionnaire, participants interested in meeting with us were invited to provide their contact information; we were then able to proceed with the second

questionnaires which allowed us to proceed to statistical analyses and contact participants for interviews.

Respondents profile

To qualify as respondents in our survey, participants had to be paid employees and be in charge of at least one child under the age of 18. In the social economy sector, 423 persons completed the survey—28 men and 395 women. Among the respondents, 69% work in early childhood centres, 14% in cooperatives and 17% in not-for-profit enterprises (NPO). This article is concerned with the childcare sector, and we have 293 respondents from that sector of the social economy: 289 women and 4 men.

In CPEs, 68% of respondents are employees while 32% have coordination of management responsibilities. Overall, 94% are employed on a regular basis. Further, more than 80% of our respondents are 45 years old or younger and more than a third (36,2%) have at least one (1) child 6 years old or younger, 52% have at least one (1) child between the ages of 6 and 12, and 50% have at least one (1) child between the ages of 12 and 17. A majority of employees enjoy occupational seniority with their current employer: 30% have more than 10 years, 32% between 6 and 10 years, and 37% have 5 years or less. Further, 87% of respondents live with a partner and 53% of the paertners have a higher income of up to $10,000 more for 42% among them, which may have an impact of WLB and the division of duties. Approximately 74% of CPE work environments are in an urban setting and 26% in rural areas.

3. Results

The quantitative data collected indicate that respondents' overall satisfaction with work-life articulation is rather positive. It should be noted, however, that we were not always able to identify differences among sub-categories or different respondent profiles in this respect – this will be mentioned where necessary.

In general, it was not possible to establish perception and satisfaction differences between employees and their supervisors (CPE directors) with respect to work-life articulation. It seems that the needs of both groups in this respect are satisfied, and both groups consider they are equally supported by their work environment. As well, perception and satisfaction appears to be homogenous between lone parents and couples regardless of the type of enterprise, whether CPE, cooperative or non-profit organisation (NPO).

Nevertheless, the analysis of quantitative data reveals significant differences in parents with children under the age of 6 although the size of the sub-groups that compose this category is rather limited (few NPOs and cooperatives). The CPE sector appears to be a rather favoured sector in term of social innovations regarding work-family articulation; managers and colleagues provide relatively important organizational support. In this work environment, work-life measures are diversified and offered to more people as we shall see in the following pages.

4.1 An organisational culture generally open to work-life articulation

First, we need to underscore that the overall data clearly indicates our respondents' satisfaction with the organizational support afforded them toward work-family articulation.

In the online questionnaire, five umbrella questions covered organisational culture, the support provided by the supervisor, and the respondents' ability to manage family and professional responsibilities.

To the statement "Your organisation is a work environment that supports work-family articulation", approximately 10% of participants replied "rather disagree" and "disagree totally", while 80% replied "rather agree" and "agree totally"; 10% of respondents remained neutral.

Statistical analyses were conducted to determine whether differences existed among the types of organisations (CPE, cooperative, NPO) with respect to work-life articulation; it was interesting to find out that no significant difference exits in this respect: the three social economy sectors concerned equally support work-life articulation. However, when comparing the social economy sector with the social work, nursing and public safety (police) subsectors, marked differences appeared among all the groups and the effect size is important (p 0,05 — large effect size, r2 = 0,285), which seems to indicate that the CPE sector introduces more social innovations. Therefore, definite differences exist between large public sector work environments and the social economy sector, the latter being more supportive of work-family articulation. CPEs are the outstanding subgroup within the social economy sector studied and the statistical analysis identifies them as a work environment more supportive to work-family articulation (Table 1).

Table 1

Your organisation is a work environment that facilitates work-family articulation	
Strongly disagree (*n*)	4
%	*1,49%*
Rather disagree	24
%	*8,96%*
Neutral	25
%	*9,33%*
Rather agree	125
%	*46,64%*
Fully agree	90
%	*33,58%*
Total	268
%	*100,00%*

To the question "Overall, do you encounter difficulties in balancing your family and professional responsibilities?", only 5,6% indicated frequent problems while more than 55% have no such problems and 30% only occasionally (Table 2).

Overall, do you encounter difficulties in balancing your family and professional responsibilities?	
	N=
I encounter frequent problems	15
%	5,62%
I encounter problems occasionally	104
%	38,95%
Overall, I do not encounter such problems	148
%	55,43%
Total	383
	100,00%

Likewise, to the statement "I have the feeling that I'm successful in balancing my professional life and my family life", more than 73% of respondents replied they were rather in agreement or in full agreement with the statement, while 11% remained neutral. We have seen, in the statistical analyses, that the social economy sector is different from the police subsector in this regard among others, but the variation is narrow (p 0,05 — weak size effect, r2 = 0,050) and we were not able to identify or establish significant differences with the other groups under study.

Table 3

I have the feeling that I'm successful in balancing my professional life and my family life	
Strongly disagree (n)	9
%	3,24%
Rather disagree	35
%	12,59%
Neutral	31
%	11,15%
Rather agree	144
%	51,80%
Fully agree	59
%	21,22%
Total	278
%	100,00%

It is worth mentioning that 98,5% of respondents in CPE stated that they are satisfied with their job. And we will see that only 9% of participants believe that it is not within the culture of their work environment to take leave for family reasons, and that less than 5% apply the same to parental leave. The CPE work environment is therefore open to work-family articulation and work leave for family reasons.

Statistical analyses show that respondents are more satisfied in the CPE subsector and there is a significant difference with the two other social economy sub-sectors although the size effect is very weak ($p \prec 0,05$ — very weak size effect, $r2 = 0,026$); it is therefore difficult to conclude with certainty since there are few subjects in the "unsatisfied" groups. We were not able to observe any significant difference either among job designations (employer-director, employee), according to the presence of a partner (few do not have a partner) or the presence of a child or children between 0 and 5 years of age.

Table 4 Globally, would you say you are satisfied with your work?						
With or without partner	Childcare center	Cooperative	Other social economy*	Total		
Yes	263	65	47	375		
%	*98,50%*	*89,04%*	*92,16%*	*95,91%*		
No	4	8	4	16		
%	*1,50%*	*10,96%*	*7,84%*	*4,09%*		
Total	267	73	51	391		
%	*100,00%*	*100,00%*	*100,00%*	*100,00%*		

*The other social economy organisations or enterprises are NPOs other than CPEs and workers' cooperatives. Among our respondents, their number is smaller than the two other groups.

A large majority of respondents consider that their work environment is very approving of work-life articulation and state that they succeed quite well in balancing their professional and family responsibilities. Nothing is perfect and a number of issues were mentioned during the face-to-face interviews although not to such extent as was observed in other work environments. Here, in CPEs belonging to the social economy sector, support provided by management and colleagues is definitely higher.

In order to better understand such positive perception among our respondents, we asked them to comment, explain or provide examples of how their work environment actually supports work-family articulation. The answers were classified into four categories.

Selecting an job or employer for its work-family articulation measures or social innovation

We know that work-life articulation measures are important social innovations that can attract new employees (Tremblay, 2008). In this sense, social economy enterprises and CPEs in particular seem to have a very positive reputation concerning their approach to work-life articulation.

Certain persons among our respondents stated that they left a job in another sector to work in a CPE precisely because work-family articulation would be easier there. For them, the workload and work schedule in their former job did not take into consideration a working parent's family responsibilities. For example, these two mothers formerly had a very stimulating career in another sector of activity with a private company but did not find any support regarding their family responsibilities. They decided to change jobs and found what they were looking for:

> When I left my last job, honestly, I gave it up precisely because family and career were at odds [...].and I was very lucky because it's… it is really a dream come true.
>
> I was even ready to sacrifice the kind of job, you know, just to have this balance [...]I wanted to find balance and I think, for me at least, for our family, we found it and it is working out real well for us.[3]

In the same line of thought, other respondents who intend to re-assess and reorient their career will wait until the children are older before leaving:

> I will not stay in this job forever. I like it here, it's good for my family. I have young children, 13 and 10 years old, and things are OK for now in my life. But in 5 years, if I still have this job, I think I'd rather look for something else. [...] maybe take up a job that is less flexible... For now, however, I need flexibility, that's the critical requirement.

For others, working in a CPE means lower wages than what they could earn or were actually earning elsewhere, but the loss is largely offset by all the work-life options not otherwise available. Another example is this respondent who did not hesitate to leave a well-paid and prestigious job:

> So they told me outright: 'We can't offer you that kind of money. So, what is the rock bottom salary you would accept if you were to help us?' I realized that the job would earn me much less money but that I would have comparative advantages and access other employment related measures toward a sound family life.

A sector with a human touch for lone-parent families

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[3] Interviews were conducted by Josée Boisvert and most accounts are included in the full

Our data show no difference in satisfaction between lone-parent families and others with regard to one's capacity at balancing work-life issues and organisational support to work-life measures. For certain monoparental family heads, the social economy CPE sector is especially accepting of their situation. For example, a young monoparental mother recounts having lost her job repeatedly because of her status; now, she encounters understanding and support in her supervisor. Other testimonies gathered in the CPE sector confirm this vision.

A sector where fathers take up their work leaves

One last type of comment evidences the openness of enterprises toward work-family articulation; according to our respondents, male employees are also concerned with the issue. The participation of fathers to paternity leave following birth or adoption has risen in Québec and almost 80% take leave in one form or another. On the average, men in Québec take seven (7) weeks off (Doucet and Tremblay, 2009). Number of managers note that when the need arises to leave work for family reasons (sick child), male employees who live with a partner will take leave more often than their spouse when the latter does not work in a CPE. From management's point of view, the measures available in the specific sector foster leave take up by employees regardless of gender:

> But of course, for example when we had men
> working here at the CPE and their wife worked
> in another field, the man would take time off.

Observations recorded by management are substantiated by male employees who estimate that they indeed take leave for family reasons more often than their partners because the latter's work environments are not as flexible.

While they recognize that nothing is perfect and that holding a full-time or part-time job involves different constraints, many respondents believe that work-family articulation measures designed for them by their employers are a definite step toward an explicit ideal. In CPEs, the service offered to the community is self-promoting by definition, i.e., it supports the very idea of work-life articulation. This in turn leads CPE directors to a more sensible outlook on such issues in their own work environments and to take them into consideration in their management practices.

4.2 CPE outlook on work-life articulation: factors involved

Our respondents identify several indicators of or grounds for CPEs acknowledgment of work-family articulation. However, since it is our intention to compare several sectors in the labour market including social work, nursing and police, it is necessary to document our respondents' perception of the factors or indicators that explain CPEs outlook on work-life issues or, better still, their organisational culture.

4.2.1 First and foremost a matter of values

As mentioned earlier, doing things differently is the social economy's *modus vivendi*. Social economy enterprises are indeed different; their case history, and above all

Further, it should be noted that despite the social mission inherent to the social work sector, that sector does not provide as much organisational work-family support (Fusulier, Tremblay & di Loreto, 2008). Many respondents we have met will naturally and directly amalgamate the values born of social economy business purposes—and especially CPEs, and work-family concerns and tie-in the fact that their work environment is more receptive to work-family articulation.

Background

We mentioned earlier that the social economy and the CPE childcare approach stem from citizens' common concern for needs that are overlooked or ill-served by the state, or for local economic development purposes based first on individuals as opposed to corporations and profit-making. For our respondents, it is only natural to have advocacy, social struggles, individual needs and good work-family organisational support benefit the employees. In this instance, it is no doubt the advocacy dimension and the non-hierarchical character of the organisation that extend the social mission into organisational assistance to employees, at least when comparing CPEs with social work. For example according to our respondents, unionist and cooperative values at the root of number of community organizations explain why work-family measures are included in the working conditions of employees hired by them. Community organisation coordinators thus bridge the social values advocated by the founders of the organisation that employs her and the work-family measures afforded the employees. Another respondent ties together work-family issues, community circles and feminism. For him, the employer's openness to family values and the father's responsibilities are an extension of the values that warranted the creation of community-based organisations in the first place.

Mission, activities and operating rules

Operational rules and principles that govern social economy enterprises including CPEs promote the well-being of individuals and communities. In addition, according to a most prominent organisation in the field (*Chantier de l'économie sociale*), the main distinguishing characteristic of social economy enterprises is to blend economic activity and social mission. The persons we interviewed believe that where social mission is intrinsically part of the enterprise's activities and operations, it is only natural that the employer would be sensitive to work-family issues and that the organisation's management would reflect that mind-set.

When we asked a CPE educator if she believed that the availability of work-family measures put forth by her employer had anything to do with the mission of the enterprise, she replied without hesitation:

> Yes, yes. It is all included in the childhood centre's policies. It is clearly stated in the organisation's mission that work and family concerns be addressed. [...] Indeed, yes. Everybody working here has it naturally that family comes first.

For a CPE director, work-family articulation and CPE mission are incidental and stem from an inescapable rationale:

> In our CPEs, our mandate is to take care of children, we spend all our time doing that. And when they are sick, we call the parents to inform them and we tell them to pick them up [...] I, for one, insist that the parents of sick children... I call them and ask them to 'please come and pick up your child immediately.' So then in similar circumstances, how can I tell one of my own employees 'no, you can't leave, forget about your child.'

Many respondents indicated that in their organisations the decision-making process was carried out "partly, yet often" as team work. As well, we have seen that the social economy enterprises integrate within their organisational rules and principles "a democratic decision process involving both users and workers".[4] While a large majority of persons interviewed work in organisations headed by a management team or coordinating office responsible for the decision process, most of them, whether managers or employees, have indicated that the decision-making process is often taken among colleagues or at least discussed among colleagues. For example, managers will often submit proposals or ask the employees for their opinion on matters of concern to them. This method refers to the concern held by managers toward the needs of their employees; this issue will be further examined later on in this report. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe here how participation, team work and better working conditions intermingle.

4.2.2 On organisational support and management's shared values

The values inherent to the social economy movement appear to be among the founding elements that explain the openness of CPEs to work-family issues and solutions. As well it seems that CPE managers personally, and other social economy enterprises, adhere to the same values, which results in a significant impact on work-life articulation. It is understood that work-life measures deliver little results when managers do not support them with an open mind (Duxbury et al. 1994, 1993; Behson, 2005) and therefore management's attitude and values are crucial. This dimension of the problem is explored in the following paragraphs.

In addition to general statements on organisational support as we have seen above, it is meaningful to examine the offer of specific measures and their use. This would confirm whether organisational support toward different measures is theoretical—whether included in policies or otherwise implemented, and to assess to what extent supervisors and colleagues are responsive to the question. First, we examine organisational support—or the support afforded by supervisors and colleagues; second, to the overall openness of the organisation toward leave take up, and finally to existing measures within the organisation compared to what employees would expect.

With respect to organisational support of employees' parental and family responsibilities, it is useful to recall findings from previous research. Several studies draw the attention on the importance of organisational culture and on colleagues and management's behaviours and attitudes in the conflicts resulting from work-family articulation problems, that is, between personal and professional duties (Haas et al., 2002; Lewis, 2001). Guérin et al. (1997) found that organisational culture does bear on the level or intensity of work-life conflict. According to that research among unionized workers, when the employee does not have the feeling that he or she is penalized for what is sacrificed to his or her family, the employee perceives that there are less work-life problems. As well, the conflict is expected to be lessened when the employee has the feeling that his supervisor shows empathy or accepts accommodations in order to ease professional and family issues. Colleague support is another important variable according to other studies (Guérin et al., 1997, 1994) but it does not crop out in all the studies, hence the interest to pursue further the research on organisational support in other uncharted sectors of the social economy.

On the topic of organisational support, this query was included in the online survey: "I have the feeling that my supervisor is responsive to the work-family articulation issue" (table 5). Among the respondents, only 11% of CPE participants rather disagreed or disagreed totally with the statement against 70% who rather agreed or were in total agreement; 18% remained neutral. During the interviews, CPE managers regardless of gender spoke of the values that nourish their actions; employees also mentioned the values they perceive in their supervisors[5].

The statistical analyses conducted, i.e., the comparative assessment of all the social economy subgroups we have studied, reveal that the status of employment (manager, employee), the type of enterprise (CPE, cooperative and other NPO or social economy enterprise) had no bearing on this question. The analyses showed no differences among the groups.

Table 5

I have the feeling that my supervisor is responsive to the work-family articulation issue.	
Strongly disagree (*n*)	10
%	*3,57%*
Rather disagree	21
%	*7,50%*
Neutral	52
%	*18,57%*
Rather agree	98
%	*35,00%*
Fully agree	99
%	*35,36%*
Total	280
%	*100,00%*

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[5] By 'supervisor', we mean any person holding a management or coordinating position, including persons who sit on the organisation's board of directors.

It should be noted, however, that practices may vary. Where a majority of respondents expressed their satisfaction with work-family flexibility in their work environment, others face less malleability; in the quantitative segment of the research, some respondents mentioned that practices are not uniform or consistent. More formal or rigid methods were referred to as part of management's position toward work-family concerns. For example, before a decision is made an office employee needs to 'ask for permission' and provide reasons to change her schedule even so lightly although such changes have no bearing whatsoever on clients or colleagues.

Another similar example was reported, concerning sick leave. While a majority of managers seem to agree that employees can use sick leave as they see fit since they have a right to them, others will tend to enforce that one really needs to be sick to avail herself of the sick leave. In the eyes of the former, not only do personal values come into pay with respect to leave take up, but knowing in advance who intends to take leave in a given work shift makes it easier to schedule a relief worker.

This illustrates the importance of supervisors' individual attitude beyond the general principles or policies in a given work environment. Diversity in management practices was observed in other sectors as well and is an argument in favour of providing managers with uniform training and heightening their awareness about work-family balance; clearly, some managers know about the issues and others do not, hence the diferrences in the practices.

Research by Duxbury et al. (1994, 1993) and Guérin et al. (1997) indicate that supervisors' attitudes tend to legitimize employees' utilization of measures and this actually supports them with respect to work-family articulation. In the online questionnaire, we designed several questions on the kind of support employees perceive as being available to them and on the impact of such management support on the actual utilization of work-life articulation measures.

To the statement "I have my supervisor's support" which concerns leave take up for family reasons, hardly more than 8% of respondents said they rather disagreed or totally disagreed, while more than 74% agreed somewhat or fully agreed with the statement; 17% sat on the fence (neutral).

When asked why her organisation would want to cater to her employees' needs in terms of work-family articulation, this CPE female manager mentions continuous improvement and the addition of relevant measures as needs arise:

> Let's just say that we tow the line. We adjust to relevant circumstances and to the needs of our employees.

Table 6

Leave for family reasons: I have my supervisor's support.	
Strongly disagree (*n*)	6

Rather disagree	16
%	*5,99%*
Neutral	46
%	*17,23%*
Rather agree	93
%	*34,83%*
Fully agree	106
%	*39,70%*
Total	267
%	*100,00%*

Likewise, some of our respondents with young children indicated that their supervisor is well aware of their family situation. One female CPE educator reports her supervisor's attitude concerning the forced extension of business hours:

> The CPE reacted energetically to the extension of the business hours… Yes the director actually said 'Listen, we can't ask that of an educator with young children'. Others in the CPE will take care of closing, she said 'It doesn't make sense to arrive home from work at six thirty with young children', so yes, they are aware […]

Another CPE employee recounts what she needs to do in order to change her work schedule to accommodate her sometimes unpredictable parental duties:

> Yes. Of course, with the director's authorisation, I can change my day off, I can get to work a bit later. [...] Yes, the employer is flexible, yes.

We know that organisational support offered to employees can contribute to reduce their stress when faced with work-family constraints (Behson 2005; Families and Work Institute 1998; Tremblay and Genin 2009). It is therefore interesting to observe that not only do managers interviewed recognize and approve that work leave for family reasons is legitimate but they do not hesitate to reassure them and cooperate with them. This is what a CPE director had to say:

> [...] when there is a serious reason to take leave from work, and I told the person so, I said 'Look, don't be stressed with your job. I know your child is sick and that you're going through rough times and it's ok. Look, go see to it, fix up that part of your life and when you're back everything should be alright' [...]

Although managers are 'aware' and sensitive, they do not always have the possibility to accommodate their employees in that respect even in CPEs because there are

Support of work-family articulation may serve management as well and bring about a better understanding from the employees. For example, a CPE director who is also a monoparental mother was asked what would be the reaction of her employees if she had to leave the work place or take work leave for family reasons; she explained that she herself was flexible and understanding with the employees and that she in turn enjoyed the same attitude on their part.

Support from colleagues may sometimes compensate the shortfalls of management support as we have seen in other work environments; support from colleagues adds flexibility to the situation and makes it even more bendable. Therefore regarding support toward leave from work, the statement "I have the support of my colleagues" yielded 79% agreement while only 5% disagreed and 16% were non-committal.

Table 7
Leave from work for family reasons. I have the support of my colleagues.

Strongly disagree (*n*)	2
%	*0,76%*
Rather disagree	10
%	*3,79%*
Neutral	43
%	*16,29%*
Rather agree	111
%	*42,05%*
Fully agree	98
%	*37,12%*
Total	264
%	*100,00%*

The directors or coordinators themselves report to the board of directors and must refer to that body to negotiate their work-family articulation needs. In general and as it is the case for most managers and professionals (Tremblay, 2008), the flexibility of the work schedule and self-reliance allows them to balance their professional responsibilities and their family duties. Where such self-reliance is applicable day-to-day there is no need to notify the members of the board for coming late at work for example, but CPE managers must nevertheless negotiate with the latter any extended leave or a permanent departure from the usual and expected schedule and task performance. Here again it seems that boards of directors share the same values and mind-set which eases leave take-up or any other work-family articulation measure in this environment as compared to other sectors.

We also found that more unusual requests may be allowed by management. For example, a CPE director has no problem obtaining from the board the permission to leave work at 3 PM every day for all the years her children were in primary school; this mother wanted at all cost to pick up her children at school and permission was granted. It is difficult to imagine such arrangements in many of the other sectors we

have studied like police, nursing, and social work (Tremblay, di Loreto and Genin 2010; Tremblay and Larivière 2009).

Another question dealing this time with organisational culture was put to the participants; it stated "It is in the culture of the work environment to take up parental leave". Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents provided a neutral answer while 9% disagreed with the statement and 68% agreed. In this case, our analyses showed no statistical differences among the types of enterprises (CPE, cooperative or other social economy sector enterprises) and not even in the group with children 0 to 5 years of age.

Table 8

Leave for family reasons: It is in the culture of the work environment to take up parental leave

Strongly disagree (*n*)	5
%	*1,89%*
Rather disagree	19
%	*7,20%*
Neutral	60
%	*22,73%*
Rather agree	95
%	*35,98%*
Fully agree	85
%	*32,20%*
Total	264
%	*100,00%*

In the same line of thought, we tested the following statement: "I did not take or do not intend to avail myself of the parental leave because my supervisors put (or would put) too much pressure on me". Less than 4% agreed with the statement while 86% disagreed and 9% were neutral.

Table 9

I did not take or do not intend to avail myself of the parental leave because my supervisors put (or would put) too much pressure on me.

Strongly disagree (*n*)	61
%	*79,22%*
Rather disagree	6
%	*7,79%*
Neutral	7
%	*9,09%*
Rather agree	3
%	*3,90%*
Fully agree	0

Total	77
%	*100,00%*

The statement "I can manage to take leave from work" applied to leaves for family reasons and 14% of respondents disagreed while more than 82% agreed and almost 4% remained neutral.

In this instance, the analyses indicate that there is no significant statistical difference according to status of employment (manager, employee), type of enterprise (CPE, cooperative or NPO or other enterprise in the social economy sector), and not even in the group with children 0 to 5 years of age which indicates that the support is consistent regardless of the age of the children.

Table 10
Leave for family reasons: I can manage to take leave from work

Strongly disagree (*n*)	11
%	*4,14%*
Rather disagree	28
%	*10,53%*
Neutral	10
%	*3,76%*
Rather agree	119
%	*44,74%*
Fully agree	98
%	*36,84%*
Total	266
%	*100,00%*

The above data show that a majority of managers and colleagues in CPEs have a responsive approach to work-family articulation, that there is support for both employees and managers, and that the organisational culture is open to the take up of work-family articulation measures by the employees who in turn feel that they can avail themselves of the measures afforded without fear of criticism.

In the interviews moreover, we observed that many participants mentioned the ease with which they could change their work schedule in order to respond to family requirements or emergencies. Whether it was changing a day off or being late at work occasionally, leaving early of coming to work only later in the day, or taking a few days off for family reasons, a simple phone call or an informal request would generally be sufficient. In CPEs of course a ratio of qualified employees is mandatory and persons must be replaced at once; apparently this is done without difficulty.

4.2.3. Organisational support and percentage of female managers

In CPEs the proportion of women is above 99%; they are also managers and members of the boards of directors. In this regard, it is clear in the eyes of our respondents that a work environment populated mostly by women would need to be

more flexible toward work-family articulation and that it would afford them satisfactory measures:

> [...] indeed in CPEs there is a lot of 4-day work week schedules. The work environment requires much more work-family arrangements than a male environment.

Organisational support is a key factor. It allows employees to utilize work-family measures and feel free to do so. According to our participants, the fact that women, and therefore mothers, are also the managers in enterprises that employ them, results in a double status that reinforces their awareness of employee-parents' needs and would explain both the availability of work-family measures and the ease with which they can be drawn upon.

As well, we observe that the interviewees have all instantly operated a semantic shift from the female status to that of mother as being necessarily incidental one to the other. Our respondents referred to female managers, whether they were mothers or not, and to female employees who are mothers and whose presence have a bearing on work-life articulation measures.

Several respondents consider that the presence of women at the helm of organisations, on boards of directors, or among the founders of social economy enterprises actually fosters the design and implementation of work-family policies in the organisation and more so in CPEs. From the start, the CPE network or system was created and managed for women and by them in order to cater to their needs and that of their families. As a matter of fact, there are reasons to believe that work-family measures were implemented in response to the concerns of the women who created the childcare system, then to childhood centres—not for profit childcare centres were converted to CPEs in 1997 (Tremblay 2009; Marois 2008).

Moreover according to our respondents, managers who are also mothers, are deemed to be more aware of and open to the family constraints of their employees if only because of their status and their own intimate experience of family issues (it should be noted, however, that the directors of other social economy enterprises are also sensitive to the question):

> Oh yes. And moreover it's… the upper management, we all have children. We understand the problems. And we know each other as a team, we have an idea of every person's problems or their family circumstances. I think there has to be a lot of tolerance and understanding regarding the issues. And, well, it's always been there, even before I joined the organisation. A certain form of freedom and a non judgemental attitude are requisites...

It should be remembered that CPE boards of directors are mostly composed of the

former cannot manage outstanding work-family issues without being influenced by their own parental status:

> I believe they are very sensitive [...] the board members are all parents, exclusively, parents I deal with on a daily basis [...] Yes, so of course in that respect they are quite open as well. I'd say that they are parents more than managers if you ask me.

We came to the same conclusion with the employees; employees believe that a CPE director who is also a mother would be more open to work-family situations. We do not suggest that all women and all mothers are necessarily more open to work-family articulation. Studies conducted in other sectors where women are the managers, for example social work or nursing, show an entirely different state of affairs (Fusulier, Tremblay & di Loreto 2007; Tremblay and Larivière 2010). In the later case, nursing, the organisational context is quite dissimilar and personnel shortages in the health sector certainly have an impact. In the social work sector, no explanation is obvious, unless large public organisations are simply less flexible than enterprises in the social economy.

A second observation which may contribute to explain positive work-family articulation policies and attitudes would result from the number of female employees: the number of women increases the occurrence of maternity leaves. The more common such events as maternity leave, the easier it gets to deal with this condition and its consequences. For example in CPEs where all or substantially all employees are women, a pregnant educator has a right to precautionary cessation of work. She must be automatically replaced towards her group of children and for CPE managers this is a run of the mill situation. One CPE educator offers this comment:

> Well, with employees, educators who are women and most of them in their child-bearing years, it's no unusual to see 2 or 3 of them pregnant and on maternity leave whether we like it or not.

An earnings-related issue?

Certain persons believe that the benefits provided by flexible work schedules can compensate for lower salaries offered in CPEs. To the contrary, others think that the salary improvements of recent years due to pay equity regulations allow workers to benefit from work-family measures such as the 4-day work week. On this question, opinions differ but managers often envision flexibility as a means to compensate lower (yet improved) wages. As one CPE director puts it:

> … we always try to fulfill, to… to offer them opportunities to live their [family] life, because 35 hours in the role of an educator… Taking care of young children is hard work, a huge responsibility. And the people here… the Ministry, well, government and our society, how much are people paid to accomplish this work, this demanding work, it's ridiculous, $15 per hour for this…

Given the 4-day work week and other compressed-time schedules, some consider the wages high enough given the education and training required and the comparative income level in other service sectors. When asked what had helped her most to manage her work-family articulation problems, this seasoned CPE educator replied:

> In private daycare centres, schedules are mostly 5 days a week and the salary is more attractive, but now, with the increase in wages women were able to consider the 4-day schedule and still balance their budget. This occurred at the creation of CPEs round, if I recall, 1990 or 1993, around that time. The movement caught on in those years.

4.2.4. Measures available in CPEs

We focused on concrete work-family measures offered in CPEs and in social economy sector enterprises. The tables below [?] show data obtained in our investigation of CPEs[6] to determine if such measures exist and are available, if people avail themselves of them, or if they do not exist, whether people would need them or could do without.

Our data show that early childhood centres exist even where people would not need them—no doubt because their children are now older (63 %). We can see that 224% [?] of respondents use the early childhood services at work, meaning in their own CPE.

The second part of the table concerning work-life articulation measures explore the information and reference services often considered very important as support to workers in emergency or unexpected situations. Almost 65% of respondents indicate that such services exist in their childcare organisation and 35% use them.

Regarding leave from work for personal or family reasons, 89% of workers will avail themselves of the possibilities while only 6% will not although they have a right to them. Approximately 4% state that they cannot enjoy this privilege, which is relatively rare on the employment market.

Flexible schedules are the most important issue for parents in Québec (Tremblay, 2008), and 64% indicate that they use them; 4% say that this does not exist in their

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[6] Cf Tremblay (2010) for an overall assessment of the social economy sector, including

organisation and they add that they have no need for flexible work schedules. It is interesting to note that flexible work schedules are not available to a little more than 23% of workers who could make use of such arrangements.

The 4-day workweek is used by 58% of respondents while 14% state that they would not use it although it exists in their organisation. Approximately 27% indicate that this measure is not available in their organisation; further, 19% would like to have access to this kind of measure while 8% consider they have no need for it.

Voluntary part-time work is the choice of very few people (8%); it is available without being used by 31% of respondents. Only 15% would like to utilize that format and another 46% reply that this option is not available to them and that they would have no need for it.

Voluntary work-sharing (two persons share the same work) is another extremely rare occurrence in the workplace; indeed, 69% of respondents indicate that the format does not exist and that they do not need it while 10% indicate that they would use it if it was available. Only 4% mention that they work under this regime and 16% state that the option is available but that they have no need for it.

Telework or work at home is used by 10% while 20% are not offered this possibility and would choose this option. Approximately 67% of respondents belong to organisations where such option does not exist and deem they have no need for it. It must be noted, however, that telework cannot apply to an educator but could be an option for CPE management personnel only, or for secretary work, for the compliance agent and for the pedagogical (reinforcement) support agent.

We also explored career progression or advancement opportunities adapted to family requirements. Among the respondents, 29% take advantage of them in their organisation, 26% say it *does not exist* and that they do not need it while 32% state that it *does exist* and is not needed. Finally, 11% would like to benefit from such opportunities even if not offered in their organisation.

4.2.4. Parental leave

In January 2006, Québec implemented a parental leave program that offers a choice to young working parents: the modes to choose from are a longer leave at reduced benefit or a shorter leave with higher benefit; the regime includes a three to five week period available exclusively to the father. Earnings eligible to the program are higher than in the Canadian parental leave program (granted in the framework of the unemployment insurance system which had been offered in Québec until 2006) in order to reduce salary losses inherent to parental leave. In addition, the program offers more flexibility as an incentive for parents to take up the leave, especially fathers (Doucet and Tremblay, 2009). However, while parental leave is regulated and is available to all, it is not mandatory and many factors are involved in workers' decision to take up the leave or not, and to determine its duration (Doucet, Mc Kay and Tremblay, 2009).

In the online questionnaire, we asked several questions intended to identify these factors within social economy enterprises and to assess their import on parental leave take up and duration.

One question referred directly to salary losses: "I did not take up or will not take up parental leave because it is financially uninteresting". Among the respondents, 20% either agreed or totally agreed with the statement while 22% were non-committal. The question revealed that 21% of respondents rather disagreed or totally disagreed with the statement.

At 20%, the proportion of parents who feel that the financial drawback involved in the parental leave program being 'too much of a sacrifice' is in our eyes rather high and somewhat contradicts the comments we gathered during the face-to-face interviews. All our respondents indeed both men and women had taken one or several parental leaves in their career but when asked if they thought they had been penalized, all responded negatively (were not penalized).

Statistical data show that our respondents feel at ease with taking up parental leave and that a majority did not hesitate to choose the longest available leave period (often 10-11 months for women); this is believed to mean that the work environment shows great acceptance of this work-family measure.

Let us once more recall that women are a majority in these enterprises and that managers have grown accustomed to see female employees take parental leave; as a consequence, the work environment shows flexibility in this respect.

In the online questionnaire, we also wanted to find out who, between the respondent or her partner, had taken the parental leave. A statement read "I did not or will not take up the parental leave because it is easier for my partner to do so". Less than 4% of respondents indicated they were in agreement or in total agreement with the statement. Quite understandably, our respondents are females and with precautionary cessation of work and maternity leave women are the target population of this work-family measure.

In the same line of thought, we investigated how parental leave was distributed between partners. The question read "At the time of the last parental leave, indicate who, between your partner or yourself took up the leave"; more than 82% of respondents replied they availed themselves of the measure (mostly women) while 16% indicated that both partners took up the parental leave. In Québec on the average, men take seven weeks off when a child is born or adopted.

Another significant element or factor can be used to assess organisational support to work-family articulation, and that is the impact of work-family measures on one's career. In order to probe this issue, a statement was designed as follows: "I did not or will not take up parental leave because it would have an impact on my career". Hardly more than 5% of respondents agreed with the statement (against 10% in the social economy sector overall) and 78% rather disagreed or disagreed totally.

5.   **Conclusion**

Data presented throughout this document show how CPEs offer adequate organisational support toward work-family articulation: management, colleagues, and measures. It is interesting to note that the situation is to a certain extent similar in other sectors of the social economy (NPOs, cooperatives). Although the number of respondents was smaller in the latter subsectors, support seems just as adequate and differences or gaps are very narrow between CPEs and the social economy sector. Our data pertaining to other subsectors reveal more significant differences and from this vantage point it is clear that social economy work environments and CPEs in particular are open to work-family articulation and offer adequate and relevant organisational support.

It is nevertheless difficult to explain why this subsector in the social economy would provide such strong support to work-family articulation while several other sectors offer so little, including work environments with a social mission and mostly managed by women (i.e., social work; cf. Fusulier, Tremblay & di Loreto, 2008). It seems that the values inherent to the social economy sector would explain the situation: offering people-oriented services or performing some form of social work cannot in itself explain why work-family articulation is given support. Actually, such support is not found to the same extent in social work or nursing (Fusulier, Tremblay & di Loreto 2008; Tremblay and Larivière 2010).

CPEs are populated by women (99%) including a large proportion of female managers and this may contribute to reinforce organisational support to work-family articulation measures. Moreover as was mentioned earlier, a female-dominated work environment tends to increase the number of maternity or parental leaves (with durations up to a total of one year in Québec). Therefore according to the data gathered during the interviews, it seems that the frequency of such events leads to normalcy in the outcomes which translate into significant support toward work leaves for family reasons. In CPEs most employees are women and a pregnant educator has a right to precautionary cessation of work; the organisation must systematically accommodate such situations and has no doubt developed appropriate practices until they became routine.

Another factor likely to explain the scope of organisational support in social economy enterprises may have to do with managers' familiarity with the benefits of work-family articulation in their own work environment. The benefits were widely documented (Tremblay 2008; Barrère-Maurisson and Tremblay 2009) and the relevant studies show without doubt that employers may benefit as well in terms of problem reduction (and savings thereof) related to absenteeism, attendance problems including coming in late at work, to personnel turnover, diminishing allegiance and risks involved in employees' dwindling dependability for lack of organisational support toward their parental role. CPEs are relatively small-sized workplaces and this allows managers to better observe how work-family related measures actually benefit the organisation.

A supportive work-family environment earn managers a very high rate of satisfaction at work as exemplified by responses to the following statement: "Globally, would you say that you are satisfied with your job?" More than 98% of our CPE participants replied positively, which confirms the importance of work-family articulation

workweek and schedule flexibility). Those types of measures are common in CPE work environments and employees express their satisfaction with them.

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