



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

**WORK-FAMILY ARTICULATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY:
DOES DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

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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. Vieillesse 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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WORK-FAMILY ARTICULATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY: DOES DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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Abstract: We consider that work-family articulation measures should be considered as essential to economic sustainability as defined by IWPLMS, since it is essential to economic security, particularly for women in the labour market. Our research thus tries to determine if specific forms of management are more favorable to work-life articulation, and in fine, to economic security. Our research compares perceived organizational support to work-life articulation measures and policies in the social economy sector with various work environments in order to determine whether a democratic management environment may be more favourable to work life balance, and therefore offer a more sustainable form of employment. It does appear that the social mission and its impact on the organisational context can be more supportive of its workers in a perspective of work-life balance. More specifically, our paper asks the question whether the social economy sector, with its explicit mission and management approach (participative decision-making process) might have an influence on organizational support to work-life balance (WLB) and thus reduce the perception of WLB-related difficulties. We studied the social economy sector in Québec and compared findings with three other sectors in the public service that also have a public service mission but not the same management mode or philosophy: a metropolitan police service, social work and nursing, all in the same city.

Our research identifies many significant differences between the four sectors, apparently owing to the characteristics of the social economy sector. In addition to our quantitative research (about 800 respondents in all, 400 in the social economy sector), we conducted interviews (36) in the social economy sector and results confirm that the specificity of this sector, i.e., mission, philosophy and management mode, appear to explain the overriding concern for WLB in the social economy sector. Although more research would need to be done in other firms with various forms of democratic management, this is a first contribution to the issue.

Keywords: organization of daily life, organisational support, work-family conflict, worklife balance, social economy sector.

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the Call for Papers, « economic sustainability implies the ability of economic systems to be able to proactively ensure economic security for its members. This can be understood as a flow of resources (monetary, services, etc.) sufficient to ensure the coverage of needs and an appropriate degree of stability thereof. Sustainability in economic terms should be considered from a spatial (countries, regions, urban areas) and personal perspective: the possibility each person has to achieve a satisfactory standard of living. » We consider that work-family articulation measures should be seen as essential to economic sustainability as defined here, since it is essential to economic security, particularly for women in the labour market. Our research thus tries to determine if specific forms of management are more

Work-family conflict and work-life balance have been high on the agenda for some time now. In the 90's, research on work-life balance focused mainly on the difficulties faced by parents of young children (Guérin *et al.*, 1997), while more recently the interest has turned to measures and policies developed by organisations to support work-family articulation (Duxbury and Higgins, 2003; Fusulier *et al.*, 2006). Some studies (Guérin *et al.*, 1994, Haas *et al.*, 2002, Lewis, 2001, Frone *et al.*, 1992) also shed light on the importance of organisational culture and of the attitudes and behaviours of colleagues and managers as key determinants of work-life balance.

However, it is only recently that the public sector has been the object of research (Secret and Swanberg, 2008), since most research has been concentrated on private firms. Some research has highlighted the fact that large firms and public organizations might be more favourable to work-life balance, and Guerin *et al.* (1997) observed that organisational culture does influence the degree of work-family conflict. From an organisational standpoint, it seems that organisations can play a favourable or unfavourable mediating role in the development and implementation of family-friendly practices and policies (Fusulier *et al.*, 2008, Fusulier *et al.*, 2006). However, while some comparisons have been done between organisations, we have seen no attempt to test the idea that *more participatory and democratic* mission-derived management style (particularly in the social economy) may have an influence on the way the issue of work-family reconciliation is managed. We therefore decided to look into the matter.

From another point of view, other studies (Families and Work Institute, 1998) highlighted the possibly positive impact of the presence of a high percentage of women in the workforce and in the management of an organisation. Consequently, we might think that employees of strongly feminized sectors and employees of strongly masculine sectors would have different perceptions of work-life balance support in their organisation. Former research led us to compare different occupational classes from a gendered perspective. We studied a traditionally masculine sector in order to determine if professional environments and organisational cultures could play a specific mediating role in the perception of work-life balance and if masculine sectors generate more difficulties in this respect. Results showed the contrary; the gender issue does not seem to be a self-standing factor across the board. Indeed, we found that a masculine work environment (police) can offer better support to work-family balance than some female sectors (nursing and social work). (Tremblay and Larivière, 2010, 2009)

We thus wanted to investigate the incidence of organisational culture on the perceptions of work-life balance in different sectors, some more masculine (police) and some more feminine (nursing, social work) and another, mixed but with a more democratic management and different mission, i.e., an organisation in the social economy sector. We decided to study the social economy sector in Québec to see if this factor, the social economy mission and culture, has an influence on the organisational support and the perceptions related to work-family balance. It seemed that human resources managers of social economy organisations were likely to pay more attention to work-life balance issue, given their "social" mission. This is what we set out to study.

Before discussing the findings and in order to set the scene, we outline the research methodology and a brief literature review on organisational support and work-life balance.

1. Work-life balance and organizational support

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as the incompatibility between the demands

other role difficult. The conflict appears when individuals perceive the demands of their family are incompatible with the demands of their job, and vice versa (Frone and Rice, 1987). Work-life balance measures, sometimes called family-friendly policies, generally aim at reducing this conflict and at facilitating the organisation of times and responsibilities of employees.

Research has identified various factors associated with work environment, which influence the degree of work-family conflict. Family-friendly practices, but also the support of colleagues and management, have been found to have a significant impact to reduce work-family conflict (Conference Board of Canada, 1994, Duxbury and Higgins, 2003, Kossek and Ozeki, 1998, Rothbard et al., 2005).

A certain number of studies report the lack of time expressed by parents of young children, mainly of children under 6 years old, but also sometimes of teenagers (Conference Board of Canada, 1994, Galinsky et al., 2001, Frederick, 1995, Tremblay, 2008), as well as the work-family conflict they experience (Stephens and Sommer, 1996).

Galinsky *et al.* (2001) note that managers and professionals are more exposed to work overload than other employees; the number of hours they devote to paid work is also significantly higher than in other groups. Duxbury *et al.* (1993) obtain similar results; professionals work longer hours than other groups of workers, which can amplify work-family conflict. Frederick and Fast (2001) highlight the fact that Canadian managers or self-employed are less satisfied with their work-family balance than less qualified workers because they experience more "time famine" (Perlow, 1999). Elliott, Dale and Egerton (2001) show that it is easier for non qualified women than for professional women to balance work and family. This led us to study professionals in very demanding work environments, that is nursing, social work, police work, and finally to compare them to an also demanding work environment, that of the social economy (childcare mainly, but also some service cooperatives and other social economy organizations).

Several researchers stress the importance of the organisational culture and of the attitudes and behaviours of colleagues and managers in the analysis of work-family conflict (Haas et al., 2002, Lewis, 2001). In addition, an American survey carried out by the Families and Work Institute (1998) showed that occupying a demanding employment added to the lack of organisational support, tend to make employees more stressed, less apt to face difficulties, ill-tempered and less energetic after work, which can reduce personal and family wellbeing. This situation can generate the transfer of family problems to work, which would reduce employees' performance. Organisational support to work-family balance thus appears as a key element to increase both organisational performance and employees' wellbeing. That is the reason why we focused on this question in this research.

The survey of the Families and Work Institute (1998) indicates that the most important determinants of the presence of programs, policies but also organisational support to work-family balance are, by order of importance: the sector, the size of the organisation and the proportion of women occupying executive positions. This led us to pay particular attention to the sector and to retain masculine (police) and feminine (nursing, social work and social economy) sectors, since the proportion of women in the workforce and the proportion of women in the management are generally linked.

The sector and the professional category thus appear to be variables that can influence work-family conflict, but research has not yet, to our knowledge, differentiated organisations according to their management mode. i.e. comparing for example participative or more democratic organisations, vs traditional hierarchical organisations, which we will do here looking at social economy organisations vs large public organisations. We will now present the social economy sector.

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

According to a CSMO-ESAC¹ survey conducted in 2000, the social economy sector's workforce is predominantly feminine: 76% work in non-profit organizations and 44% in cooperatives. In these businesses overall, women held 63% of the management jobs. In 2005, another study carried out by the *Centre de formation populaire* (CFP) and *Relais-femmes*, women held 80% of all the 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 online):

- 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 state-independent.
- Statutes and the operations include democratic decision-making processes that involve users and workers.
- In the distribution of its surpluses and revenues, the enterprise promotes the primacy of persons and of work over capital.
- Activities are founded on participatory principles, self-empowerment, and on individual and collective responsibility.

Social economy businesses are 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 childcare sector. We identified the social economy sector for investigation in order to determine whether a more democratically managed work environment is more receptive or adaptive to work-family issues and concerns.

The other sectors to which we will compare the social economy are not described here since most readers are familiar with them; suffice it to say that all three (social work, police service and nursing) belong to the public sector and are large, top-heavy organisations.

3. Methodology

Our investigation of the social economy sector was conducted in 2009 using mixed methodologies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Patton, 1990); we combined qualitative and quantitative methods. We first conducted a quantitative survey where participants were invited to answer an online questionnaire; this was followed by a qualitative investigation using semi structured interviews.²

¹ Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre, de l'économie sociale et de l'action communautaire.

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 phase of

The online questionnaire was made 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. Participants were also polled on different aspects of leave for family reasons and on parental leave. Finally, we managed to assess whether our respondents were satisfied with the way they could balance their professional and their family responsibilities.

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), 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 (REF) have shown that adequately designed measures, taken up by workers, do contribute to reduce work-family conflict occurrences. Our questionnaire was prepared with these central themes in mind.

The same questions were administered to the four sectors but the previous three (social services, police, nursing) were conducted in 2007 and 2008. All respondents were contacted through email and directed to the online survey except the nursing sector; in that case, a hard copy questionnaire was used (nurses do not easily access Internet on the job).

In the police sector, we surveyed a metropolitan police service. For nurses, the entry point was their professional corporation (FIQ), and social workers were also contacted through their professional corporation (OPTSQ). For the social economy sector, however, we called upon the support of different regional or provincial organisations or clusters whose members are active in social economy enterprises. This approach is efficient but does not allow to assess a response rate with precision. We nevertheless received hundreds of 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 police sector, we processed 164 forms, 418 forms in the social work sector, and 144 in nursing (those respondents had filled a hard copy questionnaire, not an online survey).

In the social economy sector, 423 persons completed the survey—28 men and 395 women. Of the total, 69% of respondents work in early childcare centres, 14% in cooperatives and 17% in not-for-profit enterprises. Among them, 70% are employees while 30% perform management functions. More than 92% of respondents hold a regular job. Further, 80% of our respondents in the social economy sector are under the age of 45 and 37,5% have at least one child under the age of 6. Most employees enjoy some seniority with their current employer: 26% have more than 10 years in length of service, 30% have between 6 and 10 years, and 43% have 5 years or less. Among the respondents, 84% live with a spouse and this is where professional and family concerns and issues are relevant to WLB measures.

4. Results

4.1. Work-family balance difficulties

We first asked respondents if they had the feeling they could easily manage conflicts between their professional life and their family life and it appears there are some significant differences ; the analysis particularly highlights significant differences between the social economy sector and the police sector as well as with the social work sector, although the size effect is small in the statistical differences ($p < 0,05$ and small effect size $r^2 = 0,050$)³. Nevertheless, the descriptive data do show some differences as can be seen in Table 1. It is particularly noteworthy that the social economy sector respondents are the ones who present the strongest agreement with the proposition since they are 73 % (the highest percentage of all groups) indicating that they do manage the issues to their satisfaction (addition of agree and totally agree). The police sector comes next, which may be surprising and indeed we were surprised when we first looked at the data, since we would expect a masculine sector to present more difficulties. Indeed, contrary to what we expected –i.e. work-life balance is more difficult in a masculine work environment (Families and Work, 1998)- we found that the police sector seems to offer a better support to work-family balance than two other strongly feminized sectors – nursing and social work (Tremblay and Larivière, 2009), especially with respect to parental leaves, which are much more easily supported here. Of course the police sector presents specific difficulties for work-life balance, in particular due to the schedules of work, which go 24 hours a day, implying many rotating and night shifts, as in the nursing sector. However, not only this data, but the analysis of all the survey data (qualitative and quantitative) has shown clearly that the support of managers and colleagues (exchange of shifts for example) in the police sector make it possible to partly compensate for these difficulties related to schedules (Labrèche and Lavoie, 2004; Lavoie, 2005; Thompson et al., 2005). The collaboration of colleagues came out as particularly important as a mediating effect of the professional environment and it does have an impact on the (rather positive) perception of work-life balance.

However, the social economy sector presents an even more positive picture, while the social work and even more the nursing sector present more disagreement with the proposition, thus indicating higher levels of difficulty, as is shown in table 1.

Table 1

I have the feeling that I manage to reconcile well my professional and family life

	Social economy	Police	Social work	Nursing	Total
Totally disagree	12 3,03%	5 2,67%	14 3,35%	7 4,61%	38 3,30%
Rather disagree	51 12,88%	31 16,58%	69 16,51%	41 26,97%	192 16,65%
Neutral	42	33	136	36	247

³ The Wilcoxon tests are created specifically to calculate the differences between groups for ordinal variables and they also allow calculation of the importance of a particular effect. The level of significance is not sufficient to qualify a difference between groups as small, medium or large, especially with a large sample size. The results of the analysis using Cohen's method are based on the variance explained by the relations between the variables. It is thus possible to differentiate the importance of two significant differences. Consequently, using the effect size, this analysis takes into account the number of respondents and offers an opportunity to better qualify the differences as

	10,61%	17,65%	32,54%	23,68%	21,42%
Agree	204	79	116	56	455
	51,52%	42,25%	27,75%	36,84%	39,46%
Totally agree	87	39	83	12	221
	21,97%	20,86%	19,86%	7,89%	19,17%
Total	396	187	418	152	1153
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

In order to get a more complete view of the issue, we used other propositions that had been tested in the literature on work-family balance (Guérin et al, 1997, 1994) and then asked respondents if they had the feeling they were sacrificing their professional life for their family life, or the opposite if they were sacrificing their family life for their professional life. In Table 2, there are significant differences between all the groups ($p < 0,05$ and small effect size $r^2 = 0,050$), except police and nursing who both tend to agree somewhat more with the proposition than the others.

The data indicate that most respondents are in disagreement that they are sacrificing their professional life, many of them being neutral towards the proposition and a small percentage being in agreement (8 % in social economy, 3 % in social work, but up to 17 % in police work and 20 % in nursing. This seems to indicate that in the case of nursing, it is particularly difficult and in police work also, it may be somewhat difficult to easily reconcile both.

Table 2
I have the feeling that I am sacrificing my professional life for my family life

	Social economy	Police	Social work	Nursing	Total
Totally disagree	149	61	209	43	462
	37,63%	32,97%	50,00%	28,29%	40,14%
Rather disagree	126	35	107	36	304
	31,82%	18,92%	25,60%	23,68%	26,41%
Neutral	86	57	85	43	271
	21,72%	30,81%	20,33%	28,29%	23,54%
Agree	32	28	13	28	101
	8,08%	15,14%	3,11%	18,42%	8,77%
Totally agree	3	4	4	2	13
	0,76%	2,16%	0,96%	1,32%	1,13%
Total	396	185	418	152	1151
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

In table 3, we can see that it is in the nursing sector that people feel they are sacrificing their family life for their professional life. We know that there is a labour shortage in this sector so this may explain partly the situation. Here the dominant statistical differences are between the nursing sector and the others, significant differences being found here ($p \geq 0,05$ small size effect, $r^2 = 0,031$).

The statistical analysis does not reveal significant differences for the social economy sector, except with the nursing sector, so it appears that in the three other sectors (police, social work and social economy), it is not necessary to sacrifice one's family life for the professional life. Still some 23 % do feel this in the social economy sector, some 23 % as well in the police sector and 19 % in the nursing sector, while it is 48 % in the

nursing sector (totals of agree and totally agree). A good percentage of individuals are neutral on this issue, mainly in the police and social work sectors.

Table 3

I have the feeling that I am sacrificing my family life for my professional life

	Social economy	Police	Social work	Nursing	Total
Totally disagree	95 23,99%	51 27,72%	120 28,71%	23 15,03%	289 25,11%
Rather disagree	125 31,57%	33 17,93%	101 24,16%	28 18,30%	287 24,93%
Neutral	84 21,21%	58 31,52%	119 28,47%	30 19,61%	291 25,28%
Agree	77 19,44%	34 18,48%	57 13,64%	58 37,91%	226 19,64%
Totally agree	15 3,79%	8 4,35%	21 5,02%	14 9,15%	58 5,04%
Total	396 100,00%	184 100,00%	418 100,00%	153 100,00%	1151 100,00%

4.2. Organisational support to WLB

With respect to organisational support toward parental and family responsibilities, a number of studies draw attention on the importance of organisational culture and the behaviour or attitude of colleagues or managers (or supervisors) when problems arise in balancing professional and personal responsibilities (Haas *et al.*, 2002; Lewis, 2001). Elsewhere, Guérin *et al.* (1997) found that organisational culture may affect work-family conflicts; according to that research conducted among union members, workers perceive that WLB is made easier when they incur no loss or suffer no consequence for taking care of their family. Conflicts are also toned down when the employee believes that his manager or supervisor expresses empathy or accepts accommodations or arrangements that help balancing professional activities and family life. Caussignac (2000) indicates that organisational support contributes significantly to lessen work-family conflict. Chenevier (1996) identifies three studies that underline the influence of non receptive attitudes or lack of flexibility of the supervisor toward employees and work-family conflicts. Negative attitudes stress the employee and feed discontent; as a result, employees take leave from work more often. Nelson and Quick (1985) developed a model of stressing agents among employed professional women and several of the variables are related to the organisation. According to a number of studies, support from colleagues appears to be among the significant variables (Guérin *et al.*, 1997, 1994) but this does not crop out as a determinative factor in all studies, hence the interest in pursuing research on organisational support in other sectors such as the social economy sector which has seldom been investigated.

Given what we have written previously on the social economy sector, the fact that its mission is centered on people over other issues, but mainly, its democratic and participative management style, we might hypothesise that this sector would be more supportive to work-family balance. This could be translated into two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The social economy sector offers more support from the superior or management than the others.

Hypothesis 2 : The social economy sector offers more support from the colleagues or management than the others.

We now look at the data on organisational support, that is support from the immediate superior and from the colleagues, as defined by Behson (2005).

In table 4, statistical analysis reveals significant differences between all the groups and here the effect size is high, which means that the differences are here clearly confirmed and important, and there are important differences, i.e. between social economy and each of the other groups. ($p < 0,05$ large size effect, $r^2 = 0,220$).

Table 4
I have the feeling that my superior (manager, coordinator) is supportive in terms of work-family balance

	Social economy	Police	Social work	Nursing	Total
Totally disagree	12 3,02%	7 3,78%	69 16,51%	45 29,22%	133 11,52%
Rather disagree	26 6,53%	23 12,43%	89 21,29%	46 29,87%	184 15,93%
Neutral	78 19,60%	49 26,49%	121 28,95%	26 16,88%	274 23,72%
Agree	139 34,92%	67 36,22%	116 27,75%	35 22,73%	357 30,91%
Totally agree	143 35,93%	39 21,08%	23 5,50%	2 1,30%	207 17,92%
Total	398 100,00%	185 100,00%	418 100,00%	154 100,00%	1155 100,00%

Support is clearly higher in the social economy group. We can see that over 71 % support the proposition, while levels of support are lower in the police sector (57 %) and definitely much lower in the two other groups : 33 % only in the social work sector and 24 % in the nursing sector. This clearly shows that the social economy sector is more supportive and the fact that it is significantly different from the other sectors leads us to think that the social economy mission and mode of management would be the explanation. We thus pursued this question in the interviews and our hypothesis seems supported, as we will show further on, after having analysed the colleagues' support in table 5.

Here again there are many significant differences, since it is only between police and social work, and police and nursing that the differences are not significant. The social economy sector again appears to differentiate itself here. We can see that levels of support from colleagues are higher in this sector : 43 % agreeing and 36 % totally agreeing for a total of 79 % in agreement. The police sector comes next with 65 % agreement, then 60 % in social work and 58 % in nursing. In the interviews we conducted in these sectors, it does come out that colleagues are quite supportive, offering to change schedules in order to accommodate a colleague, finishing up some work for a colleague who has to leave for family reasons and the like. In some cases, it was mentioned to us that colleagues' support can compensate for the lack of superior's support, since it can happen that a manager may not be supportive even if the environment is generally supportive. However, we need to note that some 20 % of nurses indicate that their colleagues are not supportive, about 12 % in social work and police sector, and only 6 % in the social economy sector.

Table 5
I have the feeling that my colleagues are supportive in terms of work-family balance

	Social economy	Police	Social work	Nursing	Total
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	1,51%	2,70%	3,11%	8,39%	3,20%
Rather disagree	20	20	39	19	98
	5,04%	10,81%	9,33%	12,26%	8,48%
Neutral	54	41	115	33	243
	13,60%	22,16%	27,51%	21,29%	21,04%
Agree	172	89	160	71	492
	43,32%	48,11%	38,28%	45,81%	42,60%
Totally agree	145	30	91	19	285
	36,52%	16,22%	21,77%	12,26%	24,68%
Total	397	185	418	155	1155
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

The statistical data cannot explain the reason why the support is higher in the social economy sector and so we conducted some interviews (36) in the social economy sector to have a better understanding of why the social economy sector might be more supportive than others.⁴

5. Factors that can explain the supportive attitude of the social economy sector towards WLB

As we saw, our respondents indicate that the social economy sector is more supportive and we will present here the reasons that people put forward in our interviews to explain this more positive attitude or organisational culture.

5.1 A question of values

The social economy sector goes by the motto of « doing things differently ». They are very much embedded in their history, their social mission, the rules and regulations that support this mission, and all this is oriented towards collective wellbeing. Many persons interviewed in this sector naturally make a link between these values and the fact that their working environment is open to work-family issues.

Work-family balance in continuity with a history of caring

The social economy sector arises from citizens' concerns with issues that are poorly if at all covered by the State and with an interest for local economic development focused more on people than on profit or return. For our respondents, the connection between this history of activism, social struggles, individual needs and the existence of good organisational support to WLB for employees is only logical. According to our respondents for example, the cooperative and union values that underpin the foundation of a number of community organisations explain why WLB measures are embedded in the working conditions of the employees. The coordinator of a community agency thus ties both in the social values promoted by the founders of the enterprise that employs her and the WLB measures:

⁴ We also conducted interviews in the other sectors, but will concentrate here on the social economy since it definitely presents some specificities according to our interviewees. We want to thank Josée Boisvert, research assistant, who conducted these interviews and contributed to this part on the

At the outset, it is a bunch of unionists and people in cooperatives, and producers' cooperatives [who have founded our agency]. They are people who are open to these matters, work-family balance, and who believe in good working conditions generally.

By the same token, another respondent who is active in a work reintegration agency establishes connections between WLB, community-based activism and feminism. For him, the employer's openness to family values and his own responsibilities as a father are in keeping with the values that guided the foundation of the community-based enterprise:

Generally, the values held in community-based organisation... you know, childcare centres were established through community efforts... the connection of community-based issues with feminism and all the rest, it's all intertwined and as a result today nobody bites the bullet if I say that I need to stay home because my son is sick [...].

A mission, with principles of democracy, equity, and respect for individuals

As was seen earlier, the processes, rules and operating principles that guide enterprises in the social economy are based on a shared vision of both collective and individual well-being. Moreover, according to the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, the principal defining characteristic of social economy enterprises is to pursue "economic development with a social mission". The social mission is therefore an intrinsic part of the activities and/or the operation of the business. The persons we have met therefore believe that the employers' openness to WLB stems from that social mission which in turn shapes how personnel management is streamed.

For example, we asked one day-care teacher if she believed that the available WLB measures were in keeping with the mission of the enterprise, there was no hesitation as to their connectedness:

Of course, for sure. It's really embedded in the childcare centre's policies. The mission statement clearly advocates work-family balance. [...] Absolutely. Everybody here deeply believes in this and indeed family comes first.

For one early childcare centre manager, the link between WLB and the mission of the enterprise is logical and obvious:

It's because in day-care centres we spend lots of time... actually this is what we are assigned to do, taking care of the children, and when they're sick I call the parents and tell them that they must pick them up [...] I, for one, require from the parents whose kids are sick... I call them and tell them that they must come to pick them up immediately, so you understand that I can't tell my employees who face a

similar situation 'No, you must stay at work and forget about your child for the time being'.

The same question was put the employee of a housekeeping services cooperative catering to persons experiencing loss of independence; this respondent believes that offering services to people in need requires that all the personnel be sensitive to other people's needs and therefore understand the necessity of WLB measures.

Likewise, one founding member of a cooperative, the father of two toddlers, explained why he founded a worker cooperative; it is because, he says, the philosophy and the operating rules promote equity principles, democratic decision-making and a concern for persons. These are naturally in keeping with work-life balance measures.

A number of respondents indicated that the decision-making process in their enterprise is often carried out in teams. As we have seen earlier, collective enterprises establish, in their statutes and code of conduct, "*a democratic decision-making process that implies the necessary participation of users and workers*". While an overwhelming majority of respondents work in collective businesses that are managed or coordinated by persons who supervise decisional processes, both managers and employees among the respondents have indicated that decisions are taken collectively or at least discussed in teams. For example, managers will often submit their opinion to employees or request their opinion on matters of concern to them. This process blends in with managers' concerns for their employees' needs and well-being. We shall return to this question in the following section.

5.2 Values shared by the managers and employees

The intrinsic values in the social economy movement are seen as the building blocks on which the openness to work-life balance grows. In addition, it seems that our sample of managers in social economy enterprises individually share the same set of values which are carried over to work-life balance issues. As we have learned, measures toward work-family balance bear little fruit where managers fail to support them with an open mind (Behson, 2005; Duxbury and Higgins, 2003; Behson, 2005). It is crucial that values inform management attitudes. In this sense, the take up of leaves for family reasons eventually allows to confirm the significance of management support in this respect.

During the interviews, our respondents who hold management positions have spoken of the values that strengthen their behaviour with respect to work-life balance measures, and employees told us about the values they perceived in their employers⁵.

Managers caring for the wellbeing and needs of their employees

At the outset, we observe that the managers interviewed express an interest in the general wellbeing of their employees. One manager in charge of a cooperative told us how the organisation is sensitive to employee needs in terms of work-life balance:

Yes, well I'd say—for myself and the members of the board—that there is a belief in the central importance of human values in the organisation. [...] administrative processes are centered on the

⁵ Here, 'managers' include directors, coordinators and persons who sit on the board of social economy enterprises, since the latter are the ones who "manage" the directors and coordinators in

employee. And while we focus on employee needs, we listen to them and try to implement solutions that are supportive. [...] We systematically try to offer them the best possible support.

The same concerns are held by board members. To explain the board's outlook on their responsibilities, one coordinator believes that board members are concerned with employee needs as well:

No doubt board members always fully supported me in this respect. They have an intimate understanding of what it is to 'be employed'. Upfront, they believe that work should not impinge too much on personal life. [...] And there is constant monitoring of employee satisfaction with their job. [...] Board members pay attention to employee needs.

Likewise, those among our respondents who are parents of young children report that their supervisors are aware of their parental situation. On this subject, one kindergarten educator mentions the comments of her supervisor concerning the extension of business hours imposed on the childcare centre:

The childcare centre reacted strongly to the extension of business hours... Simply, the manager said "Listen, we can't ask this of an educator who is the parent of young children", especially from the person who has to lock the premises at the end of the day. She said "It is nonsense to get home at six thirty with young children." So indeed managers are very much aware... [...]

However aware and sensitive, managers and supervisors may not have the possibility to accommodate employees at all times. We have seen that a number of enterprises manage to build an organisational culture that will permeate the behaviour of all work teams with informal rules that are favourable to parents of young children.

In a number of enterprises where the nature of the services allow for it, employees are allowed to decide for themselves how many hours per week they will work to accommodate their needs and responsibilities. This approach is used in enterprises devoted to home-care services where a fixed number of "clients" is assigned to individual employees in order to fill their self-determined working schedule each week. This choice of a work schedule applies to a full year but it can be reconsidered as needs arise.

So an employee can tell us "I don't want to work more than 20 hours per week" and we'll accommodate that. They'll provide their weekly availability and we'll book them with clients according to that schedule. [...] They provide this once every year and we arrange our services accordingly. And whenever employees have family reasons or other material constraints that force them to rearrange their availability, we meet with them and make the adjustments to their schedule to suit their needs.

We know that forms of organisational support offered to employees can contribute to the reduction of stress when faced with work-life balance constraints (Behson, 2005; Families and Work Institute, 1998). In this respect, it is interesting to realise that even the managers we have met tend to recognise and approve that their employees would take leave from work for family reasons. As employers, they unwaveringly reassure and support them in their parental commitments. Here is how two managers —in a childcare centre and in a community agency— view the issue:

[...] when there is a serious reason to miss work, and this is what I told the person, I said “Look, you don’t need to worry about your job. I know your child is sick and that times are rough for you. So, why don’t you straighten out those aspects of your life and when you come back, you’ll feel so much better.” [...]

[...] it’s also that the person can count on her employer. So, whatever is happening in her life, whether she needs one week off, or two weeks, or if she needs six months, if that’s the priority for her or him, we’ll try to help out.

Conclusion

In conclusion let us recall our main observations. First, it is clearly easier to balance work and family in the social economy sector in comparison with the other sectors. While this could be attributed to the strong presence of women in the sector, this is not sufficient, since the social work and nursing sectors are also very feminine and it appears more difficult to balance work and family in these sectors. In particular in the nursing sector, it was shown that professional life spills into private and family life much more than is the case in other sectors, amongst which the social economy sector.

In the second part of our demonstration, we showed that organisational support in the form of the superior’s support and the colleagues’ support are both more important in the social economy sector than in others. While the police sector came in second place, there were significant differences between all groups, with more support from the supervisor in the social economy sector, and quite little in the social work and even more nursing sector.

We then tried to explain the reasons for which this support appears more important in the social economy sector, and here we referred to the qualitative part of our research, as the interviews made it possible to discuss the reasons why the social economy sector could be more supportive than the other sectors.

The history of the sector, its accent on a social mission, with principles of democracy, equity, and respect for individuals seems to be very clearly the explanation. As mentioned, it could have been the fact that there are somewhat more women in some of the social economy organisations (mainly in the daycare sector, but less in the cooperatives), but this is contradicted by the fact that in the very feminine sectors of nursing and social work, there is definitely not as much support. It thus appears that it is the accent on caring, on respect for individuals’ lives, but also the participation of workers (and parents in the case of daycare institutions) that could explain the clearly stronger organisational support for work-family balance in this sector.

We were to a certain extent surprised to observe this stronger support since we might have expected that public sector organisations (such as found in nursing, social work and police) would have more means to offer better working conditions and better support for work-family balance. This also appears to confirm the thesis put forward by Behson (2005), indicating that organisational support (from supervisors and colleagues) is at least as important as formal measures. Indeed, while formal measures and policies may well exist in public sector organisations, it may be that the application of these is quite rigid and therefore that the objective of

We need to mention now a few limits of the research and avenues for further research.

First, we need to recognize the fact that for statistical analysis some of our groups were not numerous enough or not sufficiently differentiated to give strong results. We still had strong results in many cases, but it would definitely be interesting to have access to more male workers, cooperatives and other work environments in the social economy sector. We made many efforts to reach cooperatives and male workers but this proved very difficult and in the end the respondents are dominated by the social economy daycare sector to a certain extent. While this does not impede analysis at the level of the whole social economy sector, it does make it more difficult to make analysis within the sectors.

In future research we would therefore like to pursue the research in the cooperative sector and gain more male respondents in order to do a gendered analysis of the situation in the social economy sector. It is of course already very good to have obtained some 400 respondents in the social economy as in the social work sector, and almost 200 in the police sector, some 154 in the nursing sector, but we will try to obtain more male respondents in the social economy sector to see if men in this sector obtain a better support than in male sectors, where it is often said that support for work-family balance is not high on the agenda.

As concerns the more general issue of economic security and the contribution of work-life articulation measures to economic security of women in particular, our results confirm that the specificity of this sector, i.e., mission, philosophy and management mode, appear to explain the important concern for work-life articulation in the social economy sector. Although more research would need to be done in other firms with various forms of democratic management, this is a first contribution to the issue.

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