

BOSTON COLLEGE

CENTER FOR WORK & FAMILY

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SERIES

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Work-Life in Mexico: Policy, Practice and Culture

The Economic, Political, and Social Context in Mexico

Mexico is an upper-middle income country according to the World Bank's country classification and a high human development country according to UNDP's Human Development Reports (UNDP, 2013b). Its modern cities and natural landscapes, racial and ethnic diversity, affluence and poverty, collectivism and violence, social movements and artistic expressions make Mexico an interesting mosaic of contrasts.

Mexico has enjoyed economic stability and a growing financial system despite the recent financial crisis in Europe and the U.S. slowdown (World Bank, ND). Its participation in the North America Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and Canada (NAFTA) and its close geographical proximity to the U.S. has made Mexico an attractive country for foreign investment. The country has maintained strong and stable economic growth since 2010 at an average of 4.15% (OECD, 2013), making it the fastest growing country in Latin America, and it currently enjoys low inflation rates.

As the second largest economy in Latin America, Mexico is a leading actor in the region and the rest of the world. It is among the developing countries that have made substantial advances in terms of human development in the last three decades. Today, Mexico is ranked 61st out of the 187 countries of the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures achievement in the three dimensions of long and healthy life, education, and a decent standard of living (UNDP, 2013a). However, despite overall advances in health, education and income, inequality in Mexico persists.

Mexico: Human Development Indicators

Demography	Population, total both sexes (thousands)	112,336.5
Human Development Index	Ranking	61 out of 187 countries
Health	Life expectancy at birth (years)	74
Education	Mean years of schooling (of adults) (years)	8.5
Income	GNI per capita in PPP terms (constant 2005 international \$)	12,947
Poverty	Population below national poverty line (percentage)	51

Source: (INEGI, 2013b; UNDP, 2013a, 2013b)

For example, Mexico is home of Carlos Slim, who has been ranked the richest billionaire in the world consecutively since 2010 by Forbes. Yet, 51% of Mexico's population lives below the national poverty line. Escaping poverty is particularly difficult in unequal societies, and Mexico is no exception. Factors like parental wealth, parental occupation and even skin color, which are not under individual control, are indicative of occupational and educational attainment, especially for the lower socio-economic groups (Flores & Telles, 2012; Villarreal, 2010).

Over the past five years, after the global financial crisis, the labor market situation in Mexico has remained below pre-crisis levels and job quality has worsened (ILO, 2013). The current unemployment rate of 4.9% (OECD, 2013) masks the extent of the informal economy, which is one of the biggest challenges in Mexico. Underemployment is estimated at 25% (CIA, ND) and as much as 60% of the total working population is in the informal sector without legal or institutional protection (INEGI, 2012).

Historically, the political situation in Mexico has been unstable. In 2000, after ruling the country for 70 years, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost the presidential elections against the National Action Party (PAN). PAN succeeded in remaining in power for only two presidential periods, which were characterized by increased violence in the country in response to the Government's war on drug cartels, as well as unsuccessful changes to fundamental reforms. On December 1st, 2012 Enrique Peña Nieto assumed the presidency, granting power to the PRI once more. Peña Nieto beat the front-runner, left-wing Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) candidate Andres Manuel López Obrador, who alleged fraud and called for protests, and drove PAN's Josefina Vázquez Mota into third place. Peña Nieto's administration promises constitutional reforms on energy and telecommunications in order to increase competitiveness and growth in these two important sectors, and efforts to attain greater peace and educational quality under its "Pacto por México." The drug war, which is one of Mexico's major concerns and a topic that continues to dominate headlines globally, will also remain central to the new Government's strategy changes.

Demographic and workforce trends in Mexico

The 2010 national census (INEGI, 2013b) estimates a total Mexican population of 112.3 million people, of whom almost 77% live in urban areas. The percentage of the female population is slightly higher than the male at 51% and 49% respectively. The Mexican population is relatively young. Almost 30% are under 14, while 6% are

older than 65. Among Mexican women, 53% of them are of childbearing age and, on average, women in this group have 2.3 children. Life expectancy in Mexico is almost 74 years.

The Mexican population is primarily categorized in two racial groups: indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The distinction is based on cultural and linguistic characteristics rather than on physical characteristics (Villarreal, 2010). Indigenous people are those who speak an ethnic language and live according to ethnic traditions. Non-indigenous people are mainly represented by "mestizos", a mixed race between Spanish and "indígenas". Most of the Mexicans who do not consider themselves indigenous will call themselves "mestizos". The Mexican national census only collects information on whether a person considers herself/himself "indígena" and speaks ethnic languages. Almost 7% of Mexicans older than 3 years speak an ethnic language and 15% consider themselves "indígena", which leaves the great majority of the population racially unclassified. Although formal racial categorizations in Mexico have been downplayed, informal discrimination based on phenotype exists and is tied to inequality in education and employment (Flores & Telles, 2012; Nutini, 1997; Villarreal, 2010).

Literacy in Mexico is high at 92%. Almost 36% of the population has completed at least one grade of upper secondary education and 18% have completed at least one year of college. These rates have considerably increased from 23% and 9% in the 1990s, respectively. However, although educational achievement has improved, it is considerably below the OECD average (OECD, 2013).

Women and Men in Mexico

Indicator	Women	Men
Population (percentage)	51.1	48.9
Illiteracy rate (percentage)	5.6	8.1
Labor force (percentage)	39.9	60.1
Paid work (hours/week)	38.3	45.9
Household work (hours/week)	26.5	8.9
Child and family care (hours/week)	24.3	13.4

Source: (INEGI, 2011, 2013a, 2013b)

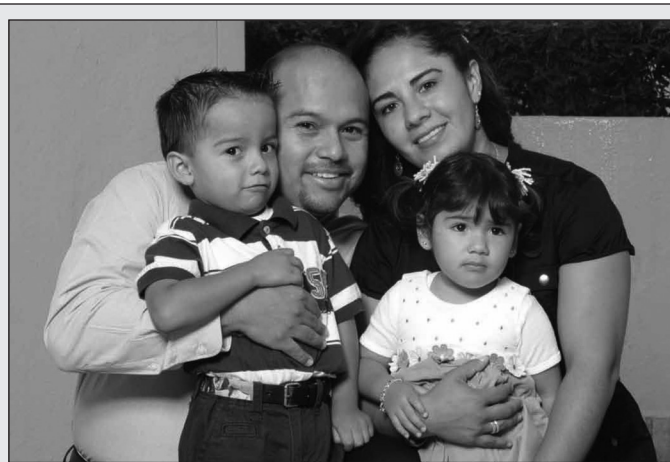
Mexico's formal labor force is estimated in the 2010 national census at some 45 million (INEGI, 2010) and is employed primarily in the service and commerce sectors, which together account for 67% of employment. One of the most important changes in the workforce composition is the increasing participation of women in paid employment in the last four decades. Having increased 14% between 1988 and 2011, women account for almost 40% of the labor force and are highly represented in the service and commerce sectors followed by the manufacturing sector (INEGI, 2011). Women represent 42% of the total of professional and technical workers in the country (UNDP, 2006) reflecting women's increasing levels of higher education. A recent McKinsey & Company report on women in senior management positions in Latin America shows that women represent only 6% of board members in Mexico. Furthermore, with 5%, Mexico has the lowest female representation on executive committees in the region (McKinsey & Company, 2013).

Mexico's labor force is primarily represented by three generational groups, including Baby Boomers (between 46 and 64 years) with 27%, Generation X (between 28 and 45 years) with 36% and Generation Y (between 20 and 27 years) representing 24% (INEGI, 2010).

Mexican culture and values

Studies have shown that work is part of Mexicans' identity, overall satisfaction and sense of self-worth. Mexicans work the longest hours among OECD countries, spending 10 hours a day doing both paid and unpaid work compared to the OECD average of just over 8 hours (OECD, 2011). On average, Mexican men and women invest 46 and 38 hours in paid work respectively (INEGI, 2013a). Age is an important determinant of the priority given to work and personal life. According to a study on generational differences in Mexico, for 70% of Generation Y employees, meeting both work and personal needs is the most important aspect of their jobs. Fourteen percent of them stated that they would prioritize personal matters over work. In contrast, 8% of Generation X employees and only 2% Baby Boomers agreed with the same statement. Twenty-six percent of Baby Boomers and 24% of Generation X employees would give priority to work over personal life, in contrast to 13% of Generation Y employees (Deloitte, 2011).

Family and children are a strong motivator for Mexicans to work hard and do their jobs well. They wish to provide for their families and set a good example. The breadwinner role is undoubtedly central to men's identity in Latin America (Gutmann, 2003) and oftentimes they mea-



Douglas Prato, his wife, Paty, and his children Roxane and Isaac. Through their work-life initiatives, Novartis aims to build an inclusive, high-performance environment in which diversity is valued and leveraged. Employee engagement is increased when associates have support for their professional and their personal responsibilities. (photo provided by Novartis)

sure their achievements in terms of the educational and material provisions made to their families and children (Broughton, 2008). Traditionally, men are also the protectors and controllers of all family members, and are named "jefes" (bosses) of the family. However, the percentage of female breadwinners in Mexican households is increasing. Between 1994 and 2002, it rose from 21% to 26% (INEGI, 2005). Women's role, although constantly evolving, is still strongly identified to the role of wife and mother prioritizing family needs over their own.

The experiences of working Mexican women are determined by different demographic, geographical and cultural factors. Young women experience social and cultural pressure to get married and have children, and believe they have to make a choice between "career" and "family" (Zabludovsky, 2001). Only 33% of married women are part of the labor force (INEGI, 2013a). At the same time, young women receive less support from their employers to get hired and advance their careers, because of beliefs that they will choose family life over work (Brumley, 2013; Ruiz Castro, 2012). Indeed, discrimination based on pregnancy and childbearing is a well-known practice in Mexico (Covarrubias Terán, 2012; Fernández-Kelly, 1983), where 11% of women workers are required to undergo a pregnancy test as part of their employment (INEGI, 2008).

On the other hand, female professionals consider their contribution to the development of a stable family through their jobs as the most important element of life success (Lirio et al., 2007). Both work and family provide

a form of worthiness and meaning to middle-class women's lives and are not necessarily perceived as two mutually exclusive pursuits. However, women's work continuity and advancement depends upon the approval for work and the emotional support provided by not only fathers and husbands, but also their children (Covarrubias Terán, 2012; Lirio et al., 2007; Ruiz Castro, 2012). The support from the men in the house will rarely involve childcare or household work, as these tasks continue to be perceived as women's sole responsibility. On average, women invest 26 hours of domestic work and 24 hours of child and family care a week in contrast to the 9 and 13 hours respectively that men do (INEGI, 2013a). Couples who can afford it will usually hire domestic help in order to decrease the time invested in household work and be able to spend more time in work-related and leisure activities. In households with working parents, the extended family plays a crucial role, especially in relation to child care. It is not uncommon for grandmothers to look after their grandchildren while parents work. Low-income parents rely heavily on extended family.

Religion is an important part of culture in Mexico that influences intra-household dynamics and people's work and family choices. The majority of the population (84%) is Catholic, although between 2000 and 2010 this percentage decreased by 4% (INEGI, 2013b). Most Mexicans will refer to "God's plans" when talking about success and constraints in both their personal and work lives.

Work-life balance in Mexico

The typical working day can be incredibly long because of commute times and organizational requirements. Mexico ranks fourth for longest commutes to and from work (OECD, 2010). In Mexico City and the Metropolitan Area, it can take up to three hours to get to work, which creates very stressful working lives and can be detrimental to work-life balance. Those who can afford to own a car face the heaviest and "most painful" traffic jam in the world (IBM, 2011) and those who use public transportation know that it is not necessarily fast, safe, reliable or comfortable, despite the significant investment in infrastructure that has been made in Mexico City in recent years. Increasingly, high-income employees choose to leave the suburbs and move to the more central neighborhoods where their offices are located. Furthermore, a two hour-lunch break is stipulated by many employers (usually from 2:00 to 4:00 pm), although many people would prefer to have a shorter lunch-time and leave their offices earlier. In addition, there exists a strong culture of "presenteeism" in some workplaces which requires employees to spend long hours at work as a proof of organi-

zational commitment (Ruiz Castro, 2012). All these factors take their toll on the work-life balance of employees. This picture is particularly complicated for women, who are also expected to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. Ultimately, because of these competing pressures women's opportunities to keep their jobs and advance their careers are compromised. There is, therefore, an important connection between work-life balance and gender equality in the workplace which has not fully been recognized or addressed.

Work-life-related policies

As in most developing countries, work-life balance is not central to the agenda of the Mexican government (Lee, McCann, & Messenger, 2007), but the Mexican Constitution and the Federal Labor Law include anti-discrimination laws and cover some basic work-life related issues. Article 1 of the Mexican Constitution (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos) prohibits the government and civil society from discriminating on the basis of ethnic origin, nationality, sex, age, disability, social condition, health condition, religion and beliefs. Article 123 guarantees workers' right to an eight-hour working day and stipulates specific protective measures for working women. The Federal Labor Law (Ley Federal del Trabajo, LFT), which governs employer-employee relations, protects workers' working conditions, health insurance, pensions, working schedules and job security. The fifth article of the LFT covers specific rights and obligations of women workers, especially in relation to maternity. As of December 2012, the LFT grants working fathers the right to paternity leave. Whereas these policies tended to be gendered and restrictive, recent reforms recognize the rights of fathers and parents who adopt a child.

In terms of health insurance in Mexico, the Social Security Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS) provides overall medical insurance and supports wage benefits during pregnancy or disability. It also provides child care benefits and child care centers (1,450 centers with 237,625 children as of July 2012) for children ages 43 days through four years old. Only workers in the formal economy whose employers pay their contributions to the social security system are entitled to these benefits. This means that the large population involved in the informal economy does not have access to health services and other related benefits.

During President Vicente Fox Quesada's term (2000-2006), the National Institute for Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, or *Inmujeres*) was founded. *Inmujeres* seeks to design and implement strategies for equal

The Federal Labor Law

Workplace anti-discrimination and equal pay laws

Article	Stipulation
Article 3	No distinctions established between workers based on race, sex, age, religious beliefs, political doctrine or social condition.
Article 56	Right to equal labor conditions for equal work regardless of race, sex, age, religious beliefs, political doctrine or social condition.
Article 86	Equal pay for work performed in equal job position, workday and efficiency conditions.
Article 133, Part I	Prohibition against not hiring on the basis of sex or age.

Women's work, maternity and paternity

Article	Stipulation
Article 132	Guarantees the rights of working fathers to enjoy five days of paid paternity leave after childbirth or child adoption.
Article 164	Women enjoy the same rights and have the same benefits as men.
Article 166	Without affecting her salary, benefits and rights, a woman in a period of pregnancy or lactation may not carry out unhealthy or dangerous work, nighttime industrial work, commercial or service establishment work after 10:00 pm and overtime.
Article 170	Guarantees the rights of working mothers to: a. No heavy and dangerous work during pregnancy b. Enjoy a six-week paid leave before and after childbirth (12 weeks of paid maternity leave in total) or a six-week paid leave after child adoption. In agreement with the employer, up to four weeks of maternity leave before childbirth can be transferred to after childbirth. c. Enjoy an extended leave for up to 60 days at 50% of her salary if a woman cannot work due to pregnancy or childbirth d. During lactation, enjoy two additional rest periods (30 minutes each) to feed her children in a hygienic and adequate place designated by the company or, if not possible and in agreement with the employer, to reduce the workday by an hour for a six-month period e. Return to the same job position as long as no more than a year has passed since the date of childbirth f. Maintain all of her seniority while on maternity leave
Article 171	Child care benefits will be provided by the Mexican Social Security Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS) according to its own laws.

opportunities between women and men. Supported by the World Bank, *Inmujeres* created the Gender Equity Model (GEM). GEM is a voluntary firm certification process for gender equity in the areas of industrial relations including selection and hiring processes, training policies, professional development, family-work balance, and the prevention, handling, and follow-up of sexual harassment cases. Its goal is to engage participating organizations in a learning process to overcome cultural barriers and promote gender equity. The GEM initiative was designed and tested in Mexico in 2003 (known in Mexico as MEG:2003) and has been replicated or adapted in Argentina, Chile, Egypt, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Turkey.

The World Bank reports through its website that by December 2010, around 300 Mexican organizations

had been certified as gender equitable, benefiting some 300,000 employees in primarily the private and the public sectors. According to the World Bank, the initiative has yielded the following results in participant organizations:

- Elimination of pregnancy discrimination in recruitment processes
- Increased workers' performance and productivity, as reported by 90% of the organizations
- Reduced gender gaps by 50% and increased representation of women in managerial positions
- Taken measures to improve the work-life balance of both women and men, including flexible hours and the engagement of families in participant organizations' gender equity activities.

Organizational practices

The work-life agenda of firms and organizations in Mexico is often embodied in gender equity programs. Work-life balance is a pursuit of some corporations influenced by global efforts to attract, retain and advance women in the workforce. Multinational corporations are slowly transferring some of their home countries' policies on women's advancement and work-life balance to their offices in Mexico and other developing countries. Mexican companies are adopting more "modern" policies and opening up opportunities for women that allow them to compete in the global market.

One of these global policies, formal flexible work arrangements, is a rarity in Mexican workplaces. If policies are in place, their implementation is still very uneven. They are likely to apply only to a limited sector of the workforce. For example, only managers might be able to benefit from work schedule flexibility, or only women might benefit from extended maternity leave. Gender, occupational status, and age determine access to work-family policies (Brumley, 2013) and affect employees differently accordingly. Informally, it is common to hear that working women's requests for flexible work scheduling or compressed work weeks are rejected by their supervisors.

Though work-life programs are rare, there are some companies which have excelled in this area in Mexico. Some best practices are described below:

American Express Mexico

The financial services firm's diversity and inclusion program includes a policy on virtual working and flexible work scheduling (late start, early leave) allowing employees across hierarchical levels to adapt their work schedule to home location and personal commitments. Employees also enjoy a "flexible Friday" every two weeks, which allows them to take time off either in the mornings or afternoons to carry out personal activities that cannot be done during weekends. In exchange, employees are expected to work three additional hours in a 15-day period. American Express Mexico also offers the opportunity to take leave with 20% of salary and a job position guarantee for care of a family member. In some of its of-

fices, the company has designated places where mothers can keep human milk safely refrigerated (Santiago, 2011).

Eli Lilly Mexico

As part of its Diversity initiative, the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly has implemented an initiative on flexible work, which can be used by all its employees. The company provides all employees with medical insurance and runs health campaigns for its employees and their families. Eli Lilly promotes parent-child bonding and the participation of male employees in child care activities by offering extended paternity and maternity leave for up to seven weeks. It has also created an on-site lactation room. The company also offers paid leave for marriage. In regards to child care services, the company has reached

agreements with high quality child care centers that offer discounted rates to Eli Lilly's employees (Santiago, 2011).

Grupo Scotiabank

Grupo Scotiabank, a financial services firm, implemented a program on equity, diversity and inclusion as a response to the low representation of women in management positions. An internal study indicated that the average age of female employees is 29 years, exactly the average reproductive age in Mexico. Grupo Scotiabank decided to implement specific initiatives and programs that help both women and men balance work and personal life. The firm has implemented a range of initiatives including the LIVE program, a website created for all employees including useful information that promotes quality of life. It also offers extended maternity and paternity leave and flexible work scheduling to all employees (Santiago, 2011).

Heinz Mexico

One of the initiatives to improve quality of life of hourly workers at Heinz's manufacturing plant in Guadalajara is the "Open School Program." Employees who have not completed their secondary or preparatory school can take classes provided by the company to fulfill the required curricula and achieve their official certification. This not only allows employees to be better prepared for their current positions, but also allows them to opt for better positions within the organization. Additionally, the achievement helps them to have a sense of accomplishment and pride, builds their self-esteem, and drives engagement with the organization. By providing these educational opportunities, Heinz contributes to creating better environments both within the organization and in the communities where their employees live.

IBM Mexico

IBM's global work-life integration initiatives include a broad spectrum of flexible work options such as compressed work week, part-time reduced work schedule, telecommuting, and work at home. Additionally, IBM offers both short (1-2 months) and extended (3-36 months) leaves of absence. IBM's Global Work-life Fund is used to develop and support child care and elder care programs benefitting IBM employees and their families. In Mexico, the Global Work-Life Fund resources have been used to establish partnerships with community child care centers in Monterrey, Guadalajara, and DF to offer discounts on yearly or monthly enrollments, ensure that IBM employees have priority slots, and help improve infrastructure and provide professional development opportunities

to child care staff. The Fund subsidizes summer camp enrollment for children of IBM employees. Finally, IBM Mexico has a Business Resource Group focusing on work & life integration for employees in Guadalajara and DF, with activities including Bring Your Child to Work Day, recreational and educational workshops, implementing flexibility training, and workshops on wellbeing.

Novartis

Since 2004 Novartis has worked on several initiatives to build an inclusive, high-performance environment in which diversity is valued and leveraged. In an effort to support employees with children, Novartis developed a fun and formative summer course for children of employees, *Novarkids*, in partnership with ITESM (Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey), one of the top universities in Mexico. *Novarkids* is a three week-program for kids ages 4 to 14 years old, of 8 hour per day including meals. Children with disabilities were also integrated into the program. The program was fully enrolled by 54 children registered in 2 days. With *Novarkids*, Novartis expanded its Diversity & Inclusion journey, generating an emotional link between the associates' families (mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters) and the company.

Unilever

To help face the challenges of a competitive business world, Unilever has modified its office environments to a flexible, cost effective, competitive and productive approach termed "Agile Working". Agile Working is a new business culture that is aimed to produce outstanding results through maximum flexibility with minimal constraints. Agile Working puts each worker in greater control over how, when, and where he or she works, and supports individual vitality. Agile Working allows workers to collaborate more effectively with distributed colleagues with far less travel, energy consumption, CO2 emissions, and waste. It also helps to build a diverse and inclusive organization by creating work environments that are more accommodating of people with different needs and preferences. Employees select one of three styles for their work: resident, mobile, or offsite, and managers are assessed on how well they support Agile Working. In Mexico, the Agile Working initiative is coordinated closely with the health and wellness function, with tools and resources to help employees assess, monitor, and improve their health while working agile. Examples include mobile ergonomics, home and open air exercises, focus on the life circle, and guides to healthy eating.

Recommendations

The implementation of a work-life strategy in Mexico is a shared responsibility between governments, individuals and employers. However, employers can take important steps to help employees' better balance work and life and increase employees' overall quality of life:

Workplace flexibility

This includes the implementation and encouragement of remote and home working, staggered hours schemes, part-time jobs, compressed work schedules, and job sharing arrangements. These flexible work arrangements should not be associated with women only and should ensure employees have access to fair wages, benefits, and development and advancement opportunities.

Commuting support

Any effort that can help employees reduce the time and energy spent in commuting, especially in metropolitan areas, will have a positive impact on employees' overall wellbeing and safety. Some of the initiatives that employers can consider are arranging for shared-taxis, promoting car-sharing, and offering shuttle buses to and from key destinations.

Childcare support

The provision of on-site childcare or establishing partnerships with quality childcare providers not only gives employees peace of mind, but also can help reduce both turnover and absenteeism. Employers can also facilitate forums through which employees can initiate cooperative childcare or care giver-sharing.

Extended parental leave

Offering extended parental leave for both women and men will attract and retain talent while allowing employees to engage in and draw more satisfaction from personal life. Particularly, providing extended paternity leave and encouraging male employees to dedicate more time to family life can contribute to greater gender equality at work and within households.

Promoting cultural change

In addition to structural changes and policies on gender equality and work-life balance, a profound cultural change of beliefs on women's and men's role and value in organizations and in the broader society are needed. Employers can act as agents of change by training and raising awareness on gender issues among all organizational members.

A Publication of the Boston College Center for Work & Family

About this Series

Written for an executive level audience, the Boston College Center for Work & Family Executive Briefing Series addresses topical and strategic issues of particular relevance to the current business climate. The series highlights research findings, data trends and best practices in a concise format, aiming to foster action-oriented dialogue within organizations. Each issue features an accompanying PowerPoint presentation that captures key points and includes a section for practitioners to customize and add organization-specific data.

About this Series

Since its founding in 1990, the Boston College Center for Work & Family (BCCWF) has been a leader in helping organizations create successful workplaces that support and develop healthy and productive employees. We provide a bridge linking the academic community to leaders in employment settings who are committed to promoting workforce effectiveness. With 100 employers as our corporate partners, the Center for Work & Family positively impacts the lives of nearly 4 million employees through research, education and contributing a leading voice to conversations on contemporary issues around work and life.



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