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PART V

POLICIES AND
PRACTICES

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FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS: FROM WORK-LIFE TO GENDER EQUITY POLICIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

WITHIN personnel psychology, “work–life” policies are often conceptualized as an offshoot of equal opportunities (EO) policies, although in practice the connection can be tenuous. For a start, a discourse of equal opportunities implies that men and women should be treated the same. In practice this is often interpreted as giving women the “equal opportunity” to act like men—for example to work long hours—rather than changing the cultures, structures, and working practices to benefit both men and women. Work–life policies on the other hand have developed from what used to be called “family friendly” policies and are widely interpreted as being

policies for women, focusing on difference rather than sameness, despite usually officially being articulated as policies for both women and men. In practice, there are rarely equal opportunities for men to use work–life or flexible working policies to the same extent as women. As a result, these policies often act to marginalize those workers—mainly women—who take up opportunities to work non-standard working time; the “non-standard” worker invariably finds themselves penalized in career terms for not behaving like (traditional) men who continue to be regarded as ideal workers (Lewis 2001; Judiesch and Lyness 1999; Fried 1998; Rapoport et al. 2002). In response to the issue of “sameness” a more recent focus on “diversity” emphasizes the different needs and circumstances of diverse groups, thus resolving the dilemma, in EO, of women “levelling down” to male workplace cultural practice, as discussed above. With diversity, however, there has been an equal but opposite danger of reifying difference. In the case of “work–life” policies such an overemphasis could serve to trivialize structural disadvantage faced by women in the labor market by emphasizing the notion of “lifestyle choices;” and can also underlie a neglect of men’s work and family needs. In practice, however, as is pointed out by a number of writers (Kirton and Green 2000; Liff and Dickens 2000), recognizing both similarities and differences as an integrated approach is quite possible without undermining the principles of either equal opportunities or of diversity.

The dilemma in relation to work–life or work–family policies, then, is that currently women tend to take on more family responsibilities than men, suggesting the need for “special treatment” for women. However, as long as initiatives to support the integration of work and personal life are directed primarily at women they will not be mainstreamed into organizations and they will perpetuate gender inequities. In view of the tensions in approaches taken to equality, we refer in this chapter to policies and practices to promote *gender equity*. Gender equity refers to a goal of fair or equitable division of opportunities and constraints among men and women. This implies the need to change work to enable all employees to integrate their work and family or personal lives (Rapoport et al. 2002; Williams 2000). We also prefer to avoid, where possible the terms work–life policies and especially work–life balance policies, with the implications that work is not part of life and which tend to focus on individual “choices” rather than organizational issues (Gambles, Lewis, and Rapoport 2006; Lewis, Gambles, and Rapoport 2007). Instead we discuss policies and practices that aim to support men and women integrating or harmonizing their paid work and personal lives in gender equitable ways. The goal is that such policies should enable women and men to make optimum contributions at work and their lives beyond work. The term “work–life policies” is generally used to incorporate flexible working arrangements (FWAs) and dependent care initiatives. We focus predominantly here on FWAs, as these shift the focus from individual needs and non-work obligations, to the nature of work, though we also refer to dependent care arrangements from time to time when appropriate.

In this chapter we first discuss the social and psychological cases for gender equity and for policies and practices to support the integration of work and non-work life.

As the implementation of FWAs (and dependent care initiatives) is influenced by public policy provisions we then consider the regulatory background from a European/UK perspective before going on to consider the types of “work–life” policies or flexible working arrangements introduced in organizations. The impact and effectiveness of these policies and residual barriers to their success are then discussed, drawing on psychological concepts and theories at the individual and organizational levels. Such outcomes include well-being and perceived organizational justice, as well as organizational learning and other organizational issues. We demonstrate the interrelationships between individual and workplace outcomes, emphasizing the limitations of policy alone and the importance of implementation and practice.

2. THE SOCIAL CASE FOR GENDER EQUITY AT WORK

The need to consider the wider “social case” for gender equity stems from it forming the basis of the “external” forces influencing regulatory pressures, industrial/sectoral practices, company-level practices, and values-based influences on individual preferences for work–life balance. Demands for gender equity do not merely arise on aggregate from individual employees; nor do they arise neutrally as some sort of human resource strategy in the face of competitive pressures. They arise as a result of the interaction between social forces within and outside organizations. Sayer (2007), making a more general point, puts this very succinctly:

We... cannot afford to ignore the special character of organisations as hierarchical and instrumental institutions pursuing highly specific goals. We also need to take account of the embedding of both employees and organisations in a wider field of social relations among equals and unequals. (Sayer 2007, 21)

The wider social influences on workplace gender equity is that of gendered labor market segmentation; itself a product of a wider (gendered) division of labor in society. At the core of the feminist critique of political economy is how the structure of the family is reproduced at societal level and how this creates structural disadvantage for women (Barratt-Brown 1995; Kirton and Green 2000). At the highest level, humankind requires reproduction as a prerequisite for survival; and the economic interests of capital requires future workers to be nurtured. The notion that women should bear a disproportionate burden of responsibility for this activity while men are able to fulfill their aspirations in the wider labor market has been termed “the myth of separate spheres” whereby the public sphere of work is regarded as primarily the domain of men while family and personal life are regarded as primarily the domain of women. This dualism impacts on workplaces

by reinforcing gender inequity at work. It leads to the valuing of certain types of behavior, incorporated in gendered organizational cultures. In particular there is often an assumption that traditional male patterns of continuous full-time work is the norm and that stereotypically masculine characteristics such as rationality and competitiveness (rather than, for example, interpersonal skills) are necessary to be effective in the workplace (Rapoport et al. 2002)

The moral basis for the equitable treatment of women in the labor market has been supplemented by more instrumental pressures. Two developments are of particular importance, both of which relate to the most consistent demographic trend in every developed economy in the world; that of the rise in female participation in the labor market. Female participation in the labor market has grown from low absolute levels, marginalized within peripheral occupations, to almost parity in numbers and a presence in all occupations at the turn of the twenty-first century. Indeed, trends show that increased female participation has continued across the majority of OECD countries even since 1981 (OECD 2004). The first consequence of this demographic shift has been the growth in equality legislation arising, politically, from the women's movement and, industrially, from women's influence within the labor movement. The second consequence has been the increased bargaining power of (particularly) professional women in the labor market in recent decades. Thus, the growth in equality legislation acts as a negative incentive for employers to adjust inequitable practices affecting all employees so as to avoid litigation, while the enhanced labor market position (for some women) creates a more positive incentive for employers to adjust practices to appeal to those women whose skills and expertise are valued and who could be considered expensive to recruit, train, and therefore replace. In recent years the second of these factors has become particularly influential in creating a "business case" argument to make greater recognition of the domestic responsibilities of employees.

In short, then, social practices and social attitudes have shifted markedly in recent decades on the assumed roles of men and women within the workplace and in (although perhaps less so) the domestic sphere; in turn these changed assumptions and practices have shaped individual expectations, as we shall now discuss.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CASE FOR FLEXIBLE WORK TO SUPPORT GENDER EQUITY AT WORK

In terms of gender equity, most of the discussion from the organizational psychology literature has been based around the need to enhance employee choices in

work patterns through the greater adoption of flexible working arrangements (FWAs). FWAs can support the integration of work and personal life which also addresses, to varying extents, the issue of gender equity at work. There are four main, interrelated psychological arguments for this. The argument that has received the most research attention rests on the case that multiple roles (particularly in work and family) have the potential to affect well-being negatively and create stress, unless policies are introduced to increase flexibility and autonomy in managing the work and family interface. In this approach the focus is very much on family responsibilities as the form of non-work roles under consideration and there is a large literature on the relationships between work, family, and well-being. This research originally stemmed from studies of the impact of maternal employment and hence a focus on women and difference. However it is increasingly recognized that both men and women have multiple roles in work and family.

The core concept in this perspective on the work–family interface is that of work–family conflict; a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). There are different forms of conflict but that which has received most attention is time-based conflict.¹ This involves competing demands on time such as when a business meeting and a child's doctor's appointment coincide. Research on time-based work–family conflict stresses the importance of policies to help employees to manage their work and family time demands, although it does not always consider the gendered use of time. Although the concept of work–family conflict has been refined since the 1980s, for example distinguishing between work conflicting or interfering with family and family interfering with work, which have different antecedents and consequences (Frone, Russell, and Cooper 1992; O'Driscoll et al. 2003; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2006), work–family conflict remains the most widely researched concept in the psychology of work and family. It is argued that multiple roles can be a source of role overload, which in turn can be associated with stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and other negative consequences for individuals and organizations (see Bellavia and Frone 2005; MacDermid 2005; Tetrick and Buffardi 2006 for reviews). For instance, role overload has been linked to individual outcomes such as increased levels of anxiety, fatigue, burnout, depression, and emotional and physiological stress and to decreased satisfaction with family and work (Guelzow et al. 1991). Work–family conflict is also linked to a number of organizational outcomes including higher rates of absenteeism, lower levels of organizational commitment, and increased thoughts of quitting (Duxbury, Lyons, and Higgins in press).

This approach is based on a scarcity hypothesis; that is, the belief that individuals have a finite amount of time and energy, and that work and family compete for these finite resources. It implies that this is a problem of individual employees (who

¹ Other forms of conflict are strain based and behavior based (Greenhaus and Beurell 1985).

by implication are “different” from the norm) and views the role of organizations as being to introduce policies such as childcare support or flexible working policies to help individual employees to manage their complex demands and to avoid or reduce individual stress, absenteeism, and other negative outcomes. The focus on individuals, especially women in most cases, means that wider organizational systems remain largely unchallenged and gender inequities persist.

An alternative perspective is based on the role expansion hypothesis. This recognizes that multiple roles can create multiple sources of satisfaction and even protect against stress in some circumstances (Lewis, Kagan, and Heaton 2000). The positive side of the work–family interface—or the idea that work and family may actually be mutually beneficial—has begun to receive more attention (Frone, Russell, and Cooper 1992; see Carlson and Grzywacz in press, for review) supported by the growing interest in positive psychology more generally. Concepts from the positive perspective include positive spillover, enrichment, or facilitation (Carlson and Grzywacz in press). Positive spillover refers to the transfer of positive affect, skills, behaviors, and values from one domain to the other, having overall beneficial effects (Hanson, Hammer, and Colton 2006), while work–family enrichment refers to the extent to which experiences in one role improve performance or the quality of life in the other role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Wayne, Randel, and Stevens 2006). Work–family facilitation focuses on the synergies or complementarities that occur between an individual’s work and family life (Frone 2003; Wayne, Randel, and Stevens 2006) or more recently the extent to which an individual’s engagement in one social system (e.g. work or family) contributes to growth in another social system (family or work) (Carlson and Grzywacz in press). Another positive approach is work–family boundary theory (Campbell Clark 2000) which views people as active boundary crossers, developing active strategies for crossing boundaries between work and family rather than passive recipients of work–family pressures.

These approaches are helpful in moving beyond a deficit view of those who have multiple roles in work and family to an acknowledgment of the potential positive outcomes of multiple roles, if workplace policies and practices support work–family boundary management. This has the potential to encourage a focus on workplace systems: cultures, structures, and working practices that might enable members of the workforce and the organization itself to benefit from the synergies between work and non-work lives. In practical terms it involves going beyond policies designed to mitigate stress (which are necessary but not sufficient) to seek win-win solutions to benefit both employees (men and women) and the organization as a whole.

A third perspective focuses on the life course. Work–family conflict and related stress appears to be greatest during the phase where employees have young children (Lewis and Cooper 1987; Barnett and Gareis 2006), although this may change in the context of ageing populations and explosion of eldercare issues which are also associated with work–family conflict (Townsend, Maline, and Druley 2001). Taking

the role expansion approach it can be argued that experiences of caring at home during some periods in the life course can facilitate valuable workplace skills, particularly interpersonal skills. Problems arise because most organizations still adhere to traditional images of careers, whereby career progression has to take place at the same time as the family building phase and anyone who takes time out for family reasons, or who does not wish to work long hours while they have young children, risk losing their places on a career track. This view is short-sighted for two reasons. Firstly this model of career is no longer normative in the post jobs-for-life era. And secondly organizations risk losing the skills of trained employees or of only promoting those who do not gain the potential advantages associated with participation in family as well as occupational life. The implication of this approach therefore is that gender equity and work-life/FWA approaches include a need to find ways of valuing diverse career shapes to take account of the sequencing of work and family events and to recognize that men as well as women are (or want to be) able to derive satisfaction from multiple domains.

A fourth approach which integrates aspects of both the positive and negative approaches focuses on the challenges of contemporary twenty-first century workplaces, rather than individual non-work commitments, taking account of changes and turbulence associated with technological developments, the changing nature of work, and the shifting nature of work/non-work boundaries in the global economy (Lewis and Cooper 1999). This includes a focus on the increased time in work, shifting cultural expectations; that is, organizational norms that reward long hours at the workplace rather than performance, the blurring of work/non-work boundaries, growing intensity of workloads, and faster pace of work demands (Bailyn 1993; Gambles, Lewis, and Rapoport 2006; Lewis and Smithson 2006; Lewis 2003a; Fried 1998; Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002; Duxbury, Lyons, and Higgins in press; Andreassi and Thompson, in press; Hyman et al. 2003). All of these appear to be growing globally (Gambles, Lewis, and Rapoport 2006; Lewis and Smithson 2006; Duxbury, et al. Lyons, and Higgins in press). These trends tend to reinforce gendered organizational cultures. There are many opportunities for satisfaction and personal involvement in contemporary knowledge work (Lewis 2003a; Hochschild 1997). Among white collar and professional workers it often appears that long working hours are freely chosen, but in fact these "choices" are made within the constraints of lean workforces, high targets, and organizational cultures that often value willingness to work long hours and presenteeism for their own sake (Lewis 2003a; Perlow 1998). Research suggests that when job demands require "too much" effort and time (i.e., deadlines are too tight, resources are insufficient to allow the employee to fulfill their responsibilities at work during regular hours) energy and time resources are depleted and the effects of work overload noted in the negative perspective undermine the potential positive outcomes of the changing nature of much work, especially in the knowledge economy (Duxbury, Lyons, and Higgins in press).

This approach has also been reflected in research that looks beyond work and family boundaries to examine the impact of what has been termed the “time squeeze” on other aspects of life affecting men and women and reinforces the need to focus on organizations and gender equity rather than individuals and accommodations for individual problems. One example is the need for time and energy for leisure. Both work and leisure are essential for well-being (Bryce and Haworth 2003; Iso-Ahala and Mannell 1997) but time for leisure is increasingly squeezed out by contemporary workplace demands (Haworth and Lewis 2005). Moreover this is gendered, with men more likely to make time for leisure pursuits and women for family (Kay 2001) which increases gender inequities. Other aspects of personal life that are squeezed out by many contemporary work patterns include time for friendships, which again has implications for well-being (Gambles, Lewis, and Rapoport 2006; Parris, Vickers, and Wilkes, in press).

The implications of this approach for FWAs is that there is a need to examine more fundamental aspects of contemporary ways of working, taking a long-term perspective and considering the impact on gender equity, the sustainability of workforces, and broader social sustainability (Lewis, Gambles, and Rapoport 2007).

The psychological case therefore plays into the business case (which is discussed further, below); that is, it supports a case to redesign working practices to gain greater efficiency out of workers; and to more successfully retain them, by reducing stress and sickness absence and thereby increasing organizational commitment. However, psychological arguments also suggest the need to look beyond fragmented policies to more systemic workplace changes, to take a life-course perspective, and to monitor the impact of contemporary ways of working which can undermine work–life and gender equity policies, and ultimately affect workforce and organizational well-being.

Before discussing workplace policies and practices to support the integration of work and personal life we consider the impact of macro-level context, particularly the role of regulation.

4. REGULATORY BACKGROUND TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUITY POLICIES

What determines the minimum standards of work–life policies in organizations is the regulatory environment at national level and on this there is a surprisingly high degree of divergence between countries. Broadly the division falls between those

countries whose employment system could be categorized as liberal market economies and those characterized as coordinated market economies (Soskice 2005). Broadly speaking the coordinated market economies—where a “social dimension” is seen to require intervention to temper the excesses of the market—have tended to provide for a generous regulatory environment concerning maternity and childcare. This is best exemplified by the Nordic countries. In contrast, liberal market economies—where labor markets are assumed to be self-regulating and require no intervention—have tended to allow little in the way of regulatory protection at all. The exemplary case, here, is the US, where even paid maternity is not a statutory obligation for employers. A few hybrids exist here. The UK is usually characterized as falling within the liberal market economy type, yet in this area of employment policy, the UK regulatory approach has been tempered by its adoption of EU employment regulation—the Parental Leave Directive being a particularly recent relevant policy, here. Moreover, the UK had also already adopted the principle of paid maternity leave—as a contrast to the example of US practice, above—prior to its dramatic shift into the liberal market camp in the 1980s.

Of course, the regulations laid down, in themselves, are a product of arguments and interests played out over a longer period of time, incorporating a constantly changing consensus in the wider socio-political sphere, the demographic sphere (in relation to the changing gender composition in the workplace); within the family and what is known about the psychological well-being of the individual. In the UK—as in the EU more generally—the trajectory of regulatory change over the latter decades of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century has been tilted towards the enhancement of equality—even if unevenly at times (Dickens 2007). The expansion from “anti-discrimination” into a more positive promotion of equality—recognizing non-market and unpaid domestic work as part of the overall work environment—has been even more recent (*ibid.*). Thus, paid maternity leave for mothers has been incrementally extended and supplemented with tentative steps towards normalizing minimal levels of paid paternity leave for fathers.

While the case for enhancing statutory work–life entitlements at work has been driven by “external” factors such as supranational regulation (in the case of EU member states), political pressure, and demographics, the regulatory shift has also often been made through a perceived need to convince business interests of the instrumental benefits of adopting such approaches—the so-called “business case.” The business case is broadly based on the transaction costs associated with losing skilled and talented staff unable to commit to a traditional “nine-to-five” “presenteeist” work culture. This has been—particularly in the UK—a largely successful approach inasmuch as business hostility to such incremental enhancements to work–life entitlements has been relatively low. There is, however, a noted danger in appealing to such instrumental values in that it does provide for a quite rational opposition to such enhancements where the benefits are clearly not there for the employer (Dickens and

Hall 2006; Roper, Cunningham, and James 2003)—for example, where margins are low and where high skills are not fundamental to the business model in question.

If we were to consider a continuum of regulations that could legitimately be said to cover the work–life balance agenda we would begin with appropriate employment protection for maternity leave, moving through to adequate pay for maternity leave, and to more general protections for parental leave and recognition of the responsibilities parents may have outside of work. This could further extend to appropriate recognition of (paid) paternity/parental leave aimed at equalizing the assumed responsibilities involved in both childcare and paid work. Regulations supporting work–life choices could also be considered important, even where not directly aimed at childcare responsibilities. For example, guaranteeing equitable treatment of employees not working the standard working time (either in terms of the working week or the working year) ensuring that choices made are genuine choices and not choices that involve a (pro-rata) financial sacrifice or a substantial loss of job security. Finally, it could extend into a more proactive attempt to encourage fathers to take more time out of work to take more responsibility for childcare; the most notable example of this being the so-called “daddy-month” introduced—and then extended—in Sweden in 1995 and 2002 (Eriksson 2005).

5. ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES FOR INTEGRATING WORK AND NON-WORK LIFE

Workplace policies developed to support the integration of work and personal life include dependent care supports and FWAs. Dependent care policies include support for childcare and/or eldercare such as workplace nurseries or funded places in a childcare or eldercare facility, childcare or eldercare vouchers, and out of school schemes. These are more important in contexts where there is limited or no public provision or childcare or other forms of care, or when public provision is limited in some way, so that there is scope for employers to improve provisions. These policies do not change the nature of work, but enable workers with family commitments to sustain employment. They can be regarded as equal opportunities provisions in that they enable women to work in the same ways that men do.

Family related leaves, discussed above, also enable people with family commitments to carry on working, but unlike dependent care provisions they have some impact on working practices as these must be adapted to facilitate temporary absences. Arrangements for dealing with family emergencies are particularly crucial.

Furthermore some forms of leaves, such as the Swedish “daddy leaves”, mentioned above, have an explicit goal of supporting gender equity—a fair sharing of rewards and constraints by men and women.

Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) potentially change the nature of work, recognizing that work can be accomplished in different ways and, ideally, that outcomes are more important than input of hours in the workplace. Flexible working arrangements refer to any arrangements that enable workers to vary when and where they work (Lewis 2003b). They include flexitime systems, annualized hours, working from home for all or part of the week, and other forms of flexibility such as compressed working weeks (working full-time hours over a shorter number of days). FWAs also include various forms of part-time or reduced hours such as job sharing or term-time-only working. Ideally, flexible working arrangements provide opportunities for managers to respond to employees’ changing needs which might for example be for short periods of part-time work interspersed with full-time flexitime. Flexible working arrangements can be introduced by HR in response to individual requests from staff, or by collective agreement.

Some forms of flexible working schedules such as part-time work, compressed working weeks, annualized hours, and flexitime have a long history and have traditionally been introduced largely to meet employer needs for flexibility or to keep costs down, though they may also have met employee needs and demands (Krausz, Sagie, and Biderman 2000). These and other flexible arrangements are also introduced ostensibly to meet employee needs for flexibility to integrate work and family demands under the banner of so-called family-friendly or work–life employment policies (Lewis and Cooper 1996) where, often, a business case argument has been used to support their adoption (Bevan et al. 1999). Other contemporary drivers of change include increased emphasis on high-trust working practices, the thrust towards gender equity and greater opportunities for working at home because of new technology (Evans 2000). Nevertheless, despite much rhetoric about the importance of challenging outmoded forms of work and the gradual association of FWAs with leading-edge employment practice (Friedman and Greenhaus 2000; Evans 2000; Lee, MacDermid, and Buck 2000), the implementation of these policies remains patchy across organizations (Hogarth et al. 2000).

6. THE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF FWAs

How effective are FWAs? The answer varies according to the criteria used for effectiveness of policies and practices, which, in turn, reflect different conceptual/theoretical frameworks within which initiatives are embedded. At the most basic

level, evaluation draws on work–family conflict theory (or less commonly, work–family enrichment theory) and consequences for individual well-being and organizational outcomes as discussed above. Research on the low take-up of policies and backlash against policies targeted at particular groups of employees has prompted evaluation in terms of equity and perceived organizational justice. Additionally, some research evaluates the impact on wider organizational culture and learning.

6.1 Impacts on Work–Family Conflict, Individual Well-Being, and Organizational Outcomes

Most research evaluating FWA policies and practices examines work–family conflict as a mediator between policies and organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, organizational commitment, and intention to quit (Kossek and Ozeki 1999; Kossek and Van Dyne in press). The impact of policies on more positive outcomes such as enrichment or facilitation and the implications for workplace outcomes has received less attention, although it is beginning to attract some more research (Wayne et al. 2006). Hence, currently the predominantly implicit focus is on reducing the potential negative effects of managing multiple roles rather than on enabling employees to use their non-work roles and experiences to enrich and facilitate their work. Moreover, evidence of the effectiveness of flexible working policies (and dependent care provisions) on work–family conflict and organizational outcomes is mixed (Kossek and Ozeki 1999; Kossek and Van Dyne in press; Sutton and Noe 2005). Firstly, much depends on the outcomes studied. Secondly, the impacts of FWAs on work–family conflict and subsequent work-related outcomes also appear to vary for different groups of workers. Gender is a crucial variable (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1999) and, in particular, the gender composition of workplaces (Holt and Thauow 1996; Maume and Houston 2001). For example it is generally easier to take up FWAs in a female-dominated workplace than it is in a male-dominated workplace (Holt and Thaulow 1996). Age, life-course phase, and generation also appear to be relevant factors. There is evidence that younger workers—both men and women—are more likely than older workers to want FWAs. For example, in a study of chartered accountants in the UK, the link between work–family conflict and intention to leave was particularly strong among the younger generation who were also the most likely to say they would use FWAs. There is also emerging evidence that older workers, including those who would like to work beyond statutory retirement age, desire FWAs, so that they can integrate work with both family concerns such as eldercare, leisure, and other activities (Irving, Steele, and Hall 2005).

FWAs appear to work best where employees are encouraged to participate in designing their own work routines in a way that does not damage output (Lewis and

Cooper 2005; Rapoport et al. 2002). One crucial factor influencing the outcomes of FWAs is the extent to which initiatives are perceived by employees as providing control and autonomy over working hours (Thomas and Ganster 1995; Krausz, Sagie, and Biderman 2000; Tausig and Fenwick 2001). Thomas and Ganster (1995) distinguish between family supportive policies and family supportive managers, both of which they found relate to perceived control over work and family demands, which in turn, are associated with lower scores on a number of indicators of stress among a sample of healthcare professionals. This implies that the more flexibility there is, the better. For example if someone works a fixed compressed working week and is unable to work one day he or she may not be able to make up the time, whereas if that person had complete flexitime they would be able to make up the time—hence absenteeism is lowest where there is most flexibility (Baltes et al. 1999).

However flexibility can also be double-edged in its effects. A theme in much current research is that those workers who have opportunities to work flexibly and have autonomy to manage their own work schedules often use this to work longer rather than shorter hours (Perlow 1998; Holt and Thaulow 1996). This is particularly apparent in the context of intensification of work (Burchell, Lapido, and Wilkinson 2001; Green and McIntosh 2001). Thus, although flexible working arrangements, such as working from home, can be regarded as a positive practice for employees with multiple roles, reducing work–family conflict and its consequences, it can also have negative consequences, such as “allowing” employees to work longer hours to manage intense workloads. Whilst this may seem to be mutually advantageous in the short term, its impact on long-term sustainability is questionable.

Overall, evidence in this tradition indicates that flexible working arrangements can be successful up to a point, but much depends on how they are implemented and managed (Lewis and Cooper 2005). Perceptions of fairness, management support, organizational culture, and learning are particularly crucial in this respect.

6.2 Perceived Organizational Justice

The impact of flexible working policies depends on how they are implemented and, more particularly, how equitable they are perceived to be. Perceived procedural and distributive justice as well as an individual sense of entitlement and equity are both important here.

In terms of perceived procedural justice, interventions in which employees have been able to participate in the design of work schedules appear to have the potential to achieve highly workable flexible arrangements and be associated with positive work-related attitudes (Smith and Wedderburn 1998; Rapoport et al. 2002). Conversely, a lack of consultation by senior managers about the development of FWAs can contribute to feelings of unfairness which may undermine implementation. Front-line managers can feel alienated if they are compelled to

introduce policies on which they have not been consulted (Dex and Schriebl 2001), and their subsequent resistance can—and often does—undermine the experiences of FWAs among those whom they manage (Lewis 1997).

Perceived fairness of outcomes (distributive justice) is also important. Although FWAs can potentially benefit all employees and their employing organizations, they are often directed mainly at employees with family commitments—especially parents; and mostly mothers of young children (Young 1999). This can result in what has been termed work–family backlash among employees without children, particularly if they feel that they have to do extra work to cover for colleagues working more flexibly (Young 1999; Lewis and Smithson 2006). This raises the possibility of negative organizational outcomes of FWAs. Such situations could be exacerbated by the framing of regulation. For example, from 2002 employees in the UK were granted the right to request flexible working arrangements in the UK—but only to parents of children up to the age of 6. On the other hand there is some evidence that making FWAs normative and available to all—with rights matched by responsibilities for work being accomplished can be very effective (Rapoport et al. 2002; Lewis and Cooper 2005) which is an argument for extending the right to request to all workers.

Even if FWAs are, in theory, available to all, they are often implemented in a way that privileges management discretion, based on perceived operational needs. This reduces the need for managers to find innovative ways of reorganizing work to accommodate and benefit from flexible working arrangements (Rapoport et al. 2002; Lewis and Cooper 2005). While management discretion may be necessary in some circumstances, if this discretion is perceived to be used inconsistently or some managers are perceived as more supportive than others, this can cause feelings of inequity, job dissatisfaction, and higher intention to quit rates (Lewis and Smithson 2006). Management discretion appears to work best in a context of trust and mutual understanding.

Perceived procedural and distributive justice at the organizational level impact on individual sense of entitlement to support the ability to take up flexible working arrangements. Sense of entitlement is a concept used to denote a set of beliefs and feelings about rights and entitlements, or legitimate expectations, based on what is perceived to be fair and equitable (Major 1993; Lewis and Smithson 2001; Lewis and Haas 2005). It is different from, albeit influenced by, actual legal or workplace entitlements (Lewis and Lewis 1996). A limited subjective sense of entitlement to be able to work in ways which are compatible with family demands can create low expectations of support and reluctance to request the flexibility that is needed to fulfill work and other obligations (Lewis and Lewis 1997). One criterion for the effectiveness of policies, therefore, is whether or not policies—and the ways in which they are implemented—enhance employees' sense of entitlement to modify work for non-work reasons.

Sense of entitlement is theorized as determined by social comparison processes (Lerner 1987), influenced by social context and ideology, and constructed on the

basis of social, normative, and feasibility comparisons (Major 1987; 1993; Lewis and Lewis 1997). Judgments about what is fair or equitable are made on the basis of normative comparisons with others who are assumed to be similar to oneself (Major 1993). Gender appears to be particularly significant in influencing what is perceived as normative, appropriate, and feasible (Reichle 1996; Hochschild 1997). For example, if policies are mostly taken up by women, men are less likely to feel entitled to such support. Regulation can play an important role in enhancing sense of entitlement to use FWAs. A study of young European workers' expectations of employer support (Lewis and Smithson 2001) found that participants in Sweden and Norway—where welfare states are based on an equality gender contract, and a part of parental leave is reserved for fathers—demonstrated a higher sense of entitlement to support from the state and for employer flexibility in terms of working hours than those in Ireland, Portugal, and the UK, who emphasized self or family reliance. Sense of entitlement to work and family support was gendered among these young adults, but less so in Sweden and Norway where there is strong state support for men as well as women to combine work and family roles. Hence regulation and the assumptions on which it is based can send out strong messages to employees about what is feasible, normative, and equitable.

Regulations such as the right to request flexibility play directly into redefining sense of entitlement. There is some evidence that right to ask for flexibility has increased requests, especially from women but also men, though with some variation based on organizational size, sector, and degree of unionization (Kersley et al. 2006).

Again however, the outcomes of regulation depend upon how this is implemented in practice. Sense of entitlement to take up public or workplace policies on flexible working can be limited by a culture in which ideal workers are not expected to work flexibly, undermining the potential positive impact of such policies. Moreover, in circumstances where FWAs are directed primarily at parents, perceived inequity among employees without children can also reduce the sense of entitlement to take up provisions among parents themselves (Lewis 1997; Lewis and Smithson 2001), reducing the take-up and therefore outcomes of FWAs.

7. APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS AND RESIDUAL BARRIERS

It is increasingly recognized, as discussed above, that the impact of both government regulations and organizational FWAs depend on how they are implemented.

However, despite some evidence of positive outcomes (e.g. Goff, Mount, and Jameson 1990), there is now accumulating evidence that the impact of such initiatives depends on a range of factors, particularly organizational climate and support (e.g. Anderson, Coffey, and Byerly 2002; Allen 2001; O'Driscoll et al. 2003; Mauno, Kinnunen, and Piitulainen 2005; Mauno, Kinnunen, and Pyykkö 2005). For example, opportunities for flexible working are not always well communicated (Bond, Hyman, and Wise 2002) and employees with most need for flexibility are often unaware of the possibilities (Lewis, Kagan, and Heaton 2000).

Organizational culture and normative practices are particularly crucial in determining the outcomes of FWAs (Lewis 1997; 2001; Bailyn 1993; Hochschild 1997; Fried 1998). Aspects of culture such as the assumption that long hours of face time in the workplace are necessary to demonstrate commitment and productivity, especially among professional and managerial workers, can coexist with more surface manifestations of work–life support (Perlow 1998; Lewis 1997; 2001; Bailyn 1993; 2006; Rapoport et al. 2002). Drawing on Schein's (1985) model of organizational culture, flexible working arrangements or work–family policies can be regarded as surface-level artefacts which are underpinned and often undermined by values and assumptions (Lewis 1997). For example reduced hours or part-time working policies may be undermined by assumptions that these policies are only for women and that long hours are necessary to be committed or productive and therefore an undervaluing of those who work shorter hours. More recently constructs such as perceived work–family culture, perceptions of family-supportive organizations (Allan 2001), and perceived organizational family support (Jahn, Thompson, and Kopelman 2003) have been developed and operationalized (see Andreassi and Thompson in press for a review). Research consistently shows that these measures better predict positive individual and organizational outcomes than just the existence of work–family policies or FWAs (Andreassi and Thompson in press; Sahibzida et al. 2005; Dikkers et al. 2005; Mauno, Kinnunen, and Pyykkö 2005; Thompson and Prottas 2006).

Work–family culture in its various forms is usually considered to be multidimensional. Important dimensions include organizational time demands, perceived career consequences of using FWAs (Andreassi and Thompson in press). Other research distinguishes between a climate for sharing concerns or for sacrifices (Kossek, Colquitt, and Noe 2001). Given the prevailing focus on women, a more radical definition provided by Haas, Alard, and Hwang (2002) distinguishes different aspects of culture in terms of how far men are supported in taking leaves. In all these approaches supervisory and management support is considered a critical aspect of wider organizational culture and practice which is essential for policies to be effective in practice (Thomas and Ganster 1995; Goff, Mount, and Jamison 1990; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2006).

It is clear from both qualitative and quantitative research that management attitudes, values, and decisions are crucial to the effectiveness of FWAs (Lewis

1997; 2001; Hochschild, 1997; Dex and Schreibl 2001; Perlow 1998; Thomas and Ganster 1995; Goff, Mount, and Jamison 1990; Lee et al. 2000; Rapoport et al. 2002; Bond, Hyman, and Wise 2002). Managers must communicate, implement, and manage FWAs within organizational cultures which they both influence and are influenced by. Managers can increase the effectiveness of FWAs by their supportiveness (Allen 2001; Thompson et al. 1999; Thomas and Ganster 1995) or can undermine them by communicating, in a variety of ways, implicit assumptions about the value of more traditional ways of working (Lewis 1997; 2001; Perlow 1998). Managers also influence flexible working by their response to requests for non-standard work, by the ways in which they manage flexible workers on a day-to-day basis, and by their own flexibility and work-life integration.

Some recent research has begun to focus on other changes at the organizational level of analysis, for example examining contribution of FWAs to organizational learning and change (Lee, MacDermid, and Buck 2000; Rapoport et al. 2002) and demonstrating that FWAs can be a catalyst to positive and transformational workplace change. For example, Lee, MacDermid, and Buck (2000) examined responses to managerial and professional workers' requests for reduced hours in terms of the organizational learning that takes place. They found three different paradigms of organizational learning in this situation: accommodation, elaboration, and transformation. *Accommodation* involves making individual adaptations to meet the needs of specific employees, usually as a retention measure but not involving any broader changes. Indeed, efforts are made to contain and limit this different way of working, rather than using it as an opportunity for developing policies or broader changes in working practices. In other organizations with formal policies on FWAs backed up by a well-articulated view of the advantages to the organization, *elaboration* takes place. This goes beyond random individual responses to request for flexibility but full-time employees are still the most valued and employers make efforts to contain and systematize procedures for experimenting with FWAs. In the *transformation* paradigm of organizational learning FWAs are viewed as an opportunity to learn how to adapt managerial and professional jobs to the changing conditions of the global market place. The concern of employers is not to limit flexible working arrangements, but to use them to experiment and learn.

The notion that FWAs can be a positive strategy for responding to key business issues implicit in the transformational paradigm is also highlighted in studies that have employed action research to bring about organizational change to meet a *dual agenda* of organizational effectiveness on the one hand and work-personal life integration and gender equity on the other, both afforded equal importance (Rapoport et al. 2002). Organizational learning can be deliberately helped along, using a process termed collaborative interactive action research (CIAR). This involves collaboration between researchers and employees to explore the assumptions underpinning taken-for-granted norms and ways of working that make it

difficult to integrate work and non-work activities in gender equitable ways and then to develop collaboratively innovative interventions to address the dual agenda (Rapoport et al. 2002). This method can engender new FWAs implemented in gender equitable ways and elements of job redesign that support the integration on work and family as well as enhancing—or at least sustaining—workplace effectiveness.

Flexible working arrangements developed in this way and implemented in the context of wider systemic change, have the potential to reduce work–family conflict and enhance opportunities for work/non-work synergies in ways that are perceived as equitable by employees involved in the process. However change is ongoing in contemporary organizations and transformational or “win-win” solutions need to be continually monitored for their applicability in shifting contexts. For example, self-managing teams and self-rostering can be very effective ways of engaging workers in the design of work to support work/non-work integration and equity as well as effectiveness. However, recent research involving eleven case studies of private sector (finance) and public sector (social services) organizations in seven European states shows how this could be undermined in current contexts. With intensified workload and lean staffing, workers in self-managed groups were reluctant to work in flexible ways and especially to take off time for family reasons because they know that their colleagues, who would have to cover for them, were already overworked. In this context colleagues rather than managers became agents of control, and work–family conflicts were intensified rather than managed or reduced (Lewis and Smithson 2006). This points to the importance of realistic workloads for FWAs to be really effective.

Despite the possibilities for improvement, residual barriers remain. Many of these have already been mentioned. At the workplace level this could be a macho culture influencing individual choices or the effects of work intensification creating a peer-generated fear of taking time off. At the organizational level it could be managerial reluctance to challenge presenteeist working culture or a lack of willingness to trust employees to participate in decision-making about their own working arrangements. At the national level it includes an approach to regulate constrained by the need to make such regulations only where endorsed by the representatives of business and, more generally, is influenced by dominant ideas of what is possible and desirable within the relevant national business system (particularly if the system fits to the liberal market economy type).

Combine these factors and difficult scenarios become apparent. In liberal-market economies, the lower levels of employment protection and lower exit costs for—in particular—multinational companies and their subsidiaries, create a harsh environment to level up gender equity policies. Within the often maligned but descriptively useful “flexible firm” organizational type (Pollert 1991), the scenario in even the more enlightened employers strategy, would be for a polarization of gender equity in different labor market subcategories (Blyton and

Turnbull 2004). Thus, men and women working in the “core”—highly skilled and educated, working at the organization at the apex of the supply chain in a professional capacity in a vital function—could expect that the business case for FWA will enable them to experience enlightened management attitudes. In contrast, those on the “periphery”—subcontracted, labor-intensive functions subject to cost-based competition (often, now aided by off-shoring)—will not find their employers able to make the same business case.

8. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this chapter the authors propose the use of the term gender equity as a means of integrating the principles of a range of approaches to enhancing the relationship between work and non-work life, without damaging relations between employees in the workplace. An integrated approach is quite possible without undermining the principles of either equal opportunities or of diversity. The dilemma in relation to work–life or work–family policies is that, currently, women tend to take on more family responsibilities than men (although this is changing, slowly). Therefore introducing policies aimed at enhancing family-friendly employment practices, while welcome in reducing work–family conflict, risk reinforcing these wider gender stereotypes by suggesting the need for “special treatment” for women: as long as initiatives to support the integration of work and personal life are directed primarily at women, they will not be mainstreamed into organizations and they will perpetuate gender inequities.

Any changes in workplace practice would ultimately require workplace culture change. However, such culture change will not happen without supportive policy shifts (both regulatory and organizational). The approach to organizational implementation is crucial, including the recognition and challenging of the gendered nature of most organizational cultures. Systemic change—rather than piecemeal change—is therefore crucial and this cannot be aimed at enhancing “choice”—as choice in certain presenteeist workplace cultures can lead to an intensification of work, rather than the opposite.

In many ways the cause of work–life balance could be said to have received some notable boosts in recent years. It is an area, in Britain for example, where employment regulation has moved consistently in the direction of improving the rights of employees over recent years—unlike in other areas of employment policy. However, in addition to criticism that such policy initiatives often intervene “on behalf of mothers”—and thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles within the family—such policy moves have taken place in a dialogue dominated by the discourse of the

“business case.” Business case arguments for enhancing gender equity at work are useful, but long term it is not clear how well this could coexist with the broader “social justice” case in an increasingly fragmented employment scenario dominated with outsourcing and off-shoring issues.

On this final point, the role of regulation as a driver for organization change returns. Whilst most point to the importance of culture change as the key to embed practices that could enhance gender equity at work, it is clear that this cannot be assumed to be something that will take place by organizations voluntarily in the cases where it is—arguably—likely to be most needed (the peripheral labor markets). Future research will need to focus on these dilemmas addressing the importance of a multi-layered research approach, taking account of macro, meso, and micro contexts including, for example, the interaction between regulation, workplace policy and practice, and individual sense of entitlement to support for integrating work and family in gender equitable ways.

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