Chapter 1

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS: IMPLEMENTATION, OUTCOMES, AND MANAGEMENT

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Flexibility has become a buzzword in organizations. However, flexibility is an overarching term that incorporates a number of different types of strategy. Flexible working time and place arrangements, which are the subject of this chapter, are only one strand along with functional, contractual, numerical, financial, and geographical flexibility. This chapter focuses on flexible working arrangements (FWAs), that is organizational policies and practices that enable employees to vary, at least to some extent, when and/or where they work or to otherwise diverge from traditional working hours. They include, for example, flexitime, term time working, part-time or reduced hours, job sharing, career breaks, family-related and other leaves, compressed workweeks and teleworking. These working arrangements are also often referred to as family-friendly, work-family, or more recently work-life policies. This implies an employee focus, but the extent to which these policies primarily benefit employees or employers, especially in the 24/7 economy (Presser, 1998), or contribute to mutually beneficial solutions, has been the subject of much debate (e.g., Barnett & Hall, 2001; Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001; Purcell, Hogarth, & Simm, 1999; Raabe, 1996; Shreibl & Dex, 1998). Other work-family policies such as dependent care support can be used to complement FWAs and much of the research addresses them simultaneously. The term FWAs will be used in this chapter except where the research under consideration explicitly addresses work-family issues. Non-traditional work arrangements such as shift work or weekend work which are 'standard' in certain jobs are not considered here.

There are two increasingly converging strands of research on FWAs. One stems from a long tradition of examining flexible working as a productivity or efficiency measure (e.g., Brewster, Hegwisch, Lockhart, & Mayne, 1993; Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Krausz, Sagie, & Biderman, 2000) but increasingly also recognizes that these strategies have implications for work–personal life integration. The other has emerged from the work–life literature and depicts flexible working initiatives as tools for reducing work–family conflict or enhancing work–life integration, but has increasingly addressed productivity and other organizational outcomes (e.g., Barnett & Hall, 2001; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Hill et al., 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, 1999; Lewis, Smithson, Cooper, & Dyer, 2002; Prutchno, Litchfield, & Fried, 2000; Smith & Wedderburn, 1998). This review draws on literature from both traditions, although most studies are within the work–family paradigm. It focuses on three major current research themes: (i) empirical and theoretically based discussions of the factors contributing to organizational decisions to implement FWAs; (ii) research on the work-related outcomes of FWAs; and (iii) research focusing on issues in the management of flexible work and workers.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FWAs

Some forms of flexible working schedules such as part-time work, compressed work 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 (Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Krausz et al., 2000; Purcell et al., 1999; Ralston, 1989). 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 employment policies (Harker, 1996; Lewis & Cooper, 1995). Often a business case argument has been used to support the adoption of FWAs; that is, a focus on the cost benefits (Barnett & Hall, 2001; Bevan, Dench, Tamkin, & Cummings, 1999; Galinsky & Johnson, 1998; Hill et al., 2001; Lewis et al., 2002; Prutchno et al., 2000). Other contemporary drivers of change include increased emphasis on high-trust working practices and the thrust toward 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 (DfEE, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Friedman & Johnson, 1996; Lee, McDermid, & Buck, 2000), the implementation of these policies remains patchy across organizations (Glass & Estes, 1997; Golden, 2001; Hogarth, Hasluck, Pierre, Winterbotham, & Vivian, 2000). A major direction of recent research,

therefore, has been to examine the factors that influence organizational responsiveness to work–family issues and hence the development of FWAs.

This research initially emanated from North America (e.g., Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Milliken, Martins, & Morgan, 1998; Osterman, 1995) but also includes some recent research from Europe and Australia (Bardoel, Tharenou, & Moss, 1998; den Dulk, 2001; Dex & Schreibl, 2001; Wood, De Menezes, & Lasasosa, forthcoming). It has focused on identifying factors associated with the adoption of formal FWAs and other work–family policies rather than actual practice and employee use of these initiatives. Organizational size, and sector and economic factors are widely identified as being associated with the adoption of policies (Bardoel et al., 1998; den Dulk & Lewis, 2000; Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Milliken et al., 1998; Wood, 1999; Wood et al., forthcoming). The research suggests that large organizations are more likely to provide formal FWAs than smaller ones; public sector organizations are more likely to develop initiatives than private sector companies; and, within the private sector, arrangements are more common in the service and financial sector compared with construction and manufacturing (Bardoel et al., 1998; Forth et al., 1997; Hogarth et al., 2000; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Morgan & Milliken, 1992). These sectors employ more women, and it is usually believed that having more women in the workforce creates internal pressures that are associated with the development of work–family policies. However, findings on the influence of the proportion of women in the workforce are mixed. Some studies find this factor is associated with the likelihood of adopting FWAs and work–family policies such as childcare (Auerbach, 1990; Bardoel et al., 1998; Glass & Fujimoto, 1995; Goodstein, 1994), while this relationship is not found in other studies (Ingram & Simons, 1995; Morgan & Milliken, 1992). This may depend on the position of women as there is evidence that organizations with a relatively large share of women managers seem to provide work–family arrangements more often than organizations where women’s employment consists mainly of lower skilled jobs (Glass & Fujimoto, 1995; Ingram & Simons, 1995). However, when access to flexible work schedules rather than work–family policies (which include dependent care and family related leaves) are considered, women are less likely than men to have access to them (Golden, 2001). Other research suggests that organizations with relatively ‘progressive’ employment policies and philosophies, seeking to implement high-commitment management, may also be likely to develop FWAs and other work–family supports (Auerbach, 1990; Osterman, 1995; Wood et al., forthcoming).

Theoretical Frameworks

The majority of studies in this tradition have been based on the analysis of large-scale surveys of policies implemented in organizations, usually testing

predictions derived from variations on institutional theory (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Kossek, Dass, & DeMarr, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995; Morgan et al., 1998). The institutional theory approach begins with the basic assumption that there is growing institutional pressure on employers to develop work-family arrangements. It is argued that changes in the demographics of the workforce have increased the salience of work-family issues, and that public attention to these issues and/or state regulations have heightened institutional pressures on employers to be responsive to the increasing need for employees to integrate work and family demands. Variability in organizational responses to these normative pressures is explained by differences in the visibility of companies and in the extent to which social legitimacy matters to them. Hence public sector and large private sector organizations are most likely to develop policies because of concern about their public image. Pressure is also exerted when other organizations in the same sector introduce flexible policies (Goodstein, 1994). Critics of the traditional, institutional theory approach maintain that this underestimates the latitude available to employers to make strategic decisions in adapting to institutional pressures. Goodstein (1994) argues that responsiveness to institutional expectations depends on both the strength of institutional pressures and on economic or other strategic business or technical factors, such as the need to retain skilled staff and the perceived costs and benefits of introducing work-family arrangements. More recently a number of variations of institutional theory and other theoretical approaches have been proposed, differing in the extent to which they focus on institutional pressures, organizational factors, and technical or business considerations (Wood et al., forthcoming). Recent attempts to identify significant factors associated with the adoption of policies, however, suggest that, while all theoretical approaches have some value, no single theoretical perspective can explain all the findings (Wood et al., forthcoming; Dex & Shreibl, 2001). Institutional pressures, strategic business concerns, local situational variables, and human resource strategies may all influence organizational decision making to some extent.

Two major limitations of research examining the factors associated with organizational responsiveness to work-life issues (and indeed much of the other literature in this area) have been the tendency to focus on large organizations and on formal policy rather than informal practice. There is a growing consensus that the availability of formal FWAs alone is not necessarily indicative of their use in practice (e.g., Cooper, Lewis, Smithson, & Dyer, 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Lewis et al., 2002; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002), and this is discussed in later sections of this chapter. The neglect of small- and medium-sized organizations also relates to this policy/practice distinction. The scope for informal practices and flexibility in smaller organisations is often overlooked.

Small- and medium-sized organizations

There is some indication that smaller organizations are more likely than larger ones to develop informal practices, which are often implemented in an *ad hoc* way, to meet the needs of individual employees (Bond, Hyman, Summers, and Wise, 2002; Cooper et al. 2001; Dex & Schreibl, 2001), although one survey failed to confirm this (MacDermid, Litchfield, and Pitt-Catsouphes, 1999). Findings that the size of companies is a predictor of FWAs may thus be an artefact of what it is that is measured. More informal FWAs may well be more appropriate for small- and medium-sized organizations because of their fewer resources and their greater difficulty in, for example, getting cover for colleagues on leave or working flexible hours. However, as with larger companies, no single theoretical approach appears to explain why FWAs are implemented in small- and medium-sized enterprises. For example, Dex and Shreibl (2001) describe a range of formal and informal arrangements that were introduced in small businesses in response to institutional, business, and economic pressures as well as ethical concerns. They found that small organizations were more hesitant about introducing flexibility and were particularly concerned about costs; but it was also in small businesses compared with large businesses in their study that attempts were made to introduce a culture of flexibility (e.g., encouraging employees to cover for each other). Lack of formalization of policies in small businesses could be associated with inequity. On the other hand, formal policies in larger organizations are not necessarily applied in an equitable or consistent way (Bond et al., 2002; Cooper et al., 2001; Lewis, 1997; Lewis et al., 2002; Powell & Mainiero, 1999), and there is some evidence that employees in small organizations with informal practices can feel more supported than those in large organizations with a coherent programme of policies but difficulties in practice (Cooper et al., 2001).

The role of national social policy and state legislation

Recent research, particularly European and cross-national studies, have begun to examine the processes whereby social policy and state legislation might influence the adoption of workplace policies (den Dulk, 2001; Evans, 2000; Lewis et al., 1998). Social policy, such as the statutory provision of childcare and legislation to support work and family integration, varies cross-nationally. For example, paid parental leave is an entitlement in many European states, and in some countries, particularly in Scandinavia, fathers as well as mothers are encouraged to take up this entitlement (Brannen, Lewis, Nielson, & Smithson, 2002; Moss & Deven, 1999); maternity but not parental leave (for either parent) is paid in the UK and parental leave is unpaid in the USA. Employees are more likely to take up parental leave entitlements if they are remunerated (Moss & Deven, 1999), so

organizations develop voluntary FWAs, especially in relation to leave, in different contexts. In Europe state legislation requires organizations to implement policies such as parental leave, the right to take leave for family emergencies, or the provision of equal pro rata benefits for part-time workers. Legislation may also help to create a normative climate that gives rise to higher expectations of employer support (Lewis & Lewis, 1997; Lewis & Smithson, 2001). Edelman argued, 'when a new law provides the public with new expectations or new bases for criticising organisations, or when the law enjoys considerable societal support, apparent non-compliance is likely to engender loss of public approval' (Edelman, 1990, p. 1406). Social policies such as the provision or absence of publicly provided childcare also contribute to institutional pressures on organizations to take account of work-family issues. Evidence from a five-country European study of young workers' orientations to work and family suggests that supportive state policies including legislation and public childcare provision can enhance young people's sense of being entitled to expect support for managing work and family, not just from the state but also from employers (Lewis & Smithson, 2001), which may increase internal as well as external pressures on organizations.

There has been some debate about whether statutory entitlements and provisions encourage employers to implement more voluntary FWAs and other work-family policies, which would be in keeping with institutional theory, or whether it absolves them from responsibility for employees' non-work lives, which might suggest that economic factors are more important (Brewster et al., 1993; Evans, 2000). An overview of analyses of provisions in EU countries suggests that voluntary provision by companies are highest in countries with a medium level of statutory provision such as Austria and Germany. They are least likely to be implemented in those countries with the lowest levels of statutory provision such as the UK and Ireland and in those with the highest levels of support also; that is, the Nordic countries (Evans, 2000). One explanation of this finding may be that national legislation tends to encourage private provision up to a point, after which it tends to replace it, although Evans cautions that it is also necessary to take account of the possible impact of cultural attitudes toward the family on both public policy and the behavior of firms. Another possible explanation for the finding that high levels of statutory provision appear to be associated with lower employer provision may be that national surveys of employer policies tend to focus on childcare support, and on family leaves beyond the statutory minimum, to a greater extent than flexible forms of work. Dependent care policies are less relevant in, for example, the Nordic countries where public provision of childcare is high and statutory leave rights are generous. Elsewhere employers may introduce voluntary provisions to compensate for lack of state provision (den Dulk & Lewis, 2000), while employers in countries with a higher level of statutory provision

do not have to give so much consideration to providing support for childcare or parental leaves and are therefore free to focus on flexible ways of organizing work. Indeed, it has been suggested that the need to organize work to accommodate family leaves can oblige employers to develop such flexibility (Kivimäki, 1998). More cross-national studies focusing specifically on FWAs will be necessary to examine this possibility. Cross-national studies focusing on the development of good practice from the employees' perspective rather than policies as reported by organizations would elucidate further the impact of national policy.

Organizations thus implement flexible and work-family arrangements in response to internal and external pressures although technical factors are also taken into account. One of the most influential technical factors is the business case; that is, the argument that the development of FWAs is cost-effective and has a positive impact on recruitment, retention, turnover, and other work-related variables (Bardoel et al., 1998; Bevan et al., 1999; Prutchno et al., 2000). But how viable is this argument? Much of the human resource (HR) literature that sets out the business case is based on small-scale or large-scale but organizationally specific case studies (e.g., Bevan et al., 1999; DfEE, 2000; Hill et al., 2001). It also fails to consider the possibility that if FWAs have no costs (rather than an actual bottom-line benefit) there may still be an important case for their implementation (Harker & Lewis, 2001). Another theme of recent research in this area has been to examine more critically the organizational outcomes of flexible working practices.

THE OUTCOMES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Evaluation studies vary in the FWAs that they address, the methods they use, and the outcome variables studied. Furthermore, even when the same outcome variables are employed different measures are often used, making comparisons difficult. Nevertheless research on the outcomes of FWAs demonstrates that, although there can be some positive work-related outcomes, a simple business case argument neglects much of the complexity in this area.

Outcomes vary by types of FWA and outcome studied

Numerous studies and several recent reviews and meta-analyses of outcome research have concluded that flexible working arrangements can have positive organizational effects, at least in some circumstances (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Glass & Estes, 1997; Hill et al., 2001), although the results are

not always consistent and reported outcomes are sometimes minimal and often contingent upon other factors. Kossek and Ozeki (1999) carried out a meta-analysis of studies examining (a) the relationships between work-family conflict and organizational outcomes, (b) work-family policy (including both FWAs and dependent care policies) and organizational outcomes, or (c) the overall links between policies, conflict, and outcomes. Criteria for inclusion of studies were that they reported a correlation between a work-family conflict measure and one of six work-related outcomes (performance, turnover intentions, absenteeism, organizational commitment, job/work involvement, and burnout) or that they estimated the effects of an HR policy or intervention on one of the six work-related outcomes or work-family conflict. They found qualified support for the relationship between policies and the work-related outcomes although the results varied somewhat according to the policies and outcomes studied. FWAs tended to be more strongly related than dependent care measures to work-related outcomes but policies did not necessarily reduce work-family conflict nor improve organizational effectiveness in all circumstances, particularly if they did not enhance employees' sense of control over their work schedules.

Many of the studies reviewed by Kossek and Ozeki (1998) were cross-sectional in design so that effects over time were not clear. Baltes et al. (1999) carried out a meta-analysis of the effects of experimental intervention studies of flexitime and compressed work weeks selecting only those studies that included pre- and post-intervention test measures or normative experimental comparison and found that results varied according to the policy and outcomes assessed as well. The meta-analysis was theory driven with hypotheses derived from a range of theoretical models including the work adjustment model, job characteristics theory, person-job fit, and stress models. Baltes et al. (1999) concluded that both flexitime and compressed work weeks had positive effects on productivity/or self-rated performance, job satisfaction, and satisfaction with work schedules but that absenteeism was affected by flexitime only. They suggest that the different effects on absenteeism are because compressed work weeks are less flexible and therefore do not allow employees to, for example, make up time lost through illness or other reasons, as flexitime does. However, this appears to contradict another of their findings, namely that the degree of flexibility is negatively associated with the organizational outcomes studied (Baltes et al., 1999). This suggests that too much flexibility is a bad thing. This finding, which is both counter-intuitive and also counter to theory-based predictions, is explained by Baltes et al. in terms of the possible difficulties in co-ordinating and communicating with others that might arise if there is too much flexibility. However, it is worth noting that, although their analysis is relatively recent, the studies examined in this meta-analysis were mainly conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, many of them before the recent developments in information and communication technologies that are so crucial for many forms of flexible

working. In the age of mobile phones and emails, communication difficulties may be much less pertinent. Other more recent research, albeit not experimentally based, suggests the opposite: that more rather than less flexibility is associated with more positive outcomes, at least in terms of self-reported outcomes. For example, Prutchno et al. (2000), in a survey of over 1,500 employees and managers in six US corporations, found that daily flexitime, which they defined as schedules that enable employees to vary their work hours on a daily basis, was much more likely than traditional flexibility to be associated with self-reported positive impacts on productivity, quality of work, plans to stay with the company, job satisfaction, and a better experience of work–family balance. Other studies have suggested that the impact of flexible working arrangements on organizational outcomes may depend less on the objective extent of flexibility than on psychological factors such as preferred working schedules (Ball, 1997; Barnett, Gareis, & Brennan, 1999; Krausz et al., 2000; Martens, Nijhuis, van Boxtel, and Knottnerus, 1999) or the extent to which flexibility provides autonomy and control (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), as discussed later in this chapter.

The possibility of having too much flexibility is, however, raised in research focusing on teleworking, that is, working from home for some or all the week, which has produced mixed results. There is some evidence of positive work-related outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and lower turnover among teleworkers than office-based workers and of enhanced flexibility and integration of work and non-work roles in some circumstances (Ahrentzen, 1990; Dubrin, 1991; Frolick, Wilkes, & Urwiler, 1993; Olsen, 1987; Rowe & Bentley, 1992). However, other research reports negative outcomes such as lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, less positive relationships with managers and colleagues, greater work–family conflict and more tendency to overwork such as working during vacations (Olsen, 1987; Prutchno et al., 2000). Many studies imply that teleworking can be a double-edged sword with the potential for both positive and negative outcomes (Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996; Steward, 2000; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). The tendency to overworking may be regarded as symptomatic of the increased blurring of work and non-work boundaries that appears to be becoming widespread, facilitated by developments in information and communication technologies (Haddon, 1992; Steward, 2000; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Although the outcome measures used in research on telework often differ from those used in relation to other forms of flexible working arrangements, research does seem to suggest that too much flexibility in the context of information and communication technology in the home as well as the workplace may raise a different set of issues about impacts on individuals, their families, and organizations that will require further exploration and research (Standen, Daniels, & Lamond, 1999). The effects of teleworking also appear to be highly gendered. Qualitative research shows that teleworking women are

more likely than men to multitask and less likely to have a room of their own, men more likely to be able to shut themselves away and work without interruptions from family members (Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). This may explain why, in a recent UK national survey, men were more likely than women to wish to work from home (Hogarth et al., 2000).

The different dependent variables used in outcome research makes comparison difficult. This is particularly evident in relation to measures of performance and productivity. Measures used in the research include sales performance (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996), self-rated performance (Cooper et al., 2001; Prutchno et al., 2000), self-efficacy ratings (Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Netemeyer et al. 1996), and supervisor ratings (Kossek & Nichol, 1992), as well as more objective measures of productivity in the case of manufacturing workers (Baltes et al., 1999; Shepard & Clifton, 2000). It can be argued that studies that predetermine outcomes inevitably limit to some extent what can be learnt about FWAs. Action research, which begins at an earlier stage with the problem to be solved rather than the evaluation of policy to be implemented, may have advantages in this respect. Rather than just predetermining what outcomes will be measured, this approach enables other outcomes to emerge, grounded in the specific organizational context. For example, action research carried out in a number of companies in the USA explored systemic solutions that could meet both strategic business needs and employees' needs for work-life integration as well as gender equity—what the researchers term the dual agenda (Bailyn, Rapoport, Kolb, and Fletcher, 1996; Fletcher & Rapoport, 1996; Rapoport et al., 2002). Interventions developed as a consequence of the research team working collaboratively with employees, examining the nature of the work, and identifying, surfacing, and challenging assumptions about working practices, included introducing periods of quiet time so that work could be carried out without interruptions, and removing management discretion about FWAs in order to empower work teams to develop their own schedules. It is worth noting that the outcomes identified from these interventions were both more varied and more directly bottom-line-oriented than those in most experimental or survey research. They were specific to the work unit studied and included improved time to market, enhanced product quality, and increased customer responsiveness as well as more traditional measures such as reduced absenteeism (Fletcher & Rapoport, 1996; Rapoport et al., 2002).

Processes and Intervening Variables

The action research discussed above focused on evaluation of the process of bringing about change rather than policy. In contrast, much of the research evaluating FWAs neglects process, although this is crucial for explaining how and why some FWAs are effective in some circumstances. There have, never-

theless, been a number of attempts to theorize the outcomes of FWAs or work-life policies and the factors which facilitate or undermine them. Research has examined the role of work-family conflict, worker preferences, perceived control and autonomy, perceptions of organizational justice, perceived management and organizational support, and organizational learning. These studies tend to address the processes explaining outcomes of FWAs for those with family commitments, primarily childcare and eldercare demands. Less attention has been paid to the processes whereby FWAs may impact on work-related outcomes among employees more broadly or on more fundamental organizational change.

Work-Family Conflict

It is often argued that FWAs can contribute toward positive integration of work and personal life (Galinsky & Johnson, 1998; Hill et al., 1996). However, much of the research operationalizes this in terms of absence or minimization of work-family conflict. Kossek and Ozeki (1999) argue that work-family conflict is a crucial but often neglected variable for understanding the process whereby FWAs may relate to work-related outcomes. Studies examining work-family conflict increasingly distinguish between work conflicting with family and family conflicting with work rather than more global measures (e.g., Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, 1999; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Kossek and Ozeki (1999) conclude from their meta-analysis that, although work conflicting with the family role is not necessarily related to productivity and work-related attitudes, there is substantial evidence that family conflicting with the work role is. To understand why and how FWAs influence individual work-related attitudes and behaviours, they argue, it is necessary to examine how they affect different aspects of work-family conflict, which in turn influence outcomes such as performance and absenteeism. For example, there may be different implications of the effects of FWAs on time-related strains or emotional conflict: 'not being able to do two things at the same time may impact differently from feeling bad about it!' (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999, p. 18). As Kossek and Ozeki (1999) point out there is a need for more longitudinal research looking at the impact of FWAs on work-family conflict to extend our understanding of the processes whereby policies impact on individual and organizational outcomes. The impacts of FWAs on work-family conflict and subsequent work-related outcomes may vary for different groups of workers and this too needs to be taken into account in this research. Gender is a crucial variable (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999) as well as the gender composition of workplaces (Holt & Thaulow, 1996; Maume & Houston, 2001). Age (or generation) may be a further relevant factor. 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 (Cooper et al., 2001), who were also more likely to say they would use FWAs.

Employee Preferences

As would be predicted from person–job fit theory, the impact of FWAs appears to depend on employee preferences (Ball, 1997; Krausz et al., 2000; Martens et al., 1999). The work-related outcomes can be positive if FWAs fit in with employee needs but may be non-effective or even detrimental if not freely chosen (Martens et al., 1999; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). Martens et al. (1999) concluded that FWAs were only beneficial to employees who could choose and control their own flexibility, after finding significantly more health problems among Belgian employees working flexible schedules than among a control group working traditional hours. However, the FWAs examined in this study included long or irregular shifts, on-call work, and temporary employment contracts, implemented for employer flexibility.

Control and Autonomy

A closely related factor influencing the outcomes of FWAs is the extent to which they are perceived as providing control and autonomy over working hours (Krausz et al., 2000; Martens et al., 1999; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Thomas and Ganster (1995) distinguished between family supportive policies and family supportive managers, both of which they found related to perceived control over work and family demands, which, in turn, were associated with lower scores on a number of indicators of stress among a sample of healthcare professionals. While there is much support for the view that perceived control and autonomy explain positive outcomes of some FWAs (Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Kossek & Oseki, 1999; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001), this does seem to depend to some extent on the populations studied. Baltes et al. (1999) found that the benefits of flexitime and compressed work weeks were lower for managers than other employees and argue that this is likely to be because managers already have considerable autonomy and therefore these policies are less relevant. Other research however, contests the idea that management autonomy provides flexibility. It is often more difficult for managers to work flexibly, particularly in the context of long-working-hours cultures (Kossek et al., 1999; Perlow, 1998; Bond et al., 2002; Hochschild, 1997; Lewis et al., 2002) and the beliefs that managerial or supervisory tasks cannot be performed flexibly (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). In fact 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 (Holt & Thaulow, 1996; Lewis et al., 2002; Perlow, 1998).

More research is needed to clarify the effects of FWAs on managers and subsequent organizational outcomes if the effects are, perversely, to encourage or enable managers and professionals to work longer hours (Lewis & Cooper, 1999).

Perceived Organizational Justice

Although FWAs can potentially benefit all employees and their employing organizations, they are often directed mainly at employees with family commitments, especially parents of young children (Young, 1999). There have been some suggestions, mostly in the popular media, of work–family backlash among employees without children, especially if they feel that they have to do extra work to cover for colleagues working more flexibly (Young, 1999; Lewis et al., 1998). This raises the possibility of negative organizational outcomes of FWAs in some circumstances. These might include low morale or resentment, which, in turn, could affect job satisfaction, intention to leave, and other outcomes among employees who do not have access to FWAs, if this is selectively provided. Results from the sparse research that has addressed these questions are inconsistent. Grover (1991) examined perceptions of fairness of family-related leave in the USA and concluded that these were influenced by whether or not employees were likely to gain personally. Thus parents and those who were considering becoming parents viewed these leaves more favourably than other employees, supporting the backlash notion. In contrast, Grover and Crooker (1995) compared employees in organisations with and without family-oriented policies and found that all employees in family responsive organizations, regardless of their own parental status, perceived their employers more positively. The authors suggested that work–family policies contributed to perceptions of the organization as being generally supportive and fair, which contradicts the idea of backlash. Parker and Allen (2000) extended this research by examining a number of personal and situational factors that might impact on perceptions of fairness of work–family policies and generated moderate support for both views. Employees who had personal experience of using FWAs, younger employees, women, and parents with young children (but not those who were considering becoming parents) were most likely to perceive work–family policies as fair. The only situational variable to influence fairness perceptions was interdependence of tasks. It was expected that employees working in jobs characterized by high job interdependence would be more likely to perceive work–family policies as unfair because they would be more inconvenienced by colleagues' flexibility. The findings were significant in the opposite direction. The authors speculate that this may be due to the personality characteristics of those who self-select into this type of job, and who may be more relationship oriented. Another possible explanation is that employees in highly interdependent jobs may be more aware of the

potential reciprocity of informal and formal flexibility from which they too could benefit (Holt & Thaulow, 1996).

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 & Smithson, 2001), reducing the takeup and therefore outcomes of FWAs. Making FWAs normative and available to all rather than subject to management discretion may therefore contribute more than targeted policies to a family supportive culture.

The impact of FWAs can also be influenced by 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 (Ball, 1997; Kogi & Martino, 1995; Rapoport et al., 2002; Smith & Wedderburn, 1998). Conversely, lack of consultation with managers about the development of FWAs can contribute to feelings of unfairness, which may undermine implementation. For example, Baltes et al. (1999) speculated that one reason for the negative effects of high levels of flexibility in the studies they reviewed may be that more flexible policies on paper may result in managers clamping down on flexibility in practice in order to sustain control. Dex and Schriebl (2001) also noted that some of the managers in the larger organizations they studied felt alienated because they were compelled to introduce policies on which they had not been consulted.

Clearly more research is needed to clarify conditions under which FWAs are perceived as fair, the outcomes of justice perceptions, and the implications for organizations. Organizational justice theory (e.g., Greenberg, 1996) provides a useful framework for extending understanding of these processes (Lewis & Smithson, 2002; Young, 1999).

Organizational Culture and Supportive Management

Organizational culture or climate is a crucial variable contributing to the outcomes of FWAs, especially when these are formulated as 'family friendly' rather than productivity measures (Bailyn, 1993; Fried, 1998; Friedman & Johnson, 1996; Hochschild, 1997; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Lewis et al., 2002). In this context 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 co-exist with more surface manifestations of work-life support (Bailyn, 1993; Cooper et al., 2001; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Lewis et al., 2002; Perlow, 1998; Rapoport et al., 2002). Moreover, opportunities for flexible working are not always well communicated (Bond et al., 2002). Often employees with most need for flexibility are unaware of the possibilities (Lewis, Kagan, & Heaton, 1999). Supervisory support is a critical aspect of the organizational climate that is

essential for policies to be effective in practice (Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), but it is not always forthcoming and many employees feel that taking up opportunities for flexible working will be career limiting (Bailyn, 1993; Cooper et al., 2001; Lewis et al., 2002; Perlow, 1998). In many occupations, especially at professional and managerial levels 'strong players' are regarded as those who do not need to modify hours of work for personal reasons (Lewis, 2002).

The impact of workplace culture on the outcomes of FWAs has not always been acknowledged in discussions of notions such as family friendliness. Initially, family friendliness was measured by the number of policies available (Galinsky, Friedman, & Hernandez, 1991). Wood (1999) proposed a concept of family-friendly management that denotes a coherent rather than *ad hoc* approach to the development of work-family policies. This implies more consistency in supportiveness for employees with family commitments, but still tends to be measured by reference to policy adoption as reported by HR representatives or other managers (Wood, 1999). To understand the process whereby FWAs may relate to work-related behaviors and attitudes it is important to understand the organizational climate from employees perspectives. Recent literature has begun to focus more on organizational culture, and measures to assess the extent to which organizational cultures are perceived as supportive of work-family integration have been developed (Allen, 2001; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco, & Jusiesch, 1999; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Drawing on theories of organizational and social support Thompson and her colleagues (Thompson et al., 1999) developed a measure of perceived organizational family support (POFS) that assesses perceived instrumental, informational, and emotional support for work-family needs. It incorporates perceived support from the organization and from supervisors. Another scale (Allen, 2001) examines global employee perceptions of the extent to which their organizations are supportive. Both measures predict work-related outcomes in the expected direction, including enhanced organizational commitment, job satisfaction, women's intentions to return to work more quickly after childbirth and reduced intention to quit, and work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; Lyness et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 1999), and have been found to mediate the relationship between FWAs and work-related behaviours and attitudes. The distinction between perceived support from the organization and from supervisors may be a fruitful avenue to pursue further. In some cases wellintentioned support from the organization (i.e., senior or HR management) can be undermined by line managers (Lewis & Taylor, 1996) while there is some evidence that line managers can be perceived as more supportive than 'the organization' when the normative culture is not perceived as supporting work-life integration (Cooper et al., 2001).

The inclusion of measurements of employees perceptions of organizational climate in studies evaluating FWAs is an important advance, recognizing the

distinction between policy and practice and underscoring the fact that FWAs will have limited impact if not supported by the culture. However, future research could usefully generate multiple perspectives, including managers' perceptions of FWAs in practice, to provide a more holistic picture of the processes and barriers impacting the effectiveness of FWAs in a range of workplace contexts. Non-supportive cultures suggest that understanding of the potential value of FWAs has not been diffused throughout the organization and this has not become a part of organizational learning.

FWAs and Organizational Level Change: Organizational Learning

Although it is increasingly recognized that FWAs can meet the needs of both organizations and individual employees, most research on FWAs has not only focused on policy rather than practice but also on individual level outcomes rather than organizational level change. Some recent research, however, has begun to focus on the organizational level of analysis, examining the contribution of FWAs to organizational learning and change (Lee et al., 2000; Rapoport et al., 2002). Lee et al. (2000) examined responses to managerial and professional workers' requests for reduced-hours work 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 this 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 as 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 marketplace. The concern of employers is to experiment and learn. These emergent paradigms were considered by Lee et al. (2000) to be representative of more general organizational variability in response to changes in the external environment or challenges to the status quo.

The notion that FWAs can be a strategy for responding to key business issues implicit in the transformation 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 (Fletcher & Rapoport, 1996; Rapoport et al., 2002). This approach illustrates a process

whereby organizational learning can be deliberately helped along. Managers, at all levels, are crucial in this process. The next section, “The management of flexible work and workers”, therefore examines research on the role of managers in the implementation and diffusion of FWAs.

THE MANAGEMENT OF FLEXIBLE WORK AND WORKERS

An important but relatively new area of research concerns how managers make decisions about the day-to-day operation of FWAs. It is clear from both qualitative and quantitative research that management attitudes, values, and decisions are crucial to the effectiveness of FWAs (Bond et al., 2002; Dex & Schreibl, 2001; Goff et al., 1990; Hochschild, 1997; Lee et al., 2001; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Perlow, 1998; Rapoport et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 1999). Managers must communicate, implement, and manage FWAs within organizational cultures that they both influence and are influenced by. Managers can increase the effectiveness of FWAs by their supportiveness (Allen, 2001; Hohl, 1996; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999) or can undermine FWAs 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, the ways in which they manage flexible workers on a day-to-day basis, and by their own flexibility and work-life integration.

Management Decision Making in Relation to Subordinates Requests for Flexible Work Schedules

FWAs are often subject to management discretion; that is, first line managers with operational responsibility have the discretion to say who can work in flexible ways. Managers' decisions to grant requests may be based on beliefs about potential disruption, substitutability of employees, notions of fairness and respect, perceptions of employees' record of work and commitment, perceived long-term impact, or perceived gender appropriateness of a request and other factors (Bond et al., 2002; Klein, Berman, & Dickson, 2000; Lee et al., 2000; Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Powell and Mainiero (1999) analysed managers' decision making when responding to vignettes in which hypothetical subordinates made requests for FWAs (working from home for part of the week, part-time work, or unpaid leave). The type of FWA requested, characteristics and job role of the subordinate, and reasons for the request were all manipulated. They found support for a work disruption theoretical explanation of first line managers' decision making. That is, managers looked more favorably on requests that they perceived as involving least disruption. For example, working from home

was regarded more favourably than unpaid leave, and managers tended to be less willing to approve FWAs for subordinates whose skills and tasks were critical to operations and could not be easily replaced or who had supervisory responsibilities. This reflects other research that suggests that managers may be more willing to grant requests for flexibility to those workers who are more easily substituted (Bond et al., 2002). The tendency for decisions to be made on the basis of judgements of short-term disruption rather than long-term consideration of the potential costs of losing and replacing subordinates who are most critical to the work unit suggests that many of the managers are not aware of, or do not fully understand, long-term arguments for flexible working. However, Powell and Mainiero (1999) found some diversity in decision making, particularly in relation to the extent to which managers focused on the person making the request, the nature of the FWA requested, and the reason for making the request. In so far as this mirrors actual behavior in organizations this implies that decision making is not always based on consistent principles, which can have important implications for employees' perceptions of justice and possible backlash.

In contrast, however, other policy capturing research suggests that managers may be more likely to grant requests for alternative work schedules to those on whom they rely most. Klein et al. (2000) asked a sample of American attorneys (including both partners and associates) to rate how likely it was that their firm would grant requests from different attorneys to change from full-time to part-time work, again using hypothetical scenarios. They drew on dependency theory (Bartol & Martin, 1989) to predict that managers would be most likely to acquiesce to those subordinates on whom they most depended and on institutional theory to predict that managers would respond more favourably to requests from women and when requests related to childcare than for other reasons. Both hypotheses were supported. The notion of dependency is conceptually and operationally similar to that of criticality of subordinates used by Powell and Mainiero (1999) but also differs in notable ways. Both incorporate the ease or difficulty of replacement but the scenarios used in Klein et al.'s (2000) study also included high performance, the subordinates having support from powerful people in the organization and subordinates' threats to leave. It may be that if these extra variables had been included in Powell and Mainiero's study managers would have been more reflective in responding to requests. However, there are other differences between the two studies, which may also explain the contradictory findings about critical employees. Klein et al. studied lawyers while Powell and Mainiero looked at managers in a range of organizations. Powell and Mainiero also included a wider range of alternative working strategies. Perhaps most significant is the distinction between manager supportiveness and perceived organizational supportiveness (Allen, 2001). Powell and Mainiero examined managers' decision making processes while Klein et al. addressed the perspectives of both managers and subordinates on

their firms' likely responses. Managers, especially HR managers, tend to present different and often more favourable pictures of alternative working strategies in the organizations than subordinates (Klein et al., 2000; Cooper et al., 2001). Thus the contradictory findings may indicate contradictions between what managers say they would do and more general perceptions of organizational responsiveness.

The two studies also produced contradictory findings on the significance of the gender of subordinates making the request. Klein et al.'s (2000) findings support institutional theory and other research on the role of applicants gender (Barham, Gottlieb, & Kelloway, 1998) in that managers were more likely to grant requests to women than men and to those related to childcare than those from employees who wanted time for writing a novel. Powell and Mainiero (1999), on the other hand, found managers less willing to grant requests relating to childcare than eldercare, which was viewed as short term and therefore potentially less disruptive. In their study, the gender of the subordinate did not significantly affect decisions though the gender of the manager did, with women being more likely to make favourable decisions. While the difference between these two sets of findings may again be related to methodological approaches, it is possible that managers may be less influenced by gender stereotypes than others believe. If so this could have a significant effect. If men, and also women who want flexibility for non-childcare-related reasons, believe that managers are unlikely to grant requests for FWAs this may reduce the likelihood of making such requests and therefore reduce the scope and pressure for managers to make non-stereotyped decisions.

Both studies are limited in that they use hypothetical scenarios and methods that restrict the number of variables that can be manipulated and analysed. Given the contradictory nature of these findings more research is needed to clarify the factors that impinge on management decision making about FWAs, including the influence of the likelihood of different groups of subordinates actually making such requests, in a range of real-life organizational settings and the implications for organizational learning.

Management Expectations of Flexible Workers

A second way in which managers can influence the effectiveness of FWAs is by their day-to-day management and expectations of flexible workers and those who have access to FWAs. There is some evidence from both qualitative and quantitative research suggesting that employees working shorter hours may be as or often more efficient or productive than full-timers (Lewis, 1997, 2001; Stanworth, 1999). Yet studies of part-time and reduced-hours workers suggest they often pose particular problems for managers, particularly in contexts where those working non-standard hours are in a minority, the result of reactive decision making rather than part of a

well-thought-out strategy, and in the context of a norm of long working hours (Cooper et al., 2001; Edwards & Robinson, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Lewis et al., 2002). Managers do not always adjust their expectations when employees move from full-time to part-time work (Edwards & Robinson, 2000). Alternatively, managers often assume that part-timers are not committed or serious workers and underuse them (Cooper et al., 2001; Edwards & Robinson, 2000; Lewis, 2001). For example, a study of part-time police officers revealed that they were often overlooked for training and promotion (Edwards and Robinson, 2000), while part-timers in a survey of chartered accountants reported that they typically worked proportionately as many hours over their contracts as full-timers but were still regarded as not committed, and many felt that they were given less challenging assignments (Cooper et al., 2001). It is important for future research to examine the reasons why managers tend to underestimate part-time workers and what it takes to change managerial assumptions about the primacy of full-time work (Raabe, 1996, 1998). Furthermore, it is worth noting that attitudes to part-time workers appear to vary cross-nationally. A study of part-time work in the public health services in Denmark, France, and the UK suggested that while part-time work was regarded as a sign of low career commitment in the UK and France this view is less evident in Denmark where there is also more equality between male and female part-time work (Branine, 1999). Further cross-national studies may illuminate the reasons for these differences.

Managers can also undermine FWAs among full-time employees by the encouragement of long hours and face time. For example, in a case study of engineers using a combination of interviews and participant observation Perlow reveals how managers use organizational culture to control subordinates' boundaries between work and personal lives, by the various ways in which they 'cajole, encourage, coerce or otherwise influence the amount of time employees spend visibly at the workplace' (Perlow, 1998, p. 329). They do this Perlow argues by, for example, overtly valuing and rewarding long hours at the workplace and penalizing those who do not conform, setting unnecessary deadlines, and constantly monitoring employees. When commitment and productivity are difficult to quantify, as they are in most knowledge work, then they are often measured by workers' willingness to work late to meet a series of deadlines, or simply to get the work done (Lewis, 1997, 2001). Consequently managers may not only be unsupportive of FWAs but may actively undermine them.

Managers as Role Models to Subordinates and Peers

A further way in which managers can influence the outcomes of FWAs is by the ways they model work-life integration in their own lives; for example, by working reduced or flexible schedules or full-time schedules but not long

hours (Bond et al., 2002; Kossek, Barber, & Winters, 1999; Lee et al., 2000; Lewis, 2001; Raabe, 1996, 1998). Managers' working patterns send out powerful signals about what sort of working hours or schedules are acceptable. It is therefore important to understand not only what drives managers to work long hours and to expect others to do the same, but also what factors contribute to their decisions to work non-standard hours or to use FWAs in the face of what are often strong cultural and structural barriers (Raabe, 1998). A study by Kossek et al. (1999) suggests that managers' decisions about their own working patterns like those of their subordinates are influenced by perceived business impact (Kossek et al., 1999). Personal factors also play a role, with women and younger managers being more likely than other groups to say they have worked flexibly or intend to do so at some point (Kossek et al., 1999). In addition, the working patterns of their peers can exert a powerful influence on managers' behaviour. Managers in Kossek et al.'s study were much more likely to have used or to intend using flexible working practices if they had peers who had previously used them (Kossek et al., 1999). Managers who can lead the way by using FWAs themselves thus have the potential to be change agents, influencing the culture and indeed the behaviour of their peers and subordinates. However, managers often have different rules for their subordinates and themselves. For example, in a study of 'family friendly' policies and practices in 17 companies in Scotland, Bond et al. (2002) noted that, while many managers saw the importance of FWAs for their subordinates, they tended to eschew flexibility and work long hours themselves.

Research on management decision making strategies in relation to both subordinates' and their own working schedules is a promising avenue of investigation, as yet in its infancy. While policy capturing studies using hypothetical scenarios are useful for testing specific theories, more research is now needed on the factors that influence managers' decision making and behaviours in a range of real-life organizational settings. Research needs to take account of a wider range of factors influencing management assumptions and decision-making. For example, research on the impact of management training or guidelines on managing flexible workers and of feedback on colleagues' experiences of managing flexible workers would help to inform training policy. The extent to which managers are themselves under pressure, with constant deadlines, may also affect their ability to consider longer term impacts of decisions and expectations concerning subordinates' working schedules.

CONCLUSIONS

The three strands of research discussed here obviously overlap. Nevertheless, there remains a need for more connections to be made between them. Further

links could be made between research into the factors that influence organizational adoption of policies and that into management decision making relating to the day-to-day practice of managing flexible workers. For example, how do factors such as organizational size and sector, which are associated with the adoption of FWAs, impact on the way flexible work is managed in everyday practice? Research evaluating the outcomes of FWAs points to the paramount importance of organizational culture and working practices and to the need to distinguish between policy and practice. It is time for this to be recognized in all research on FWAs so that not just the adoption of policies but also the actual take-up and practice of FWAs becomes the focus of enquiry. The creation of organizational cultures that support truly flexible working arrangements to meet the needs of employees and employers may be one of the major challenges facing organizations at a time when human resources are so crucial in the global economy.

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