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Work-Life Flexibility for Whom?

Occupational Status and Work-Life Inequality in Upper, Middle, and Lower Level Jobs

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Abstract

We define work-life flexibility as employment scheduling practices that are designed to give employees greater control over when, where, how much or how continuously work is done. Research has under-examined how work-life flexibility is stratified across occupations. We review how occupational status and flexibility experiences vary and shape work-life inequality, which we identify as a form of job inequality. We investigate the range of definitions, measurement approaches and theorizing regarding work-life flexibility. We find that employees across occupational groups experience different work-life flexibility outcomes from different flexibility types. Providing employee control over scheduling variation (flextime) may benefit lower-level workers the most, yet many are unable to access this flexibility form. Part-time work permitting control over work volume/workload hurts lower-level employees the most (due to involuntary income and benefits loss). Yet these same part-time practices enhance recruitment and retention for upper-level jobs, but harm promotion and pay. Work continuity control (leaves) benefits upper and middle-level employees, but is largely unavailable to lower-level workers. Flexibility to control work location is rarely available for lower-level jobs; but benefits middle and upper-level employees, provided that individuals are able to control separation from work when desired and self-regulate complexity. We offer implications for research and practice.

Introduction

> I really feel that the part-time thing has isolated me completely and taken me out of the game. And I don't think I realized when I was doing it the long-term implications of it…and the career that I'm in is driven by young people who can work the nights … So I actually don't know when I can actually take one of these big jobs that the head hunters call me up about… But you know what, it's all what you want on your gravestone, right?
> -Marketing manager at Fortune 500 firm who doesn't want to put young children in full time child care[1]

> They normally work 12 hours a day, they work about 5 days straight for some of them, some people work up to 12 hours a day. It shuffles…This is a 24 hours facility, and if you don't find a way to cover it, you are stretching your people, we need to develop a schedule that covers weekends.
> -Blue collar unionized team leader at food processing plant[2]

> Well, I just adopted a kid from (country). Why can't I have it off? … cause you can't, you work in nursing.
> -Hourly nursing assistant in a long-term care facility[3]

Work-life flexibility practices, from flextime and telework to part-time or reduced-load work and parental or sick leave, are a hot topic in the media and public policy debates, and of increasing importance around the globe as work-life stress levels rise and household demographics shift to include more women in the workforce (Kossek, Thompson, & Lautsch, 2015). We define work-life flexibility as employment scheduling practices that are designed to give employees greater work–life control over when, where, how much or how continuously work is done (Allen, et al., 201l; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Kossek, Thompson, & Lautsch, 2015; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Leading high technology and consulting companies from Netflix to Google to Accenture regularly make highly publicized announcements on their enhancement of work-life flexibility (Walker, 2015). Even the U.S., which has been slower compared to other industrialized western countries (e.g., Canada, U.K., Australia) to adopt legislation providing the

[1] Lee, Kossek, Hall, Litrico, 2011
[2] Kossek, Gettings & Berg, 2014
[3] Kossek, Pisczcek, McAlpine, Hammer & Burke, 2016

right to request a flexible schedule or paid leave, appears to be moving toward policies promoting work-life flexibility as illustrated by the fact that both main political candidates in the recent 2016 U.S. presidential elections included support for paid parental leaves in their presidential platforms (Scholar, 2016). Increased access to work-life flexibility has also been linked to national competitiveness (Council of Economic Advisors, 2014), and recommended by professional associations such as the Society of Human Resources Management as a means to attract and retain talent, increase engagement, and to facilitate global work operations (Kossek, Hammer, Thompson & Burke, 2014).

Yet it is unclear whether workers across occupational levels of the labor force equally benefit from work-life flexibility enhancements. For example, relatively few lower level workers are employed by Silicon Valley and management consulting firms that promote flexible ways of working. Much of the management literature and practice has also overlooked differences across occupational groups spanning the upper, middle and lower segments of the labor force that vary in job conditions that shape the need for and experience of work-life flexibility. As the opening quotes to this article demonstrate, employees across occupations face work-life flexibility challenges related to work hours, schedules, time off, or volume of work, but perhaps not the same set of challenges. For example, many doctors, lawyers, business professionals and high technology workers work long hours and may lack the ability to disconnect from e-work when at home, take vacations or enjoy their weekends as "Sunday" has become the new "Monday morning" for cell phone calls and emails (Teitell, 2015). Employees in lower level retail, food and hotel service jobs can work erratic schedules making it difficult to arrange child care, or work too few hours to make ends meet (Henley & Lambert, 2014). Research also shows that workers earning less than US $10 per hour or who have not completed high school historically

have been less likely to have access to flexible work practices such as flextime and unpaid leave (Miller, 1992). Manufacturing and nursing employees may have regimented or employer-driven rotating shifts making it challenging to attend doctor or school appointments (Williams & Boushey, 2010). In sum, individuals in different occupations need and have access to different types of work-life flexibility (Williams & Boushey, 2010), but they don't necessarily get the right kind of flexibility that benefits them the most to help them manage their career or reduce their job and family stress.

Disciplinary Silos

Our understanding of these differences in work-life flexibility experiences is limited because scholarship examining flexibility practices is fragmented, across occupations and disciplines. Studies focusing on the outcomes of these flexibility arrangements for higher occupational status groups such as managerial and professional samples (higher pay and skill) (e.g., Jacobs & Gerson, 2005) are not well assimilated with research on middle (moderate pay, skilled/semi-skilled) (e.g. Berg, Kossek, Misra & Belman, 2014) or lower status (lower wage, lower skilled) (e.g., Henly & Lambert, 2014) occupational groups (Casper et al., 2007; Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). Disciplinary differences also exist in types of flexibility and populations studied. Scholarship, particularly in the management journals, has been overly focused on managerial and professional samples, which restricts our knowledge about work-life dilemmas and potential solutions for those employed in middle and lower-status occupations (Casper et al., 2007; Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). While management scholars might focus on the flexibility forms of telework, flextime or boundary management (cf. Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015), social work scholars examine lower income workers‘ need for prédictible schedules (cf Henly & Lambert, 2014) or how employers create flexible schedules to transfer risk from variation in

customer demands onto lower level workers (Lambert, 2008). Labor relations scholars examine middle class unionized workers, many who are in shift work or jobs restricting overtime (Berg, Kossek, Misra, & Belman, 2014). Psychologists often examine perceptions of autonomy and access to schedule flexibility as a general job attribute, but typically give less attention to how variation in occupation and job level moderate work-life flexibility access and outcomes (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 201l). Thus, there is reason for concern that systematic occupational differences in work-life flexibility experiences exist (Williams & Boushey, 2010; Williams, Blair-Loy & Berdahl, 2013), and interdisciplinary integration is needed to provide a window into this variation across job groups in order to close the gap in outcomes related to workforce work-life flexibility needs.

Review Goals, Contributions and Organization

Goals. Given our limited understanding of the important work-life challenges faced by workers across occupations and the potential usefulness of flexibility programs in addressing them, our primary purpose is to provide a systematic review of research on different types of flexibility and to identify patterns in how flexibility and occupational differences in outcomes have been researched. Drawing on Williams and Boushey's typology (2010) of upper, middle and lower, we identify key themes by different occupational groups – specifically, issues for the upper 20%, middle 50%, and lower 30% of the workforce in terms of income and associated skill levels. (See Appendix 1 for further detail on our definition and categorization of upper/middle/lower segments of the workforce.) In the next section we consider previous reviews and demonstrate that this is the first review to focus systematically on a range of outcomes across occupations. This is important as the ability of employees to remain and excel in the labor force, and their personal and family health and financial well-being may be

influenced greatly by experiences with work-life flexibility arrangements that fit their occupational demands. If some occupations are not deriving positive outcomes because of lack of access to the type of flexibility they need or experiencing stigma or negative consequences from using flexibility policies, this is important for managing societal workforce stress, productivity, and the ability of diverse employee occupational groups who need flexibility to benefit from these policies and practices.

Contributions. First, we identify work-life flexibility access and outcomes as a growing form of job inequality. In doing so, this review extends previous work-life flexibility research by providing evidence that occupational status and work-life flexibility outcomes remain not only under-researched (e.g. few studies compare occupational groups systematically using the same types of work-life flexibility in the same study), but paramount to regularly examine in future research.

Second we conceptualize work–life flexibility in an integrative way that can be used to synthesize the literature. Disciplines are siloed in their examination of work-life flexibility and this make it difficult to link to different occupational groups. Similarly, flexibility studies can also be siloed by examining for example only virtual work but not workload reduction in a comparative way. We add to theory on why flexibility matters for well-being and link it to the job control literature (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) which sees flexibility as a means to enable employees to better manage job and personal life demands.

Third, we catalogue the extent to which the existing work-family and flexibility literatures are limited in their ability to understand inequality, by not asking the right questions and looking at all forms of flexibility across key work-related groups. Drawing on the trends in the review,

we conclude with a definition of work-life inequality as the degree to which individuals in different occupational groups have unequal access and ability to use flexibility and different outcomes from different forms of flexibility. We argue that research and policy should focus on how organizations can ensure employees in different job groups can have access to the type of work-life flexibly they need that solves their job and family demands. This doesn't mean that blue collar workers or waitresses will be able to for example telework or that all employees will be treated the same in terms of work-life flexibility. It does mean that each job group needs access and use without stigma of work-life flexibility forms that address the critical challenges of their occupational job group and associated work and life demands.

Fourth, while the literature generally has some papers focused on access, others on outcomes and still others on unintended consequences from outcomes, we show they are linked and it is sometimes difficult to untangle the work-life pushes and pulls of work-life flexibility access, use and attributions and stigma. We offer an integrated review.

Organization of review. We first briefly summarize gaps in previous reviews and then critically examine current attempts to conceptualize work-life flexibility. We focus on construct identification and address the question of what "flexibility" is and develop our definition, along with four dimensions of scheduling flexibility that we derived from an expansive examination of prior theory and empirical studies of flexibility-related practices: continuity, volume, schedule variability, and location. Next we explain our methodology. Drawing on a sample of 186 papers that examined work-life flexibility and outcomes, we then organize our review of the literature according to these four dimensions, and across occupational levels of upper, middle and lower, rather than more narrowly examining only a single type of flexibility practice, often for a specific group (e.g. professionals) or a mixed occupational sample as has been common in other reviews

(e.g., Allen et al., 2013; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Our results report cross-cutting trends from our coding, and then we integrate general literature on occupational trends in work-life challenges and flexibility access with our coding of outcomes. We conclude with directions for future research and practice.

Work-life Flexibility and Occupational Status: Current Reviews and Gaps

Flexibility Reviews -- Drawbacks

We extensively searched the literature and could find few qualitative reviews that specifically addressed occupational differences in work-life flexibility. For example, DeMenezes and Kelliher (2011) examined an array of types of flexibility and performance-related outcomes and determined that universal evidence for a business case for flexibility is lacking, but were not able to consider whether flexibility might aid performance in some occupations more than others. Some individual studies focus on differences in access by occupation such as labor economist Golden's (2009) review of U.S. Census data, which showed that most lower level and unionized workers lack access to flexible work arrangements. Kossek and Distelberg (2009) reviewed various national surveys on access and use of flexibility, and similarly observed that white collar workers have greater access to flexibility than blue collar or service workers but did not look at outcomes. In an introduction to a special issue, Williams, Blair-Loy and Berdahl (2013) address different cultural schemas regarding flexiblity and begin to examine class differences, but did not provide an extensive scholarly review. None of these offer theory to link different forms of flexibilty.

We then turned to quantitative meta-analyses that often feature broad conceptualizations of flexibility. Reviews that report on aggregated measures (e.g. global counts of number of programs or types of flexibility) tend to feature few significant effects. Both Mesmer-Magnus &

Viswesvaran (2006) and Michel and colleagues (2011), for example, failed to find any significant effects of flexibility on WIF (work interference with family) and FIW (family interference with work). Allen and colleagues (2013) reviewed linkages between flexibility use, availability and outcomes, first combining forms of flexibility together, and then breaking out flextime and flexplace, but did not find large effects. Yet perhaps these weak results are due to the fact that these reviews either overlooked or had an inability to examine job and occupational differences. Indeed, reviews examining occupational differences in work-life flexibility effects have been hampered by the lack of primary studies that consider occupational status (e.g., Gajendran and Harrison 2007; Allen et al., 2013), and when able to reach conclusions, have arrived at conflicting findings based on very small sample sizes, or only analyzing one or two types of flexibility. Take Thorsteinson's (2003) meta-analysis of the outcomes of flexible part-time work (one of a handful to examine flexibility and occupational differences), which found no occupational differences. Its dataset compared only seven studies of professional samples along with twenty-one non-professional or mixed occupational studies. Baltes and colleagues' widely cited (1999) meta-analysis of the outcomes of use of formal flextime and compressed workweeks did identify occupational differences in the effects of flexibility, concluding that its benefits do not necessarily accrue to higher level managers and professionals who already have autonomy built into their job design. Yet they base this finding on only three studies with professional samples, a limitation which the authors identified as creating a need for replication (Baltes et al., 1999). Surprisingly, both these reviews identified more studies with general employees, or mixed samples, rather than the professional samples that dominate the management and work-family research literatures overall. Managers, policy advocates and scholars simply do not yet know whether work-life flexibility that gives employees some discretion to control when, where,

how much or how long they work, or certain forms of it, benefits those at all levels in organizations, and how occupational status may matter for outcomes. More research is also needed to theoretically conceptualize how to examine work-life flexibility holistically so that the effects of control over where work is done for example can be compared verses when or how much or how long work is done.

Defining Work-Life Flexibility

What is "flexibility"?

Definitions and writings vary in whether work-life flexibility is: 1) a list of current work-life practices or policies; 2) an alternative work practice that differs in social comparison to a standard (not typically defined); 3) designed for the employer or employee interests; or 4) a choice over work conditions (see Table 1). We briefly elaborate on these points prior to developing our definition.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Flexibility as a list of current employer practices. Flexibility is sometimes defined simply in terms of a list of work practices adopted by firms. For example, Allen, Shockley and Poteat (2008: 338), stated that two "popular forms of FWA {flexible work arrangements} are flextime and flexplace", without further elaboration. (See also Allard, Haas & Hwang, 2007).

Flexibility as an "alternative work system". Other scholars have defined flexibility in relation to traditional work norms, arguing that flexible work arrangements are those that deviate

from standard 9-5 work (e.g., Baltes et al., 1999; Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes & Drescher-Burke, 2005). One challenge with using this definition is that others have defined "non-standard" work in similar terms as any work arrangement that diverges from the standard employment model of secure, full-year, full-time employment (Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000). The standard is often not defined, in general nor for specific job occupational groups.

Flexibility for whom? Some scholars argue that it is important to recognize that not all types of flexibility benefit workers, but may be more focused on employer interests. Hill and colleagues (2008) argue that the literature on flexibility can be divided into an organizational perspective and a worker perspective. In the former view, practices aimed at enhancing the ability of firms to fluidly respond to market changes are examined. In the latter perspective, the focus is instead on organizational initiatives that enhance the ability of workers to reconcile demands of their work and personal roles. This distinction could lead to two alternative definitions of flexibility: flexibility as practices that enhance the ability of firms to adjust staffing to market demands, versus, flexibility as practices that allow individuals to balance work and personal roles. In essence, this division recognizes that flexible work arrangements may be enacted to achieve a purpose that favors either organizations or employees and are part of a negotiated employment relationship (Kossek & Ruderman, 2010). However, there are considerable difficulties in identifying organizational initiatives that can be clearly categorized as organization- or worker-focused. For example, compressed work weeks, while they may be adopted to ease scheduling concerns for firms, are also viewed as desirable options by some workers. Companies may also act to achieve multiple motives with a given program, such as making the organization attractive to new recruits by easing work-life conflicts for professionals. Moving toward definitions and measurement such as those measured in separate employee and

employer matched surveys used by the Families and Work Institute, which views practices as supporting work-life flexibility only if they simultaneously meet the interests of both organizations and individuals may avoid these problems (Galinsky, Sakai, Eby, Bond & Wigton, 2010). However, few studies have examined whether the intended benefits of programs are realized across various employee occupational groups, which is ultimately an empirical question.

Flexibility as choice over work hours, schedules and other job conditions. Perhaps the most common option is to consider jobs as flexible when they allow employees to exercise choice over certain features of their work arrangements, though the specific features focused upon vary. For example, the Center on Aging and Work (2007) defined flexibility in terms of employee control over when, where and how people work (see also Putnam, Myers & Gailliard, 2013), while Hill et al. (2008) instead highlighted choice of when, where and for how long individuals work. Allen et al. (2013) are more restrictive in their definition and include only practices that confer control over when and where people work.

Rarely have scholars applied existing theory in order to develop these definitions. One exception lies in the work of Hill and colleagues (2008) who define flexibility as employee control or choice over when, where and for how long they work, and who link this definition to ecological systems theory (EST). They argue that, according to EST, workplace flexibility may be viewed as an "attribute of the environment that enables 'proximal processes' – progressively more complex person-environment interactions – (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) that contribute to positive outcomes for workers, their families, and their organizations (Hill et al., 2008: 154)."

Our definition of work-life flexibility: A control perspective over dimensions of different forms of work-life flexibility Control is an emerging theme in prior research on flexibility. We build on this research, and integrate ecological systems theory (EST) and theories of control to

develop our flexibility definition. Control, according to Karasek & Theorell's (1990) demand-control-support theory, refers to the autonomy one has to make decisions about the order and way in which one's work is done. The higher one's control, the higher one's well-being (Beehr, 1995). Similarly, EST views job autonomy as an enabling resource that increases "the competence and capacities of individuals to perform (Voydanoff, 2007, p. 73)", fostering well-being and work-family facilitation. Recent reviews (cf. Kossek & Michel, 2011) are also in this vein of allowing employees the ability to have some control over how, when, where work is done, and some are beginning to highlight the differential access and consequences from these different work options for different types of occupations (Kossek, Thompson & Lautsch, 2015; Kossek & Thompson 2016.) This idea has also been supported empirically in research utilizing traditional measures of job control, which have found that higher personal autonomy over how the job is done is linked to higher individual well-being (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Job autonomy also has been shown to have spillover benefits for family life, such as improved mood, energy and parenting behaviors (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Stewart & Barling, 1996).

Both theory and empirical evidence, then, show us that control is important. In the context of new work arrangements, we identify practices as flexible to the extent to which they are experienced by employees as actually providing workers with control over key characteristics of work. According to ecological systems theory, one of the key characteristics of the work domain is its structure, and important aspects of its structure are the timing and spatial location of work (Voydanoff, 2007). Timing relates to both how much time is spent in fulfilling the work role, as well as when that work is conducted (Voydanoff, 2007). Relatedly, Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) argue that traditional notions of job control used in job characteristics theory should be expanded to consider psychological control over where and when one works. They

supported this argument with results in a quasi-experimental study that showed that users of formal flexibility policies such as telework experienced reduced work-life conflict, compared to a control group of nonusers, only when employees perceived that use of the flexible arrangement enabled them to have greater psychological job control over work conditions (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006). Thus, we define work-life flexibility as employment scheduling practices that are designed to give employees greater work–life control over when, where, for how long, or how continuously work is done.

Four dimensions of flexibility flow from this definition – variability, location, volume and continuity -- and these dimensions and associated work arrangements are outlined in Table 2 below. Individuals may vary the timing of their work on a daily basis, as in flex-time, or choose an altered schedule such as a compressed work week. A variety of work arrangements exist that allow workers greater control over the location of work, including telecommuting and hoteling. Individuals who control how long they work, may do this through working only a restricted set of hours, as in part-time or reduced-load arrangements. Finally, the continuity of work may also be adjusted by engaging in periodic interruptions, including sick leave or parental leave following the birth of a child.

Insert Table 2 about here.

We note that the control implicit in these arrangements is a potential rather than a guarantee. Much depends on how work arrangements are implemented. Kossek and Ruderman (2012) have argued that flexible work arrangements are most likely to have positive effects if

employees initiate them. We concur that volition is likely to moderate the outcomes of flexible scheduling arrangement, so that positive benefits of them are intensified.

Methodology and Terminology

In conducting our review, we adopt the research synthesis approach advocated by Rousseau, Manning and Denyer (2008). They identify a 4-step process for improving on traditional literature reviews through the systematic synthesis of scientific knowledge: (1) clear question formulations and construct identification; (2) comprehensive identification of relevant literature; (3) organization and interpretation; and (4) synthesis (Rousseau et al., 2008).

Prior reviews of flexibility have restricted the scope of their examination in various ways: (1) according to the types of flexibility (or independent variables) examined (e.g., flextime or telecommuting only) or the employee samples (e.g. professional only, low income only); (2) according to the dependent variables considered (e.g. work-family conflict only); (3) according to method of research in source studies (e.g. exclusion of non-quantitative studies) and (4) discipline (e.g. management studies but not sociology or family studies). This means that scholars make decisions that direct their reviews and meta-analyses toward unique research questions and that the resulting reviews can be like "apples and oranges" and not always directly comparable (Nieminen, Nicklin, McClure & Chakrabarti, 2011). For example, Baltes and colleagues (1999) examined only 2 types of flexibility (flextime and compressed workweeks) and included only studies with a pre-post, control-experimental or normative-experimental design, including only 39 studies in their meta-analysis. De Menezes and Kelliher (2011) restricted the scope of their review by focusing only on performance-related dependent variables that might be affected by work-life flexibility. Given our goal of conducting a more-comprehensive synthesis of the literature (Rousseau et al., 2008), we adopt fewer restrictions on

the scope of our study. We incorporate research in our review related to all four dimensions of flexibility outlined above, and do not limit our review to only those studies with certain dependent variables (e.g. work-family conflict) or with data only suitable to meta-analysis (e.g. included qualitative studies). Further details on how we systematically identified studies to include in our review may be found in Appendix 2. In the next section, our results are organized where we first report cross-cutting trends from our coding and following this we discuss occupational flexibility differences.

Cross-Cutting Themes Emerging from Our Sample on Flexibility and Occupations

Key themes discussed below include a lack of construct clarity, lack of consensus on theoretical grounding, level and discipline skewness, some inconsistency in availability of occupational data, and emerging occupational status work-life trends in access and unique challenges.

Lack of Flexibility Construct Clarity and Scholarly Focus

Overall we found a lot of ambiguity in flexibility as a construct. One of the challenges with accessing the literature on "flexibility" is that there many studies that do not discuss or define "flexibility" directly. Instead, some studies focus on specific practices that are often associated with flexibility, such as telecommuting or part-time work, but even these more specific practices are sometimes undefined. For example, some studies of part-time work simply ask respondents to report whether or not they work part-time, rather than coding a certain number of work hours as part-time. So while many of the studies do not define "flexibility" specifically, they do offer definitions of specific practices they focus on (e.g. studies of telecommuting often do define telecommuting but may not also define flexibility). About 10%

of studies in our sample did not offer any definitions at all, of flexibility or any specific related practices.

The studies in our sample also tended to focus on some types of flexibility more than others. For example, nearly twice as many studies in our sample focused on schedule variability relative to studies of continuity/leaves (23% versus 13%). Part-time and telecommuting made up 19% and 15% of our sample respectively, and the remainder were composite studies with a combination of flexible work arrangements.

Lack of Theoretical Consensus

Table 3 gives an overview of the most common theories that were used to frame studies in our sample. We identified over *50* theories that were used in our review suggesting scholars have little theoretical consensus on the processes and outcomes from work-life flexibility. A sample of the theoretical assumptions include the notion that flexibility reduces inter-role conflict, helps buffer job demands, is part of a social exchange as an inducement for extra effort or an expectation as part of psychological contract, a way to enhance job control and autonomy, among others. Despite this wide variation, *nearly half our sample did not specify a theory driving their research*.

Insert Table 3 Here

Level and Discipline Skewness

Most of the data and theories were operationalized at the individual level of analysis and even when multi-level relationships were suggested such as in the case of psychological contract which refers to the unwritten expectations employees and employers have of each other typically only the employee perspective was the focus of the theory and the data. Many of these studies include nonrandom samples of workers desiring or opting to use flexibility. We also noticed disciplinary differences: sociology and diversity scholars sometime adopted a critical perspective and focused on the notion of privilege and discrimination. While HR took a rational perspective focusing on descriptions of flexibility access as being linked to job type but under analyzing justice and critical views. The organizational behavior scholars tended to focus on conflict, motivation and positive benefits, though more recent studies are beginning to examine issues of equity in access and justice and overwork. The challenge with these fragmented perspectives is that some ignore practical workplace implementation issues and others overlook societal justice and societal and organizational change imperatives.

Occupational Data Challenges

Measuring and analyzing specific occupational access and outcomes was challenging due to missing data or how it was aggregated. In approximately 15% of studies we examined, insufficient information was provided to allow us to determine whether the sample in the study was focused on the upper, middle, or lower segment or was mixed. In over half the studies (54%) the samples were mixed with varied occupational levels included. In the studies with mixed samples of employees in various types of occupations, only approximately 1/3 of them reported representative samples that would allow them to address flexibility outcomes for all types of workers. About the same proportion of studies included measures of occupation in their sample, though few discuss occupation-specific effects. For the remaining sample, which was

about a fourth of our studies, 26%, we had clear data to analyze the upper, middle and lower segments -- within this group 60% are upper, 23% are middle and 17% are lower. Examples of occupations in studies focused on the upper segment included: product development, engineering, professionals, sales/marketing, technical employees, statistician, IT, journalists, logistics management, professor, consultants, physicians, managers. Occupations in studies focused on the middle examined nurses, security guards, semi-skilled administrators, medical residents, and tourism services. Occupations in studies focused on the lower segment of the labor market looked at retail, food, and hotel workers.

Access To Work-Life Supports and Challenges Systematically Vary by Occupational Level.

Work-life challenges and flexibility for occupations lower in associated wages and skill. As shown in Table 4 with additional detail, lower occupations face unique work-life challenges. While workers who are in low wage low skill jobs are more likely to work fewer hours than those employed in higher-status occupations (Kalleberg et al., 1997; Jacobs & Gerson 2004 cited in Gerstel & Clawson 2014), they have difficulty getting predictable and enough hours to be able to provide and care for their families (Henly & Lambert, 2014). Individuals with household income in the lowest quartile also have the least access to flexible schedules (cited in Swanberg et al., 2005), a pattern reported in recent reviews (Williams & Boushey, 2010). Because of this lower access, workers in lower-level jobs are more likely to be expected to work when sick or ill. Gerstel and Clawson (2014) describe the experiences of low-status nursing assistants who are expected to come to work even if experiencing diarrhea or vomiting, and where workers are fired for failing to do.

Work-life challenges and flexibility for occupations in the middle. Lautsch and Scully (2007) examined the case of working class individuals who worked long hours, and noted this was driven by overtime work and extra pay opportunities which made it possible to "make ends meet" and provide care for extended family members. More often these are two parent families squeezed for time and may include increasingly blended families (Williams & Boushey, 2010). Kossek and colleagues (2014) found that some unionized workers who desired regular part time work to care for their families were not able to access these policies as most unions had a preference for supporting full time employment.

Work-life challenges and flexibility for occupations higher in wages and skill. Managers and professionals are more likely to have long work weeks than are workers in other occupations (Jacobs & Gerson, 1998), and long work hours are linked to the desire to work less (e.g. Golden, 2004). At the same time, these workers are also more likely to have access to flexibility practices that provides schedule control (Galinsky et al., 2010). Several studies have shown that "workers who do have access to flexible work arrangements can be considered to be a more so-called privileged group of employees (Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes & Drescher-Burke, 2005, p. 870)." Yet a key challenge for workers in the upper 20% who use flexibility is having their career stalled and not being able to rise to the most senior leadership levels, due to stigma associated with working flexibly, and not being able to cut back or access reduced load in order to be able to care for their families (Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2016).

Occupational Differences in Outcomes by Work-Life Flexibility Type

Below for each type of flexibility, we briefly review key themes in the literature on the types of flexibility as background to our findings from investigation of how occupational status at the upper, middle or lower level of the workforce might relate to outcomes.

Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here.

Schedule Variability

General Literature Trends

A few reviews have addressed outcomes from schedule variability or flex-time or compressed work week, where workers generally work full time hours but vary the amount of hours in scheduling by day or week. Allen and colleagues (2013) examined the effects of flex-time availability and use. Their results showed that the availability of flex-time practices significantly reduced WIF, although no significant effects of flex-time on FIW were found. These results or (lack thereof) prompted these authors to go as far as to conclude that use of formal flexibility arrangements may be less effective than informal organizational and supervisor support (Allen et al., 2013). In contrast, Byron (2005) found that schedule flexibility significantly reduced both WIF and FIW, although effects on the former were stronger. Few studies address occupational differences. Of all the prior reviews, a meta-analyses by Baltes and colleagues (1999) is the only one to explicitly address the issue of occupational or status differences on outcomes. Relying on a small sample of studies, they reported positive effects of flextime on productivity, absenteeism, job satisfaction and satisfaction with schedule, but only for non-professional employees.

Our Findings on Occupational Variation in Outcomes from Control over Schedule Variation

As shown in Table 5, higher-level workers do benefit to some degree from variability in their schedules, particularly in terms of personal gains in outcomes such as improved sleep,

exercise (Fan, 2015) and balance, capacity to work longer hours and reduced work family conflict (Hill, Erickson, Holmes & Ferris, 2010), in contrast to the conclusion of prior reviews that professional and managerial workers do not benefit from schedule variability. However, there are some negative outcomes of schedule variability for higher-level workers too and so overall results for this subgroup are mixed. For example, one study found that control over schedules, while it moderated the effects of frequent night work on sleep, and reduced fatigue, did not help with other work time strains, and sometimes increased a culture of overwork (Tucker, Bejerot, Kecklund, Aronsson, Akerstedt, 2015). Other studies have also shown a risk of career penalties (Brown, 2010) and work intensification (Gerdenitsch, 2015). There are more uniformly positive outcomes for those in the middle and at lower levels of the income and skill distributions. Those in lower-level jobs gain significantly in schedule satisfaction and engagement (Swanberg et al, 2011) and are less likely to turnover (Lee, Magnini & Kim, 2011). Those in the middle benefit in terms of reduced work-life conflict (Lin et al., 2014), and better job related attitudes and behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Hammer et al., 2015). These findings in particular highlight the importance of this review and why we argue that researchers and practitioners should not abandon research on flexibility or pull back from these policies because of implementation challenges. There are some forms of flexibility that have potential to benefit some groups that really need it. In sum, employee control over scheduling variation most benefits lower-level workers, then middles, and it is of the least benefit to employees at the top, but even those at the top may benefit when a broader range of potential outcomes are considered.

Volume

General Literature Trends

Thorsteinson (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of the job attitudes of part-time workers and concluded that workers in this job arrangement had attitudes that did not differ from full-time employees, in terms of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to leave and facets of job satisfaction. Full-time workers did report higher involvement in work, however (Thorsteinson, 2003: 164). A key theme in the literature on part-time work is that there are "good" (or "retention") and "bad" (or, "secondary") part-time jobs (Tilly, 1996). An example of "good part time work" is often referred to as "reduced-load work" for managerial and professional jobs Reduced-load work is often most available when used as a strategy to retain high performing workers (who often have unique skills and intellectual capital) in professions such as law, medicine and business, who work long hours where workloads and hours are ambiguous and people are expected to work as long as it takes to get the job done (Kossek, Ollier-Malaterre, Lee, Pichler & Hall, 2016). Thorsteinson (2003) and others (e.g. Higgins, Duxbury & Johnson, 2000) attempted to examine these differences in part-time job quality by measuring occupation, predicting that the good jobs would be held by professionals and managers, while bad part-time opportunities would fall to those in technical, clerical, and other non-professional work. However, despite their predictions, meta-analytic results showed no effect for occupation differences across professional, non-professional and mixed aggregated samples, in job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Thorsteinson, 2003). Let's turn to our specific sample we analyzed to see if similar patterns exist.

Our Findings on Occupational Differences in Outcomes from Controlling Work Volume

Part-time work is a form of flexibility most studied for those at the bottom, given many workers at the bottom work part time not by choice (though some may have some health and caregiving demands, and others may seek part-time work as a ladder to gain full time

employment). Building on the theme above that there is "good" and "bad" part-time work (e.g. Tilly, 1996), these jobs tend to map respectively onto upper and lower-level jobs. While prior reviews have found that the consequences of part-time work are not different across occupations (e.g. Thorsteinson, 2003) those reviews only considered a limited range of possible outcomes of this work form. When we examine the studies in our sample by occupational grouping, we see that those at the bottom tend to have less positive experiences, particularly those in certain demographic groups. For example, part-time work for those in lower-level jobs is associated with unpredictable schedules, dissatisfaction with pay and security, and punishment via hour's reductions (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011; Jacobs & Padavic, 2015).

Low income single mothers are less likely to benefit from the potential for extra time that accompanies part-time work and that could be devoted to time with their children in the same way that more privileged workers do as they are juggling transportation, education or other demands (Drago, 2011). Wittmer and Martin (2011) found that low status part-time workers with significant outside role attachments had worse work-related attitudes than other part-time workers. In contrast, part-time work for those in upper-level jobs often reflects the outcomes of i-deals, or the idea of customizing work volume to meet one's needs, which can be beneficial in terms of outcomes like job satisfaction and commitment, and lower turnover. However, similar to the outcomes for control over schedule variation, upper-level workers do report risks of work intensification, sometimes part-time pay for full-time work, and career penalties (Westring, Kossek, Pichler & Ryan, 2015). We could find few studies for part time work for workers in the middle and one of the only studies we found (conducted in Israel with a sample of nurses) showed that these workers were more likely to have turnover than other full time nurses (Toren et al, 2012).

In sum, control over work volume or workload, hurts employees most at lower-levels in the workforce (due to benefits and income loss and reduction). Little literature examined part time work for middles, perhaps because they have the least access. For those at the top, part-time work reduces turnover and improves recruitment, but can hurt promotion and pay prospects and result in work overload if responsibilities are not reduced.

Continuity

General Literature Trends

Prior research has examined the effects of parental and sick leave policies, but large-scale reviews or meta-analysis for general trends and occupational differences are absent to our knowledge. In the US, for example, research has shown that the effect of the FMLA, the central employment law aimed at guaranteeing unpaid leave for illness and caregiving, is limited because of the restricted reach of the legislation. Approximately 11 percent of firms are covered by the legislation (Waldfogel, 2001), and only 54.3 to 76.8 percent of private sector firms that are covered comply with the legislation (Armenia, Gerstel & Wing, 2014). Low income workers, in particular, may not be eligible for FMLA-leave or be able to afford to take unpaid time off work (Stanczyk, 2015). Where individuals are able to access continuity breaks in their employment, the outcomes are mixed. Allen and colleagues (2014) have shown that paid sick leave is associated with lower FIW and WIF, while paid parental leave had no impact. Hofferth and Curtain (2006) offer further evidence on parental leave, finding that the existence of FMLA makes women more likely to retain their jobs after a leave, but that they still pay a price in terms of experiencing income declines.

Our Findings on Occupational Level Outcomes from Control over Continuity of Work

Studies of sick leave and parental leave are less often focused on comparing outcomes for a specific subset of workers at the lower, middle or upper part of the labor market. One reason for this may be disciplinary trends as it is likely that most studies of government policies like FMLA are conducted by economists who use large data sets that have "mixed" aggregated samples of people with varied occupational level and broad workforce trends are examined. The studies in our sample do suggest that, those at the lowest levels of the income and skill distribution do not benefit as much from this work-life flexibility form, especially in the U.S. since it is unpaid. Some scholars go as far as to argue that lower-level workers may not be better off using the unpaid leave policies they have access to than they would be on welfare (Ybarra, 2013), as they need to remain in the workforce to make ends meet and risk economic marginalization from extended parental leave (Fodor & Kispeter, 2014).

In contrast, workers in the middle appear to benefit in terms of health and lifestyle outcomes such as increasing the likelihood of making childbearing plans when there is parental leave. (Willett et al., 2010). Employees in the middle such as nurses who have managers who are supportive, adjusting schedules and providing family leave with job security, have employees with lower cardiovascular risk and who sleep more (Berkman et al., 2010). Those in upper-level jobs have reduced work family conflict when they have sick leave access (Allen et al., 2014). Longer maternity leave duration was associated with increased breast feeding duration, which may have indirect family and health benefits since breast feeding is associated with better child health (Sattari, Serwint, Neal, Chen & Levine, 2013).

Future research should further examine variation in the types of leaves taken by occupational groups, such as whether the leaves were for parental leave, elder care, or leave for longer term personal health or medical need. In the U.S., the lack of paid parental leave is a

confound as employees who work for large employers are more likely to have access to paid leave so organizational size may be another variable to include in studies of occupational outcomes. Overall, it is clear, that where unpaid leave is the norm, having the ability to control work continuity for parental leave or sickness benefits those in upper- and middle-level jobs the most, as few workers with lower wages can afford to take unpaid leaves. Taking a leave for these workers can reduce access to benefits such as health care and pensions, job security and income to provide for the family.

Location

General Literature Trends

Previous reviews of research on telecommuting document many benefits of this workform across an array of dependent variables. In some cases, only a single review documents the benefits of telecommuting because scholars restrict the domain of their reviews in different ways, as we explained above. Telecommuting has been shown in single reviews to enhance: flexibility (Nieminen et al, 2008), work-family conflict (bi-directional), supervisor-rated performance and relationship quality with supervisors (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), and effectiveness (Nicklin et al., 2009).

Stronger evidence of telecommuting's benefits exist where multiple reviews show consistent results. For example, telework is associated with improvements in perceived autonomy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Nieminen et al. 2008), turnover (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Nicklin et al., 2009; Nieminen et al., 2008), and work-interference-with-family (WIF) (Allen et al., 2013; Nicklin et al., 2009; Nieminen et al., 2008). The potential benefits of telecommuting for autonomy/psychological job control and reduced turnover were also echoed in one of the few quasi-experimental studies in this area (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006)

However, other telecommuting reviews show insignificant or mixed findings with respect to other dependent variables, and in some cases outcomes harmful to individuals. Telecommuting has insignificant impacts on several dependent variables: organizational commitment (Nicklin et al, 2009; Nieminen et al., 2008) self-rated performance and relationship quality with co-workers (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), productivity (Nicklin et al., 2009), and family interference with work (FIW) (Allen et al., 2013; Nicklin et al., 2009; Nieminen et al., 2008). Mixed effects across prior meta-analyses are found with respect to several work-related attitudes and behaviors, particularly, job satisfaction, perceived career advancement, performance (composite), and role stress (Allen et al., 2013; Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Nicklin et al., 2009; Nieminen et al., 2008). Detrimental outcomes of telework have been noted on work-life balance and work hours, but again only in a single review (Nieminen et al., 2008).

Although each review of flex-place initiatives considers the effects of potential moderators, none examined job type or status measures. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) did explore whether this was possible, but were unable to conduct a moderator analysis due to insufficient data on this in the source studies they examined.

Our Findings on Occupational Level Outcomes from Control over Location of Work

Most of the studies in our sample on location control were on professionals and managers. Results were mixed and it is clear that more experimental and random samples are needed. Based on the sample overall, the main benefits of telecommuting to those who are higher in the income/skill/occupational distribution involved higher work-life balance satisfaction and commitment; increased capacity for long work hours longer and reduced work

family conflict (Hill et al., 2010 Rafnsdottir, 2013). Yet this comes with the cost of higher work intensification (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010), and sometimes increased exhaustion from work (Golden, 2012). Also, telecommuting by a manager generally worsens outcomes for subordinates including increased turnover intent and job satisfaction, although results are better if the subordinate telecommutes as well (Golden, 2011). Leslie (2012) showed that flexible work practices such as teleworking can result in career benefits for those at the top if managers make productivity-related attributions about why they are used.

Few studies were conducted with middle and lower level workers. One study of middles found that homeworking is associated with greater productivity, but also a more transactional psychological contract approach to employment as there was high willingness to quit if homeworking is withdrawn (Tietze & Nadin, 2011). We could find few recent studies of workers in lower-level jobs who telework. In one older study, Olson and Primps (1984) reported that clerical workers lost full-time permanent status, medical benefits, and vacation when they converted to telework, and their already low autonomy became further restricted.

Discussion -- Looking Forward for Future Research

This article has documented that work-life stratification and unequal occupational access to, use of, and commensurate benefits from using work-life flexibility is widespread. In essence, work-life flexibility opportunities to access needed flexible work forms that fit occupational job demands, and positive outcomes from use are stratified by occupational job groups. We identify the following streams for future research, which are also summarized in Table 6.

Work-Life Inequality: A Growing Form of Job Inequality

Future research should examine work-life inequality as a characteristic of organizations and occupations. As noted in the introduction, work-life inequality is defined as unequal

opportunities to access work-life supports such as flexibility, take up these benefits, and experience beneficial outcomes or rewards (e.g., pay, promotion) from use relative to other occupational groups. Work-life inequality is also a phenomenon that requires more systematic investigation by other social identity groups, such as gender, religion, age and racioethnic, family status, groups. Occupational groups often mirror job segregation by gender and racial/ethnic groups participating in the labor market and in employing organizations. Women and minorities, for example, are under-represented in higher paid and higher level jobs relative to their skill or educational preparation.

Moving beyond individual explanations to study social mechanisms fostering work-life inequality. Reskin (2000) notes that most research on inequality and race and gender either focuses on *individual level explanations* of why race and gender relate to occupational job segregation (e.g. lower schooling, discrimination, more single parent status) or differences in earnings (e.g., the existence of a "motherhood penalty"), or discrimination motives, the last of which is hard to measure or study since motives cannot be observed. Far less research has been done on group, organizational or societal explanations that reproduce work-life inequality and most importantly the *mechanisms* that explain why inequality exists and continues to be accepted and perpetuated in occupations, organizations and society, even as more women enter the labor market and flexibility and work-life issues have received increasing employer attention.

Reskin (2002) defines a mechanism as an account of the process for explaining what fosters a change in a variable. She identifies four mechanisms (intrapsychic, social, organizational, and societal) that pertain to "ascriptive inequality" or social status attributions that perpetuate inequality based on socially ascribed characteristics of race, gender or age that make some groups privileged and seen as "in groups" and others as "outgroups." Future

research should focus on investigating the societal, occupational and organizational arrangements or mechanisms that perpetuate work-life inequality. That is, work settings vary in the extent to which they have processes that privilege some groups over others (Reskin, 2000). Research might look at these mechanisms systematically within and across occupational groups. For example, implicit bias for making stereotyped attributions regarding opportunities to use forms of flexibility or outcomes from use could be studied as a cognitive mechanism. It could also be studied as a social process examining intergroup dynamics as to why some occupations or job groups are seen as being able to access or use certain flexibility forms over others. And the way that workplace flexibility policies are implemented to privilege some groups over others or the stigmatism from use should be studied as well. Examining how to change occupational cultures within and across organizations to normalize equal access and rewards from use might be conducted as well. Policy research could be developed building on discrimination law of adverse impact and adverse treatment related to access and use of different work-life flexibility practices for protected classes covered by workplace equal employment opportunity laws such as Title VII in the U.S. These steps would help us move toward understanding "how inequality happens" (Lambert & Waxman, 2005: 104), and how policy may ameliorate it.

Examining Occupational and Flexibility Linkages to Workforce Diversity and Gender and Racioethnicity as Moderators.

Future research should focus on class, gender, age, racio-ethnicity, and immigrant status and occupational differences in work-life flexibility access and outcomes and stigma. We've noted that occupational job groups and workforce demographic groups often systematically overlap. Gerstel and Clawson (2014) argue, based on an in-depth analysis of four medical occupations, that class, along with gender, "shapes the ability to win and use (p. 397)" flexibility. In

advantaged occupations, both women and men have greater access to flexibility and use it to reinforce traditional gender roles (i.e. women nurses focus on their families while male physicians seek flexibility to invest in their careers). Individuals, particularly women, working in lower-status occupations have more difficulty gaining access to flexible schedules and outcomes from using them. Future research needs to address these issues for diverse employee groups and examine how these identities intersect with work-life flexibility and occupational status.

Measuring and Monitoring Occupational Equality across Work-Life Flexibility Types

Future research can draw on the upper, middle and lower categories developed for this study for further refinement and validation as meaningful occupational level clusters. We believe the combination of income and job skills, relying on O'Net data validation, that we propose is a useful beginning for scholars and policymakers to build upon. We also believe improved measures can be developed to assess control over different types of work-life flexibility from worker controlled variation in work schedules, continuity, volume or load and location. Such measures might include perceived ability to access, easily use and experience consequences without jeopardy by occupational group.

This review has highlighted that much of the literature has used non-representative mixed occupation samples which are samples of respondents that include a mix of occupations (e.g. upper, middle and lower), but are "non-representative" of the general working population or of the larger population it is drawn from. We suggest that even if a study includes all types of workers, if it is a convenience sample, or some other non-representative sample, we still won't necessarily get the data that allows us to fully understand occupational differences in flexibility access. Many types of workers simply don't get studied in some disciplines (e.g., lower income service workers or on-line workers in the gig economy such as workers at microjobs.com).

We also encourage researchers with mixed occupation samples to explicitly test occupational differences in work-life flexibility. A simple example is including measures of occupation in a survey, and interacting them with other independent variables.

Addressing Gaps in State of Occupational Work-Life Flexibility Knowledge

Some additional themes for research noted in table 6 include the need for studies that build on our definition of work-life flexibility and develop validated measures of control emanating from different flexibility forms to advance construct clarity and allow for common measures to be used in studies across occupations and across disciplines to address weaknesses in the current body of knowledge.

We also examined the lack of theoretical consensus and range of theories used. We believe that control theory linked to the employee ecological system may hold a lot of promise to try and foster greater theoretical consensus as well. We suggest that occupational equality in work-life flexibility occurs when employees across occupations have similar access, support for use, and outcomes from the ability to control a menu of flexibility forms.

Our focused sample analysis showed that there was a lot unevenness in what types of flexibility scholars are studying and what occupational samples are being analyzed. There was a lot more interest in studying flextime for example, with less research on occupational differences in telework, part time work and leaves. This is surprising given the latter of which is where public policy innovation is most likely to occur.

Workers in the middle are particularly under-studied and need to access different flexibility forms which can be implemented via occupationally appropriate interventions. For example, shift trades may be the appropriate work-life flexibility form to enable one to control schedule variation for workers in 24-7 systems or work systems with a lot of interdependence.

Further the lack of access of some key types of flexibility such as flextime or paid leave for workers at the bottom is a critical gap. Studies are needed on how to improve take up and effectiveness of policies and practices to help the most vulnerable workers. And workers in upper level jobs need support to be able to not overwork themselves to death and harm their families and themselves.

We've noted that some recent studies of flexible work schedules have concluded that the evidence indicates that workplace support and employee control are more important than the availability or even use of flexible work arrangements to worker well-being. Allen and colleagues (2013), point to the larger effect sizes that have been reported in meta-analyses for the relationship between WIF and supervisor or perceived organizational support (Kossek et al, 2011), relative to the smaller effect in their own examination of the impact of flex-time and flex-place on work-family conflict. Other research shows that flexible scheduling control may be more important for well-being than the mere availability of flexibility (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012; Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy & Hannum, 2012). Our results lead us to be see work-life flexibility as still warranting significant research and investment by organizations, given that results for some types of flexibility are more favorable (e.g., paid continuity) than others across workers. And even where results are most mixed (e.g., variability in hours) some employees may benefit and this may be the workplace support that enables workers across different occupational strata to remain in the labor force. Our examination of linkages between different types of work-life flexibility, occupational practices, and occupational groups fills a key literature gap. There is also a great need for multi-level and group and organizational studies as well as cross-national work as we found few studies that considered connections across cultural influences, occupation and flexibility. It may be that norms and

occupational outcomes have some cultural determinants. For example, Masuda (2012) showed that telecommuting can increase WFC in Asian countries. A cross-national study that looks across occupational levels, would be valuable using controls for firm type such as comparing a global firm with an employer that primarily employees local nationals.

Limitations

One limitation of this review is that we examined trends for a majority of workers based on our review across occupational groups. While we believe these trends we report exist for the majority and are evidence based, in order to avoid stereotyping, one should look at how these job demands intersect with nonwork identities, demographics such as gender, age, racio-ethnicity, and family configuration support, noted above and that may shape work and nonwork identities and needs over the career life course.

Another limitation is that we while we focused on worker outcomes from worker ability to control different types of flexibility, we are aware that sometimes "workers' choices" are constrained as employees work in situations where they feel obligated to match employer demands for variation as well. There is excellent work on the effects of unpredictable scheduling and a lack of worker control (cg. Lambert, 2008, Henly & Lambert, 2014, Kossek et al, 2016). Schedule unpredictability, in particular, is a workplace flexibility issue that affects all workers, and especially those at the bottom, and is a critical issue (Wood, 2016) In this study we did not examine flexibility that is "forced on" the employee or where employers transfer economic risk to the workers by using flexibility to degrade job quality and cut labor hours, with little if any concern for employees (Hill et al., 2008; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Lambert, 2008). Yet clearly employees are nested in social economic systems and sometimes may be socialized to meet employer demands or risk job loss.

Implications for Practice

Policy Databases by Occupation Status and Work-Life Flexibility Type

Future research can not only develop refined methods of capturing occupational levels and types of work-life flexibility, but data bases need to be developed that can be replicated across occupational, organizational and national samples. Future research should be organized into differential access, and differential outcomes and use multilevel research to compare experiences within and between occupational groups nested in similar organizations, labor markets, and nations. This will provide additional evidence for work-life flexibility equality as a basic employment right. Public policy can be developed to provide a floor of basic work-life protection in organizations and societies

Yet many countries do not even have reliable work-life flexibility databases of access and outcomes data by occupation, There is a need for national census bureaus to develop national databases to monitor key relevant trends in employment as such policies affect economic labor market participation, mental health of workers and their families from children to the elderly, and even divorce, marriage and fertility rates. Policy makers need to partner with progressive employers and researchers to measure and learn how to improve implementation and access of work-life flexibility across occupations to promote equality.

Work-Life Flexibility, Policy Research and the Changing Nature of Careers,

Future research is also needed that links organizational practices to law, the need for legislative and employer policy improvement given the changing nature of careers and the increasingly boundary-less employer and employee relationship. The U.S. follows a minimalist market based approach to workforce and work-life protection leaving the choice to provide and support work-life flexibility based on the noblese oblige of employers (Kossek, 2006). One key

issue is that pension and retirement benefits are linked to full time workforce employment. There are a lot of legal gaps for coverage that may not fit with the changing nature of careers today. For example, pensions are not funded well for reduced-load workers who seek to pull back on work hours or loads at different points over their career to seek education or change careers, or pull back on work intensity to care for family or self may not make enough annual hours to qualify or fund a particular year (Kossek, 2006). Or workers may need to go on unpaid leave and also face shortfalls. This lack of linkage between pensions and retirement policy creates coverage gaps for some people with health or family caregiving needs or shifting career interests. It also affects U.S. competitiveness as it may be a barrier to funding pensions effectively for people who engage in education retraining and career change and breaks are needed for competitive skill development. Many employment systems are based on the assumption that most people work full time for a main employer and in one career over a life time and then go from full time work to complete retirement. This is simply not so for most of the work force who seek and need work-life flexibility over the career life course. Future policy work should look at the legal implications of different workplace flexibility regimes.

Conclusion

Work-life flexibility experiences and outcomes are occupationally-based. The challenges faced by workers across the economic strata are growing in general and increasingly diverse. It is critical researchers and scholars advance understanding of how to match control over working conditions to work-life needs to enhance productivity and well-being of workers and society. People may have limited choices and many constraints on the options available to manage their personal lives. This paper has shown that organizations can benefit society and improve

employee well-being by designing work to provide individuals within and across job groups some control over how work is enacted and reconciled with the rest of life.

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Table 1: Illustrative Flexibility Definitions

Definitional Approach		**Exemplars**
Descriptive	A list of prevalent employer policies or practices	Allen, Shockley & Poteat (2008) Allard, Haas & Hwang, (2007) Galinsky, Sakai, Wigton, (2011)
Social comparative	An "alternative" work system	Baltes et al. (1999), Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes & Drescher-Burke, (2005)
Flexibility for whom?	For individuals: Practices that allow individuals to balance work and personal roles OR For firms: Practices that enhance the ability of firms to adjust staffing to market demands	Hill et al. (2008)
Choice	Employee choice or control over features of the work arrangement	Putnam, Myers & Gailliard (2013)
Control (Our definition)	Employment scheduling arrangements that promote worker control over: (1) when, (2) where, (3) for how long, and (4) how continuously they work	Kossek, Lautsch, Eaton, (2006) Kossek, Thompson, Lautsch, (2015)

Table 2: Work-Life Flexibility Dimensions

Control over:	Dimension	Definition	Associated Work Arrangements
When	Variability	The ability to adjust the starting or ending times of work, or working a schedule different than the traditional 9-5	Flex-time, compressed work week, part-year
Where	Location	The ability to adjust the location of work.	Flex-place, telecommuting, remote work, hoteling, mobile work
For How Long	Volume	Work hours that are lower than traditional full-time employment	Part-time, reduced-load, job sharing
How Continuously	Continuity	The periodic interruption of work attendance.	FMLA-leave, sick leave, compassionate leave, vacation, parental, adoption leave, education

Table 3: Dominant Theoretical Perspectives on the Outcomes of Work-life Flexibility

Theory on Work-life Flexibility Effects	**Central Prediction Regarding Work-life Flexibility**	**Examples**
Role conflict theory	Flexibility reduces role conflict	Allen et al. (2014) Fiksenbaum (2014) Galovan et al. (2015)
Theories related to resources: ***P-E fit theory** ***Job demands-resources (JD-R)** ***Conservation of resources**	Flexibility provides resources to enhance person –environment fit which helps buffer strain	Beutell (2010) Hammer et al. (2018) Hsaio (2013) Gajendran et al. (2015)
Theories related to control/autonomy: ***Job characteristics theory** ***Control theory** ***Demand-control-support (DCS) model**	Flexibility enhances control/autonomy over work and life demands	Duxbury & Halinski (2014) Ek et al. (2014) Shultz et al. (2010) Swanberg et al. (2011)
Theories related to social exchange, motivation and extra-role behaviors.	Flexibility is an inducement that is part of social exchange that enhances motivation & performance.	Lambert (2000) Kossek & Ruderman, (2009)
Psychological contract theory	Flexibility is an implicit expectation many employees have of employers in return for loyalty, commitment and hard work.	Barnett et al. (2004) Lee et al. (2011)
Boundary and border theory	Flexibility allows individuals to control work-life boundaries	Grant (2013) Glavin (2012)

Table 4: Occupational Differences in Work-Life Challenges for Schedule and Hours and Flexibility Access and Use

		Upper (20 %)	**Middle (50 %)**	**Lower (30%)**
Schedule and Hours		Long work hours (Jacobs & Gerson, 1998) Travel obligations and 24-7 workplace	Full-time work is common (Williams & Boushey, 2010) Regular, sometimes rigid shifts, "no fault" discipline systems, mandated overtime (Williams & Boushey, 2010)	Insufficient work hours to support income needs (Henley & Lambert, 2014) Limited advance schedule notice, variation in days and hours worked, punishment and control via hours reduction (Swanberg et al., 2008; Jacobs & Padavic, 2015)
Flexibility Access and Use	**Variability**	Greater access to schedule flexibility (Gerstel & Clawson, 2014; Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes & Drescher-Burke, 2005)	Some access to flexibility, under union contracts (Berg & Kossek, 2011)	Limited access (Swanberg et al., 2005)
	Volume	Line managers reserve voluntary "reduced load" work for high performers (Kossek et al., 2016)	Limited access to part time work (Berg & Kossek, 2011).	Little ability to control volume of work

	Continuity	Access to paid leave (Williamson & Boushey, 2010) sick leave (McNamara et al., 2013) and maternity leave (Drago, 2011)	Good access to parental and sick leaves in many collective bargaining agreements (Berg & Kossek, 2011).	Low income workers may not be eligible for paid sickness or parental leave or be able to afford to take unpaid time off work (Milkman & Appelbaum, 2013; Stanczyk, 2015)
	Location	Greater access to telework for professionals, due to job suitability, power and status (Bailey & Kurland, 2002)	Limited opportunities to telework (Berg & Kossek, 2011)	Clerical workers face opposition from management to their requests to work at home (Bailey & Kurland,2002)

Table 5: Occupational Differences in Flexibility Outcomes

Flexibility Dimension	Upper		Middle		Lower	
	Beneficial Effects	**Harmful Effects**	**Beneficial Effects**	**Harmful Effects**	**Beneficial Effects**	**Harmful Effects**
Variability	Increased capacity for longer work hours and reduced WFC (Hill et al.,2010) Lessen negative effects of night work on sleep, reduce fatigue (Tucker et al., 2015) Increased exercise (Fan, 2015) Improved private life and work-life balance (Galea, 2014) Increased efficiency and balance	Career penalties (Brown, 2010). Increased culture of overwork (Tucker et al., 2015) Work intensification (Gerdenitsch, 2015)	Lower turnover and increased job satisfaction (Kossek & Michel, 2011). Reduced work-to-leisure conflict (Lin et al., 2014) Reduces the negative effects of hour's variability (Bohle et al., 2011). Enhances the positive effects of STAR interventions on OCBs and safety compliance	None identified	Increased schedule satisfaction and (indirectly) work engagement (Swanberg et al., 2011) Reduced turnover intentions (Lee et al., 2011)	None identified

	(Gerdenitsch, 2015)		(Hammer et al., 2015)			
Volume	Higher job satisfaction and commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Higher patient satisfaction (Panattoni et al., 2015) Benefits high performers (Kossek et al., 2016)	Work intensification (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Part-time work for physicians is associated with worsened access to care and continuity of care (Panattoni et al., 2015) Obstacles to promotion and other opportunities (Nomura & Gohchi, 2012) Lower pay and career opportunities (Westring et al., 2015)	Positive experience and reduced turnover intentions as long as supported (Halvari, 2013).	Part-time nursing work in Israel is associated with higher turnover (Toren et al, 2012).	Higher satisfaction with coworker relationships (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011) Part-time work for students doesn't reduce educational engagement (Howieson et al., 2012)	Less able to translate time saved into increased time for childcare (Drago, 2011) Lower work role involvement. In some cases, less positive work attitudes (Wittmer & Martin, 2011) Low wage part-time workers are subject to: (1) unpredictable schedules and income; (2) inadequate hours; (3) time theft (e.g. no pay for overtime); and (4) punishment via hours reductions (Jacobs & Padavic, 2015)

						Lower satisfaction with pay and job security (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011)
Continuity	Paid sick leave reduces WFC, but paid parental leave has no effect (Allen et al., 2014) Longer maternity leave duration is associated with breast feeding duration (Sattari et al, 2013)	None identified	Awareness of parental leave policies increases likelihood of childbearing plans (Willett et al., 2010). Family leave with job security improves cardiovascular risk and sleep (Berkman et al., 2010)	None identified	None identified	Lengthy maternity leave associated with economic marginalization (Fodor & Kispeter, 2014). Maternity leave in the form of welfare doesn't protect low income women from still having to work (Hill, 2012) Some new mothers are worse off under state-level paid family leave programs than they would be on

						welfare (Ybarra, 2013)
Location	Increased capacity for long work hours and reduced work family conflict (Hill et al., 2010) Higher job satisfaction and commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Increased balance (Rafnsdottir, 2013) Career benefits if managers attribute use for work reasons (Leslie et al., 2012).	Extensive telecommuting worsens exhaustion associated with WFC/FWC (Golden, 2012) Work intensification (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Telecommuting by a manager worsens subordinate turnover intent and job satisfaction (Golden, 2011) Long workdays (Rafnsdottir, 2013)	Increased productivity (Tietze & Nadin, 2011)	More transactional psychological contract and willingness to quit (Tietze & Nadin, 2011)	None identified	Reduced access to full-time, permanent work, autonomy, medical and vacation benefits, and vacation (Olson & Primps, 1984)

Table 6: Limitations in the Current Flexibility Literature and Recommendations for Future Research

Limitations	Our Recommendations for Future Research
Under-examination of work-life inequality as a growing form of job inequality	Future research could: (1) Study the interpersonal, intergroup, organizational and societal mechanisms that reproduce work–life inequality within and across lower, middle and higher level job groups and how these link to gender, racial and other disparities (2) Identify solutions for limited access of lower segments to key forms of flexibility (like schedule variability) that benefit them more than middle or upper level professionals and managers (3) Examine whether there are ways to implement flexibility that reduce the risk of work intensification or role overload from boundary blurring for upper-level workers as this is common across most forms of flexibility for them (4) Examine understudied dimensions of flexibility for different populations (For example, few focused studies for upper, middle or lower exist for continuity-related flexibility. Telecommuting has been less examined for those in middle- and lower-level jobs.)
Lack of systematic investigation of occupational differences in flexibility experiences	We identified a method and criteria for identifying and grouping higher/middle/lower occupational workforce samples, which could be used to examine adverse impact of flexibility opportunities to different work forms and outcomes. We recommend avoiding non-representative mixed occupation samples and incorporating tests for occupational differences Focused studies of those in middle and lower segments are needed

Lack of flexibility construct clarity	We suggest defining work-life flexibility as: employment scheduling arrangements that promote worker control over: (1) when, (2) where, (3) for how long, and (4) how continuously they work
Lack of theoretical consensus	We identify the most commonly used theoretical perspectives on flexibility to foster convergence. Theories of control, resources and roles have been the most examined in prior research and offer powerful lenses for understanding flexibility.
Level and discipline skewness	Additional multi-level and cross-disciplinary studies would be helpful.
Lack of Actionable Policy and Translation Work	Partner with firms and policy groups to rigorously evaluate implementation challenges in experiments, translate best practices or develop databases, and leverage research to advance policy and legal implications of work-life flexibility.

Appendix 1: Defining and Categorizing the Upper, Middle and Lower Levels of the Labor Market

In developing our approach for occupational status groupings, we identified and reviewed several approaches in prior research to distinguishing the experiences of those at the upper, middle, and lower ends of the workforce. We found some disciplinary differences in how occupations are classified. Where work-family scholars have examined occupational differences in flexibility reviews, they have characterized samples according to job type, such as whether they have "managerial/professional" respondents, "general employees" or "mixed" samples with a combination of the two (e.g., Baltes et al., 1999). Feminist and social work scholars place more emphasis on income to identify those who struggling in the labour market (cf. Williams & Boushey, 2010; Lambert, 2008). Sociologists typically define the top and bottom of the labour market according to occupational prestige and socioeconomic indicators like education and income (e.g., Nakao & Treas, 1994). They define occupation as referring to "the functional differentiation of positions in a technical division of labor" which is often linked to skill requirements of an occupation and linked to job rewards (Kallberg & Griffin, 1980: 731). Given income is often challenging for researchers to collect accurate information on using self-report data which is how most social science research is done, some scholars suggest using education as a proxy for occupational status (Williams, 2016). With this approach, high school would be associated with lower level job groups, high school completion and or some community college would be middles, and college completion and above and graduate degree would be upper-level occupations.

We build on these various approaches by examining income and skill as key signals of occupational status. We examined the samples reported in each article in our study, looking for detailed occupational titles, if available, and for information on income or skill. Where occupational titles were available, we then utilized the U.S. Department of Labor online taxonomy of jobs, called the O-NET database, which has income and skill level for each occupation. We build on Williams and Boushey's (2010) framework in demarcating the lower, middle and upper levels, as the lowest 30%, middle 50% and top 20% in income (although they focused on household income and we rely on individual income as we believe this is stronger for examining outcomes for individuals, but future studies can build on our work). Occupations earning less than $22,499 annually were in the lower category, between $22,499 and $70,000 were in the middle, and higher earnings placed occupations in the upper category (Census.gov, 2015). To examine skill, we relied on the measure of specific vocational preparation (SVP), available in O-NET. SVP captures the training and experience required in order to perform in a specific occupation (Oswald et al., 1999). Table 7 summarizes our approach to grouping samples into upper, middle or lower level.

Table 7: Occupational Job: Categorizing the Upper, Middle and Lower Levels of the Workforce

	Upper	Middle	Lower
Income[a]	Highest 20% Greater than $70,000	Middle 50% $22,499 to $70,000	Lowest 30% Less than $22,499
Skill[b]	Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP) score of at least 7	SVP score of 3.5 to 6.9	SVP score of 1 to 3.4
Typical occupations	Manager, professional	Nurses, semi-skilled admin	Retail food workers, hotel workers

[a]Income thresholds are for person income for individuals 15 years and older who receive income for 2014, reported in 2015 (www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc.html)

[b]Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP) scores are considered a preferred metric for stratifying occupations according to knowledge and skill. (See Oswald et al., 1999).

Appendix 2: Methods

To ensure that we thoroughly identified the relevant literature, we searched the PsychINFO database using the keywords shown in Table 8 below. We combined keywords that represented practices that exemplify each of the four dimensions of flexibility discussed above (in group A in Table 8), with keywords representing the outcomes of those practices (in group B in Table 8). Each keyword in group A was combined with each keyword in group B. Searches were restricted to English-language peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2015. To comprehensively identify work-life flexibility research, we began with work-family research within the organizational literature but extended our search beyond it to also consider research conducted by researchers within economics, sociology and labor and employment relations.

Table 8: Database Search Details

A. Flexibility Dimension	**Keywords**
Continuity	Parental leave Maternity leave
Volume	Part-time work Reduced-load work
Variability	Flextime Schedule flexibility Schedule control
Location	Flexplace Telecommuting Telework
General flexibility terms (multiple dimensions)	Flexible work*
B. Outcomes	Outcomes Effects

	Impacts Consequences Efficacy Employee attitudes Employee productivity Working conditions Family work relationship

*An asterisk indicates that our search included multiple forms for this search term (e.g. Flexible work, flexible working, flexible work arrangements, flexible work practices).

We also conducted manual searches of prior reviews of the literature (e.g., Allen et al., 2013), and of top work-family journals (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Organization Science, Personnel Psychology*).

In total, 682 articles were included in our initial sample. We reviewed their abstracts and excluded articles that were not relevant to our research question (e.g. that examined only antecedents of flexibility and not outcomes), or that were not empirical studies. We also focused our sample on articles with the most rigorous research methods by including only articles published in journals that are ranked in Thomson-Reuters' Journal Citation Reports. Our final sample was 186 articles.

Although culture and cross-national differences were not a focus of our review, the studies we examine are quite international. While the largest group of studies in our sample are from the US (39%), this is less than half of our sample. 25 different countries are featured in research that we review. Several studies that we review also draw on cross-national samples (15%).