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Implementing organizational work–life interventions: toward a triple bottom line

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This paper provides examples and considerations in implementing work–life interventions. I first define work–life interventions and draw on concepts from the work I co-authored Suzan Lewis and Leslie Hammer: ‘Moving Work-life Initiatives from the Margins to the Mainstream’. I elaborate on this essay to discuss how work–life interventions impact on organizational change which can be understood from five design and evaluation characteristics that can vary on a continuum: (1) cultural and structural systems integration; (2) prevention and inclusion; (3) organizational social support versus individual control focus; (4) multi-level comprehensiveness; and (5) unintended consequences. To illustrate some of these issues, I describe issues in developing and implementing two work–life interventions. The first intervention examined is a work–life assessment (flexstyles) which is designed to help individuals assess their boundary management styles. The second intervention is the Family Supportive Supervisory Behavior (FSSB) training intervention for leaders. I conclude with key lessons regarding work–life interventions, one of which is that interventions can (and should) be evaluated for impacts on a triple bottom line (outcomes for employees, employers and society), a concept that builds on Suzan’s argument that work–life interventions can have broad societal impacts.

Keywords: work-life interventions; boundary management styles; family supportive supervisor behaviors

Cet article fournit des exemples et des commentaires pour la mise en œuvre d’interventions qui favorisent l’équilibre vie personnelle – vie professionnelle. Tout d’abord, je définis ce que sont ces interventions en utilisant les concepts que Suzan Lewis, Leslie Hammer et moi-même avons présentés dans l’article : ‘Moving Work Life Initiatives from the Margins to the Mainstream.’ Je développe cet article pour expliquer comment l’effet des interventions vie personnelle – vie professionnelle sur le changement organisationnel peut être compris à partir de cinq caractéristiques de conception et d’évaluation, qui varient sur des continuum : 1) l’intégration des systèmes culturels et structurels; 2) la prévention et l’inclusion 3) le soutien social organisationnel vs. le contrôle de l’individu; 4) l’exhaustivité multi-niveaux et 5) les effets de bord. Pour mieux illustrer ces caractéristiques, je décris les enjeux de conception et de mise en œuvre de deux interventions visant à favoriser l’équilibre vie personnelle – vie professionnelle. La première intervention était une auto-évaluation conçue pour aider les individus à évaluer leurs styles de gestion des frontières entre vie personnelle et vie professionnelle. La deuxième intervention était la formation

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aux managers pour développer des compétences spécifiques en matière de soutien familial aux collaborateurs. Je conclus avec les principaux enseignements pour implémenter efficacement ces interventions, notamment le fait que les interventions peuvent (et doivent) être évaluées en considérant un triple bénéfice: les effets pour les salariés, pour les organisations et pour la société civile. Ce concept de triple bénéfice repose sur l'argument de Suzan Lewis que les interventions pour favoriser l'équilibre vie personnelle – vie professionnelle peuvent avoir de larges répercussions sur la société civile.

Mots-clés: d'interventions qui favorisent l'équilibre vie personnelle – vie professionnelle; les styles de gestion des frontières entre vie personnelle et vie professionnelle; la formation aux managers pour développer des compétences spécifiques en matière de soutien familial aux collaborateurs

This paper examines work–life interventions, identifies some important design and implementation criteria, and discusses several research-based work–life interventions I have developed over the past decade. I draw on several of Suzan Lewis's writings including concepts presented in our 2010 editorial introduction on the need for employers and society to move work–life initiatives from the 'margins to the mainstream', and to consider formal structural and informal cultural integration of these initiatives (2010).¹

I begin by defining work–life organizational interventions. I identify five design and implementation characteristics, building on and extending these criteria of integration and mainstreaming (see Table 1). I then describe and analyze two work–life interventions: a work–life boundary management psychological assessment called flexstyles (also known as Work–Life Indicator) (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008, 2012; Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012); and family supportive supervisor behavioral training (Hammer, Kossek, Bodner, Anger, & Zimmerman, 2011; Kossek & Hammer, 2008). I close with a call for future work to consider how such initiatives might impact a 'triple bottom line' to benefit workers and their families, organizations and society. I conclude by drawing on several of my own and Suzan's writings on key implementation lessons.

Work–life organizational interventions

Although work–family and work–life initiatives have become common phrases in the media and discourse across societies and nations, their meanings are ambiguous and are evolving across organizational, national cultural and cross-cultural contexts (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010; Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007). In this paper, I consciously use the term 'work–life interventions' to update the term 'work–life initiatives' used in our 2010 paper, and other prevalent terms such as 'work–life and work–family policies', 'family friendly practices', 'alternative work arrangements' and 'work–family–life supports'. I argue we should use the language 'work–life intervention' to frame and highlight that these initiatives have the potential to improve individual and organizational effectiveness, enhance broader societal impacts such as health, family, economies and communities. Yet, unfortunately, it is increasingly apparent that work–life interventions, even if they are adopted on paper, often tend not to result in significant organizational change to reduce work–family–life conflict of employees. Despite the proliferation of work–life issues into many employment settings, and in everyday

Table 1. Organizational Work–Life Intervention Design & Implementation Evaluation Considerations: Five Key Elements.

| Intervention Design & Implementation Evaluation Elements | Definition | Continuum Anchors | |
|--|---|---|---------------------|
| 1. ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS INTEGRATION | The degree to which formal organizational structures and informal cultural values dovetail, are consistent and integrated | Culture (Informal) | Structural (Formal) |
| 2. PREVENTION AND INCLUSION | The degree to which work–life interventions are preventative, that is mainstreamed in availability to be inclusive of all employees | Targeted (Risk of being marginalized/stigmatized) | Mainstreamed |
| 3. ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL SUPPORT (RESOURCE FOCUS) VERSUS CONTROL (EMPOWERMENT FOCUS) | The degree to the intervention is designed with workplace social support resource focus or an individual control focus | Employer Entitlements & Resources | Employee Control |
| 4. MULTI-LEVEL COMPREHENSIVENESS | The degree to which work–life interventions are designed to address a single or multiple levels of the organization | Single Level | Multi-Level |
| 5. UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES | The degree to which the implementation of the work–life intervention positively and/or negatively disrupts work and social systems | Positive | Negative |

conversations, evidence is growing that work–life initiatives face an implementation gap. Although on paper work–life initiatives are available more in previous decades, research shows work–life stress remains a significant societal challenge across all nations and for all demographic groups, from men to women, younger and older workers, and in industrialized and non-industrialized nations (ILO, 2011).

I define work–life/work–family interventions as those that are aimed at reducing work–life and work–family conflicts in order to enhance the well-being and effectiveness of employees and their families, and the organizations in which they work (Kossek, Hammer, Kelly, & Moen, 2014). Examples include flexible work arrangements, family supportive supervisor behavior training, work redesign to focus on results-oriented work, self-scheduling of worker shifts, and elder and child care

supports. Also included are newer nontraditional forms such as housing allowances to help low-income or younger workers obtain cost-effective housing with reasonable commutes, classes on mindfulness, or the freezing of eggs for women working for Silicon Valley companies (<http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2014/10/17/356765423/silicon-valley-companies-add-new-benefit-for-women-egg-freezing>). As Suzan would argue, we are constrained if we focus too narrow in intervention on work–life balance and reducing work–life conflicts as the main objectives of work–life interventions (Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007).

Work–life interventions – design and implementation considerations

In order to enhance the potential impacts of work–life interventions, since most of the literature today remains focused on the adoption and availability of work–life policies and practices rather than their use, extent of implementation, or effectiveness, I identify and elaborate on five design and implementation considerations (see Table 1). Definitions are provided in Table 1 and elaborated on below. These are (1) organizational cultural and structural systems integration; (2) prevention and inclusion; (3) organizational support (resource focus) versus individual control (empowerment focus); (4) multi-level comprehensiveness; and (5) unintended consequences. Each of these elements can vary along a continuum. They can not only reflect intervention design choices, but are also factors that can be used in evaluation of implementation.

Organizational integration of employer support: linking cultural and structural systems

The first key element of work–life intervention design and implementation is organizational systems integration, which is the degree to which formal work structures and informal cultural values dovetail, are consistent and integrated. In our 2010 paper, we noted that work–life interventions involve two main organizational forms of support: structural and cultural (Kossek et al., 2010). Structural work–life support includes employment policies and practices and flexible job design that either (1) increase workers' control over where, when or how much they work such as through flexible work arrangements (e.g. telework, flextime) or (2) provide tangible employer-sponsored benefits (e.g. financial vouchers, direct services such as on-site child or elder care or social information networks) to enable individuals to be able to work and also be engaged in caregiving or other nonwork roles (Kossek et al., 2010, p. 3). Simply put, structural support refers to the extent to which organizations adopt a menu of formal work–life policies. While cultural support clearly matters, as we note below, the extent of availability of formal policies remains an important consideration as individuals are unlikely to feel they have the right to even request flextime or telework if there is no policy.

Further, policies and practices need to be reviewed to understand how existing work structures, processes and practices (the general accepted way work is done) impact work–life well-being. As an example, employers might systematically consider when team meetings are held to ensure that when they are at times that do not detract from employees' abilities to be able to actually use flextime to exercise or take time off for a medical appointment or volunteer at a school or food bank. Job design characteristics and performance expectations can be reviewed for their impacts on burnout,

health, well-being and personal life. Unfortunately, few employers consider how existing accepted work practices affect employees' work-life-family conflicts and other social outcomes such as health problems from chronic sleep deprivation due to expectations to take work phone calls at night; or not being able to schedule physical therapy or medical appointments during work hours.

Cultural support refers to the degree to which leaders and all members actively value positive work-life relationships and work-life fit as a working condition. It also can be measured by assessing the degree to which access and use of work-life policies, time off for personal needs, avoiding overwork or long hours, and demanding work schedules are socially supported by leaders and the general organizational climate without user backlash. It also reflects the degree to which the organizational culture has norms that employees perceive as signaling values that individuals will not face negative consequences (job loss, lower pay or promotion) if they have dual high involvement in caregiving and breadwinning or regularly allocate time to nonwork interests (hobbies, friends, exercise or their communities). Yet as a recent study on reduced load work arrangements found, many organizations have cultures that are ambivalent rather than embracing of work-life change, particularly policies that challenge embedded career professional norms of signaling organizational commitment by working long hours and only working fulltime (Kossek, Ollier-Malaterre, Lee, Pichler, & Hall, 2015).

Overall, this criterion suggests that interventions should be designed to align cultural messages with the structure of work practices and work-family supports. Work-life interventions need to dovetail to link organizational work-life culture and work structures to be synergistic.

Prevention and inclusion for mainstreaming (instead of marginalizing)

A second consideration relates to the degree to which work-life interventions are preventative – that is mainstreamed in availability to be inclusive of all employees. One benefit of mainstreaming work-life interventions, if done proactively, is that it has the potential to be consistent with an occupational health preventative approach. A mainstreamed occupational health approach tries to reduce levels of stress or prevent work-life conflicts before they even occur (Biron, Cooper, & Bond, 2009). All employees, whether they have visible work-life conflicts or not (e.g. young children, elderly parent) are included in work-life interventions. Other examples might be offering diabetes and blood pressure screening and gym memberships to all workers or encouraging all workers to disconnect from work-email on the weekends, by closing the office, to encourage more time to focus on personal needs and family.

Yet many work-life interventions are not mainstreamed or preventative and this is grounded in their early roots. Historically, as companies began offering work-life policies in the 1980s and 1990s and continuing today, many would adopt them as a distinct separate program. Doing so helped symbolize legal compliance with equal employment laws as women entered the workforce in greater numbers. Yet most work-life policies that were adopted such as flextime or part-time work, were done so without really changing the core work processes or the organization's culture to integrate them as an accepted working condition (Kossek, 2006). They were often marginalized as a policy available only to certain groups. Examples might include highly marketable professionals who negotiated a reduced load work arrangement

to customize their workloads, or working mothers who requested to change work hours to be able to leave work early every day in order to be able to pick up children at school. These individuals would then telework in the evenings to complete the workday. While certainly these initiatives can be innovative and valuable, such targeting has the risk of resulting in an accommodation approach where employees requesting what may be seen as what Rousseau, Ho, and Greenberg (2006) refer to as a special I-Deal: an idiosyncratic working arrangement. Employees working at home at night are invisible to coworkers who think these individuals are not contributing as much since they are seen leaving work earlier than coworkers. Such an implementation approach can lead to marginalization as I argued with Kossek et al. (2010): it does not move work–life issues from the organizational fringes to the organizational mainstream. A way to avoid marginalization and work–life interventions being viewed as an I-deal or a special accommodation is to ask teams to be collectively involved in implementation. This ensures that all employees have access to more flexible ways of working regardless of the reason or when they are seen as starting or stopping work compared to the norm.

Organizational social support versus individual control

Work–life interventions also vary in the degree to which they take an organizational social support focus or an individual control focus. An organizational support focus views work–life initiatives as general group resources that provide social support for nonwork roles. This approach to interventions is grounded in research on workplace social support, defined as the extent to which employees perceive that their well-being is valued by supervisors and their employers (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Drawing on the psychological literature on family supportive work environments (Allen, 2001), employees perceive social support from their organizations often through their interactions with their managers who embody the organization. Managers vary in the degree to which subordinates see them as exhibiting work–life or family supportive behaviors such as emotional support where employees feel they can openly discuss work–life concerns with managers (Hammer et al., 2011; Kossek et al., 2011). While social support is invaluable to workers, it can be linked sometimes to paternalism or the goodwill of leaders in using their discretion.

In contrast, an individual work–life control approach views work–life interventions as a means to give employees more individualized control over work hours and boundaries so they can be empowered to organize their work and nonwork demands effectively as they see fit. This latter approach is employee-driven and self-determined. It empowers workers to have a work–life–voice – a say in determining work schedules, location or load.

Yet historically, work–family initiatives have more often been viewed as the former – a formal benefit of support - where leaders and organizations use their benevolence providing a safety net to help buffer employees from work–life demands. And clearly, the more that an organization is seen as socially supportive of personal life such as by providing work–life benefits the more likely employees will show loyalty and commitment and are less likely to quit (Kossek, 2005). Besides providing social support, employees' work-life well-being might be strengthened by also giving them a sense of control or empowerment to manage boundaries, workload and work hours to fit with one's daily often complex working and personal life demands. Rather than

focusing on one or the other, the most effective work–life interventions are likely to be evaluated as providing both control and support, as studies have shown that having mere access and using work–life support (e.g. permission from your boss to allow you to occasionally telework) do not necessarily lead to perceptions of boundary control over work demands. Access to social resources is a necessary but insufficient condition for implementation effectiveness. Work–life supports are going to have the highest positive outcomes when their access and use of these resources *also* results in experience of greater psychological job control (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Yet most work–life interventions are not developed nor evaluated on the extent to which they enhance joint employee perceptions of organizational support for personal life and perceptions of individual work–life control – dual indicators of meaningful impact.

Multi-level comprehensiveness

To date most work–life interventions address a single level of the organization and overlook linkages to other organizational levels. For example, an individual employee might have access to a flexible work arrangement but the design of their current team processes might not be included in consideration of how the flexible working arrangement is implemented. So the flextime worker might be left of key team decisions as they miss important conversations. Or one team might get permission to allow all members to work telework regularly, but other groups in the organization that are not currently able to telework are not included in discussion of the implementation of the arrangement. This results in negative intergroup dynamics as the non-teleworking group complains that they never can get ahold of the virtual group. Or they feel they are always covering more of the walk in customer demands, and are jealous they canno't telework.

Another example is at the global organizational level. Perhaps work hours in China are set the standard workday for the multinational's offices around the world, so employees in other countries often are holding conference calls during mealtime and local sleeping hours. These are examples of the need for interventions to consider multi-level implementation implications when being introduced.

Unintended consequences

Work–life interventions often have unintended consequences – both positive and negative that are not often fully considered in design or implementation. Yet proactive crafters of work–life interventions should have an awareness that work–life interventions can introduce change in social relationships between employees and managers, employees and customers, and between different types of workers with diverse work–life identities and working styles. For example, some companies might give differential assignments to work–life intervention users. Individuals who job-share might not be allocated the most desirable major clients, as executives mistakenly think giving part-time workers who job-share a desirable account might send a signal to the client the company thinks they are not a key customer. Yet the reality is two part-time workers might bring more time and energy to the client than an over-worked full time worker. But the company will never be able to experience the potential benefits of fuller implementation of work–life interventions because of this

stigmatization. Take another example – when heavy users of a teleworking arrangement that co-workers do not use are seen as less committed and promotable and less team players, due to the lower face time. Or virtual teams may feel less *esprit de corps* because members rarely eat lunch together or socialize. Or users of a reduced load or part-time work arrangement may experience work intensification because although they voluntarily took a pay cut to have a shorter work week, their workload was not in reality reduced; they now simply have to cover the same amount of work in less time for less money. Or employees who start teleworking find they have trouble turning work off and cannot stop checking emails during evenings and weekends which negatively impacts family relationships.

Positive unintended consequences may also ensue from these interventions. Employees who are able to telework may end up voluntarily choosing to work an extra few hours a week more than their workplace counterparts as they are substituting commuting time in traffic for productive work time. Or employees who use an onsite child or elder care center, when their former employer did not offer one, may feel less anxious about the quality of care their elderly parent or child is receiving. Or employees who work from home are more likely to go to the doctor when they are sick or exercise and are healthier because it is easier to schedule these activities than those who have long commutes into the city. Work–life interventions are likely to have both favorable and unfavorable impacts. These impacts need to be anticipated, and assessed to hopefully ensure the good outweighs the bad.

Having generally defined work–life interventions and identified five implementation attributes, let us turn to two examples: individual assessments and feedback on boundary management style, leader training on family supportive supervisory behaviors (FSSB). I first describe these interventions and then discuss how they relate to the design principles.

Work–life boundary management style assessment: boundary control intervention

The first intervention assesses ‘flexstyles’ (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008), the different ways individuals configure and control work and nonwork identities and manage work–life boundaries and interruptions from use of cell phones, e-mails, texts, social media and other electronic communications (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Partnering with the Center for Creative Leadership, I developed a work–life indicator assessment (Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012). This assesses an individual’s level of work–life role enactment and perceptions of identity fit and work–life control. It builds an individual’s capabilities for increasing self-regulation to control work–life boundaries. This validated assessment gives feedback on differential employees’ needs and varying preferences in boundary management styles and differential work/engagement patterns. Individuals also find out if they are generally Integrators, Separators or Cyclers in their work–life patterns and have higher or lower boundary control, technological use, and would like to craft personal time each day for themselves. They then identify gaps and develop strategies for gaining boundary control and better managing transition times.

Integrating work and family throughout the day, separating work and private life as much as possible, cycling back and forth between work focus and an emphasis on home life—whether dictated by needs or by preferences, approaches to work–life balancing are as diverse as the individuals who have them. Yet most companies have not

developed cultures supporting diversity in boundary management styles and interventions are needed to empower employees. Examples of varied expectations for segmentation, integration and having the ability to shift patterns of control to more or less integration at different times of the week or year can be linked to gender, sexual identity, immigrant status or generational cohort. For example, an employee who is gay and who is not out at work or wishes to keep his or her personal life private may prefer the ability to segment work and personal life. In contrast, an employee who is an immigrant working in the United States at a university on an academic 9-month schedule may desire the ability to Skype at work to connect with family overseas during the winter months. Yet during the summer months, he or she may wish to separate from his or her US job while working from their native land and living with their elderly parents. Or a Gen-Xer may wish to integrate work and personal life by taking a long lunch hour to exercise and, not being a morning person, needing to arrive to work at 10 am instead of 8 am and work until 7 pm instead of 5 pm to accommodate both the late arrival and the gym time. And integrating work and nonwork can be a positive strategy for some to be able to find time for friendships, which some professionals working long hours may find increasingly difficult to develop. As Pederson and Lewis's papers argued, integrating work and friends and family and friends is one strategy that has worked for people as a way to find time for friendships (Pederson & Lewis, 2012). Yet others may need more separation between work and personal friendships and should not be stigmatized for needing this boundary control.

Applying intervention design and implementation elements to flexstyles

Having described flexstyles, let us turn to the first design principle, *organizational systems integration*. At a basic use level, this intervention is designed to help individuals identify personal cultural values. Most companies stop here with work-life self-assessments, resulting in poor cultural and structural integration as individuals' personal values that are highlighted in this assessment may not fit with prevailing work systems, particularly if the individual is going it alone with this openness on work-life relationships. But if implemented as part of a work group or individual change strategy and not just a personal feedback exercise, flexstyles can impact cultural and structural alignment of work-life boundaries. If the assessment is discussed in work teams where members can state preferences for integrating and separating work, as part of work group training on how to structure and implement formal flexible working such as telework to give higher boundary control, it can have high cultural and structural synergies. Such discussions might allow teleworkers to better control how they integrate personal domestic chores or child care with how they telework.

Turning to *prevention and inclusion*, if implemented as part of regular on-boarding and socialization for all new employees or teams migrating to telework, flexstyles training can be mainstreamed as part of an inclusive approach to career development. Right now, not all workers are seen as being interested in work-life, so career systems may not include mainstreamed discussions of work-life issues as part of career training. Yet integrating work-life boundary management as part of career development could help prevent work-life conflict and burnout. By ensuring all employees are trained, discussing work-life boundary management preferences is something that is normal and seen as something that is inclusive of all employees, regardless of gender or level of caregiving demands.

When implemented as not merely an work–life training supportive resource, but as an assessment and feedback intervention that is designed to strengthen perceptions of how to increase *positive control over where, when and how work is done*, flexstyles has the potential to empower employees to self-regulate how, when and where they need to work given their personal values and contexts. It draws on the research on job control (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990), and extends this research to include schedule control (Kossek & Michel, 2011) and work–life boundary control (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). When individuals perceive high work–life control, they report greater time adequacy to enact multiple life roles, have higher well-being and experience lower work–family conflict (Kossek et al., 2011).

The work–life assessment tool can also be used to foster dialogue between leaders and employees; employees and co-workers and teams; and employees and family members on cross-level work–life boundary management needs. Thus, it can be used to also support another intervention attribute: *multi-level change comprehensiveness*. For example, by using the assessment with financial services teams of a large *Fortune* 200 firm, dialogue was encouraged about employee impacts from one vice president’s habit of often sending out e-mails at the last minute on a Sunday night announcing that there would be an early Monday morning staff meeting. This was stressful for some employees and ruined some of their weekends as they did not know whether they had to log in on Sunday evening to find out about the meeting or be surprised at the last minute. Once they gave the vice president’s feedback, he began to change his style to be more mindful of how he communicated meetings. This began a change in corporate culture where meetings were now scheduled in advance of the weekend, and workers would not have to check in online. Another change was that meetings, that were often triple and double booked, are now scheduled to have 10-minute breaks in between each other to allow people to have time to get up, take a bio-break and physically recover before the next meeting.

Lastly, if flexstyles also improves how the employee relates to family and friends, such as helping them to be better able to separate from work more during vacation and nonworking time, it may have the *unintended consequences* of improving family and personal relationships and facilitating better psychological health by fostering more time for recovery and work separation. When flexstyles training is conducted in teams, it also may help have the unintended consequences, of improving team communication and work processes. I have led discussions and change efforts where teams and organizations consciously work to change the culture to give people more boundary control and have clearer communication of times they are on- and offline. This requires focused discussion on how to back up each other when others are not available.

Family supportive supervisory behavior training intervention

The second intervention I have developed and implemented is the Family Supportive Supervisory Behavior (FSSB) training intervention with my colleague Leslie Hammer (Hammer, Kossek et al., 2011; Kossek & Hammer, 2008). This National Institutes of Health-funded intervention was field-tested in a randomized control trial in high- and low-income populations as part of the Work, Family & Health Network (Kossek et al., 2014). The FSSB intervention is signed to increase both family supportive supervisor behaviors and supervisor performance support. The

term ‘family’ is used broadly to include all workers’ nonwork ties and personal needs for leader support. We implemented the intervention in 12 grocery stores in Michigan in the United States. Managers in six stores got the training and half in the other six stores did not. We trained whole stores at a time (e.g. the produce manager, the front end manager, the meat department and the store director among other roles) so that there would be a culture change. After an entire store was trained (we brought laptops into the store, right to the managers), we held a luncheon and invited managers to set goals for a few weeks and track how many times they did one of the various supportive behaviors for all their subordinates. This ensured that the store put the training into practice.

The FSSB training is designed to teach supervisors : (1) the benefits of providing support to help employees handle their work, family and personal demands; (2) discuss the different types of family, personal (emotional, instrumental, creative role modeling) and performance support behaviors that supportive supervisors exhibit; and (3) motivate supervisors to establish goals and track their own supportive behaviors for two weeks (Hammer, Kossek, Bodner, & Crain, 2013; Kossek & Hammer, 2008).

Comparing survey results for employees nine months before the intervention with those for several months after the intervention, this intervention reduced depressive symptoms and increased job satisfaction and well-being on and off the job, particularly for employees who had high work–family conflict prior to the training (Hammer et al., 2011). What was even more interesting was that it did not matter if a person’s individual manager was trained or not: what mattered was whether an employee worked in a store where a cohort of managers had been trained, as this began to shift the culture to be generally more aware of the need to be flexible and tuned into employees work–family needs.

Applying intervention design and implementation elements to FSSB

Because the FFSB intervention involves not only formal training to change leader values but asks them to change their behaviors on the job, it can result in higher *organizational systems alignment* between managerial cultural values and the way work is structured and practiced, which is the first design element. The FFSB intervention is also *mainstreamed and preventative* as it is delivered as a workplace level intervention to all managers in a particular work unit with the goal of training leaders on how to prevent work–family conflict before it occurs in the workplace culture. Turning to the third design element, it is generally more focused on *increasing leader social support* than increasing individual worker empowerment and control. Despite this, because the FSSB intervention is often implemented as part of entire work sites and delivered to several layers of the management hierarchy, the FSSB does have the benefit of targeting the leadership and organizational levels (consistent with the *comprehensive multilevel design* principle). Thus, a key aspect of the FSSB leader training is that it is implemented as a leader and site-level intervention. Thus, all leaders must be offered training to move work–life support from not just the dyadic level to an organizational-level cultural aspect of the work environment.

Lastly, there were some important *unintended consequences* of FFSB. We have found that introducing such training can change the workplace context to be

more inclusive of work and personal life and more preventative of work–life conflicts. There have been improvements shown in physical health reports, job satisfaction and intension to turnover, particularly for employees with higher levels of work–life conflict prior to the intervention. Such improvements have very positive consequences both intended and unintended for the workplace. In one organization we worked with, our training also changed scheduling practices. Now work schedules are now being posted several weeks in advance instead of the previous ‘just in time’ weekly scheduling practice. This earlier posting of work schedules has resulted in more schedule predictability for employees.

Conclusion and generative themes for practice: moving work–life interventions toward a triple bottom line

In this paper, I identify and describe five key elements of work–life intervention design and implementation. I then describe several work–life interventions and apply the interventions, discuss the potential of interventions for improving a triple bottom line and conclude with six lessons learned from designing and implementing work–life interventions. In this article’s title, I note the idea of the triple bottom line. By this I mean the notion that interventions can benefit not only individual employees by reducing stress, or companies, by reducing turnover; but it also can have societal impacts on the overall mental health, time for involvement in family and the development of community strength. These are social capital for society. In many ways, the idea of the triple bottom line refers to positive unintended consequences of work–life interventions. This is the notion that multiple stakeholders – employees, employers and society – can sometimes reap unexpected synergistic benefits from viewing and implementing work–life interventions as not just discretionary initiatives – something that nice to do in good economic times – but as a core part of the social employment contract across all economies and levels of industrialization.

Lesson 1: Leaders and societies varying discourse on work–life interventions goals need to be clarified and measured to reflect multiple stakeholders and a triple bottom line. We need to identify broader societal and community impacts from work–life interventions toward a ‘triple bottom line’ to improve the well-being of individuals, organizations and society. Examples of broader societal effectiveness indicators might include whether the adoption and use of work–life interventions result in greater health and less worker stress, strengthening of employer and employee loyalty and commitment, more balanced gender representation in leadership positions and family life, or greater workforce readiness and quality by having flexibility to regularly engage in education over the life course (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). Or as Suzan might also argue, a shift in state social policy to prioritize work–life well-being of citizens, or an increase in national cultural expectations of work–life entitlement, so that workers of child-bearing age might have expectations that they are able to start a family but also be able to have a career and not view these goals as in conflict (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). In sum, interventions must be evaluated to include some evaluation of how they affect employees, employers and families, communities and society.

Lesson 2: Organizational leaders need to better link work–life interventions to the big issues that matter most in the firm and in society. We need to link work–life

interventions to positive engagement of employees in their personal lives as parents and citizens and to success in meeting business objectives. We need to make sure work–life interventions are tapping into current societal challenges such as how the changes in the economy and the employment relationship are reshaping work–family relationships in ways that can be experienced more positively if supported by the employer. Work–life initiatives can be the lever to foster a positive renewal of the social contract between employees and employers by sending a signal that workers of all backgrounds are valued for what they bring to the workplace.

Lesson 3: Work–life interventions need to continue to not only focus on increasing formal support of work and life but informal cultural support to close the gap between policy availability and use. Often our formal policies that are available (e.g. the opportunity to work less through part-time work or take a leave when one’s parent is sick) are not aligned with prevailing organizational work–life values. Because of this, in order to reduce ‘bias avoidance’ many career-oriented employees do not feel free to use work–life policies and those who do (often women or those with family or personal demands) risk stigmatization. More importantly, formal policies and legal mandates such as maternity protection or the right to request flexible working laws are necessary but insufficient conditions for effective work–life intervention effectiveness. Overall informal (or cultural support) must generally be integrated with legal policy mandates (which essentially provide minimum standards and employee rights) in order to ensure greater implementation.

Lesson 4: Work–life change interventions should focus on prevention of work–life conflict in the design of work and work demands. The preventive mainstreaming approach ensures that those with the greatest need for work–life support (often those who have work–life identities and interests that challenge prevailing norms) are less likely to be seen as asking for special accommodations for their work–life needs. Prevention suggests mainstreaming of work–life interventions so they are part of the work environment.

Lesson 5: Take a holistic multilevel approach to work–life change that is socially based; in other words, work–life change is a collective issue linking the individual to the group and organization, families and society. At the individual level, people need to reflect on their values and then discuss with their employer and family or others how to make it work. At the societal level, the United States (and UK), the culture values work time over time for self and family as a demonstration of success, and the main time many people can slow down is when they retire. So in the United States and many other countries now, we have this crazy corporate culture in large firms, where you burn people out working long hours and make it hard for people to advance their careers while being highly engaged with family.

Lesson 6: Leaders and organizations should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to work–life interventions. Work–life demands are diverse. Offering a menu of initiatives sends the message that the company acknowledges diversity and values its people and recognizes that work–life needs and identities may shift over the life course. These initiatives might focus on clarifying and identifying diversity and encouraging leaders to not dwell on how a person balances work and life, but whether he or she achieves results. We need to move our work cultures from idealizing a single career path and way to success to being open to the many trails along career pathway that can lead many forms of achievement over many different time frames. It is the spirit

of work–life inclusion, and the need for supporting many different ways of working that is echoed not only by my own work but in the large body of Suzan Lewis’s research.

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Note

1. I have had the pleasure of periodically interacting with Dr Suzan Lewis through her writing and personal and virtual interactions over several decades across countries in several continents – in the UK, Spain and the US.

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