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WORK-LIFE RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Work Life Policy Captain Report March 2016

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Introduction: Trends Making Work-Life Research Matter as a Critical Policy Area

Work-life research involves the study of predictors, processes and outcomes related to how individuals, groups, and organizations manage work and nonwork role relationships for all employees of all backgrounds (e.g., single, married, divorced, gay) for a multitude of nonwork roles (e.g., family, school, exercise, community, religion). (Kossek, 2006; Wilson & Baumann, 2015). This field grew out of work-family conflict research from the 1960s based on role stress theory (Kahn et al, 1964) examining how and why work and family roles conflict, given that individuals (and families) have fixed resources such as time and energy to devote to these competing domains. Interest in work-family research has exploded, since the 60's due to transformed workforce demographics as women now represent half the labor force, approximately half of all college graduates, and are one third of breadwinners in families. Approximately 70% of American families with children have all household adults participating in the paid labor force, and men's participation in domestic chores has also risen (Williams & Boushey, 2010). This has consequences for families and worker well-being, as 75% of working parents say they do not have enough time for their children (or each other) (Aumann & Galinsky, 2009). Statistics show that about half of all children under 18 will live in a single parent household for part of their childhood (Kossek & Distelberg, 2009).

Elder care pressures have also made work-life research critical to strategic human resource policy innovation, as life expectancies are increasing at the same time that many young adults are delaying marriage and reducing their number of children or forgoing marriage and children altogether. (Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). Although Silicon Valley and Fortune companies have recently made headlines by offering high profile perquisites such as the ability to freeze eggs, airlift breast milk and increase the amount of paid paternity and maternity leave to up to 4-6 months, the reality is that the take-up of these policies is often limited, particularly for career- oriented employees. U.S. fertility rates are dropping where workers are not replacing themselves, which has critical economic consequences for nations (Holst, 2014) and retirement systems (Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). The growth rate for the cohort of individuals 65 years and older is rising faster than the growth rate for all other age groups between 2000 and 2050.

Work-life pressures affect productivity and society as work-life and work-to-family conflict has negative effects on job burnout, depressive symptoms, psychological stress, physical health symptoms, turnover, and family strain (Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton, 2000) and job and life satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Family supportive cultures have been found to have

positive linkages to child well-being and family performance effectiveness (Work Family Health Network, 2016; Kossek, Noe & Colquitt, 2001).

Yet nearly two thirds of U.S. workers are dissatisfied with the manner in which their employers assist them in balancing work and family and other personal life demands—a drop from 42% in 2009 (Clay, 2011). Perhaps this is because, the job and personnel structures and cultures have not been fully updated to keep up with the changing nature of work and the workforce. For example, work-life issues and policies are sometimes marginalized by management-- seen as worker entitlements more than engagement or economic tools that can help the organization adapt to the changing nature of work and the workforce (Kossek, Lewis & Hammer, 2010). Work-life policies have sometimes been viewed as individual initiatives with less focus on how they must be part of a balanced system of workplace flexibility that are implemented by workgroups managing a total unit workload. To date, far more research has focused on the adoption of practices and less on identifying indicators of effective implementation, performance management, and how to manage equity, and countervailing stigma for use. The policies and practices being implemented have need better quality research to evaluate effects (Kossek, 2005). Employers need to move from simply adopting practices and abandoning them if they are not initially effective to move toward quality evidence- based implementation using control groups, and learning how to customize practices to the job and context as a process of organizational change (Kossek, Hammer, Kelly & Moen, 2014). Measures of outcomes and processes are needed that balance worker, employer and societal interests (Kossek, Thompson & Lautsch, 2015 RARC, 2015). Also under-studied is how to link work-life practices to job design, staffing levels, career development, and human capital strategies. Some employers are abandoning flextime or other policies workers value if performance and implementation problems or an economic downturn ensue (Kossek, 2013; SHRM, 2010). In sum,, researchers have not made a significant impact in improving the lives of employees relative to the amount of research that has been conducted" (Kelly, et al., 2008; Kossek Baltes, & Mathews, 2011a, p. 353; 2011b). Quality policy and organizational research is needed focused on organizational support for work and life.

Research Gaps: Critical Need for Research on Effective Organizational Work-life Policy and Practices

Overall, there is a large gap on the organizational policy level, as the vast majority of the scholarly work-family research has been conducted at the individual level. Also, far more research has been conducted on white collar workers in office jobs rather than those with front line customer facing jobs with unpredictable schedules or work hours. Thus, key issues of "overwork" (working too many hours), "underwork" (not getting enough hours to make ends meet) or "work life fit" (not getting the right hours) to support a positive work-life relationship are under-examined.

Defining current work-life policy practice domain. Work/Life research at the organizational policy level "involves study of the practice of creating a flexible, supportive environment to engage employees and maximize organizational performance. Work/Life programs may include worksite health and wellness, employee assistance programs, occupational health, organizational interventions for to prevent work-life stress and conflict, workplace

flexibilities, work scheduling, and telework, and boundary management of electronic communication and personal computing devices (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/opm-research-summit/)

What does this support look like in the federal government? A review of the OPM website: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/ suggests that the typical federal work life portfolio includes the following which includes some areas and not others: Alternative work schedules (AWS,) https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/handbooks/alternative-work-schedules/), Telework (https://www.telework.gov/) (which may not be available to employees depending on job demands), employee assistance plans, child care subsidy, onsite child care, dependent care resource & referral, health and wellness, employee assistance programs. To date much of the research on these topics are descriptive and research is needed using control groups comparing the effectiveness of different types of supports. Theory-based research is lacking on how different types of supports matter for employees and workgroups with varying job and family and other nonwork demands. Below are some possible research themes based on current and desired research.

Current Research Themes and Needs

Theme 1. Work-family support studies examining linkages between organizational dependent care support for work and family and outcomes. Organizational support of work and nonwork roles is defined as the degree to which the workplace is designed to reduce worklife conflicts and enhance work-life interactions and performance and well-being on and off the job (Kossek et al, 2011a). Organizational support of work and life entails three workplace characteristics that foster effective work–family relationships: (a) job working conditions and work structures (e.g., work hours, job design allowing individual control over when, where, or how one carries out work); (b) workplace culture and norms supporting balanced work and nonwork relationships; and (c) human resource policies enabling the facilitation of effectiveness in both work and nonwork roles (Kossek, 2006). Few studies look at all three of these areas on the relationships between the work–family support policies (specifically support for dependent care responsibilities but excluding workplace flexibility), and employee outcomes, found a modest relationship between policy availability and use of work-family support policies and job satisfaction, affective commitment, and intentions to turnover. The authors note, "Stronger results were found for policy availability than use and these results were mediated by familysupportive organization perceptions and work-to-family conflict. Also, the number of policies and sample characteristics (percent women, percent married-cohabiting, percent with dependents) moderated the effects of policy availability and use on outcomes." The authors also reported that policy use was greater when more policies were available, suggesting that employers should offer a menu of policies and practices since a single policy is likely to be insufficient.

Theme 2. Workplace flexibility and scheduling studies: Mixed messages and types

Workplace flexibility is a mutually beneficial arrangement between employees and employers in which both parties agree on when, where and how the employee will work to meet

¹ Thanks to co-captain Alisa Green, Dept. of Homeland Security for providing the OPM links and good discussion on current policies.

the organization's needs (Kossek, Hammer, Thompson & Burke, 2014). A recent meta-analysis on comparing telework, flextime and shift work found negligible impact on family to work role conflict reductions (Allen et al, 2013). The authors surmised that flexibility in regards to the work role may increase the amount of family demands an employee takes on (Hammer et al, 2005) as workers use the freedom derived from flexibility to restructure work to take on more family roles (Allen et al, 2013).

It is also important to measure the direction of work-family conflict affected by policy use (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). For example, studies consistently show that the magnitude of work to family conflict is much higher than family to work conflict and flexibility may be sometimes used to help employees engage in overwork such as checking email or working on nights and weekends to keep up with work (Kossek et al, 2012; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012, Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006). It also may be that there simply are limits to individuals' abilities to self-regulate and manage work and nonwork roles (Allen et al., 2013). Further, it is likely that use of different flexibility forms may matter for productivity enactment and is moderated by effective worker decision-making and discretion. For example, telework and flextime may allow people to bring work home or work different hours and negatively impact sleep or time with family or to take care of oneself such as exercise (Kossek et al, 2015).

Research is needed on workload reduction and low value work reduction, which is looking at how to improve work processes get rid of work tasks that add less to productivity (Kossek et al, 2014) as well as a way to enhance "balanced flexibility". By this research refers to mutually beneficial flexible arrangement for employees/ employers to support both work and nonwork wellbeing. Such research would examine workplace flexibility much as when IBM moved to a mobile workforce in the 90s as a business practice & teamwork process not only a work-life program. It involved a culture change toward new ways working to serve customers and reduce business costs. Yet some scholars argue that it is naïve to believe that individual work-life relationships can be scaled up to translate into organizational systems level change is not substantiated" (Grzywacz et al. 2007, p. 560; Williams et al, 2015) and is probably unwarranted

Team based flexibility migration to flexibility implementation has been suggested to be more effective than an ad hoc approach to allowing individuals some individuals to flex and not others (Kossek, Thompson, Lautsch, 2015). Research is needed to redesign laws on Fair Labor Standards to support split shifts for working parents who might want to work a shorter work day and then engage with family and work at night. Below we will discuss research on how to implement control over schedules and support for work and life as an intervention study.

Theme 3: Workplace, and leader social support and culture change: Intervention studies

One set of studies began by the NIH funded Work-Family Health network (Kossek et al, 2014) has begun to address how to change the structure of the workplace to reduce work-family conflict and improve the health of families. The goal is to identify how to improve worker control over work, reduce low value work and improve family supportive supervisory behaviors (Hammer et al, 2011; 2015). A number of papers have come from this initiative (Hammer et al, 2011 Kelly et al. 2011, 2014 showing that organizational intervention studies that are designed to prevent work –family conflict in the structure of work can increase worker perceptions of control over work and schedules. More over interventions that increase worker perceptions of leader and organizational social support for work and life and can have positive productivity far greater

than formal flexibility policies affecting intention to turnover, following safety climate rules, and helping out coworkers (Allen et al, 2013; Hammer et al, 2011, 2015; Kossek et al, 2011).

As an example, the studies of the Work Family Health Network, integrated supervisorsupport training (Hammer et al., 2011) with participative worker training to increased schedule control and showed significant, but small, improvements in reducing work-family conflict and perceptions of family time adequacy (Kelly et al. 2014,) for IT workers. Such studies did not find results for nursing home workers as a primary effect but as Kossek and Thompson's and colleagues (2016) paper shows, the intervention effects were moderated and beneficial for those with elder care and sandwiched care (both employees with children and elders) demands. The study which will be presented at the conference examines the effects of a work-family organizational intervention designed to increase work resources (perceptions of supervisor support for family, control over work time) to positively impact employees' psychological health (stress, psychological distress) in a group-randomized field experiment in 30 health care facilities. Multilevel analyses from across four time points indicated that caregiving demands significantly moderated intervention effects. Specifically, the intervention was more beneficial in improving psychological health for employees with elder or sandwiched caregiving responsibilities, but not for employees who only had child care demands or no care demands. The intervention was also more effective in improving psychological health in health care facilities that had higher pre-intervention ratings of satisfaction with resident care quality. Implications and future directions will be discussed.

Other studies conducted with white collar workers in consulting firms have shown that having a predictable day off a week matters for well-being and work family enrichment as long as team resources can be deployed to ensure the work is covered (Perlow, 2012).

Theme 4: Studies on how to reduce stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace while still balancing performance and family demands, for working mothers, fathers and family caregivers.

King (2016) has conducted research on what challenges that mother's face at work and suggests the "Opt Out" explanation is Insufficient. She will present research at the conference that shows that even before having children, women must manage the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities. Further, mother's leadership and job support for advancement is undermined by persistent, common, subtle biases that push some women out of their careers. The stereotypes and discrimination that women encounter when they have children, affect their ability to advance. Multi-level work linking career preferences, opting out and pushed out perspectives should be integrated to create a positive gender and work-family supportive climate for women's career equality (Kossek, Rong & Su, 2016).

Other research (Little, 2016) on mothers; experiences during the time of pregnancy, show that although about 1.5 million women working in the United States become pregnant each year and pregnancy can be a wonderful time in women's and families; lives, studies show that pregnancy is not always viewed positively in the workplace. Little will present research showing that many pregnant workers feel stigmatized and feel that the stereotypes associated with pregnancy and motherhood changes others perceptions of their competence and career motivation. They also worry about differential treatment and face worries about serious negative career consequences. Studies are needed on to help organizations and pregnant women manage

their concerns to foster positive work outcomes. Studies are also needed on working fathers and policy that promote gender equality in father and other family involvement in caregiving, such as giving longer leaves to couples that engage in shared care.

One promising practice that is underutilized is reduced load work schedules for high talent workers where workloads (Kossek et al, 2015) are reduced to support a reduction in hours and load can be helpful for working mothers as well as workers who wish to pursue other life demands from school to preparing for retirement. Unlike part time work, such schedules allow individuals to advance on a career path.

Theme 5: Work Life boundaries and social media studies

As Ollier- Malaterre (2015) and colleagues have found social media such as Facebook and Linked in and Twitter presents professional opportunities and challenges. It can help a career or it blurring the lines between the personal and the professional. She has found that there are ways individuals can craft effective social media strategy in ways that can positively affect social networks at work and foster positive relationships between bosses and subordinates and ultimately help team performance.

Related to the social media studies, research is needed on the different ways employees manage boundaries and detach and integrate from work and family and manage cycles of work and family demands. For example, managing work emails during evening nonwork hours, vacations and weekends or family emails and texts at work are increasing workers' work-life self-regulatory demands ((Kossek et al, 2012). Kossek and colleagues have identified high and low boundary control integrators, separators and cyclers and found that fit between workplace culture and family culture is what matters for well-being. Multi-level work collecting data from family member's co-workers and teams and managers and subordinates are where the frontiers of this research are going. Studies also show that check-in email late at night and overwork cultures is bad for health and linked to depressive symptoms.

Theme 6: Studies needed on work scheduling implementation for front line jobs in 24-7 systems and how to link work scheduling to staffing schedules and overtime.

Studies are also needed on implementation of workplace flexibility to develop a template of effective implementation (RARC, 2015). Areas to investigate might include how to manage career repercussions for using flexibility, improving worker training and back up and scheduling systems, managing overtime to ensure customer and shift coverage and improving scheduling. Studies are needed on workers self-scheduling and the work scheduler (Kossek et al. in press). Research is needed on how to redesign jobs in different occupations to reduce stressors in the design of work and increase control over work schedules and processes as a way to enhance occupational resilience (Kossek & Perrigino, in press). Lambert and Henly (2014) have also noted that predictable work schedules are especially important to enhance family and worker well-being of low income and hourly workers.

Theme 7: Theory- based comparative effectiveness randomized control studies needed on outcomes related to policy and practice use and non-use and moderated by job type and implementation quality.

Research is needed grouping work-life policies and practices into different types of theoretical resources in order to compare their effectiveness for different employee groups and jobs.

Examples might include a) flexibility providing time and control resources, b) direct services providing extra family or worker emotional and caregiving support; c) subsidies adding financial support to cover the cost of quality care, and d) EAP as a way to provide psychological and provide health resources. Research is also needed to identify indicators of effective implementation that balances employee, employer, and societal interests and different employment outcomes. For example, work-life benefits such as on-site child care may help with attract and retention, which can be labeled organizational membership behaviors (the decision to join and stay with an employer). In contrast, telework and the ability to restructure work-hours to better combine work and nonwork demands, may not only affect membership behaviors but also extra-role behaviors as an employee may be willing to help out and answer a customer email if they are able to work from home. Health and wellness programs may affect energy, resilience, exercise participation, and reduce use of substance abuse. Theory based research is needed, comparing which policies matter most. Studies also are needed comparing the behaviors of users and nonusers of these policies and the career experiences of different employee groups and managers.

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