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The Business Case: Managerial Perspectives on Work and the Family

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In this chapter, we discuss the different management approaches used by employers for framing, adopting, and managing work and family policies in organizations and by researchers examining work-family issues. The field of management focuses on ensuring that when workers come together in an enterprise, they are organized with the dual goals of achieving effectiveness in accomplishing the organizational mission and efficiency in motivating employees to work toward maximizing productivity (Stroh, Northcraft, & Neale, 2002). Management tends to take a rational and prescriptive perspective and assumes there is an optimal way to organize a firm and its workforce depending on the organization's strategy, culture, power and resources, and external environment. The field of management is closely aligned with organizational behavior, which is multi-disciplinary, drawing from many fields in the social sciences, and seeks to understand behavior in organizations by examining individual, group, organizational, and interorganizational dynamics (Miner, 2002). It is relatively recently that work and family issues have been viewed as a mainstream and core management concern. As managers have become more cognizant of the importance of work and family issues to efficiency and effectiveness, the management field is gradually moving in practice toward recognition that like other business issues, work and family problems must be analyzed in the context of organizational behavior.

Kossek (2005) noted that the traditional research on managerial work family policy can be organized into several streams: an *adoption* stream, a *demographic* stream, and a *policy impact* stream. Research from the *adoption* stream tends to focus on the organizational level of analysis and examines employer characteristics predicting policy adoption or availability and work-life responsiveness, as well as variation in availability by industries and job groups. Research from the *demographic* stream tends to focus on the individual employee level of analysis, with regards to the perceived attractiveness, access, satisfaction, and use of policies by various demographic groups focusing on employee family-relevant demographics (e.g., gender, age, number and ages of dependents). The *policy impact* stream examines how policy use relates to individual and organizational outcomes (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). Past reviews of management streams such as these are descriptive and reflect where much of the state of

the development of the field is to date. The approach, while valuable, does not shed light on the variation in management justification for work-family policy.

A main goal of this chapter is to argue that it is critical to identify and recognize the wide diversity in employer rhetoric used to understand work and family policies in practice, an issue that has not been fully examined in previous research reviews. We believe it is important to not only focus on prevailing norms and existence of formal policies, but also to question the universalization of managerial interests (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996) that predominates the managerial work and family literature. By this we mean that the management literature on work and family has had a tendency to view work-family problems as if the way that employers deem they should be properly managed are serving everyone's interests. Yet critical and postmodern theorists (cf. Alvesson & Deetz, 1996) note that management is ascribed a privileged position in terms of being able to define the interests of corporations in such a way that minimizes the interests and investments made to organizational effectiveness by other stakeholders, such as employees, families, community and society, and maximizes those made by financial investors and owners.

By showing the wide variety in the rhetoric used by employers in their response to work and family issues, we seek to encourage future scholarship and practice that examines and scrutinizes the formal managerial rationale for the adoption of work and family policies. Such an approach will lead to a greater definition of the predictors and consequences of work and family policy, which may ultimately lead to multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of management progressivism in responding to and supporting employees' work and family needs. Before exploring managerial perspectives on work-life policies and practices, we will review the distinct ways in which organizations' support and practices impact employees' work and family well-being.

DOMAIN OF EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF WORK AND FAMILY

The domain of employer support of work and family includes three main areas: formal human resource policies to support work and family, job design and terms and conditions of employment, and informal occupational and organizational culture and norms (Kossek, 2005). The first area involves the development and implementation of *formal human resource policies and practices* that influence the extent to which a workplace has supports available that are designed to reduce conflicts and stresses related to the delivery of work and nonwork roles. Table 29.1 includes some examples of these policies, which include but are not limited to flexibility in working time or place, direct work-life services for child or elder care or self care, and information and social supports. As these policies illustrate, although employers often initially define work-family integration as a parenting and dependent care issue, over time in many firms there is a broadening of policies and practices to support participation in additional life roles such as community, elder care, teen supervision, personal health care, those related to personal values (e.g., political, religious), military service, domestic chores, or exercise (Kossek, 2005). This trend shows growing management recognition of the need to support not only those with visible dependent care needs (e.g., child care), but all employees at many life stages who may experience work-life stresses regardless of family status or who may have important nonwork identities (e.g., National Guard, education, religious) that require flexibility to enable effective participation (Kossek, 2005).

The second area of employer support, job design and terms of employment, refers to *employment conditions* such as pay, work hours, or other human resource policies. Employment conditions may dictate the manner in which work and family roles can be combined, controlled, or performed in ways that create psychological and/or physical distress as well as enrichment.

TABLE 29.1
Description of Types of Work-Life Policies/Programs

<i>Policy/Program Category</i>	<i>Flexibility of Working Time</i>
Definition	Policies/practices designed to allow employees to have more control over the amount of hours that they work or when those hours are worked.
Examples	<p><i>Reduced-Hours or Part-time work:</i> Working less than full-time with a commensurate decrease in salary.</p> <p><i>Flextime:</i> Employees vary their beginning and ending times (within a given flex range and established core hours), but generally work full-time.</p> <p><i>Compressed work-week:</i> Employees work extra hours on some days of the week in order to have part of the day or a whole day off at another time.</p> <p><i>Job-sharing:</i> Two employees share one full-time job.</p> <p><i>Compensatory time:</i> Employees working long hours get subsequent time off in order to recoup.</p> <p><i>Leaves of absence:</i> Employees get time off for maternity, paternity, military service, education, elder and child care, and other life pursuits and can return to their jobs or a similar job.</p>
<i>Policy/Program Category</i>	<i>Flexibility of Working Place</i>
Definition	Policies/practices that allow employees to choose to work outside of the office or worksite (all or some of the time).
Examples	<i>Telework:</i> Employees work part or all of the time at an off-site location and use technology (e.g., e-mail, fax, mobile phone) in order to communicate with others.
<i>Policy/Program Category</i>	<i>Support with Care Responsibilities</i>
Definition	Policies/practices that assist employees in providing care for others (child and elder) or for self and household.
Examples	<p><i>Child/elder care:</i> Employees have access to employer-provided care for children or elders either at their worksite or in communities.</p> <p><i>Child/elder care provider referral service:</i> Employees can call/e-mail a service which will assist them in finding regular child/elder care providers.</p> <p><i>Financial support for dependent care:</i> Employees receive financial help in the form of flexible spending accounts that use pretax dollars to help pay for care, direct subsidies, or discounts.</p> <p><i>Emergency/sick child/elder care:</i> Employee has access to child/elder care for unexpected situations.</p>
<i>Policy/Program Category</i>	<i>Informational and Social Supports</i>
Definition	Policies/practices that provide emotional support to employees facing nonwork or balance challenges.
Examples	<p><i>Support hotlines:</i> Employees can call a number to receive emotional support for dealing with work-life issues.</p> <p><i>Support groups:</i> Employees can join a support or networking group for informational and psychological support.</p>

*Some of the definitions in this table were adapted from Hyland, 2003; Kossek, 2003; Lee, MacDermid, & Buck, 2000.

For example, a single parent who works the second shift may find her job design makes it virtually impossible for her child to participate in after school activities that require parent involvement or for her family. Yet if the same single parent were able to take a longer dinner break at her home near the plant, she would be able to eat weekday meals with her children and still fulfill her breadwinning role. In one of the few published studies that linked work-family policies to job design and other conditions of employment, Batt and Valcour (2003) examined relationships between access to work-family policies, human resource incentives such as salary or work hours, and job design such as control for a nonrandom sample of over 500 dual earners. They found that human resource incentives had a stronger relationship to work-family conflict and turnover than job design or work family policies. Perhaps one reason for the findings that employment conditions were more important than policies is that the scale used summed access to dependent care and flexibility policies and not use of specific policies, which future research might want to further examine.

The third area refers to *organizational and professional cultures and norms*. These cultures and norms often shape informal work practices and supervisor preferences for managing work and family. The culture of the organization toward work-family issues has been defined as the “shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives” (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999, p. 394). A supportive culture includes the extent of organizational time demands for long work hours, perceived career consequences for using family-friendly policies, and managerial support of family needs (Thompson et al., 1999). Thompson et al. (1999) found that a work-family supportive work culture was associated with increased employee use of work-family benefits, increased organizational commitment, and decreased work-family conflict and intention to turnover. Kossek, Colquitt, and Noe (2001) focused on positive cross-domain climate relationships between work and family and found that the ability to share concerns about work when at home or home when at work, was related to better performance and well-being.

While the categories in Table 29.1 do not reflect every possible policy or practice associated with employer support for work-life integration, they cover a broad range of the human resource policies and practices offered in today’s workplaces. Although useful for describing organizational activities, these groupings are limited in their ability to capture management beliefs about these policies or assumptions about *why* or *how* they impact employee, group, and organizational outcomes; nor do they give insight into how these policies are embedded in practice in relation to job design and conditions of employment, organizational culture and norms, or supervision.

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTING WORK-LIFE POLICIES

We have argued that the preceding review of work-life policies, practices and research, while important for understanding the nature of work-life in organizations today, does not necessarily indicate the motivations behind policy adoption and implementation, nor the degree to which management posits connections between the policies and other organizational factors (e.g., strategy, job design, etc.). After reviewing the strategic human resource management business case, what follows is a review of the main perspectives we see used to explain the employer practice of adopting work and family policies. Table 29.2 provides a brief summary of these perspectives, including their definitions, key terms, and a sample article reference. It should be noted that these approaches are not discrete and may overlap in firms and research studies.

TABLE 29.2
Summary of Managerial Perspectives

<i>Managerial Perspective</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Key Terms</i>	<i>Recent Empirical Reference</i>
Implementation Orientations	The management orientation toward implementing work and family policies and state of organizational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management orientation • Accommodation • Elaboration • Transformation 	Lee, MacDermid, & Buck (2000)
Dual Agenda	The degree to which an organization views work-family issues as a trade-off or as mutually beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade-offs • Integrated approach • Leveraged approach 	Lautsch, Kossek, & Eaton (2004)
Work-Life Bundles	The degree to which work and family policies are clustered with each other and implemented with other HR policies and how this relates to organizational performance and other key outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bundles • Clusters • Adoption • Human Resource Management 	Perry-Smith & Blum (2000)
High Commitment Work Systems	The degree to which bundles of human resource practices create a high commitment work environment which, in turn, may affect employee work-family balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Human capital • High commitment 	Berg, Kalleberg, & Appelbaum (2003)
Social Exchange	The degree to which employees respond to an organization's work-life policies by engaging in voluntary behaviors to help the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms of reciprocity • Organizational citizenship behaviors 	Lambert (2000)
Employer of Choice	The degree to which an organization offers work-life policies and practices in order to be perceived as a high-quality employer by internal and external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share price • Employer of choice • <i>Working Mother</i> Top 100 	Cascio & Young (2005)
Diversity	The degree to which work-life policies/practices are implemented in order to attract and retain a diverse workforce. This perspective may also emphasize culture change toward joint accommodation as opposed to assimilation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting • Retention • Demographics • Multiculturalism 	Catalyst (2004)

Strategic Human Resource Management Grounding for the Business Case

Nearly all of the management perspectives we reviewed incorporate some strategic human resource management (SHRM) rhetoric related to the business case for work and family. Here, managers implicitly or explicitly draw on Barney (1991), who held that a quality-motivated, high talent workforce can be a source of competitive advantage. This view suggests that resources such as talent can become a competitive advantage when the resource is not easily imitated. Under this perspective, an organization's work-life policies enhance organizational performance due to their role in adding value to the firm. Research reflecting this perspective includes a variety of research questions: What is the relative economic performance of firms that provide such work-family balance? Do the firms that provide the best work-family balance for their employees do better in the marketplace? Are they more profitable? Are employees of those firms more productive? Potential benefits from work-life policies include increased competitiveness, profits, and stock price, reduced labor costs, and other work-related criteria that may benefit the firm over the long term. The latter might include: turnover and absenteeism; stress; unhealthy behaviors; substance abuse; and attitudes such as job satisfaction and extra-role behaviors (e.g., making suggestions, volunteering to help a coworker), commitment, and loyalty.

Using telework as an example, Hill, Ferris, and Martinson (2003) contended that work-life flexibility policies can help the organization meet strategic business needs by encouraging a reevaluation of what it means to be a productive employee. Due to the fact that employees who work in nontraditional ways (e.g., less than full-time, telework, job-share, etc.) may have reduced "face-time" in the office, performance cannot be judged solely along the lines of who is in the office and seems to be working hard. Instead, performance evaluation must shift to a more "results oriented" culture, in which performance is evaluated based on the results of the individual's work behaviors rather than his or her face-time in the office (Hill et al., 2003). This shifting emphasis on results within a company may be responsible for performance increases at the individual, group, and organizational levels.

SHRM approaches can help researchers and organizations identify the long-term strategic outcomes that may be associated with effectively managing the human resources within an organization. By emphasizing important overarching linkages between performance and new ways of working, work-life practitioners can use a SHRM approach to gain buy-in for work-life policies/practices from organizational leaders who may be reluctant to implement policies/practices for fear that they will have short-term negative business outcomes.

Organizational Implementation Orientation: Management Response to Change

Organizational implementation perspectives generally focus on variation in organizational ways of responding to workforce changes resulting in the adoption of policies and new management practices to support work-life integration. For example, after analyzing over 350 interviews with professionals who were users of company reduced workload arrangements, their bosses, their subordinates, and a family member such as a spouse, Lee, MacDermid, and Buck (2000) proposed three paradigms to describe organizational responses to the strategic change—namely the changing work-life needs of professionals and their requests to work reduced loads for at least some portion of their careers. Traditional management paradigms historically have assumed full-time managers and professionals are able and willing to work as many hours as are needed to get the job done. This resulted in many managers and professionals working long hours, sometimes 50–60-hour work weeks, which did not fit the needs

of the changing demographics of the workforce. Increasing numbers of employees have non-work interests that necessitate they set some limits to the hours of work. In the first paradigm, *accommodation*, organizations make limited adjustments on a case-by-case basis in response to individual requests to work less than full-time. Although work-life accommodations were often made in order to retain a top performer, reduced-load options were allowed reluctantly and usually not written into formal organizational policy (Lee et al., 2000). Under this approach, while employers may be willing to *accommodate* individual needs in order to retain better-performing employees, they do so with restrained enthusiasm and a belief that widespread implementation of work-life policies and practices would have negative implications for the firm. Under the second orientation, *elaboration*, employees and managers were beginning to jointly manage arrangements and policies are beginning to be developed to support reduced load. There was, however, some disagreement in management perspectives regarding the individual and organizational implications of individuals choosing to work less (Lee et al., 2000). Under the third paradigm, a *transformation* approach was followed where major culture change to support new ways of working occurred. Here, there was little controversy regarding the importance or use of reduced workload arrangements, and they were seen as benefiting both the individual and the organization. Although Lee et al. (2000) focused on reduced workload management practices, these implementation paradigms can be used to think about the cultural acceptance and implementation of any work-life policy or practice.

A benefit of adopting an implementation orientation is that these orientations exist at the intersection of many work-family issues. In each paradigm, culture, policies, practices, and belief systems combine to create an overall image of an organization's orientation toward work-life. However, one must be careful not to oversimplify the nature of an organization by simply putting it into a single paradigm. Organizations and business units may have conflicting characteristics of accommodating, elaborating, and transformational paradigms. This perspective can be used as a tool by practitioners to then identify which paradigms tend to prevail in their firm and to which paradigm they aspire. Strategies for being a transformational organization, if that were the goal, could be developed with key organizational stakeholders. Diagnosing prevailing orientations could help change agents develop strategies for mobilizing change.

Dual Agenda

When management first handles work and family issues, there is often a *trade-off* approach, in which managers believe that employees are trading off time and energy between work and family, with one or the other domain "winning." In this case, the focus is on minimizing the cost of accommodating workers' personal needs (Lautsch, Kossek, & Eaton, 2004). Often consistent with a transformation perspective toward implementation, the *dual agenda* perspective seeks to avoid this win-lose framing. Instead, managers seeking to better handle work-family issues focus on broad changes to the work process and norms that will respond to personal concerns as well as benefit the organization's performance (Bailyn & Fletcher, 1997). Here, the job and the workplace are redesigned to jointly support work and family. The dual agenda approach is aligned with Friedman, Christensen, and DeGroot's (1998) writings supporting either an *integrated approach* that assumes a win-win solution is possible for resolving work and family conflicts that can jointly improve work and family or a *leveraged approach*, where managers strive to diagnose workers' personal concerns and build on them in order to catalyze broad workplace changes that benefit workers and organizations. Other than these excellent qualitative studies, little referred quantitative work has examined the dual agenda approach.

One exception is a study by Lautsch et al. (2004). Using a matched sample of 90 supervisors and 90 professional employees, regression analysis showed that supervisors who adopted the same monitoring behaviors in terms of job formalization for teleworkers and nonteleworkers, who provided higher levels of social support, and who viewed personal issues as an opportunity to catalyze improvements in the work process for all workers—a leveraged approach—had employees with higher performance.

A dual agenda approach can be useful for helping researchers and practitioners reframe the work-family issue. By focusing on how use of work-family policies can increase their work performance and their personal effectiveness, researchers can identify the mutually beneficial outcomes associated with work-life policies/practices. Managers, if aware of mutually beneficial outcomes, may be more willing to support employee work-life needs, which may result in mutually beneficial outcomes for their firms. One potential pitfall associated with the dual agenda approach can be the assumption that work-life policies/practices will be mutually beneficial on a daily basis, under all circumstances. For example, there may be times when an employee who works a reduced load is unable to make an important meeting or when a family event must be missed for work requirements. Adopting an unrealistic expectation of constant mutual beneficiality may lead to dissatisfaction with work-life policies by all parties. By realistically discussing the pros and cons, managers and employees can make an informed decision about when it is a good decision to use a policy in a given situation.

Work-Life Bundles

The work-life bundles perspective suggests that work and family policies are more effective and have a greater relation to organizational performance if they are clustered with each other and implemented with other HR policies than if adopted piecemeal. This perspective focuses less on the effects of individual initiatives and more on the joint effects of multiple policies that are configured in a consistent way, such as a high performance or high commitment workplace. The emphasis is on examining the bottom-line benefits of having a group of complementary overlapping HR policies that foster a core organizational approach, philosophy, or mindset.

Using a national sample of 527 U.S. firms, Perry-Smith and Blum (2000) developed four profiles of work-family cluster adoption: low offerings of all policies, offering leaves and less traditional dependent care (elder care and money to support child care), offering leaves and traditional dependent care (onsite child care, information and flexible scheduling), and high offerings of all work-family policies. The outcome measures were (a) perceptual, including the ability to attract essential workers, quality of relations between management and employees, and product quality; and (b) objective, that is, the percentage increase in sales and profits (profit sales growth) in the last 12 months. They found that extensive work-family policies were linked to higher perceptual measures of firm-level performance. Their findings did not strongly vary by proportion of women in the company or firm age.

Perry-Smith and Blum suggested that the way in which work-family bundles add value to the firm is socially complex and not always obvious. They surmised that work-life bundles help better connect employees' families to the firm and employees to their families. This represents a fundamental paradigm shift of greater trust and relinquishing of management control and sends a signal to investors and the marketplace about willingness to invest in employees. It should be noted that the mechanism by which the policies actually affect performance was not measured, nor was policy use. Perry-Smith and Blum identified some potential moderators for future research: firm strategy and industry connectedness, availability of community-based work-family support, and top management support.

By examining the effects of combinations of work-life policies and practices rather than the effects of a single policy, researchers may gain a more complete picture of the psychological and

organizational outcomes associated with work-life policy availability and use. For managers, considering work-life issues as a whole may lead to a more consistent and clear vision of organizational acceptance of and culture toward employee work-life issues. However, a potential downside to the work-life bundles perspective may be that the implications of a given policy/practice are ignored. There is considerable value in understanding whether a particular policy is perceived unfairly, is not utilized appropriately, or is ineffective. Furthermore, some policies such as elder care or infant care may be used by only a relatively small portion of the workforce at any given time and hence may seem unrelated in the short run to other overarching policies such as selection or performance, yet may have long-term relationships to these and other policy clusters.

High Commitment Work Systems

The high commitment work systems approach (also known as high performance work systems, or HPWS) suggests that when employees are highly empowered and involved, they can provide a source of competitive advantage. Barling, Kelloway, and Iverson (2003) suggested that the assumptions of this management approach are that (a) employees are viewed as resources difficult to imitate, (b) there is significant investment in human capital (skills, information, motivation, latitude), and (c) human resource management practices are mutually reinforcing so that their sum is greater than their individual parts. Osterman (1995) noted that this management approach involves firms moving away from a traditional structure of highly formalized, narrowly defined jobs to a configuration of human resource practices that involve team-based decision making and a focus on quality and higher employee commitment than traditionally designed jobs. He surmised that employee work-life benefits may play an important role in eliciting desired employee behaviors supporting high commitment, especially those that are not under constant supervision or direct control. Osterman's empirical study (1995) found that organizations categorized as having high commitment work systems (measured by the goals espoused by the organization, the degree to which employees have discretion in their jobs, and the use of specific practices within the organization) were more likely to offer work-life benefits.

A recent example of a study on the perspective that holds there is a relationship between work and family policies and high performance work systems is provided by Berg, Kalleberg, and Appelbaum (2003). They argued that high commitment work environments (characterized by high-performance work systems, understanding supervisors, and jobs with intrinsic rewards) are positively related to employee perceptions that the company is helping them balance their work and nonwork lives. Berg and his colleagues suggested that the nature of the work environment such as culture and job design, not just the organization's work-life policies and programs, will influence how employees are able to balance work and nonwork aspects of their lives. Similar to Eaton (2003), they hypothesized that high commitment work environments give people a sense of control and self-efficacy that has a positive spillover into their ability to manage their nonwork life, enabling a better balance between the two roles.

An important benefit of the high commitment perspective is the recognition that employee work-family effectiveness is not simply the result of the work-family policies/practices available. The work environment as a whole, and its impact on the employee, can impact how employees feel about and react to the relationship between their work and nonwork lives. However, a focus on a high commitment work system, if enacted without regard to specific work-life issues, may leave some employees feeling that the organization does not care about their specific work-life needs. Practitioners with an eye to specific work-life issues in a firm and more broad work environment characteristics may be best able to help employees jointly manage work and family roles while at the same time maximizing their effectiveness as a company human resource.

Social Exchange

Mirroring some of the assumptions of the high commitment work systems perspective, the social exchange perspective implicitly underlies management beliefs that workers are willing to engage in more discretionary performance (i.e., behaviors not required by the job such as making suggestions or volunteering to help out a coworker) when the employer is supportive of work and family (Lambert, 2000). Work-family policies are seen as a social exchange mechanism to promote norms of reciprocity from employees. Employees are willing to give back more to the company in terms of organizational citizenship behaviors or higher loyalty, since employers have acted to create greater feelings of obligation by supporting employees' work-life integration needs. An example of a study in this stream is by Lambert (2000). In return for "extra" benefits from the organization (such as work-family supports), Lambert surmised that employees may feel obliged to perform "extra" behaviors for the organization.

Konrad and Mangel (2000) contended that those "extra" efforts on the part of the employee are likely to be in the form of discretionary work behaviors. Since the extra benefits are being offered by the organization as an entity (rather than by a specific supervisor, coworker, or department), Lambert (2000) suggested that reciprocation efforts will likely be those that benefit the firm as a whole. She found that employees who perceived the work-life benefits offered by the organization to be more useful were more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors (discretionary voluntary performance behaviors) such as submitting suggestions for organizational improvement, attending nonrequired meetings, and assisting others with their job duties. Such research typifies a prevailing management view that if you give employees "an inch of work-family support," they will give you back a mile of productivity.

A beneficial outcome associated with the adoption of a social exchange perspective is that it examines the effects of work-life policies/practices at the psychological level of the individual. While more research is needed to verify this assumption, this perspective suggests that the effects of norms of reciprocity are unlikely to be conscious. In other words, employees are unlikely to decide to put a suggestion into the suggestion box *because* the organization offered them a work-life policy/practice. Instead, psychological tendencies to want to reciprocate goodwill are the mechanism in use in the social exchange perspective. A related pitfall is the expectation that the implementation of work-life policies and practices will be associated with a visible and large increase in organizational citizenship behaviors in the entire workforce. A work-life practitioner who tries to "sell" work-life policies/programs to management in this way may be setting up unrealistic expectations. Nonetheless, practitioners who are able to think about and describe the intra-psychic effects of work-life policies/practices may be better able to *explain* why certain outcomes of policy/practice implementation may be expected.

Employer of Choice

Some organizations may offer work-life policies and practices because of the management perspective that such offerings are likely to increase the ability of the organization to attract and retain employees. This will lead to being perceived by internal (e.g., employees) and external (e.g., applicants) stakeholders as a desirable company for which to work. Konrad and Mangel (2000) offered a stress-reduction hypothesis to support this employer of choice argument. They suggested that if employees are experiencing considerable amounts of stress between their work and family lives, they may be likely to move to positions or organizations that are more supportive of balance between the roles.

Cascio and Young (2005) examined absolute and industry-adjusted productivity (defined as total sales divided by the total number of employees), profitability (operating income before depreciation and taxes divided by total assets), and returns on common stock of the *Working*

Mother 100 Best Firms from 1995–2002 for those firms that are publicly traded. They compared the performance of these firms relative to two equity benchmarks—the Standard & Poors 500 and the Russell 3000. Results showed that the productivity and profitability of the *Working Mother* 100 Best companies did not consistently exceed those of the S&P 500. However, stock performance consistently did exceed that of the two equity benchmarks. Cascio and Young surmised a possible cause of higher stock prices was that for the average investment analyst, 35 % of his or her investment decision is determined by nonfinancial information (Low & Siesfield, 1998). They noted that one of the top five nonfinancial variables considered in rating stock attractiveness is the “ability to attract and retain talented people.” Cascio (2000) argued that “best employers to work for” typically receive twice as many job applications per position as firms not deemed as best employers. An important caveat is that the Cascio and Young study is correlational in nature. Therefore, causal relationships between being a “best employer,” number of job applicants, and stock prices cannot be drawn. It is possible that other characteristics of these companies (e.g., strong leadership) may impact the relationship of the variables above. However, public recognition of work-life policies/practices may not only affect how attracted individuals are toward working in a particular organization but also the public opinion about the quality of the organization.

The adoption of an “employer of choice” perspective can be beneficial if the implementation of work-life policies/practices makes the organization more attractive to current and future employees while simultaneously improving shareholder opinion of the organization. However, the “employer of choice” perspective may be problematic if organizational actions are viewed by employees as the organization simply trying to “look good” (by making the *Working Mother Magazine’s Top 100* list, for example), especially if those actions are not associated with a genuine intent on the part of the organization to help employees balance work and nonwork. Such actions may be viewed as hypocritical. Practitioners who endorse work-life policies/programs as a means to gain external approval should emphasize the need to make sure that policies/programs are also internally supported. Furthermore, there has been considerable competitive gamesmanship about applying for the *Working Mother* and other similar awards. Organizations need to have a person dedicating a significant part of their time to complete the application. One wonders if the employer resources being allocated to the annual application might better serve employees by being focused on how to help the workforce on a day-to-day basis.

Workforce Diversity

This perspective focuses on the development and implementation of formal organizational practices that influence the extent to which a workplace becomes more diverse (Kossek & Lobel, 1996) and then links the greater diversity to organizational performance. The assumption is that employers should adopt employment practices that enable women to have upward mobility into the management and executive ranks so that the human resource policies/practices reflect the needs of the demographics of the organizations. According to Kossek, Markel, and McHugh (2002), one way that organizations may attempt to manage demographic change is through their hiring practices. Work-life policies and practices may be conceptualized as a strategy for recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce at all levels.

SHRM diversity research (Kossek, Lobel, & Brown, 2005) often measures the associations between the presence of diversity (often gender) and performance outcomes measured at either the individual (turnover) or organizational level (financial performance.) Although they did not formally measure work-life policies, Catalyst (2004) studied linkages between gender diversity of the top management executive team and business performance from 1996–2000 for 353 Fortune 500 companies from a cross-section of industries. Work-life progressiveness might be

implicitly captured if one assumes that if top management jobs were not accommodating of family or required long hours and travel, these jobs would be undesirable to talented women who would otherwise seek to opt out of the rat race. After controlling for size and the financial performance of industries, the study showed that firms with higher top management gender diversity had a 35% higher return on equity and a 34% higher total return to shareholders than other firms, an effect that held up for four out of five industries studied. A benefit of the diversity perspective is clearly its ability to meet the needs of a workforce demographic group. However, when work-life policies/practices are only available to certain subgroups within a population (e.g., parents), there is the potential for resentment on the part of other employees. Practitioners should keep in mind the work-life needs of all of the demographic groups represented, including those not seen as traditional work-family issues, such as the needs of individuals without children and older employees nearing retirement age. Focusing policies only on visible work-family diversity may give short shift to critical work-family needs related to seemingly “invisible” issues such as depression, stress from workloads, and substance abuse.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

While the findings from each perspective raise unique research questions and have distinct implications for how organizations approach work-family issues, some common threads run throughout the perspectives that have important implications for both research and practice.

Expanding the levels perspective. First, both researchers and managers have had the tendency to look at the work-family domain as an individual, rather than a contextual, issue. As Kossek and Lambert (2005) noted with regards to research, much of the traditional management literature has implicitly adopted a largely individual, psychological perspective emanating out of role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1966), which has considerable focus on the individual predictors and consequences of employees having perceived conflicts between work and family roles. This has resulted in considerably less focus on what organizations can do to alleviate work-family conflict, and greater focus on the responsibility of the individual in his or her own experiences of conflict. The relationship of organizational context (e.g., job design, culture, leadership) to individual balance between work and family has received relatively less attention. Which policies, practices, leadership styles, cultures, and other contextual elements are effective in ameliorating work-family conflict remains somewhat unclear. Future research should examine how predictors at all organizational levels (e.g., dyad-level predictors such as the supervisor/subordinate dyad and work-group level predictors such as team supportiveness) are associated with the use of, satisfaction with, and effectiveness of work-life policies and practices for organizations and individuals.

When managers and policymakers in organizations take an individual perspective on work-family balance, their attitudes toward work-life issues may be affected. Organizations that respond to work-family issues as a need to “manage individual employee problems” perpetuate the myth of work and family as separates worlds that Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) pointed out almost 30 years ago in her classic treatise: Traditional employing organizations are designed based on the assumption that most employees do have family or personal demands that compete for their primary identities and attention during working time. Policies, practices, and norms that emphasize individual responsibility for managing work and family may be overemphasized (e.g., self-help groups) and structural changes that may help employees find balance may not be deemed necessary (e.g., flextime).

In sum, managers and researchers need to be cognizant of the many influences upon which the business case for work-family issues can be examined. Some assumptions that distinguish

this chapter in the handbook are the importance placed on measuring levels of analysis beyond the individual and identifying management perspectives in use. These are crucial to designing interventions that matter. Some of the perspectives we reviewed such as the dual agenda demonstrate a recognition that individual difficulties in managing work and family can be due to organizational and group behavior. Greater cognizance of the fact that individual behavior in organizations is embedded in group and organizational contexts and that these contexts shape the work and family realities of individuals is needed in management research and practice.

Moving beyond policy adoption. Another historical trend of the management literature is a focus on the availability of formal workplace policies and minimal attention to effectiveness and utilization. Managers had a tendency to take policies at face value, often assuming that if a firm adopted a lot of work-family policies “on the books,” it must be family-friendly. The evaluations that were done were often largely informal testimonials or involved public relations successes like being listed on magazines’ Best Company lists (e.g., *Working Mother*). Kossek et al. (2005) noted that like other diversity interventions, there has been limited rigorous evaluation of policy effectiveness by employers (Comer & Soliman, 1996) as well as linkage to business and human resource strategy (for an exception, see Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000).

Nor have sufficient concerted efforts been made by managers to understand social barriers to use. For example, frequently even if policies were available, career-minded employees did not feel free to use them without fear of penalties (Eaton, 2003). Or, these policies were not uniformly well-publicized or supported by managers throughout the corporation, creating unevenness in how the policies were implemented in practice even in the same firm. “Management discretion” and “needs of the business or work group” are the caveats and language included in a majority of employee-initiated flexibility policies, for example. This creates the situation where an individual can experience the social dissonance of working for a company on the *Working Mother* list, yet not experience life in his or her own work unit as particularly family-friendly. In addition, the business and popular media may have overstated the availability of policies—a problem exacerbated by the fact that research published in management journals involves larger employers that are most likely to allow research access (Kossek, 2005).

Traditionally, given their role in the firm and their position in the hierarchy, managers also tend to take for granted and dictate the prevailing workplace cultural assumptions and norms about the hegemony of work and family. These norms are powerful as they structure the social reality and construction about how “good employees” jointly manage work and family demands. The management field generally has not questioned the roles of existing norms and social systems, management processes, and the managerial determination of workplace structures and jobs in creating and perpetuating conflict (for an exception, see Fletcher & Bailyn, 2005).

Researchers too must expand their focus to consider work-life issues beyond policy availability. While examining the relationship of the number and type of work-life policies available may be useful (e.g., the work-life bundle perspective), the subtext that exists within and beyond policy availability must also be examined. Researchers should examine whether policies are available to all workers or only to a small subset (e.g., professionals) and whether they are available under all circumstances or only in particular instances (e.g., maternity but not adoption leave). Furthermore, as discussed above, there may be cultural and social barriers to policy use, such as disapproval from leadership or being taken off the “fast track.” Also, researchers should identify what constitutes effective policy design and implementation. Policies that are ineffective or incompatible with worker needs may do little to alleviate the challenges of balancing work and family.

In sum, both managers and researchers should take into consideration not only the policies available for employees on paper, but also how those policies play out in the day-to-day lives of

employees. Only by understanding the nature, availability, effectiveness, and social and cultural implications of policies will the true status of work-life within organizations be revealed.

In closing, a main goal of this chapter was to expose readers to the wide variety of managerial perspectives on work-family issues that are reflected both in organizations and in the research literature. Our purpose was not to help readers decide what the “best” perspective is or which perspective researchers should be adopting. Instead, we propose that both individuals and organizations will benefit from thoughtfully considering the implications of each perspective.

For managers and work-life policymakers, acknowledging multiple management perspectives may encourage a more realistic weighing of the pros and cons of particular work-life focused actions. For example, consider a manager who is focused on the diversity perspective desires to retain high-level working mothers. That manager might be inclined to implement a policy that suits the needs of that particular demographic group, such as onsite child care. However, this manager also might benefit from considering the implications of the social exchange perspective before implementing such a policy. The manager may recognize that those employees who do not have children may feel left out or unimportant to the organization. The principle of norms of reciprocity suggests that if those employees feel like they are being devalued by the organization, they may be less likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. By taking on the multiple managerial perspectives discussed in this chapter, managers may be able to better understand the full ramifications of how organizations approach work-life issues and to be able to make more informed decisions and offer a cafeteria of work-life supports.

Research will also be enhanced through the consideration of multiple managerial perspectives. By trying to understand the relationships between culture, policies, practices, leadership, a multiple perspective angle is more likely to lead to an accurate understanding of the nature of organizational decision making and individual outcomes. For example, consider a researcher who adopts an “employer of choice” perspective and examines how the implementation of work-life policies enhances stakeholder opinion of (and willingness to invest in) the organization. This researcher might neglect to collect data on the degree to which policy use is seen as meeting a dual agenda for the organization. If policy use is considered a trade-off, employees who use work-life policies may be considered less effective contributors to the organization or not eligible for promotions. Consequently, employees may be less likely to use the policies, less able to balance work and family, and more likely to leave the organization. By considering multiple managerial perspectives, researchers may be able to predict and explain the pros and cons associated with different organizational work-life decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

We have shown in the chapter that there is varied rhetoric in the management field for the reasons employers respond to employees’ work and family needs and the employer payback from these policies. Drawing on strategic human resource management rhetoric, the predominant perspectives we identified in the literature to understand management practice surrounding work-life policies included the following: organizational implementation orientation, dual agenda, work-life bundles, high performance work systems, social exchange, employer of choice, and diversity.

It is important for researchers and practitioners to recognize these varying rhetorics, because the rationales given by organizations to sell work-life issues have implications for how they are viewed in practice as being effective and how they are understood and promulgated by employees, managers, and researchers. Practitioners and researchers can help individuals and organizations by examining work-life issues from a multi-faceted perspective beyond simple policy adoption, with attention to sometimes simultaneously conflicting managerial framings.

We believe more attention needs to be given in the work-family field to the rhetoric that organizations, managers, and researchers use to discuss the adoption and implementation of work-life policies. Such an approach would recognize that conflict between work and family is largely due to a structural workforce/workplace mismatch, where the formal and informal design of the workplace does not fit changing workforce characteristics, and that many long-term organizational and societal goals can be better served by examining the utility of prevailing management assumptions.

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