THE INCLUSION CHALLENGE WITH REDUCED-LOAD PROFESSIONALS: THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER

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Increased interest in reduced-load (part-time) work among professionals who want to have a life beyond work has led to new challenges for managers who must sustain productivity while also supporting employees. However, to date, little attention has been focused on exactly how managers facilitate effective implementation of these alternative work arrangements. This study presents findings from an interview study of 83 cases of reduced-load professionals in 43 organizations in the United States and Canada. Analysis of the interviews with both professionals and their managers surfaced recurrent themes that led to identification of five clusters of behaviors and five clusters of dispositions that capture the nature of managerial support in implementing reduced-load work. The ten categories of behaviors and dispositions expand on existing notions of supervisory support and provide new insight into the role of managers in fostering inclusiveness. Additional quantitative analyses found significant relationships between the success of the reduced-load arrangements and specific managerial behaviors and dispositions. © 2008 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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I had pretty much gotten to the point where I appreciated the need for individual employees to do things other than work, and I also appreciated the need for us to be responsive to a lot of these employee requests and that work was not the be-all and end-all, and that our corporate work relationship was changing. . . . And so . . . I was accustomed to thinking of, well, what can we do, now that that dynamic's changing to be responsive to these [changes] . . . again I'm not trying to be heroic; I just thought, it's good, we need it, we need to let them know that we care.
     —*Manager of Reduced-Load Professional*

Evolving workforce demographics such as increasing numbers of women, people of color, and multiple generations together in the workplace are intensifying organizations' focus on

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workplace diversity and inclusion in the twenty-first century. At the same time, professionals are caught between the pressure to work longer hours and their interest in work-life balance as the modal family structure has become dual-earner rather than single-earner. As a result, considerable scholarly attention has been given to looking at new ways of working (1) as a means of mitigating work and family demands (Barnett & Gareis, 2000; Corwin, Lawrence, & Frost, 2001; Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Saute, 1999; Hill, Martinson, Ferris, & Baker, 2004) and (2) as a way to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999; Miller & Katz, 2002; Mor Barak, 2000).

Inclusiveness exists in the workplace when individuals feel a sense of belonging, and inclusive behaviors such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees are part of the daily life in the organization (Miller & Katz, 2002). Part of workplace inclusiveness is helping employees be productive while pursuing various lifestyles and achieving a work-life balance through the use of flexible work programs (Gochman, 1989; Pless & Maak, 2004). One such form of work growing in importance for professionals is the reduced-load work arrangement—that is, a reduction in an employee's workload and work time with a proportionate adjustment in pay (cf. Lee, MacDermid, & Buck, 2000).

The opening quote illustrates a change in attitude among a growing number of managers faced with the diverse work-life desires of valued employees who want to work fewer hours. Several studies have identified managerial support as critical to the success of alternative work arrangements (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Lee, Mac-

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Expanding the Discourse from Diversity Management to Inclusion

Diversity management, the "variety of management issues and activities related to hiring and effective utilization of personnel from different cultural backgrounds" (Cox & Blake, 1991, p. 46), has grown in importance (Gilbert et al., 1999; Mor Barak, 2000; Pollitt, 2005). An effective diversity management program is said to positively affect retention, recruitment, creativity of ideas, harmony in the workplace, acceptance of others different from oneself, productivity, cost-effectiveness, market advantage/market share, and the achievement of corporate social responsibility (Kossek & Pichler, 2006, p. 261).

To effectively manage diversity, organizations need to enlist top management's support and genuine commitment. Both senior management and line management need champions to take a stand on organizational issues and role-model behaviors necessary for change (Cox & Blake, 1991; Gravely, 2003). Miller and Katz (2002) shift the discourse from diversity management toward leveraging diversity (capitalizing on individual differences) and building inclusion (welcoming a range of employee styles and not forcing conformity) as critical to an organization's long-term strategy for achieving and sustaining higher performance.

According to Pless and Maak (2004), inclusion must be founded on moral grounds, such that a culture of inclusion is found in an "organizational environment that allows people with multiple backgrounds, mindsets, and ways of thinking to work effectively

together and to perform to their highest potential in order to achieve organizational objectives based on sound principles" (p. 130). This requires a willingness to reassess existing value systems, mind-sets, and habits, and challenge assumptions in order to incorporate new ways of working. Pless and Maak (2004) say that an important part of a culture of inclusion is helping people balance their work and personal lives so that they can be productive while having various lifestyles and personal responsibilities.

Some researchers have investigated how supervisory awareness of and agreement with work-life policies relates to employees' awareness and use of alternative work arrangements (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Powell & Mainiero, 1999). However, researchers have given little attention to other ways managers are responding to the diverse work-life needs of their employees. For example, when managers are approached by employees seeking to work less to achieve better work-life balance, how do these managers respond? Do managers view their support of alternative work arrangements as addressing diversity and inclusion in their workforce?

Reduced-Load Professionals and the Inclusion Challenge

Employees wanting to work in different ways have not been considered a minority group, nor have they rallied under the banner of diversity management to promote their integration or inclusion in the organizational mainstream. However, human resource professionals have recognized that particular groups of people (e.g., women and single parents) are more likely than others to want different ways of working, and providing alternatives will be critical to attracting and retaining such employees.

"Part-time" or "reduced-load" professionals are those employees in salaried, career-track positions who have chosen to decrease their hours with a relative reduction in remuneration, in order to give more attention to personal, family, and/or community commitments. It is estimated that approximately 10% of all professionals working in the United States work part-time (Shulkin & Tilly, 2005).

The increasing number of employees in dual-earner families feeling squeezed by longer work hours and their desire for quality family time has also increased the demand for reduced-load work. Women professionals typically choose part-time work because they are the primary caretakers in the family and need or want to work less for awhile in order to combine career and family successfully without having to "opt out" and leave the workforce. However, there is recent evidence of increased interest in and experimentation with reduced-load work by men professionals as well (Lee et al., 2005; Meiksins & Whalley, 2002) for other reasons, such as transitioning to retirement or a new career and managing work-family pressures related to having young children.

Corporations may support reduced-load work arrangements for professionals, citing the business case and the equal opportunities case for flexibility (Sheridan & Conway, 2001). The business case asserts that work can be reorganized to increase efficiencies and decrease costs (e.g., through increased productivity and decreased turnover). The equal opportunities case says that flexibility initiatives will help employees balance work and family responsibilities, leading to increased employee commitment and morale and lower absenteeism and turnover.

Researchers are also examining the success of reduced-load work arrangements. Corwin et al. (2001) identified five effective strategies used by part-time professionals, including communicating about the arrangement with all stakeholders (e.g., reduced-load employee, coworkers, management) and boundary setting for the reduced-load employee. Much of the success of reduced-

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load work arrangements has been thought to rest with the professionals themselves. However, research by Lee et al. (2002) highlighted that a key factor in the success of reduced-load work arrangements is having a supportive manager.

Nevertheless, while research has established that managerial support is essential to facilitating reduced-load work arrangements, no in-depth study has examined management and employee perspectives on what that support actually entails. It is important to learn what exactly these managers do and say that constitutes being supportive and whether specific behaviors or attitudes relate more strongly than others to the success of these alternative work arrangements.

The Role of Managers in Supporting Employee Work-Life Balance

A family-supportive supervisor has been defined as one who "is sympathetic to the employee's desires to seek balance between work and family and who engages in efforts to help the employee accommodate his or her work and family responsibilities" (Allen, 2001, p. 417). Shinn, Wong, Simko, and Ortiz-Torres (1989) examined "supervisor support" in their study of social support and employee well-being. They developed a nine-item scale of supervisor support that included measures such as "listened to my problems," "was understanding or sympathetic," "switched schedules," and "juggled tasks or duties to accommodate my family responsibilities." Thomas and Ganster (1995) later used this scale to determine the effect of supervisor support on work conflict and strain. They found that reporting to a supportive supervisor was asso-

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ciated with less work-family conflict and better job- and health-related outcomes. However, this research stream has focused more on demonstrating significant relationships between supervisor support and employee outcomes rather than on clarifying the nature of supervisor support itself.

Some research has begun to explore the manager's or supervisor's influence on employees' use of work-family policies. Casper, Fox, Sitzmann, and Landy (2004) found the degree to which managers were aware of and believed in such programs related to how often they made referrals. However, this study only examined managerial behavior in relation to making referrals and not to using or implementing the programs. In a review of the literature, Hopkins (2005) grouped different kinds of supervisory support of employees seeking work-family balance into "gatekeeping" and "coaching/mentoring" efforts.

Other research indicates that supervisors play an important role in determining whether employees actually use work-family programs. Powell and Mainiero (1999) found that female managers empathized with their employees and were more likely to grant requests for alternative work arrangements than were male managers. Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) found that employees with supportive, powerful supervisors were more likely to use work-family policies, because their supervisors could buffer the negative career consequences of using the programs. Along this vein, McDonald, Brown, and Bradley (2005) have theorized that lack of managerial support for work-life balance is one dimension of "organizational work-life culture," which they believe relates to the gap between *presence* versus *usage* of work-life policies.

To date, the research shows evidence that supervisor support of employees seeking work-family balance means: (1) acknowledging that employees' work and family demands can conflict, (2) offering a sympathetic ear, (3) making employees aware of relevant organizational policies or programs, and (4) adjusting tasks or scheduling. How-

ever, these dimensions of supervisor support do not reflect how managers facilitate successful implementation of reduced-load work arrangements. Moreover, there is limited research on multiple stakeholders' views on managerial support and on its effectiveness (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Hopkins, 2005). We need to examine how employees and their managers perceive and articulate the nature of managerial support that facilitates alternative work arrangements and inclusion.

This article reports the results of a unique set of interviews with reduced-load professionals and their immediate supervisors to show how both groups see supervisor support and to determine if there are relationships between specific behaviors or attitudes and the success of alternative work arrangements. Organizations and managers today are in need of detailed and practical guidance on this issue, given the inclusion challenges with the new workforce.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

Data for this article come from a qualitative, exploratory study of 83 cases of reduced-load work in 43 firms in the United States and Canada carried out from 1996 to 1998.[1] This research strategy was pursued given that reduced-load work among professionals was a fairly new phenomenon, and there was little published theoretical or empirical work on it. All cases involved professionals voluntarily working less than full-time for family and/or lifestyle reasons with commensurate reductions in compensation. A case-study approach was used (Yin, 1994) to gather multiple perspectives on each work arrangement by: (1) interviewing the two main stakeholders per case—the professional working on a reduced-load basis and his or her manager; (2) interviewing the spouse or partner of the reduced-load professional; (3) interviewing a human resource manager knowledgeable about work-life policies and practices in the organization; (4) interview-

ing a coworker of the reduced-load professional; and (5) collecting organizational-level data through a questionnaire. For the purposes of this study, we focus primarily on interviews with the professionals and their managers, while we based assessments of the success of the reduced-load arrangements on the full set of interviews per case.

Since the study was exploratory and undertaken for theory generation rather than hypothesis testing, the sample included individuals in a wide range of jobs, firms, and family situations, as well as those with a variety of experiences negotiating and maintaining part-time work arrangements. In soliciting potential participants from human resource contacts, we specified that we were *not* looking for model cases, but rather aimed to include cases along a continuum of success to learn more about facilitating and hindering factors in these arrangements.

The resulting sample included 87 professionals (4 of the 83 cases of reduced-load work involved two people sharing a single job) and 81 managers of these professionals. The professionals were highly educated—96% held university degrees. The majority were married or partnered (92%) and were also parents (94%). Of those married or partnered, 95% of their spouses/partners were full-time employees. The mean workload was 72% of full-time; most workload reductions equaled a three- or four-day workweek (60% or 80%). The professionals were working an average of 32 hours a week at the time of the study, an average of 17 hours less than they had been working when full-time. By design, 10% of the participants were men to approximate the gender split in the percentage of professionals working reduced load by choice in the population at large. The majority of managers interviewed were

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men who had been in their jobs four years on average. Table I provides additional demographic information on the professionals and their managers.

Data Collection

The same researcher conducted semistructured interviews with the professionals and their managers in separate, confidential sessions of three-quarters to one-and-a-half hours that explored the following topics: (1) the reasons for the reduced-load work arrangement; (2) how the job was created or restructured to accommodate the reduced-load schedule; (3) perceptions of the challenges involved in restructuring the job; (4) costs and benefits of the reduced-load work from multiple perspectives; and (5) factors that made the reduced-load work arrangements successful or unsuccessful. All 168 in-

terviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Analysis

Using a modified, grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we carried out a qualitative analysis of interview material related to the manager's role in supporting reduced-load work arrangements. This involved the following steps: (1) systematically extracting material from the professional and managerial interviews related to the manager's role in supporting reduced-load work; (2) using constant comparison of quotes from professionals and managers (within case and across case) to identify convergent and divergent themes; (3) using an iterative process of identifying and collapsing categories of themes as we reached saturation in terms of discovering new themes;

TABLE I	Demographic Information—Professionals and Managers

Professionals

	Mean	Range
Age	38.8	26–53
Salary (Prorated to FTE)	$79,441	$19,950–$140,000
Spouse/Partner Salary	$92,785	0–$320,000
No. Yrs. on Reduced-Load	4.2	.25–15.00
Percent Load Reduction	72%	40–90%
Hours/Week Current	31.9	20–55
Hours/Week Before	50	35–80
N = 87		
% Female = 90%		

Managers

	Mean
Age	45.2
Hours Worked/Week	55.3
% Married	81%
% with Children	92%
% with Spouse Working FT	8%
N = 81	
% Male = 75%	

(4) using the preliminary set of themes that emerged from the first 40 cases (80 interviews) to code extracted material from the remaining 43 cases; and (5) examining the final set of themes in the context of relevant extant literature to identify patterns and make theoretical interpretations. The modifications to a classic grounded theory approach included: (1) going into the analysis with a specific agenda instead of proceeding in an open-ended fashion and (2) using themes extracted from roughly half the sample to code the second half of the sample.

To assure validity and reliability in the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the first two authors began by using a subset of 20 cases (drawing on both the professional and manager interview transcripts) to extract quotes and identify themes related to the manager's role in supporting reduced-load work arrangements. Each author took half of the 20 cases and independently generated a list of themes, initially keeping the professionals' and the managers' themes separate. Then the two authors compared and contrasted the resulting themes to determine notable differences in the professionals' and managers' perceptions. All of the themes initially identified were found in interviews with both the professionals and their managers. Furthermore, when the first two authors clarified and collapsed themes, they ensured that the final list did not include any themes that came from professionals or managers only. In fact, the two authors were struck by the remarkable similarity in how the professionals and their managers described support, and they agreed there were no significant differences in the professionals' and managers' perceptions related to support.

After concentrating intensively on the first 20 cases, the first two authors reached preliminary agreement on 12 to 15 themes with which to code additional cases. They each then reviewed the interview transcripts of an additional 20 cases and experimented with a trial coding scheme using these themes. This step was carried out to: (1) refine and finalize the themes, (2) make sure that the overall set of themes captured the

interviewees' observations and perceptions, and (3) assess whether the themes were distinct enough to enable reliable coding of the remaining cases in the sample. After this final fine-tuning and verification of the themes, the authors settled on a set of ten distinct themes that illustrated different ways in which managers supported reduced-load arrangements.

The last step of the analysis involved each other author of the article taking 10 to 15 cases and pulling out themes in the professional and managerial interview transcripts related to the manager's role in supporting reduced-load work arrangements. The first author then coded these themes to verify the validity of the ten clusters of behaviors and dispositions.

In addition to the qualitative analyses described above, we constructed additional measures to help us interpret our findings. The first was an overall measure of the extent of manager support of the reduced-load arrangement. The two coinvestigators on the research team independently assessed managerial support for each case on a scale of 1 to 3 (low, moderate, high) after reviewing all managers' interview transcripts. They achieved an agreement rate of 94% on the first round and discussed cases where there was disagreement until they reached consensus.

The second was a measure of the overall success of each reduced-load arrangement, which we created after reviewing all interviews and reflecting on the overall picture conveyed by the multiple stakeholders (e.g., professional, manager, coworker, human resource representative, and spouse/partner). Interviewers assigned an overall reduced-

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load work-arrangement success rating on a scale of 1 to 9; 1 indicated that consistently negative outcomes were reported by stakeholders and 9 indicated consistently positive outcomes (M = 6.89, SD = 1.48). Both the original interviewer and a second researcher independently rated each case, taking into account the perspectives of all stakeholders when considering: (1) the extent to which a professional or manager was satisfied with his or her work arrangement, both from a day-to-day and from a long-term career perspective; (2) the extent to which the professional's senior manager and coworkers reported positive outcomes; and (3) the extent to which the spouse or partner and the professional reported positive effects on children, family life, and/or the couple's relationship. The agreement rate on the success ratings between the original interviewer and a second researcher was 85%. Furthermore, we examined the relationship between managerial support and global success of the reduced-load work arrangement and found a significant correlation (as expected) of .45 ($p < .001$).

Results

The main qualitative findings are encapsulated as ten recurrent themes in respondents' accounts of how managers support reduced-load work arrangements. On closer examination of these themes, we determined they could be clustered into two broad categories, as shown in Table II. The first category, *Managerial Behaviors,* represents specific things, such as concrete behaviors or actions that managers actually *did* to support the arrangements. The second category, *Managerial Dispositions,* includes managers' attitudes, beliefs, and values that affect how they approached and dealt with their employees wanting to work on a reduced-load basis.

Managerial Behaviors

The recurrent themes of managerial behaviors or actions found were: (1) *crafts, creates, or finds reduced-load work arrangements;* (2) *manages at a distance, trusts employee;* (3) *defends, protects, advocates for employee;* (4) *adapts workplace norms and operations;* and (5) *develops employee.* Three or more of these behaviors were found in roughly two-thirds (66%) of the cases in the study.

Crafts, Creates, or Finds Reduced-Load Work Arrangements

The most frequently observed managerial behavior (72% of the cases) that facilitated suc-

TABLE II	Frequency of Emergent Themes in Managers' Approaches to Supporting Reduced-Load Work Arrangements

Managerial Behaviors	Managerial Dispositions
1. Crafts, creates, or finds reduced-load work arrangement (72%)	1. Believes in payoff for company (67%)
2. Manages at a distance, trusts employee (65%)	2. Openness to experimentation (66%)
3. Defends, protects, advocates for employee (64%)	3. Identifies, empathizes with employee (53%)
4. Adapts workplace norms and operations (58%)	4. Believes in viability of reduced-load work arrangements (under certain conditions) (49%)
5. Develops employee (37%)	5. Values work-life balance, diversity, and inclusiveness (46%)

Note: Percentages represent the frequency of cases (Total N = 83) where particular managerial behaviors and dispositions appeared.

cessful reduced-load work arrangements involved crafting, creating, or finding a suitable reduced-load work position for the employee. Managers were often described as being entrepreneurial in creating or locating appropriate opportunities. Specific behaviors included planning the reduced-load work arrangement with the employee so it would fit both the employee's and the organization's needs, as well as discussing the workload.

In a few cases, managers actually took the initiative to offer an employee reduced-load work before he or she approached the manager (e.g., when the employee came back from maternity leave). Managers also sometimes created a new position for the employee and crafted it to involve reduced load, or recruited the employee to join the company by creating a reduced-load work position. One such manager said:

> The previous person was full-time and . . . when we posted for a job . . . my intention was to back P. (another employee) with a full-time person. Quite frankly, J. was the best candidate for the job, and one of her requirements was that she could continue to work in what we would term a regular, part-time capacity, as opposed to temporary. . . . So once I had decided that J. was the best candidate for the job, then it was a matter of fitting the job requirements into the time that she could work.

Typically, there was also ongoing fine-tuning and adjustment of workload that took place with the ebb and flow of changing demands, as employee and manager gained more understanding of the challenges involved in maintaining a reduced-load arrangement.

Manages at a Distance, Trusts Employee

The second most frequently found recurrent managerial behavior (65% of cases) related to the managers' ease with managing at a distance, with implicit or explicit mention of trusting the employee to get the job done.

Some managers viewed their employees as "self-managing" and displaying "professionalism," which led to a hands-off approach to supervision. Other managers trusted employees to work according to their own schedules, often independent from the workgroup and the manager or off-site. The focus was on what their reduced-load employees were able to produce rather than on the number of hours they were working.

Defends, Protects, Advocates for Employee

In almost two-thirds of the cases (64%), respondents made observations about managers defending, protecting, or advocating for the employee. Here, we found that the managers operated protectively, running interference for or shielding the employee from demands of others in the organization, the system, or the employee himself or herself. In other instances, the manager proactively lobbied for the viability of reduced-load work to skeptical peers or superiors. Our quantitative analysis showed that this managerial behavior was related at a marginal level of significance to the global success of the reduced-load work arrangement ($r = .15$, $p < .10$).

Often managers would protect the boundaries of the employee's reduced work schedule by paying attention to appropriate workload. At a peak demand time, others in the workgroup might pressure the employee to work more hours, but the manager stepped in to protect the employee by taking on the additional work or by tailoring the workload within the boundaries of the employee's work hours. We also heard about managers who were careful not to abuse their authority by asking him or her to work more hours than discussed. Some managers specifically asked their employees to let them know if the workload got to be too heavy.

The most frequently observed managerial behavior (72% of the cases) that facilitated successful reduced-load work arrangements involved crafting, creating, or finding a suitable reduced-load work position for the employee.

In addition, respondents spoke of managers sometimes needing to protect employees from themselves by providing support for the employees to maintain the boundaries of their arrangements. A manager would do this by reminding them not to work more than the hours set (in some cases, employees would be tempted to fall back into putting in full-time hours but be paid only for a reduced load). For example, one manager said:

> I have some concerns . . . on his behalf, not on the firm's: He's spending a lot of time out of town, which is not meeting his objectives, which is spending more time with his family. Even though he gets the extra day, he's been away three or four nights a week, and of course that doesn't help to achieve the personal family objectives.

A manager might also act as an advocate for the reduced-load employee and champion the person's work to others in higher management. Specifically, in the case where a reduced-load employee was up for promotion or moving into management, the manager used his or her influence to sponsor or promote the employee. Managers also assisted the employees in promoting a good image as productive members of the organization despite their not being on-site at all times.

Lastly, we heard about managers who defended reduced-load employees to colleagues who were jealous of their customized work arrangement or frustrated with the different norms under which reduced-load employees worked (e.g., coworkers unable to reach reduced-load employees in the office because they were working off-site or had a day off). One manager stated:

> . . . a number of people have come to me . . . and they say, "This part-time stuff isn't working. I can't get hold of A. This is no good at all. You need a full-

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time person in this job." . . . I will normally just ask several simple questions about what the problem is. . . . And then they'll discuss it and generally after about five minutes, they realize that they don't need A. at all and that it is something that they can perfectly easily solve themselves. And they are just really flying off the handle because they are getting stressed out.

Adapts Workplace Norms and Operations

Since this theme encompassed many activities, it appeared frequently—in 58% of the cases. It refers to a manager showing that he or she attends to the operational aspects of making the reduced-load work arrangement viable while still maintaining work-unit stability and integrity. Our quantitative analysis showed that this managerial behavior was positively related to the global success of the work arrangement ($r = .24$, $p < .05$).

Three main logistical issues appeared frequently in the data: (1) issues surrounding pay and compensation, (2) issues of accessibility and coverage, and (3) issues of scheduling. In terms of pay and compensation, managers would sometimes act as a liaison with the human resources department to make sure that employees were being paid for the appropriate percentage of working hours or according to the correct salary grade. Often, this was to assure that the employees were not being underpaid. Managers would also work with employees to see that they were compensated for overtime through additional pay or days off.

Managers created viable coverage plans for reduced-load professionals on their days off yet sometimes asked employees to be accessible to the workgroup or clients in case of an emergency by phone, by e-mail, or by being willing to come in for an important meeting.

Lastly, we heard about managers fine-tuning work scheduling by, for example, scheduling team meetings to accommodate the employee's days in the office or not requiring the employee to attend meetings on a scheduled day out of the office. We also found managers adjusting to employee pref-

erences around predictable work schedules (e.g., Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays off, or working from home instead of the office when it made sense to both parties), even though such an arrangement was inconsistent with the unpredictable nature of the demands in the work unit.

Develops Employee

The theme of professional development while on reduced load emerged less often in the data (37% of cases) yet was nonetheless considered important. In some cases, we heard about managers actively pursuing career development opportunities for employees. Working reduced load was not perceived as career-stopping; managers made clear they would not deny employees additional career training or consideration for advancement or special assignments just because they worked on a reduced-load basis. For example:

> She's actually called a director, which is a term we don't even have. I created it for her with the idea that she will be a principal, eligible to be promoted to a principal in the spring. . . . I see nothing in terms of her performance that would block her from being promoted. I think things are progressing.

In other cases, the managers were proactive in developing employees beyond the reduced-load work position with a change in level, responsibilities, or hours (e.g., going to full-time status). Managers still recognized the employees' viability for career development but suggested there were limitations.

Managerial Dispositions

Our research also uncovered five recurrent themes that included attitudes, beliefs, and values or dispositions supportive of reduced-load work arrangements: (1) *believes in payoff for company;* (2) *openness to experimentation;* (3) *identifies, empathizes with employee;* (4) *believes in viability of reduced-load work arrangements (under certain conditions);* and (5) *values work-life balance, diversity, and inclusiveness.*

In more than half (57%) of the cases, managers exhibited three or more of these managerial dispositions.

Believes in Payoff for Company

In 67% of the cases, respondents described managers as believing in the pay-off of reduced-load work. The perception was that if the company was flexible and responsive to employee needs, employees would reciprocate with a high level of commitment and motivation. In general, this meant the company could avoid losing a valued employee and incurring heavy recruitment and retraining costs. Our quantitative analysis showed that this managerial disposition was marginally related to the global success of the work arrangement ($r = .18$, $p < .10$).

Another aspect of the belief in organizational benefits was the idea that reduced-load arrangements should be structured to meet both the manager's and the employee's needs. For example, one manager considered it possible to strike a balance between the schedule an employee wished to work and the project deadlines to be met. Furthermore, some managers felt that since their employees had been strong contributors to the organization, the employees' requests for a reduced-load arrangement should be considered and ultimately accommodated. For example:

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> The win/win was that we probably didn't have a full-time need and we were prepared to hire full-time, given that we would make an investment of growing someone. This [reduced-load arrangement] seemed to be a better alternative for us.

Openness to Experimentation

The other most frequently occurring managerial disposition, appearing in 66% of the

cases, presents managers as open-minded to alternative ways of working and needing to adapt to a changing workforce. Managers displayed a willingness to find another way for their employees to contribute outside the traditional constraints of full-time, on-site hours.

In some cases, managers believed that their organizations worried too much about the potential risks or logistical aspects associated with alternative work arrangements. They saw it as normal to listen to their employees' needs for flexibility and proposals for other equally effective ways of getting their work done. One professional even referred to her manager as a "forward thinker" because he was often open to different ways of accomplishing the job. In other cases, managers expressed concerns about how the arrangements would work out (i.e., Would their employees be able to navigate reduced-load hours successfully? Would the managers be comfortable managing this way?) but were nonetheless open to trying.

Identifies, Empathizes With Employee

More than half (53%) of the managers in the study identified with or were able to empathize with their reduced-load employees, thereby facilitating the arrangement. For example, some managers had personal experience working an alternative work arrangement themselves or had observed a spouse, child, or close friend struggle with work-life priorities:

> I also come from the background that I, myself, have been working an alternative work arrangement for the past six years, so, I have an interest in wanting to promote this as well within the company.

One manager who supervised a job share proposed that the company benefited greatly from having two different approaches to the same job by having two part-time employees sharing the work because this built creativity and diversity of ideas.

In some cases, managers expressed empathy because they had supervised employees in a customized work arrangement and thus were familiar with the employee and management motivations involved in creating this kind of arrangement. In fact, past experience seemed to make managers more aware of and empathetic to the requirements of reduced-load work arrangements in general.

Believes in Viability of Reduced-Load Work Arrangements

Roughly half of the professionals (49%) had managers who believed in the viability of reduced-load work arrangements under specific conditions. These managers had a contingency view that reduced-load work was sustainable but only with certain jobs or under certain circumstances—for example, when the employee has no direct external client contact, does not manage others, or is not subject to the pressure of getting product out the door.

Here, reduced-load work arrangements were looked at as easy to incorporate into the working style of the division because of the nature of the work and the working style of the manager and his or her workgroup. Also, managers suggested that if you can hire consultants, you can have different work arrangements with your employees. One manager who supervised a job share proposed that the company benefited greatly from having two different approaches to the same job by having two part-time employees sharing the work because this built creativity and diversity of ideas.

Values Work-Life Balance, Diversity, and Inclusiveness

The final disposition, found to be evident in almost half (46%) of the cases, was the manager valuing work-life balance and displaying a sensitivity to issues of diversity and inclusion. Managers who seemed to hold these values talked about respecting different work-life priorities of employees, and they were concerned about employee well-being and work-life balance. For example:

We've had a major emphasis on diversity and put all of our senior people through the diversity training. We have realized as a firm that we have to accommodate different lifestyles, a balance of work, and personal considerations. . . . There's been a real cultural shift in our organization.

The managers also recognized the importance of creating a climate where reduced-load employees felt their work-life needs were considered, which allowed them to contribute more productively to the organization. They stated that they believed alternate ways of working not only are good for the individual, but for the organization as well. Managers also recognized that their employees' needs vis-à-vis their careers were not the same as their own or the organization's.

Last, several managers recognized gender issues such as men's increasing desire to use alternate work arrangements and men's expanded role in the home, showing their awareness and valuing of diversity and creating a culture of inclusiveness.

Overall, the data show that in 75% of the cases, there was evidence of a combination of five or more managerial behaviors and dispositions; managerial behaviors were noted more frequently than dispositions. Table II shows that the most recurrent managerial behavior was *crafts, creates, or finds the reduced-load work arrangement,* whereas the most recurrent managerial dispositions were *believes in payoff for the company* and *openness to experimentation.*

We also performed supplemental quantitative analyses to examine the relationship between gender and the success of the reduced-load arrangements. The gender of the professional, the gender of his or her manager, and whether the professional and manager were of the same gender were unrelated to the global success of the work arrangement. However, we found that the gender of the professional was related to managerial support such that, on average, men received less support than women for their reduced-load work arrangements (mean support for men = 2.22 on a three-point scale; mean support for women = 2.72 on a three-point scale; overall $r = .26$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The most important contribution of this study, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, is the identification and elaboration of managerial behaviors and dispositions that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interview material. The specificity and nuances in descriptions of how managers responded to requests for reduced-load work provide a basis for generating a more theoretical approach to understanding what managerial support means. The emergent themes constituting managerial support also confirm the importance of managers fostering inclusiveness in facilitating alternative work arrangements.

Our categories of behaviors and dispositions do not overlap much with other researchers' efforts to categorize different roles managers play in supporting employees, but they help expand and elaborate on existing frameworks in the literature. For example, Hopkins (2005) suggested two different kinds of supervisory support: gatekeeping and coaching/mentoring. Our professionals and managers did not mention gatekeeping (providing information about or access to formal work-family policies and programs), coaching, or mentoring. However, our behavioral theme of *crafts, creates, or finds reduced-load work arrangement* could definitely be related to gatekeeping, although this behavior involves a higher level of manager commitment and engagement than gatekeeping, according to Hopkins. *Defends, protects, advocates for employee* easily could be interpreted as an aspect of mentoring and, of course, *develops employee* clearly falls under this category. But these supportive behaviors

The most important contribution of this study, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, is the identification and elaboration of managerial behaviors and dispositions that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interview material.

described by professionals and their managers were not mentioned in the context of mentor relationships and clearly were viewed as valuable stand-alone actions. However, Hopkins's proposition that social identity theory should be used to increase our understanding of supervisory support resonates with our emergent dispositional theme of *identifies, empathizes with employee.*

Our findings lend further support to Shinn et al.'s (1989) description of supervisor support as "switching schedules" or "juggled tasks" to accommodate an employee's desire for work-family balance. The theme *adapts workplace norms and operations* is consistent with both these measures, although in our study managers made more substantive and permanent changes rather than temporary ones. Our theme of *defends, protects, advocates for employee* suggests the possible need for additional items in the scale overall.

Other themes that make new contributions in particular to our understanding of supervisor support are *manages at a distance, trusts employee* and *values work-life balance, diversity, and inclusiveness.* As more employees embrace alternate ways of working in the future, these themes highlight creating a culture that values results over face time and includes different ways of working and pursuing careers. These themes could also be quite relevant for managers of employees working off-site, such as teleworkers, since these arrangements are often viewed as risky for the organization unless there is trust between manager and employee (Baruch, 2000).

The findings of this study also support work on newer paradigms of diversity management (Gilbert et al., 1999; Mor Barak, 2000) and the importance of creating a cul-

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ture of inclusion (Pless & Maak, 2004; Whiteley, 2004). For example, Whiteley discusses ways in which creating behavioral change in managers and leaders can increase inclusiveness in organizations. He asserts that it is important for managers to model respect and inclusiveness for diversity programs to succeed and to challenge organizational norms to lend credibility to these programs.

Two of the emergent themes in our qualitative analysis—*defends, protects, advocates for employee and crafts, creates, or finds reduced-load work arrangement*—illustrate challenging organizational norms. Four other themes—*identifies, empathizes with employee; values work-life balance, diversity, and inclusiveness; openness to experimentation,* and *adapts workplace norms and operations*—provide concrete examples of what Pless and Maak (2004) call managerial "competencies of inclusion." They suggest that these competencies involve facilitating change by showing respect and empathy, appreciating different voices, encouraging open and frank communication, and cultivating participative decision making and problem solving.

Another contribution of our study is finding a positive association between manager supportiveness and the success of the reduced-load work arrangements. Previous research (e.g., Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; McDonald et al., 2005) led us to expect this relationship, but this specific sample now confirms it. We find it interesting that the only specific supportive managerial behavior that also is significantly positively related to global success is *adapts workplace norms and operations.* This result confirms the overlapping nature of supportiveness and inclusiveness as it illustrates the power of the manager to effectively integrate the part-time professional into the work unit despite the alternative work arrangement. This behavioral theme also validates Perlow's (1998) and Lawrence and Corwin's (2003) propositions that the degree of managerial control and pressure toward conformity to rigid rules and boundaries has an important impact on employees.

Another interesting finding related to managerial support was that, on average, the

men received less support for their reduced-load work arrangements than the women. Although the sample of men was small, this nevertheless suggests that managers might be more amenable to creating these arrangements for female employees. We know that women already tend to use reduced-load work more than men do in the workplace (Francesconi & Gosling, 2005; Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000; McDonald et al., 2005), since men have been more resistant to bucking long work hours (Sheridan, 2004). Future research should explore gender effects further, since some recent research shows that the number of male professionals pursuing reduced-load work arrangements is on the rise (Lee et al., 2005).

Practical Implications and Recommendations for Managers of Reduced-Load Arrangements

As managers work closely with their employees and respond to their work-life needs, they are poised to foster an environment in which their employees can work productively and effectively for the organization. Responding to their employees' needs for work-life accommodation is a crucial way in which managers can create this environment. Managers wanting guidance about how to support employees seeking to work on a reduced-load basis can learn from the managerial behaviors and dispositions identified and described in this article. In this section, we highlight how the managerial behaviors that emerged in our study can foster a "culture of inclusion" (Pless & Maak, 2004).

- *Crafts, creates, or finds reduced-load work arrangement*—Managers should open a dialogue with an employee around working a reduced load before he or she mentions struggling with work-life balance or wanting to leave the workforce. Managers could reexamine the overall mix and allocation of tasks and the talent in the work unit to look for opportunities for workload reduction. They could also work closely with human resource professionals to create a position, depending on the organizational structure and formalities of flexible work policies on hand.

- *Defends, protects, advocates for employee*—Managers may need to act as a strong advocate or protector for their reduced-load employees. A manager who does this not only garners trust and commitment from the reduced-load employee, but also role-models commitment to respecting every employee's work-life needs and ability to effectively contribute to the workplace.

- *Manages at a distance, trusts employee*—It can be expected that over time, as the employee matures into the arrangement, the manager can trust the employee's commitment and ability to work effectively in this new way and thus avoid micromanaging. The manager also will gain competency in managing these arrangements, realizing that his or her employees can work with minimal on-site supervision.

- *Adapts workplace norms and operations*—Here, managers can demonstrate flexibility and inclusiveness in taking into consideration the work patterns of all employees in the workgroup, not just the more visible, on-site individuals. Managers should examine aspects of the workplace such as meeting times and communication channels to make sure that all employees have an opportunity to participate in work efforts and feel included.

- *Develops employee*—Managers should recognize that when employees scale back hours, it does not necessarily mean they have scaled back their professional capabilities or commitment to career advancement; some employees may simply value having an improved balance between work and home or community in-

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volvement. Managers can communicate possibilities for advancement and create meaningful career tracks for reduced-load professionals to show they are valued contributors.

Practical Implications and Recommendations for Human Resource Professionals

Human resource professionals have information gleaned from the entire company that can assist managers trying to craft, create, or find reduced-load positions for employees. For example, they might see that a particular position would be more amenable to a job share than a reduced-load arrangement and thus might help match two employees looking for reduced-load work.

Having a developmental orientation toward reduced-load professionals highlights the necessity for human resource professionals to reexamine their systems for unintentional slighting of employees who work differently. Human resource professionals must get involved, because even a supportive and forward-thinking manager cannot control the career progress of a talented reduced-load professional if other managers refrain from changing and if work-life policies are not integrated into the reward systems, performance evaluation systems, and procedures for career advancement.

A number of the managerial dispositions associated with productive reduced-load work arrangements appear to be open to influence in that they represented beliefs rather than deeply held values. For example, *believes in pay-off for company* and *believes in viability of reduced-load work arrangements (under certain conditions)* are likely to be affected by receiving new information and having new experiences. Human resource professionals can also encourage managers who have seen the benefits of facilitating alternative work arrangements in their own work units to communicate success stories throughout the organization.

The findings in this study illustrate more clearly the kinds of managerial behaviors and dispositions that constitute support of

an inclusive culture and a willingness to adapt workloads and schedules around shifting employee needs. With further research, these manifestations of managerial support could form the basis for new criteria to be used in managerial performance evaluation and reward systems, resulting in more explicit organizational expectations and standards around diversity and inclusion.

Final Thoughts

Our findings overall add support to the proposition that managers play a critical role in facilitating alternative work arrangements (Lee et al., 2002; Miller & Katz, 2002; Pless & Maak, 2004). In addition, we typically found that support consists of behaviors as well as attitudes, values, and beliefs. Further research could be pursued to explore how managers' behaviors and dispositions interact with other factors that influence reduced-load professionals' success, such as the nature of the job or organizational characteristics.

We are encouraged by these observations of the manager's role in championing alternate ways of working. This shift in practice may contribute to greater inclusiveness in the workplace and perhaps lead to the creation of an organizational climate in which assuming differences in ways of working is the norm and valuing employees' desires for work-life balance is the standard. Breaking the barrier of what is the norm in the workplace can be realized with the cooperation and facilitation of managers, who also foster input from employees and human resource professionals.

Acknowledgments

Readers interested in learning more about implementing reduced-load work from the human resource perspective will enjoy reading the forthcoming article titled "Human Resource Manager Insights on Creating and Sustaining Successful Reduced-Load Work Arrangements' by Alyssa Friede, Ellen Ernst Kossek, Mary Dean Lee, and Shelley MacDermid. This article will appear in the next issue of HRM.

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NOTE

1. The two original coinvestigators were from different universities, one American and one Canadian. From prior research conducted on reduced-load work, it was clear that there were potential participants in a variety of industries and types of jobs in both countries.

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