

Chapter Twelve

Flexible Work Arrangements: Help or Hype?

by Tammy D. Allen and Kristen Shockley

ABSTRACT

Flexible work arrangements have been cited as crucial to helping employees manage work and nonwork responsibilities. Despite the positive press given to flextime work arrangements, research results regarding their efficacy in terms of preventing work-family conflict are inconsistent. Moreover, researchers are beginning to recognize that access to flexible work arrangements (FWA) alone does not create a basis for successful management of work and family roles. The heterogeneity associated with the research findings regarding FWA is underscored by two recent meta-analytic studies. Specifically, one study reported a meta-analytic effect size of $-.30$ between flexibility and work interference with family (WIF) and of $-.17$ with family interference with work (FIW). In contrast, the other meta-analytic study reported an effect size of $.00$ with WIF and $.06$ with FIW. The inconsistencies found even within meta-analytic research suggest that there is a great deal of variation associated with the effectiveness of FWA. This chapter will review the existing literature regarding the relationship between flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict and present an agenda for future research.

"Flexibility, to me, is the trend that's going to be here and not go away."—Della Delafuente (Carlson, 2005).

"Work-Life is going to be, in some fundamental sense, replaced with something called flexibility. The field literally disappears in the term *flexibility*. I mean it just took over; because corporations were [wondering] what can we do that

doesn't cost us money? And flexibility was the answer. It was always the answer, but I don't think people really understood that."—Robert Drago (Harrington, 2007).

Based on the degree of attention given to the topic of flexibility in the workplace at all levels of society recently, one might think that flexibility is the holy grail of mechanisms for helping employees manage work and non-work responsibilities. Initiatives such as "When Work Works" sponsored by the Families and Work Institute and "Workplace Flexibility 2010" at Georgetown Law Center are both designed to promote increased workplace flexibility at a national level. Flexibility has become popular within organizations with flextime being reported as the most commonly offered family-friendly benefit, followed by telework, within the United States and Canada (Comfort, Johnson, & Wallace, 2003; SHRM Foundation, 2001). A substantial proportion of employees at large corporations such as IBM, Sun Microsystems, and Intel are involved in telework arrangements (Conlin, 2005) and a total 100% of the companies that made it to *Working Mother* magazines' list of the 100 best companies to work for allow flextime and telecommuting (Carlson, 2005). Moreover, workers often cite flexibility as a critical desired job feature (e.g., Stone & Lovejoy, 2004).

Despite all the positive attention given to flexible work arrangements (FWA), research results regarding its efficacy in terms of preventing work-family conflict are inconsistent. For example, while some studies indicate that telecommuting relates to less work-family conflict than do standard work arrangements (e.g., Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003; Madsen, 2003), others report no significant differences or mixed results (e.g., Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996; Hill, Miller, Wiener, & Colihan, 1998). Likewise, some research demonstrates that flextime relates to less work-family conflict (e.g., Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997); Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996), while others do not (e.g., Aryee, 1992; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989). Such disparities in findings have led some researchers to conclude that access to flexible work arrangements alone are not the way to successful management of work and family roles. For example, Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2004) suggested that access to flexibility is a necessary but insufficient condition for reducing work-family conflict and enhancing employee well-being.

The purpose of the current research is to review the existing literature regarding the relationship between FWA and employee work-family conflict. Our review focuses on empirical results. Following our review of the literature we offer an agenda for future research on FWA and work-family conflict.

DEFINING FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Flexible work arrangements can generally be defined as negotiated terms of employment related to the timing and/or place of work (Catalyst, 1997). Flexible work arrangements include those that involve where the work is conducted, typically referred to as telecommuting, and those that involve when work is conducted, typically referred to as flextime (Rau, 2003). Telecommuting primarily involves the ability to work from home. Flextime arrangements generally consist of a set of "core hours" during which employees are expected to be at the workplace, but provide decision latitude regarding the time employees leave and arrive from work, as long as the total daily or weekly number of hours is completed (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, & Wright, 1999). Although there are other forms of FWA such as part-time work, job sharing, and compressed workweeks, this chapter focuses primarily on the two most popular forms, flextime and telecommuting.

REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH

One of the most extensive quantitative reviews of the outcomes associated with FWA is the meta-analysis conducted by Baltes et al. (1999). Baltes et al. examined work-related criteria associated with flextime and with compressed workweek schedules. Importantly, they only included experimental studies to ensure that effects could be attributed to the FWA intervention. The dependent variables examined were productivity, self-rated performance, absenteeism, job satisfaction, and satisfaction with schedule. Of interest in the present chapter are the results regarding flextime. Baltes et al. found that flexible work schedules positively influenced productivity (objective criteria such as number of claims processed), job satisfaction, absenteeism, and satisfaction with work schedule. There was no effect on self-rated performance. The strongest effect was associated with absenteeism. Several moderators were also tested. Managers and professionals were less positively affected by flextime schedules than were employees. Less flexible schedules (fewer core hours) showed stronger effect sizes than did more flexible schedules (greater core hours). Short-interval intervention effects were not significantly different than long-interval effects. Regression analyses controlling for other study characteristics indicated that the effects became smaller as the time after the introduction of flextime increased. Some of the conclusions reached by Baltes et al. include that flextime may be more beneficial in terms of attendance than in terms of worker effectiveness. Additionally, FWA may not benefit those

who already have a great degree of autonomy, such as managers and professionals. The finding regarding core hours suggests that too much flexibility may have a negative effect, perhaps because of the difficulty associated with coordinating with other employees. Finally, the positive benefits of flextime may wane over time.

The Baltes et al. (1999) study provided convincing experimental evidence that flextime relates to important work-related criteria. However, work-family conflict was not included in the Baltes et al. review. We now turn our attention to research that has specifically examined WFC.

The inconsistency of results regarding FWA and work-family conflict are highlighted by the findings reported in two recent meta-analyses. With regard to the relationship between flexibility and work interference with family (WIF), Byron (2005) reported a mean effect of $-.30$. With regard to flexibility and family interference with work (FIW), the mean effect reported was $-.17$. Both findings were significant. On the other hand, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2006) found nonsignificant effect sizes of $-.14$ for global work-family conflict, $.00$ for WIF, and $.06$ for FIW with flexibility. A closer examination of both studies reveals several potential explanations for the discrepant results. Most telling perhaps is that Byron's analysis was limited to schedule flexibility, while Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran examined studies that included both schedule and location flexibility. Additionally, Byron only included studies in which both WIF and FIW were measured. In both meta-analyses it is uncertain if the distinction was made between research regarding FWA use and research regarding FWA availability. We suspect that a mix of the two may have been included, which might further explain the heterogeneity of results.

Several other findings from the meta-analyses are noteworthy. In both studies, the credibility intervals were large, suggesting a great deal of heterogeneity and accordingly the presence of moderators. Byron (2005) examined the data for moderators and found that flexible schedules were more highly related to work-family conflict when samples more greatly comprised participants with children than participants without children. Additionally, flexible schedules were more highly related to work-family conflict when samples more highly comprised females than males. This suggests that flexible schedules provide more of a protective benefit against work-family conflict for women than for men and for parents than nonparents.

The most recent meta-analysis on flexibility to appear in the published literature focused exclusively on telecommuting (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The authors reported an average effect size of $-.13$ between work-family conflict and telecommuting. Examining work-family conflict directionally, the findings indicated a relationship of $-.16$ with WIF and $-.15$ with FIW.

Here again there was enough heterogeneity to suggest the presence of moderators.

We reviewed individual studies in the literature to try and more closely examine the pattern of results and ascertain reasons for inconsistencies. Space constraints prohibit an exhaustive review of this literature, but selected studies were chosen to help illustrate the range of typical findings. Before presenting our review we briefly discuss some important features of the literature.

The flexibility literature is marked by studies that examine the impact of FWA availability and by studies that examine the impact of FWA use. The distinction is an important one. The theory underlying why FWA results in beneficial outcomes differs for availability than for use. Availability is thought to symbolize organizational concern for employees (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Grover & Crooker, 1995). Availability has a positive impact on employee reactions to the workplace based on social-exchange theory. That is, employees appreciate that the organization is providing a valued resource such flexibility and will reciprocate by having more favorable job attitudes. However, it seems less likely that social exchange will impact work-family conflict than it will impact general work-related attitudes. The actual use of FWA should reduce work-family conflict because it gives individuals more control to attend to family responsibilities when needed (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). We also note, however, that the mere availability of FWA can produce perceptions of control, which might help explain why FWA availability would relate to work-family conflict. Additionally, telecommuting use can result in an actual time saving when time that would otherwise be spent commuting to and from the workplace by car or public transportation is considered.

Given that the majority of existing research regarding work-family conflict and FWA is cross-sectional, another important distinction is that the relationships observed between work-family conflict and FWA availability are less likely to be the product of reverse causality than are relationships observed between work-family conflict and FWA use (Batt & Valcour, 2001). Specifically, it seems unlikely that experiencing work-family conflict would increase the likelihood that one would report that FWA is available. On the other hand, experiencing work-family conflict may influence one to use FWA. That is, employees having difficulty managing work and family may be those most likely to use FWA. This is important to keep in mind when interpreting the findings.

Finally, although we think the distinction between availability and use is important, we also note that the two are not mutually exclusive. Specifically, all individuals who report using FWA by definition have FWA available, but

not everyone who reports that FWA is available is using FWA. That is, FWA users are a subset of those that have FWA available.

WFC and FWA availability. Studies examining FWA availability include those that have examined flextime exclusively, those that have examined telecommuting availability exclusively, and those that include multiple forms of flexibility within a composite measure. We reviewed each of these groups separately.

Nonsignificant associations between flextime availability and both directions of work-family conflict or an overall measure of work-family conflict were found in a number of studies (e.g., Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Aryee, 1992; Galinsky, Bond, & Friedman, 1996; Greenhaus et al., 1989; Mennino, Rubin, & Brayfield, 2005; Russo & Waters, 2006; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). However, there are also studies reporting significant results. Parasuraman et al. (1996) reported a significant relationship for both WIF and FIW with flextime. Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) reported less job-family role strain scores among those who reported access to flextime than those who didn't. Based on QES data, Staines and Pleck (1984) reported a significant relationship between flextime and work-family conflict. Also using data QES, Voydanoff (1988) reported a correlation of $-.07$ between work-family conflict and flextime for males and $-.11$ for females, but did not report significance levels. Cao (2006) notes a significant negative correlation between flextime and WIF. Using OLS regression analyses, Blair-Loy and Wharton (2004) found a negative association between scheduling flexibility and work-family conflict ($\beta = -.22$) when controlling for a number of factors, including marital status, gender, weekly hours worked, and supervisory responsibility. The authors did not report the zero-order correlations.

Several studies reported nonsignificant correlations between flextime and FIW, but significant correlations between flextime and WIF in the anticipated direction (Barrah, Shultz, Baltes, Stolz, 2004; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Neal & Hammer, 2007; Shockley & Allen, 2007). Similarly, one study found a significant correlation between work to family strain but not family to work strain (Hill, Martinson, & Ferris, 2004). Finally, some studies report varying results depending on the sample. Comparing the self-employed with the organizationally employed, Parasuraman and Simmers (2001) found that work-family conflict related to flextime among the self-employed, but not among the organizationally employed. Pal and Saksvik (2006) examined flexibility in working hours and work-family conflict in a Norwegian and Indian sample. No significant relationship emerged in the Norwegian sample, but flexibility related to greater work-family conflict with the Indian participants.

Two studies failed to find a significant association between telecommuting availability and WIF or FIW (Kossek, Lautsch, Eaton, & Bosch,

2004; Shockley & Allen, 2007). However, Kossek and colleagues found that perceptions of job flexibility (the freedom to control where, when, and how one did one's job) were related to both directions of work-family conflict. Conversely, Hill et al. (2004) report a significant negative relationship between spatial flexibility available and WIF, as well as work-to-family strain. The authors did not measure FIW and found a nonsignificant relationship between telecommuting availability and family-to-work strain.

Studies using composite indices of available flexibility also report mixed results. In a study of Spanish employees, Carnicer, Sanchez, and Perez (2004) found a relationship between flexibility and FIW for both men and women, but flexibility was only related to WIF among men. Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2006) revealed a sizeable correlation of $-.52$ for men and $-.54$ for women between job flexibility and work-to-family spillover. In a study of IBM employees across 48 different countries, Hill, Yang, Hawkins, and Ferris (2004) reported correlations of $-.07$ with FIW and $-.05$ with WIF. Although these correlations are small in magnitude, because of the study's large sample size (25,380), they were significant. Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001) reported a positive relationship between perceived degree of flexibility and work-life balance. Their measure of work-life balance is somewhat distinctive, but similar to existing measures of work-family conflict. Using a single item of overall perceived flexibility, Hammer et al. (1997) found a significant relationship with work-family conflict for both females and males. Based on a study of European managers, Lyness and Kropf (2005) found a small but significant relationship between work-family conflict (referred to as work-family balance) and flexibility that included part-time work, working from home, and flextime. Other studies report no relationship between WIF or overall work-family conflict and FWA availability (Allen, 2001; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Clark, 2001).

Work-family conflict and FWA use. Studies examining FWA use include those that have examined flextime, telecommuting, part-time work, and compressed workweek individually and those that include multiple forms of flexibility as part of a composite measure. We reviewed each of these types of studies separately. Similar to the results regarding FWA availability, the results regarding FWA use are highly variable.

Lapierre and Allen (2006) found that flextime use was not related to either FIW or WIF. Dunham, Pierce, and Casteneda (1987) compared work interference with family and friends before and after the implementation of flextime and found no significant differences. On the other hand, Hicks and Klimoski (1981) found that those on a flextime schedule reported less interrole conflict than did those on a fixed time schedule.

Lapierre and Allen (2006) found that telework users reported more time-based FIW than did non-users. No effects were found between telework use and strain-based FIW, time-based WIF, or strain-based WIF. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, Hill, Miller, Weiner, and Colihan (1998) examined those in a naturally occurring telecommuting situation (i.e., there was no self-selection) and those who worked in a traditional office. With regard to work-life balance, participants wrote a total of 27 favorable (e.g., Mobility enables me to better fulfill household/childcare responsibilities) and 46 unfavorable (e.g., In the mobile environment I feel like I am always working) qualitative comments. The quantitative analysis indicated that mobility was not significantly related to work/life balance. Research by Hill, Ferris, and Martinson (2003) demonstrated the importance knowing more about the place with regard to telecommuting. Individuals who worked from home reported greater work-life balance than did those who worked in traditional offices. However, those who worked virtually; that is those who were on the move and working from a variety of locations, reported experiencing less work-life balance than did those in other work arrangements. Based on the same data set, Madsen (2003, 2006) compared telecommuters (participants teleworked at least two days a week) with nontelecommuters on each form and direction of work-family conflict. She found that those in a telecommuter arrangement reported less overall work-family conflict, WIF, FIW, time-based conflict, and strain-based conflict. No significant differences were found in regards to behavior-based conflict. More specifically, differences also emerged in favor of telecommuting regarding time-based FIW, strain-based WIF, and behavior-based WIF. No differences were found with regard to time-based WIF and behavior-based FIW.

Using more fine-grained measurement, several researchers have examined the relationship between the amount of telecommuting practiced and work-family conflict. Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2006) found that when participants merely reported whether or not they used telework policies (yes or no), use was not significantly related to WIF or FIW. When telework volume was assessed, the negative relationship between telecommuting use and both FIW and WIF increased in magnitude but failed to reach significance. Golden, Veiga, and Simsek (2006) found that the more extensively individuals engaged in telecommuting the lower their WIF, but the higher their FIW.

Two studies have focused exclusively on part-time work with relatively consistent results. Hill et al. (2004) found a significant negative association between part-time work and WIF and work-to-family strain, but no relationship between part-time work and family-to-work strain. Using a sample of Dutch employees, van Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte, & Croon (2004) also found a

negative relationship between part-time work and WIF. Results regarding FIW were not significant.

Only one study has examined compressed work weeks in relation to work-family conflict. Using a quasi-experimental design, Dunham, Pierce, and Casteneda (1987) found that movement from a regular work week to a compressed work week significantly reduced work interference with friends and family. After returning to a regular work week, interference again increased but not a significant amount.

Allen (2001) used a composite measure of flexible benefits options that included flextime, compressed workweek, telecommuting, and part-time work. She found that greater use of FWA was associated with less WIF. In contrast, Blair-Loy and Wharton (2004) used a similar composite (flextime, flexplace, and compressed work week) and did not find a significant association between flexible policy use and WFC. However, it is important to note that zero-order correlations were not reported; thus this statistic is based on regression analyses controlling for the effects of several other variables. In a departure from the cross-sectional studies that typify this area of the literature, Hammer, Neal, Newsome, Brockwood, and Colton (2005) conducted a longitudinal study with a one-year time lag of dual-earner couples with both child and elder care responsibilities. They found that use of FWA (a composite measure of flexible work hours, job-sharing, and telecommuting) was not related to husband reports of WIF or FIW. On the other hand, use of FWA was positively related to wives' FIW over time. That is, greater use of FWA was associated with more FIW one year later. No relationship between FWA and WIF was found for wives. Hammer et al. suggest that use of FWA by wives may allow them to take on more family-related responsibilities, thus resulting in a greater degree of FIW. This is consistent with research by Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981), who found that flextime was associated with more time spent on home chores.

Review summary. Our article title asks if FWA are help or hype. The results of our review of the literature suggest that the common assumption that FWA help employees effectively manage their work and nonwork responsibilities may be wrong at worst, and premature at best. We find no overwhelming, compelling evidence that FWA generally or consistently relates to employee work-family conflict. In fact, we find some evidence consistent with the notion that the use of FWA may exacerbate FIW. Moreover, when significant effects are found, the effect size appears to be small in magnitude. The more moderate positive effects that were observed were associated with psychological perceptions of flexibility.

Taken together, there is some evidence that FWA may more highly relate to WIF than to FIW. This conclusion is consistent with the results of the

Byron (2005) meta-analysis and with several of the individual study results (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002). More research has been conducted regarding benefit availability than benefit use, particularly with regard to flexible scheduling. We now turn our attention to opportunities for future research on FWA.

AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE FLEXIBILITY RESEARCH

The focus of this review has been on the relationship between FWA and work-family conflict. Although it is important to recognize that FWA has been associated with other benefits such as reduced absenteeism (e.g., Baltes et al., 1999) and attraction to the organization (e.g., Rau & Hyland, 2002), our purpose in conducting this review was to highlight the need for placing more research emphasis on outcomes that more squarely represent employee abilities to manage work and nonwork responsibilities.

Many of the same research needs highlighted by Christensen and Staines (1990) in their review of flextime as a viable solution to work-family conflict remain today. They noted that quasi-experimental research designs were needed to make appropriate causal inferences regarding the impact of FWA interventions. They also noted the importance of examining both availability and use of flextime. A third factor they cited as needing additional research was the issue of examining differing levels of flexibility to determine the degree of flexibility that offers positive outcomes. We further discuss these issues and others below.

Place versus time. The research to date suggests that flexibility concerning when work is completed (rather than where) might be more beneficial in terms of reducing or avoiding work-family conflict (e.g., Shockley & Allen, 2007). However, as we discussed with regard to FWA availability and FWA use, flextime and telecommuting are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There may be some telecommuting arrangements that provide limited schedule flexibility. Someone working from home forced to remain chained to the computer from 8 to 5 has little more flexibility than someone sitting in a corporate office chained to a computer from 8 to 5. Therefore, we suggest that in future studies, schedule flexibility may be examined as a moderator of the relationship between telecommuting and work-family conflict. One could expect for telecommuting to be more beneficial under circumstances of greater rather than lesser schedule flexibility. One such study was recently conducted. Golden et al. (2006) found that scheduling flexibility moderated the relationship between extent of telecommuting and WIF such that the relationship between telecommuting and WIF was stronger for telecommuters

with higher perceived scheduling flexibility than for those with lesser perceived scheduling flexibility. However, no moderation was found for FIW as the dependent variable. More research looking at how different combinations of time and place flexibility interact to predict work-family conflict is needed to determine what forms of flexibility are more or less helpful in reducing work-family conflict.

More sophisticated designs and analyses. Baltes et al. (1999) found that the positive effects of FWA appear to wane over time. Most of the research regarding FWA and WFC has been cross-sectional and correlational in nature. We did not find any studies that used an experimental design with pre- and post-measures of work-family conflict compared against a control group. Moreover, there are few longitudinal studies (see Hammer et al., 2005 for an exception). Generally a greater consideration of the role of time is needed. As noted by Hill et al. (1998) positive results soon after the start of FWA may be due to a honeymoon effect. On the other hand, after a longer time period, outcomes may improve as the individual becomes comfortable and learns to adjust to the new work arrangements. For example, an individual who begins a telecommuting arrangement and initially has difficulty disengaging from work may develop ways to adapt to the new work situation after a period of time.

There is also a need to consider curvilinear effects. Golden and Veiga (2005) found that among a sample of professional-level employees, there was a curvilinear relationship between extent of telecommuting and job satisfaction. Specifically, job satisfaction appears to plateau at more extensive levels of telecommuting. This relationship was moderated by task interdependence and job discretion. It would not be surprising to find similar results for work-family conflict. For example, telecommuting several days a week may be better than full-time telecommuting.

Boundary management and the role of rituals for telecommuters. Problems with telecommuting are thought to exist primarily because workers have trouble preserving work and family boundaries. Boundary theory assumes that humans create boundaries in order to better cope with and understand their environments (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Boundaries are constructed to better comprehend a variety of things, such as geography, history, ethnicity, and even our personal lives. As family and work are important facets of most individuals' personal lives, they naturally create boundaries between the two; these abstract borders advise individuals when to fulfill the family role vs. the worker role (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Moreover, individuals often use outside clues to help differentiate between work and home borders. For instance, the externally imposed physical barrier of location is an important cue as to when one is inside a home or a work boundary (Hill et al., 2003;

Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Telework removes the physical separation between work and family roles, thus making it potentially more difficult to maintain a boundary between both roles (Eckenrode & Gore, 1990; Lapierre & Allen, 2006). When the boundaries between work and home become blurred, a worker is forced to enact dual roles and may experience interrole strain and conflict (Ashforth et al. 2000).

Additional research designed to identify successful boundary management strategies may be useful. For example, Ahrentzen (1990) and Gurstein (1991) found that many successful telecommuters practice boundary maintenance by creating a space in the home that is solely designated for work. Hill et al. (1998) suggested that telecommuters may need to establish rituals to help them learn how to disengage from work. For example, at the end of the workday a telecommuter may close and lock the door to his or her home office. It would be interesting to examine other habits associated with telecommuting. For example, does it make a difference if a telecommuter is working in his or her pajamas or in slacks and a button-down shirt? Does wearing office attire make it easier to segment the work role from the family role? Or does the ability to forgo the trappings of appearance associated with typical corporate office decorum have benefits? Women in particular may benefit from this aspect of telecommuting in that they are typically held to more exacting standards concerning appearance (Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995).

Consideration of individual differences. Generally speaking, individual differences have received less research attention than have organizational situational factors within the work and family literature. There may be certain dispositional variables that better enable individuals to effectively take advantage of flexible work options. Hill (1995) as cited in Hill et al. (1998) made the astute observation that giving a workaholic an electronic briefcase may be like giving an alcoholic a bottle of gin. Individuals who are prone to overwork may find that FWA acts as an enabler. Other individual attributes that may make a difference include conscientiousness and self-discipline. A certain degree of control may be needed by those working at home in a telecommuting arrangement to stay focused on work rather than become distracted by household obligations. Time management skills may become even more important without the typical signals and cues regarding work that come from coworkers. Recent research has shown that individuals who use selection, optimization, and compensation strategies report fewer job and family stressors, and subsequent less work-family conflict (Baltes & Heydens-Gahir, 2003). It may be useful to use a person-environment approach to better understand the circumstances under which FWA will reduce work-family conflict. Once we acknowledge that there are individual differences in people's abilities to use FWA effectively, we can focus

on developing strategies that might better prepare individuals for the challenges FWA can pose.

What happens at home when individuals use FWA? Hammer et al. (2005) suggested that women who use FWA take on more family-related responsibilities and accordingly increase their level of FIW. This is consistent with Silver and Goldscheider (1994) who found that women with more flexible jobs spent more time on housework. Individuals with greater flexibility may be expected to take on more of the domestic obligations. It may be easier for the spouse with greater flexibility to assume household tasks such as running errands, attending children's school-related functions, taking children to the doctor, dealing with home deliveries and repairs, etc. Research is needed to understand how FWA use relates to changes in household work, which in turn relates to work-family conflict. Further, family members may also have difficulty with the blurring of work and nonwork boundaries when individuals work from home. Research examining support from family members in the form of respecting the telecommuters' physical workspace and minimizing interruptions could shed additional light on the conditions under which telecommuting is more or less effective.

Other forms of support within the organization. The inconsistent positive results for flextime may not be based on flexibility per se, but on the lack of support surrounding it within the organization. As suggested by Sutton and Noe (2005), organizations may adopt family-supportive policies for reasons such as to gain legitimacy among peers, but fail to consider how the programs should be operated within their particular organization. In a qualitative study, Nord, Fox, Phoenix, and Viano (2002) found that employees reported negative experiences associated with flexible schedules and telecommuting that affected their levels of productivity and stress. Specifically, employees indicated that factors such as inadequate technological infrastructure, lack of technical support, poorly defined policies and procedures for participating in telecommuting, failure of the organization to adjust selection, appraisal, project management, and motivational systems for consistency with work performed under new scheduling options, and lack of work schedule fit were obstacles associated FWA use. Hill et al. (2003) has also discussed the importance of providing technological support to individuals who telecommute. This research highlights the need for organizations to conduct a thorough evaluation of current human resource systems when implementing FWA practices. Without an integrated change implementation process, the stress created by the type of problems noted above may offset any flexibility advantages.

Future research may also consider the interaction between FWA and informal forms of support within the organization. A number of studies have

supported the point of view that organizational policies and benefits will not be successful without support from supervisors and a family-supportive work environment (e.g., Allen, 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 1999). It may be that under conditions of poor supervisor support FWA will have no or even negative effects on work-family conflict.

Too much of a good thing? Work and family researchers have seemingly assumed that giving workers more choice regarding when and where work will be completed is beneficial. However, one of the findings of the Baltes et al. (1999) meta-analysis was that less flexible schedules were more highly related to work-related criteria than were more flexible schedules, suggesting that too much flexibility may have a negative effect. Greater flexibility in the timing and location of work means workers have to make a greater number of choices. This is potentially problematic in that research has shown that "choice overload" can undermine satisfaction and motivation (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). For example, consumer research has shown that when individuals have a variety of products from which to choose, they are more likely to worry if they have made a poor selection. Iyengar and Lepper also found that the same choice selected from a limited-choice set resulted in better performance than that selected from a larger choice set. Similarly, Schwartz (2000) has argued that freedom, autonomy, and self-determination can become excessive. Schwartz suggests that unconstrained freedom can result in paralysis and even chaos. Other research has shown that adding options can make the choices that have to be made less attractive (Beattie, Baron, Hershey, & Spranca, 1994).

Having too many choices can become overwhelming. Participating in a FWA places greater responsibility for getting the work done on the individual. Iyengar and Lepper (2000) suggest that if freedom of choice passes a manageable boundary, people will actually experience a loss of control. Thus, some individuals with a great deal of schedule control may feel as though that have lost all boundaries between their work and nonwork lives. Although having choices regarding where and when work is to be done may initially appear appealing to workers, too much choice can ultimately be demotivating. These issues may also be moderated by culture. For example, research has shown that the availability of choice is more important for European Americans than for Asian Americans, who place more value on interdependence (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). In sum, we need to take into consideration that giving workers a greater variety of options regarding when and where work can be completed has the potential to overwhelm rather than empower. As noted by Sullivan and Lewis (2001), giving a certain amount of flexibility to employees may be useful, but too much flexibility provides the opportunity for the loss of control of overzealous work tendencies.

There is a great deal of variability in the usage of FWA. More specifically, individuals may telecommute a few days a month or every day. With regard to flextime, there can be a considerable range in the number of core hours. Start and stop times may be able to be changed from day to day or considered stable. A more nuanced approach to how we assess FWA use may help us discover what amount of use works best.

CONCLUSION

A major impetus for FWA has been the desire to help employees manage work and family, yet the outcomes more thoroughly studied have been oriented toward the organization. In an effort to provide organizations with data on how FWA can increase productivity and profits we have given less attention to systematically examining the impact of FWA on the individual outcomes that we are most interested in affecting—the employee's ability to effectively manage work and nonwork responsibilities. That is, by focusing on the business case in order to lure organizations to implement FWA, we may have neglected the human case. It appears that FWA may be more beneficial as a tool to increase productivity than as a tool to decrease work-family conflict (cf., Hill et al., 1998). FWA appears to hold promise as a means for helping employees manage their work and nonwork lives. However, we believe the current state of research is such that we need to know much more about the impact of FWA on outcomes associated with individual well-being.

NOTE

Tammy D. Allen is professor of psychology at the University of South Florida. She received her doctorate in industrial and organizational psychology from the University of Tennessee. Her research interests include work-family issues, mentoring relationships, occupational health psychology, and organizational citizenship behavior. Her work has appeared in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, among others. She is currently Associate Editor of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and of the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*.

Kristen M. Shockley is a doctoral student in the industrial and organizational psychology program at the University of South Florida. She completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Georgia.

Her primary research interest is work/family issues. She is also interested in and has conducted research on workplace mentoring relationships.

Address correspondence to Tammy D. Allen, University of South Florida, Department of Psychology, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., PCD4118, Tampa, FL 33620-7200; Phone: 813.974.0484; Fax: 813.974.4617; Email: tallen@shell.cas.usf.edu

REFERENCES

- Ahrentzen, S. B. (1990). Managing conflict by managing boundaries: How professional homeworkers cope with multiple roles at home. *Environment and Behavior*, 22, 723-752.
- Allen, T. D. (2001). Family supportive work environments: The role of organizational perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58, 414-435.
- Aryee, S. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among married professional women: Evidence from Singapore. *Human Relations*, 45, 813-837.
- Anderson, S. E., Coffey, B. S., & Byerly, R. T. (2002). Formal organizational initiatives and informal workplace practices: Links to work-family conflict and job-related outcomes. *Journal of Management*, 28(6), 787-810.
- Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries in micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(3), 472-490.
- Baltes, B. B., Briggs, T. E., Huff, J. W., Wright, J. A. (1999). Flexible and compressed workweek schedules: A meta-analysis of their effects on work-related criteria. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 496-513.
- Baltes, B. B., & Heydens-Gahir, H. A. (2003). Reduction of work-family conflict through the use of selection, optimization, and compensation behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 1005-1018.
- Barrah, J. L., Shultz, K. S., Baltes, B., & Stolz, H. E. (2004). Men's and women's eldercare-based work-family conflict: Antecedents and work-related outcomes. *Fathering*, 2(3), 305-330.
- Batt, R., & Valcour, P. M. (2003). Human resource practices as predictors of work-family outcomes and employee turnover. *Industrial Relations*, 42, 189-220.
- Beattie, J., Baron, J., Hershey, J. C., & Spranca, M. D. (1994). Psychological determinants of decision attitude. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 7, 129-144.
- Blair-Loy, M., & Wharton, A. S. (2004). Mothers in finance: Surviving and thriving. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 596, 151-171.
- Bohen H. H. & Viveros-Long, A. (1981). *Balancing jobs and family life: Do flexible schedules help?* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Byron, K. (2005). A meta-analytic review of work-family conflict and its antecedents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67(2), 169-198.
- Carlson, L. (2005, December 1). Benefits that meet moms' needs—then and now. *Employee Benefit News*, 19. <http://ebn.benefitnews.com>. Retrieved 26 May 2008.

- Cao, F. (2006). Exploring the relations among availability of temporal flexibility at work, work-to-family conflict, and job satisfaction. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 67, 585B.
- Carnicer, M. P., Sanchez, A. M., & Perez, M. P. (2004). Work-family conflict in a southern European country. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 19(5), 466-489.
- Catalyst (1997). *A new approach to flexibility: Managing the work/time equation*. New York: Catalyst.
- Christensen, K., & Staines, G. L. (1990). Flextime: A viable solution to work/family conflict? *Journal of Family Issues*, 11, 455-476.
- Cinamon, R. G. & Rich, Y. (2002). Profiles of attribution of importance of life roles and their implications for the work-family conflict. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 49(2), 212-220.
- Clark, S. C. (2001). Work cultures and work/family balance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58, 348-365.
- Comfort, D., Johnson, K., & Wallace, D. (2003). *Part-time work and family-friendly practices in Canadian workplaces* (The Evolving Workplace Series, No. 71-584-MIE No. 6). Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada/Human Resources Development Canada.
- Conlin, M. (2005, December 12). The easiest commute of all. *Business Week*, Retrieved March 5, 2009 from http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_50/63963137.htm.
- Dunham, R. B., Pierce, J. L., & Casteneda, M. B. (1987). Alternative work schedules: Two field quasi experiments. *Personnel Psychology*, 40, 215-242.
- Eckenrode, J., & Gore, S. (1990). Stress and coping at the boundary of work and family. In J. Eckenrode & S. Gore (Eds.), *Stress between work and family* (pp. 1-16). New York: Plenum.
- Galinsky, E., Bond, J. T., & Friedman, D. E. (1996). The role of employers in addressing the needs of employed parents. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(3), 111-136.
- Golden, T. D., & Veiga, J. F. (2005). The impact of extent of telecommuting on job satisfaction: Resolving inconsistent findings. *Journal of Management*, 31, 301-318.
- Golden, T. D., Veiga, J. F., Simsek, Z. (2006). Telecommuting's differential impact on work-family conflict: Is there no place like home? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(6), 1340-1350.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., Granrose, C. S., Rabinowitz, S. & Beutell, N. J. (1989). Sources of work family conflict among two-career couples. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 34, 133-153.
- Grover, S. L., & Crooker, K. J. (1995). Who appreciates family-responsive human resource policies: The impact of family-friendly policies on the organizational attachment of parents and non-parents. *Personnel Psychology*, 48(2), 271-288.
- Gurstein, P. (1991) Working at home and living at home: emerging scenarios. *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 8(2), 164-80.
- Hammer, L. B., Allen, E., & Grigsby, T. D. (1997). Work-family conflict in dual-earner couples: Within-individual and crossover effects of work and family. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 185-203.
- Hammer, L. B., & Neal, M. B. (2007). *Working couples caring for children and aging parents: Effects on work and well-being*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Hammer, L. B., Neal, M. B., Newsome, J. T., Brockwood, K. J., & Colton, C. L. (2005). A longitudinal study of the effects of dual-earner couples' utilization of family-friendly workplace supports on work and family outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*, 799-810.
- Harrington, B. (2007). The work-life evolution study. Boston College Center for Work & Family.
- Hicks, W. D. & Klimoski, R. J. (1981). The impact of flextime on employee attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal, 24*(2), 333.
- Hill, E. J., Ferris, M., & Martinson, V. (2003). Does it matter where you work? A comparison of how three work venues (traditional office, virtual office, and home office) influence aspects of work and personal/family life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 63*, 220-241.
- Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., Ferris, M., & Weitzman, M. (2001). Finding an extra day a week: The positive influence of perceived job flexibility and work family life balance. *Family Relations, 50*, 49-58.
- Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., Miller, B. C. (1996). Work and family in the virtual office: perceived influences of mobile telework. *Family Relations, 45*(3), 293-301.
- Hill, E. J., Martinson, V., & Ferris, M. (2004). New-concept part-time employment as a work-family adaptive strategy for women professionals with small children. *Family Relations, 53*, 282-292.
- Hill, E. J., Miller, B. C., Weiner, S. P. & Colihan, J. (1998). Influences of the virtual office on aspects of work and work/life balance. *Personnel Psychology, 51*, 667-683.
- Hill, E. J., Yang, C., Hawkins, A. J., & Ferris, M. (2004). A cross-cultural test of the work-family interface in 48 countries. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 1300-1316.
- Iyengar, S. S., & Lepper, M. R. (1999). Rethinking the value of choice: A cultural perspective on intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 349-366.
- Iyengar, S. S., & Lepper, M. R. (2000). When choice is demotivating: Can one desire too much of a good thing? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 995-1006.
- Jackson, L. A., Hunter, J. E., & Hodge, C. N. (1995). Physical attractiveness and intellectual competence: A meta-analytic review. *Social Psychological Quarterly, 58*, 108-122.
- Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., Eaton, S. C., & Bosch, K. L. V. (2004, April). Managing work-home boundaries, performance and well-being: The effects of formal access to telework and flexibility enactment. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Chicago, Illinois.
- Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2005). Flexibility enactment theory: Implications of flexibility type, control, and boundary management for work and family effectiveness. In E. E. Kossek & S. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 243-262). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2006). Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work-family effectiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68(2), 347-367.
- Lapierre, L. M., & Allen, T. D. (2006). Work supportive family, family-supportive supervision, use of organizational benefits, and problem-focused coping: Implications for work-family conflict and employee well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 11, 169-181.
- Lyness, K. S., & Kropf, M. B. (2005). The relationships of national gender equality and organizational support with work-family balance: A study of European managers. *Human Relations*, 58, 33-60.
- Madsen, S. R. (2003). The effects of home-based teleworking on work-family conflict. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 14(1), 35-58.
- Madsen, S. R. (2006). Work and family conflict: Can home-based teleworking make a difference? *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, 9, 307-350.
- Mennino, S. F., Rubin, B. A., & Brayfield, A. (2005). Home-to-job and job-to-home spillover: The impact of company policies and workplace culture. *Sociological Quarterly*, 46(1), 107-135.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., & Viswesvaran, C. (2006). How family-friendly work environments affect work/family conflict: A meta-analytic examination. *Journal of Labor Research*, 4, 555-574.
- Nippert-Eng, C. (1996). Calendars and keys: The classification of "home" and "work." *Sociological Forum*, 11, 563-582.
- Nord, W. R., Fox, S., Phoenix, A., & Viano, K. (2002). Real-world reactions to work-life balance programs: Lessons for effective implementation. *Organizational Dynamics*, 30, 223-238.
- Pal, S., & Saksvik, P. O. (2006). A comparative study of work and family conflict in Norwegian and Indian hospitals. *Nordic Psychology*, 58(4), 298-314.
- Parasuraman, S., Purohit, Y. S., Godshalk, V. M., & Beutell, N. J. (1996). Work and family variables, entrepreneurial career success, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 48, 275-300.
- Parasuraman, S., & Simmers, C. A. (2001). Type of employment, work-family conflict and well-being: a comparative study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 551-568.
- Rau, B. L. (2003). Flexible work arrangements. *Sloan Online Work and Family Encyclopedia*. http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=240&area=All
- Rau, B. L., & Hyland, M. M. (2002). Role conflict and flexible work arrangements: The effects on applicant attraction. *Personnel Psychology*, 55, 111-136.
- Russo, J. A., & Waters, L. E. (2006). Workaholic worker type differences in work-family conflict: The moderating role of supervisor support and flexible work scheduling. *Career Development International*, 11(5), 418-439.
- Schwartz, B. (2000). Self-determination: The tyranny of freedom. *American Psychologist*, 55, 79-88.

- Shockley, K. M., & Allen, T. D. (2007). When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 71, 479–493.
- SHRM Foundation. (2001). *SHRM 2001 benefits survey*. [city, state]: Society for Human Resource Management.
- Silver, H., & Goldscheider, F. (1994). Flexible work and housework: Work and family constraints on women's domestic labor. *Social Forces*, 72, 1103–1119.
- Staines G. L. & Pleck, J. H. (1984). Nonstandard work schedules and family life. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69, 515–523.
- Stevens, D. P., Kiger, G., Riley, P. J. (2006). His, hers, or ours? Work-to-family spillover, crossover, and family cohesion. *Social Science Journal*, 43(3), 425–436.
- Stone, P., & Lovejoy, M. (2004). Fast-track women and the “choice” to stay home. *Annals*, 596, 62–83.
- Sullivan, C. & Lewis, S. (2001). Home-based telework, gender, and the synchronization of work and family: perspectives of teleworkers and their co-residents. *Gender, Work, and Organizations*, 8(2), 123–145.
- Sutton, K. L., & Noe, R. A. (2005). Family-friendly programs and work-life integration: More myth than magic? In E. E. Kossek & S. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 151–169). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Thomas, L. T. & Ganster, D. C. (1995) Impact of family-supportive work variables on work-family conflict and strain: a control perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80(1), 6–15.
- Thompson, C. A., Beauvais, L. L., & Lyness, K. S. (1999). When work-family benefits are not enough: The influence of work-family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 392–415.
- van Rijswijk, K., Bekker, M. H. J., Rutte, C G, & Croon, M. A.(2004). The relationships among part-time work, work-family interference, and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 9, 286–295.
- Voydanoff, P. (1988). Work role characteristics, family structure demands, and work/family conflict. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 749–761.