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Work–Family Flexibility and the Employment Relationship

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A growing body of scholarly literature has accumulated on the changing employee–organization relationship (EOR) (Shore et al., 2004). Relatively little of this body of research has been integrated with changing work and family relationships, which are also undergoing a period of unprecedented transformation. It is critical to incorporate research on the changing work–family relationship into the employment relationship literature. Having positive work–family relationships has critical social meaning for the changing employment social contract of working life. From the employee perspective, a key question is: "Is the current employment deal a favorable social exchange of an individual's time, energy, and psychological capital in relation to personal and work–family well-being and economic return?" From the organizational perspective, the key question is: "When is it in the organization's interests to support positive work and family relationships?" And from an exchange perspective, key questions are: "What are the social expectations of organizations regarding their roles in supporting employees' management of work and family relationships?" and "What are the social expectations of employees regarding support of work and family relationships?" Are these views in alignment?

The main goal of this chapter is to draw from EOR theory to understand changes in work and family relationships as well as add to the integration of these literatures. This analysis will strengthen EOR research by improved consideration of changing work–family dynamics as a growing

critical component of the employment contract. Similarly, work–family research will be enhanced by integrating concepts from the EOR literature, such as the importance of alignment between employee needs and preferences and organizational perspectives on the work–family interface. We begin with a brief overview of the transformation of work and family life followed by discussion of commonalties between changing EOR and work–family relationships. Because voluntary workplace flexibility policies and practices help span the boundaries between rising work and home demands, in the second half of this chapter, we argue that formal and informal boundary-blurring practices can be used as a lens for understanding how social exchange theory and its related constructs inform work and family relationships. We develop propositions for future research, some of which are linked to employee preferences for blurring and the EOR. Examples of organizational practices include *formal flexibility policies*, such as telework, flextime, and part-time work, and *informal boundary-blurring practices* through use of technological tools (e.g., laptops, smart phones) to control work location, timing, or load. Examples of employee customization preferences include integration (blending work and family tasks), separation (focusing on each separately), and volleying (cycling back and forth) with patterns of high integration and separation (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008; Kossek, Ruderman, Hannum, & Braddy, 2011).

GROWING DIVERSITY AND INTENSITY OF WORK–FAMILY DEMANDS

In this chapter, we use the term "family" broadly. Our assumption is that even single employees have nonwork and personal concerns related to family, such as social ties to unmarried partners, close friends, siblings, parents, or grandparents. Household and caregiving demands are trending upward with unprecedented levels of labor force participation of individuals who possess significant nonwork responsibilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). This expansion is from a significant rise in the employment of single-parent, dual-career, or sandwiched (caring for elders and children) families. Less than 20% of families today with children under 18 years old are composed of two parents with a single breadwinner and a

stay-at-home parent (Kossek, 2006). Growing numbers of employees have their own or a family member's health disabilities to manage while working. A combination of trends, including the economic recession, the aging population, and the rise in children and young adults with special needs, has resulted in more working caregivers. There is also a delay in economic and psychological self-sufficiency of many current and post college students. Many students have become accustomed to the regular parental support of daily living and face difficulties transitioning to adulthood. The number of single-person households is increasing, as more working adults AQ1
are delaying marriage, staying unmarried, or divorcing than ever before. Greater geographic dispersion of nuclear families is making it more difficult for employees to have local family support systems.

The shift in family configurations and demands is accompanied by growing work–family pressures (Kossek, Baltes, & Mathews, in press). For example, trends from the National Study of the Changing Workplace, a nationwide representative sample surveying U.S. employees, suggests blurring boundaries and rising multitasking and job stress are major concerns (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). One third of employees surveyed report they are contacted by a work colleague outside of their scheduled work hours at least once a week. Over half of employees state that "they often or very often worked on too many tasks and multi-tasked too much." There are also growing problems with job stress and the health AQ2
of workers. For example, a third of individuals responding indicated that they "often or very often" felt overwhelmed by their workload over the last several months. One third of employees in the national survey have depressive symptoms, and one fifth have high blood pressure.

These growing work and family demands are pressuring governments to respond at a societal level. The European Union, for example, has made the reconciliation of work and family life a key priority for enhancing the quality of the labor pool. Although the European Commission has no direct influence over the field of child care, it has encouraged nonbinding targets for child care for the member nations (European Commission, 2010). The national government of Australia is also trying to develop policy influencing work and family with a sponsored paid parental leave plan started in 2011. National governments are becoming stakeholders in the relationships between work and family. The Dutch government has started an initiative called 24 and More to encourage more women to work 24 hours a week or more as a way to spur national economic

growth. Overall, the trends discussed in this section suggest work and family aspects relevant to the EOR are undergoing a revolution and need increased linkage.

COMMONALITIES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK, FAMILY, AND THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

Just as new organizational structures, changing work systems, and heightened economic pressures have led to a "new deal" in the social exchange between employee and the organization (Cappelli, 1999), several parallels exist suggesting a similar transformative "new deal" in work and family relationships. These relate to similarities in cultural assumptions reflecting historical paradigm shifts toward more (a) boundarylessness, (b) customization, (c) self-direction, and (d) transactional and shorter term relationships. Given these changes occurring in tandem, it is increasingly important to study work–family and employment relationships together.

Boundarylessness

Both the EOR and the work–family literatures share the assumption of a trend toward boundarylessness, a paradigm shift from seeing organizational roles as specified, formal, and narrowly defined to seeing them as more open-ended, less formal, and with loose definitions. For example, the EOR literature refers to "boundaryless" careers as increasingly the norm. This is the concept of multiemployer employment relationships reflecting the traditional approach of careers unfolding in a single organizational boundary or employment setting (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Boundarylessness in the EOR is also increasingly reflected in employer assumptions toward more open-endedness and expansiveness in job duties, which has critical linkages to work–life balance. Known as "job creep" (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004), boundarylessness in job design can result in the gradual and often subtle expansion of employee job duties that are not necessarily highly valued or formally recognized by the employer. Job creep often changes the employment relationship by resulting in the prevailing belief that an employee will take responsibility for an extra role

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behavior that is not recognized as part of his or her job and not rewarded (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004). This trend is more likely to occur when job demands are unclear.

Job creep is also occurring as employees face rising workloads from understaffing due to the global economic downturn in the past few years. Many are also working longer and harder out of fear of losing their jobs as work continues to either move overseas or layoffs occur. The movement away from rigid organizational structures means that people are consistently seeking out new information. In sum, job creep has important implications for the social exchange of work and family relationships. For many employees, work comprises a larger part of life space, shifting the employment deal to tilt toward greater investment in work over leisure. To date, employers have had the upper hand in controlling work–life boundaries to give the work role primacy.

There is also growing boundarylessness in work and family relationships. Work and family roles are increasingly enacted outside the boundaries of work or home. This shift has partially occurred due to societal changes in technological use toward increased blurring of work and home boundaries. This has led to escalation of opportunities for employees to shape behaviors regarding work–family boundary blurring temporally, physically, or mentally (Nippert-Eng, 1996). This development is due not only to the trends noted earlier but also to the proliferation of mobile communication and data technological tools. The rise in use of smart cell phones, laptops, and other portable personal digital assistants (PDAs) increasingly enables employees in all walks of life to have some availability to texts, e-mails, data, and calls of a work *or* personal nature 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Global work schedules, the increased intensification of workloads, and the diffusion of work into more hours of the day and night have also heightened the boundarylessness of personal time. The working hours of 9 AM to 5 PM are an artifact of the past in today's globalized, technology savvy world. Employees are increasingly sacrificing family life and working longer hours in order to keep their jobs.

Similar to job creep, family creep is occurring. We define family creep as the notion that the employee will take increasing responsibility for family or personal needs informally during work time. Family creep is growing under the radar as more and more employees are taking responsibility for nonwork demands during work time. Examples include an employee getting a text message at work from her child indicating that the child

has just gotten home off the bus or managing the scheduling of an elder's medical appointments during working time. More employees lack a nonworking spouse who can handle these issues, compared to the numbers of employees in traditional single-breadwinner families of the past. Given this trend, family demands also have a growing boundarylessness. So from the employer perspective, a firm may see family creep as negatively affecting the employment bargain.

Customization

Building on the psychological contract literature of the unwritten expectations the employer and employee have of each other, a growing theme is the concept of more customization in employment relationships. AQ4 Increasingly, "one size does not fit all" (Boswell, Colvin, & Darnold, 2008). Rousseau (1995, 2005) refers to the growing trend toward nonstandard individualized work arrangements as idiosyncratic deals (I-Deals). Individuals can negotiate an I-Deal that may deviate from standard practices if the individual has a high value in the labor market. For example, employees might receive a higher salary or other perquisites than counterparts in a similar job, if they have a highly valued skill set that would result in loss of a strategic asset of rare knowledge or skills if the employee left the firm (Shore et al., 2007). Under EOR theory, such customized inducements lead to increased enactment of discretionary behaviors that meet the employers' interests. I-Deals usually increase within group heterogeneity of employment relationship conditions from pay to benefits to job tasks to work schedules, as they are used as behavioral inducements to attract, retain, or motivate employees with diverse talents and psychological and economic needs (Shore et al., 2007). I-Deals are also often the first step for more standardized practices and can be wins for the employee, the organization, and the employee's coworkers. Thus, work–life arrangements such as flexible work schedules or telecommuting can be viewed as an I-Deal.

The growing trend toward customization of work and family relationships is a departure from the historical roots of organizational support for this nexus. Traditionally, most large organizations and employees have had relatively little customization of work and family relationships. Most professional and managerial workforces were relatively homogenous and unduly devoted to putting energies into careers to climb the

corporate ladder. Iconically depicted in the 1950s book, *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (Wilson, 1955), a corporate manager was socialized to divide household labor traditionally in his family. As prototypically edified in the novel, society expected a breadwinner to commute each day into New York City from the far suburbs, leaving behind his stay-at-home wife caring for their three children. With such cultural and actual distance from the domestic realm, the employee (usually male) culturally gave uninterrupted attention to work. When women did work in the firm, they often were socialized to give up marriage for a career. Those few who were married when they began working ended up quitting their jobs once they had a child. Or, if they had to work due to divorce or finances, they usually worked part time or in lower level positions that allowed for higher control over work hours. Those women who stayed in the AQ5
workplace after childbirth typically had fewer children than their male counterparts in order to prevent family interference with work demands. After work, many went home to work "a second shift" (Hochschild, 1989) taking care of all of the household domestic chores, making culturally invisible their family demands and "competing devotions" to their jobs (Blair-Loy, 2003).

Understanding these historical roots is important because these cultural remnants remain in place today, reinforcing the culturally separate spheres of work and family life (Kanter, 1977). A prevailing workplace assumption is that most employees do not expect or need much organizational family support, let alone differentiated support. Until relatively recently, work–family policies were fairly standardized by the organization in an almost paternalistic manner dictated by the employer such as providing a one-size-fits-all basic family health care package. Most employees worked the same hours set by the organization. Work and family programs and policies were not viewed as inducements in the employment relationship but as a standard benefit an individual received simply for being a member of the organization. Organizational support of work and family was not assumed to motivate discretionary behavior. Pay has traditionally been seen as the most important motivational tool in the workplace.

Today, however, customization is increasingly needed *and* socially expected because most workers are *not* 100% focused on breadwinning and disconnected from domesticity. For example, the professional and managerial workforce is now over half female. Men are more involved in domestic tasks and child care, although U.S. census time use data show

they have not yet caught up with women in sharing household labor equally. Thus, customization has begun in part to respond to the increased feminization in values of the workforce, as more workers are juggling gendered roles of domesticity with high engagement in work.

However, customization of work–family relationships is occurring more than just to support caregiving involvement. Younger workers do not expect to have a job for life with one employer and expect customization of working life as part of the social exchange for lessened job security. These Generation X and Y workers are much more interested in having more discretion over when, where, and how they work (Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). It is also important to note that demographics alone do not fully predict customization preferences in work–family relationships. Within demographic group segments, there is increasing variation in why people work and the work and family relationships they seek. Instead of coasting to retirement, some older workers want to remain highly engaged in career. For example, one study (Winkelmann-Gleed, 2009) found that there were two main segments of older employees. One group works mainly for financial reasons, and the other works mainly because they enjoy their career and feel a strong sense of social responsibility to work. This second group of older employees especially values a flexible environment as an inducement. Flexible work arrangements can be one important motivator for this group to remain working in the organization.

Overall, increasing numbers of employees want to work in different ways to match growing variation in preferences for flexibility in the hours worked, the load or amount of work done, and the scheduling of work (Kossek & Michel, 2011). Standardization of work and family relationships, particularly for professionals in terms of the timing and location of work, is on the decline in organizations. One employee may want to work 4 days a week for 10 hours a day. Another may wish to work part time. Still another would like to take a self-funded sabbatical to be able to focus on renewal or a leave of absence to become a stay-at-home mom or dad beyond the boundaries of a typical maternity or paternity leave. Unfortunately, research shows most of these voluntary customized work and family policies are underused by career-oriented workers who fear stigma from use (Kossek, 2005). This gap between availability and use suggests that despite the increased formal adoption of policies, organizational adaptation to changing work and family demands and

increased need for customized work and family arrangements are not yet fully integrated in organizational cultures regarding expected EOR relationships.

Self-Direction

Management of both the employment relationship and the work–family relationship has changed to move increasingly away from being organizationally driven and paternalistic to employee-directed and characterized by personal responsibility and choice. Employees cannot expect to have their employer take care of their careers and ensure job security for life (Cappelli, 1999). They are expected to self-manage their career; seek feedback, learning, and education; and network to increase their employability (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & DeMarr, 1998). AQ6

Similarly, employees increasingly cannot assume their organization will be paternalistic and can be counted on to help employees manage and take care of their personal and family needs. It is up to employees to figure out what child care provider is best because companies do not want the liability of recommending a provider. Many maintain a "hands off" and "it is a personal choice" rhetoric on the difficult challenge that many parents or caregivers face in finding quality child or elder care. Organizations usually would not dream of taking steps to ensure that employees do not overwork, until maybe they have a heart attack or a mental health breakdown. If an employee chooses to work during nonwork hours to the extent that it is interfering with their health or their family relationships, the organization generally does not step in. It is up to many employees, especially professionals and managers, but increasingly employees in many occupations, to schedule their work hours and manage and direct how they use their time and energy. The organization will almost always want more investment.

Besides more self-direction in the scheduling of work hours via use of formal human resource policies, there is also a cultural shift in informal work–family boundary management, particularly involving employee self-direction of technology use (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008). Employees can customize how they use their time 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many professionals are socialized to have high involvement with their careers. They may choose to check e-mail or text a work colleague on the weekends and evenings. However, if they have a boss who expects a

work e-mail to be answered within 24 hours, then is the employee decision to monitor e-mail during their day off discretionary or expected behavior? Similarly if an employee has high psychological investment in family life, he or she may choose to allow children, family members, or friends to electronically contact them via working hours. However, if an employee is a single parent or has a partner who is not able to monitor caregiving issues during the work day, how much of this employee's decision to ask a child to contact them at work to let them know their homework is done or that they got home safely after school is a "choice" or a necessity?

Transactional and Short Term

Most writers in the EOR literature note that the employment relationship has changed in many firms to become more *transactional* and short term, focused on the classic short-term economic exchange Karl Marx once wrote about: the capitalistic purchase of labor's time for money as a short-term transactional economic issue. Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997) note that under a pure economic exchange, the organization is focused on the quasi-spot employment relationships with employees. Here the employment relationship is short term, closed ended, and limited to the immediate exchange. They contrast this with more *relational* approaches to the employment relationship. Under relational approaches, there is both an economic and a social exchange relationship, where the organization not only offers a short-term financial reward but also cares about employees' well-being and their careers. Unfortunately, the current global economic downturn has led many firms to shed jobs and move away from seeing the employment relationship as a long-term social exchange.

This similar trend away from relational to transactional social exchange has occurred in work and family relationships. Early work and family policies were adopted in the 1990s by larger organizations based on the idea of a long-term social exchange. The rhetoric was that despite their cost, there is a long-term benefit to the employer. The assumption was that if an employer built an on-site child care center, for example, users of the center would be grateful for this support. Employees' performance might increase, and they would have greater loyalty and be less likely to exit from the firm (cf. Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Another benefit was

increased extra-role behavior because users of work–life benefits would be more likely to make additional contributions. However, given rising labor costs and the rapid technological obsolescence occurring in many fields (e.g., information technology and engineering), a long-term investment in work and family support to enable workers to be retained is becoming less and less in the employer's interest. Employers are trying to do all they can to take actions to reduce labor costs by increasing copays and cutting investments in benefits, including costly work–family programs. Evidence of this is based on the fact that employer investment in on-site child care and infant care has not increased in the United States in the past decade (Kossek, 2006).

Although we believe that employer direct support of work and family relationships, such as increasing the quality and availability of child and elder care, is still vital, because there is a shortage of quality child and elder care, we do not see major growth in organizational support for direct support of employee caregiving, given the cost constraints. However, we do see increased employer interest in improving the implementation of formal (e.g., human resources [HR] policies) and informal (e.g., technology-enabled) boundary-blurring flexibility policies and informal practices, because we see these practices as having potential for closer alignment of organizational and employee interests on work–family issues; we focus the rest of this review on this area.

We also see increasing use of work–family flexibility policies and practices as changing the nature of work and family experiences to be more transactional and short term on a daily basis. The growth of boundary-blurring practices and policies has increased the fragmentation and frequency of work and family interactions. In the past, people would go to work and focus on work with few interruptions. Or they would focus on family and take a complete break from work on several-week vacations, during the weekends, or at night or go on a several-year leave of absence for infant care. Now we have more daily interruptions in work and family experiences. One can switch back and forth between a work text and a family text, resulting in fragmented and short-term attention to both. The quality of our work or family relationships, our attention, and our social experiences are more fragmented, with constant interruptions and demands. Technology has made the once solid boundaries between work and personal life more porous and permeable.

Summary

Flexible workplace policies (e.g., flextime, telework) and informal technological practices provide a good lens through which to understand transforming work, family, and employment relationships. These policies and practices capture the themes of boundarylessness, customization, self-direction, and transactional or fragmented relations. Workplace flexibility was defined by Kossek and Michel (2011) as (a) constructed as "different" from standard work hours, yet culturally integrated; (b) regarded as part of a mutual agreement between employee and employer either through use of recognized HR policy or informal supervisory work practice; and (c) experienced as being voluntary and employee initiated. Flexible work schedules have several design conditions related to schedule control: (a) flexibility to control the timing of work; (b) flexibility to control the place or location of work; (c) flexibility to control the amount of work or workload; and (d) flexibility to control the continuity of work. Although these types of flexibility are often studied separately, these design features are sometimes overlapping and used in tandem. For example, someone who teleworks often has increased control over both the timing and the location of work. Similarly, some practices such as telecommuting can involve use of a formal HR policy with informal boundary blurring.

WORK–FAMILY BOUNDARY-BLURRING FLEXIBILITY PRACTICES

Given that there are a lot of flexibility practices and policies, in order to develop our hypotheses on how they relate to the social exchange relationship of employment, we briefly define these attributes. The dimensions we focus on are (a) HR policy or job design feature; (b) types of flexibility available or used; (c) whether use is employer or employee driven; and (d) relation to boundary-blurring preferences.

Formal HR Policies and Informal Job Design Feature

Flexibility policies and practices vary in the degree to which they influence the nature of employee control over boundary blurring. The research

on boundary blurring aspects of flexible work practices is organized into two main streams. One stream sees boundary blurring as related to use of a *formal HR policy* such as flextime, and the other sees it as a job design feature (Kossek & Michel, 2011). For example, a flextime practice gives one ability to control the timing of when work is done and restructure work for family time. Telework affects the physical blurring of boundaries over where work is done. Reduced load or part-time work affects the amount of work done and the time one is engaged in the work role in terms of overall life space.

The other stream views flexible work schedules as a *job design characteristic* in terms of perceived flexibility control: the degree to which one perceives they have job autonomy or control over work schedule flexibility. Researchers refer to this measure as perceived *flexibility control* or *control over work time* (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). This perception is likely a function of job design features. For example, professional workers often have job independence built into the job as a feature, unlike blue color workers. The ability to have access to a personal cell phone at work, to receive personal or family texts at work, or to bring a work smart phone or laptop home is another job design feature.

Organizational or Employee Initiated

Flexibility policies and practice vary in the degree to which the invoking of their use is organizational or employee driven. Sometimes organizations do move to these flexible arrangements as a standardized work pattern and not as a customized work–family endeavor. A well-known example is that of IBM, which in the 1990s moved to a mobile workforce for its Global Services Division where over half its employees worked out of their homes or out of the clients' location as a business mobility and workplace costs savings strategy and to develop a global mobile workforce.

More often, an employee may request to work at home to be able to reduce the commute or have greater involvement in family or personal life roles. Which party initiates the use of flexibility will influence the degree to which flexibility use is an inducement or seen as a benefit to motivate the worker. We assume that when the use of a voluntary flexibility policy is employee initiated to meet a personal need or preference, it will be more likely to be a positive inducement or motivator to enhance commitment and loyalty in the employment relationship. When it is initiated to save

the company office space or building costs, it is less likely to be seen as a positive inducement or motivator.

In countries where there is formal legislation mandating access to or right to request flexible work policies (e.g., United Kingdom, Australia), the effectiveness of flexibility as an inducement might be different than in countries where organizations are not encouraged by the government to offer flexibility. If a high level of flexibility is common in the country (e.g., Sweden's nurturing of family life), flexibility itself might be less effective as an inducement to commit to the organization than in a country where schedule flexibility is less common or not widely encouraged by society (e.g., Japan's over-work achievement culture mandating separation). Thus, cultural contexts regarding work–family flexibility may affect the EOR differently.

Idiosyncratic Deals Versus Standardized Flexibility

More often than not, assessing positive effects on the employment relationship of flexibility use has become increasingly difficult. There are often many grey areas in capturing the availability of flexibility use and the degree to which the employer actually supports flexibility use. For example, organizations vary in corporate cultural support for flexibility. In some, they view flexibility as an idiosyncratic customized deal. Employees are rarely given flexibility access unless visible work–family needs are requested. For example, the only woman in the finance department might work part time to be able to have more involvement in her child's school. In other firms, work–family flexibility is normative. It is viewed as a normal way of working, as in the IBM example, where over half of the workforce was teleworking in a particular division. In the second example, perhaps flexibility is less of an inducement for performance because people do not see the flexibility as special support and its use is not motivationally linked. However, it may be an inducement to help retention as workers move toward an organization that has a teleworking option.

Policy Availability and Awareness and Use

One other key aspect of assessing the impact of flexibility on the employment relationship involves unpacking the gap between policy availability and awareness and use. From the employer perspective, this means the

employer is even willing to formally or informally *offer the opportunity* for employees to work flexibly. From the employee side, a key issue is that many employees lack awareness or understanding of available policies and practices, or if they are aware of them, they may not perceive the policies as "usable" (Eaton, 2003)—that is, they may feel that their supervisor will hold it against them if they use the flexibility policy. An example would be a professor who takes a maternity leave but then gets a lower pay raise because the department chair held it against the professor that the department had to find someone to cover the individual's previously scheduled class. So from the employee side, use or lack of use must be assessed taking into account whether the use can be done without hurting employability status or rewards. From the employer side, there is a usability issue too. The employer may question whether use of a flextime policy can be done without hurting productivity. Will it be harder to schedule meetings? Will the employee really work a full 8-hour day if the manager does not see the employee arrive and leave work? Does the infrastructure support work at nontraditional times? Will the employee use telework as a means of avoiding conversations that must take place in person?

Besides productivity implications of use, there are customization aspects as well. From the employee side, is the use of flexibility "standardized flex," or are employees truly able to adapt flexible work policies to their needs? Some companies have inflexible flexibility policies. An example would be flextime policies that workers can only use if they plan ahead and workers who have family needs characterized by unpredictability. In this case, flexibility practices are less likely to have a large a motivational impact because the design features do not fit the employee needs. Customization also occurs from the employer perspective. Is flexibility standardized throughout the organization? Or are different supervisors allowed and even encouraged to customize the flexibility policy to department needs? One may expect that customization may enhance the influence of the flexibility policy or the employment relationship

We focus our theorizing in the following section on only work–family flexibility policies and practices where the availability or use is voluntary or particularistic to meet employee needs and preferences. Such flexibility practices are not necessarily something that is given to all members in exactly the same way simply for being a member of the organization. Thus, our discussion is not focused on general practices such as established

vacation and sick time policies that are available to all employees and similar by job group.

EOR LINKAGES TO WORK–FAMILY FLEXIBILITY: THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Two main social exchange theoretical frameworks underlie EOR research that are relevant to organizational support of work–family flexibility: the inducements–contributions framework (March & Simon, 1958) and organizational and supervisor social support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Singlhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Seminal research on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) argues that when one party bestows a benefit on the other, the party receiving the benefit may choose whether or not to reciprocate a benefit in return or reciprocate equally. Organizational work–family support such as offering flextime adds a social exchange based on trust and risk to EOR power dynamics.

Inducement and General and Specific Social Support Theories

The inducement–contributions model (March & Simon, 1958) is based on the notion that the organization offers inducements in the employment exchange in return for employee contributions (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). From a work–family perspective, employees may be motivated to stay with an employer and work harder if the access or use of a work–family inducement is something they value and motivates more positive employment attitudes and behaviors. An employee may be less likely to turnover if he or she is a user of workplace flexibility or other work–family supports like child care (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Studies do show users of work–family benefits are more likely to make suggestions on how to improve the workplace (organization citizenship behaviors) (Lambert, 2000). Flexible work arrangements, especially scheduling flexibility, are a "boundary-spanning resource" (Hill et al., 2008) and a particularly important type of organizational support and empowerment because employees have autonomy to decide when and where to complete the tasks. The employer is likely to benefit from flexibility if the consequence

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of employee access or use of flexibility results in attitudes or behaviors the employer values. Currently, we assume that most organizations perceive they are generally overinvesting in the employment relationship and social exchange by supporting voluntary employee-initiated work–family flexibility programs. The reason for this is that as currently implemented, work–family flexibility policies are being offered as a general benefit or policy that any employee can use simply by virtue of being an employee or member of the firm. Use of the flexibility is not linked to discretionary performance or other behaviors the employer values such as the degree they are valued and trusted. It is currently not being effectively implemented as an inducement.

Proposition 1: *The more that an organization can ensure that the employee's access to a customized work–family flexibility practice is linked to their being valued and trusted, the more likely the flexibility practice use will be more strongly linked to serving the employer interests (e.g., productivity).*

Perceived organizational support is the extent to which members see the organization as caring about them and valuing their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Supervisor support is the degree to which members see their supervisor as supportive (Eisenberger et al., 2002). A recent meta-analysis of dozens of studies showed that in regard to work and family, organizational and supervisor support (e.g., perceived organizational support [POS], perceived supervisor support [PSS]) must be work–family specific (e.g., family supportive organizational perceptions [FSOP], family supportive supervisory perceptions [FSS]) (cf. Allen, 2001) to relate to lower work family conflict (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). FSOP is the idea that the organization specifically cares about positive work–family support. The Kossek et al. (in press) meta-analysis showed that general organizational support or supervisor support is not as strongly related to lower work–family conflict as family-specific organizational or supervisor support. These findings suggest that in the EOR relationship, employers and supervisors who are specifically focused on providing resources targeting work and family role integration, such as workplace flexibility practices, are likely to be seen as supportive of the work, family, and employment relationship. The meta-analysis also found a mediating relationship showing that supervisors are the mechanism through which

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POS operates. To enhance work–family relationships, supportive supervisors are key actors.

Proposition 2: *Perceptions of availability and usability. The link between individual perceptions of their ability to use available formal flexibility policies that enable boundary blurring without negatively impacting the employment relationship will be stronger when the perceived quality of the relationship with the supervisor is positive.*

Proposition 3: *Actual use. Individuals with more supportive supervisors are more likely to benefit from using flexibility policies and are less likely to turnover from the organization.*

Proposition 4: *Individuals with higher POS and FSOP will be more likely to use available flexibility policies. They will also be more likely to perceive their organizations as valuing positive work–life relationships as part of the employment relationship.*

The reason for Proposition 2 is that employees who have supportive supervisors who exhibit caring attitudes and behaviors regarding work–family flexibility will be more aware of existing policies and feel freer to be able to actually use needed flexibility without jeopardy. Research shows that supervisors are the mechanisms through which employees AQ10 develop family supportive perceptions (Kossek, Pichler, et al., 2011). The leader–member exchange relationship with the supervisor will moderate this relationship, such that those employees with more positive leader–member exchange relations will have built up more idiosyncratic credits, which Rousseau (1995, 2005) views as I-Deals. They will feel freer to be able to work in different ways because they are more likely to perceive that their supervisor values their work contributions and their family and personal well–being overall. The rationale for Proposition 3 is that employees with more supportive supervisors will feel more positive support from their supervisor, which will lead to higher POS. Employees will perceive they have more psychological and tangible resources to manage work–family conflict, which will result in lower turnover. The rationale for Proposition 4 is that employees are more likely to perceive that they work in organizational cultures supportive of work and family when they perceive they work for supervisors who are supportive of work–family balance. Research consistently shows that supervisors are the mechanisms through which employees perceive organizational support for

work and family, which ultimately affects work–family conflict (Kossek et al., in press).

A key assumption of EOR research is that inducements or supports to foster more discretionary behaviors lead to higher benefits in the social exchange. For flexibility policies to be an inducement, they must be valued by the employee as attractive in the employment exchange relationship. Research increasingly shows that workers vary in their preferences for use of formal flexibility policies (Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005), informal boundary-blurring job design (Kossek et al., 2006), and work styles (Kossek, Ruderman, et al., 2011). If flexibility is attractive to the worker, then access or use will result in greater motivation to reciprocate rewards to the organization, assuming the organization sees higher job satisfaction or increased loyalty and organizational citizenship behaviors as a true benefit.

Overall, work–family flexibility is increasingly an important inducement and support in the EOR relationship. It can serve many roles from social support to reduced work–family strain; it is a reward that is bestowed on the best workers as part of a social exchange of loyalty. Flexible work arrangements also provide a means for employees to self-regulate boundaries and determine and control when, where, and how they work. It can also allow workers to be able to adapt work schedules and location to fit their working preferences or preferences for boundary management—the degree to which work–life roles are separated or integrated—and vary these conditions as job and family demands wax and wane. However organizations and individuals must take into account power and social dynamics when implementing new ways of working.

Implementation Gap

Applying EOR theory to the rewards and consequences of the social exchange (Shore & Shore, 1995), the organization has far greater power to control the offering of rewards (access and use of flexibility policies) and outcomes (organizational trust and consequences of using policies) than the employee. What the organization cannot fully control is the extent to which the employee reciprocates access to work–family flexibility with increased behaviors and attitudes that benefit the organization. This imbalance is symbolized in the persistence of a critical HR implementation effectiveness gap, due to cultural resistance and EOR

power dynamics (Kossek, 2005). Our review of work–family research with an EOR lens leads us to surmise that the mere offering of flexibility is a necessary but insufficient condition to result in a positive social exchange for either organizations or individuals. A positive EOR interaction occurs when there is some balance between employer and employee interests.

Here lies most of the challenges with work–family flexibility and EOR. There has generally not been a highly favorable EOR investment–benefits ratio for either organizations or individuals for several reasons. First, most flexibility policies have an implementation problem where some policies such as telecommuting or part-time work or flextime are underused due to organizational cultural resistance. Many organizations do not see themselves as truly benefiting from giving more support to enable employees to give more time to the family role. The ability to allow individuals to be able to restructure the work role to accommodate personal or family life is not seen as serving employer interests. Managers often do not support use because they face productivity problems such as not knowing how to manage with reduced face time or increased coordination and equity issues among coworkers or not knowing how to redesign work systems to make them work well (Van Dyne, Kossek, & Lobel, 2007). Overall, from the organization perspective, the benefits of the policy (e.g., better job satisfaction, lower turnover, increased engagement) must be seen as outweighing the economic, administrative, and social costs.

A second factor related to implementation issues is that employees do not necessarily receive sufficient benefits either from mere access or use of flexibility. From the individual perspective, the existing research shows that work–family flexibility policies often have greater benefit to the organization than to the employee. This is particularly true in terms of their public relations value than in terms of actually helping employees solve work and family conflicts (Kossek et al., in press). Career-oriented employees are often afraid to fully use flexible policies for fear of losing jobs, receiving lower pay, or losing promotions. Some studies even suggest that if employees use flexibility policies, their work–family conflict is not reduced because flexibility policies may actually increase work–family conflict by promoting more involvement in caregiving without reducing work involvement (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). One study found that teleworkers had slightly higher work–family conflict

than nonteleworkers (Kossek et al., 2006). Perhaps some flexibility policies such as telework merely enable more work–family conflict by bringing all the stresses of work into the home. Overall, from the employee perspective, the use of a work–family flexibility policy must result in real benefits. These include real schedule control, lower work–family conflict, the ability to use a policy without backlash or career stigmatization, and the ability to keep up with job demands.

A third factor is that some flexibility policies like part-time work are seen as neither affordable nor practical. They are not economically feasible for employees who need the income (part time). From an employer perspective, many employers face legal barriers in prorating benefits and do not know how to restructure work systems to allow for part-time work (Kossek, 2006), or employers may not be able to structure the interdependence of the work so it can be engaged in during nonstandardized hours.

Power Dynamics of Formal and Informal Boundary-Blurring Flexibility

Besides the fact that organizations generally do not see themselves as benefiting from flexibility policies, many do not want to give employees more power in the employment relationship. From the organizational perspective, greater cultural support of work–family flexibility policies may change the power dynamics and truly give employees more control over working hours—an increasingly "contested terrain" (Edwards, 1979). Implementing flexibility policies in ways that allow employees to control when they work would substantially change the dynamics in the power relations between employee and employer. Because employers generally have the upper hand in the employment relationship, employers often resist full implementation because many do not want to give up power and see working conditions as a management right. They do not see a positive cost–benefit rationale. Allowing employees to have greater control over work schedules is seen by employers as overinvesting in the social exchange relationship (cf. Tsui et al., 1997) with employees, where the employee receives more benefit than the employer. AQ11

Ironically, unlike formal flexibility policies, technology-based boundary blurring such as through cell phones or laptops may be a power dynamics game changer to give more power to the individual. This

assumes technology is implemented in ways that the employee can control. Informally, boundary blurring through technology use, such as with a smart phone that allows an employee to receive a text message from a family member, may be much harder for employers to control. Employees can use these tools to enable more family interruptions to work, and it is harder for employers to monitor and delineate whether the employee is really working. For these reasons, it is possible that technology use to blur boundaries may allow employees to benefit more than formal flexibility policies.

Proposition 5: *Informal flexibility boundary blurring through personal hand-held display devices may offer employees more control to manage work–family relationships in ways that meet individual interests than formal flexibility policies, the use of which is employer determined.*

Work Style Preferences for Boundary-Blurring Preferences and the EOR

We argue that increasingly employer and employee flexibility influences and boundary preferences are overlapping and interacting. One research study (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008) conducted on employees in different organizational settings, from teleworkers in professional financial services and information technology (IT) consulting firms to individuals working in a manufacturing plant, found that employee perceptions of control were critical for well-being and determinants of how people viewed flexibility as working in the employment relationship. What mattered most for positive perceptions of work and family and employer relationships was whether people felt in control of their work boundaries and whether they were using flexibility in ways that fit their personal values for aligning work and personal life. Three types of individual flexibility preferences were identified: integrators, separators, and volleyers (Kossek & Lautsch, 2008). Integrators hop back and forth from work and family to focus on different tasks all day long. Separators like to separate work and personal life, keeping a clear boundary between the two. Some people are volleyers or cyclers, with periods of sometimes high mixing of work and family at defined times of the year and then periods of high separation with a focus on one role at a time. Under each of the three types, there are high boundary control and low boundary control profiles. Positive profiles have

high control over how boundaries are managed in ways that fit values. Under each type, there were happy and unhappy integrators (fusion lovers or reactors), separators (role firsters or captives), and volleyers (quality timers or job warriors). Later work by Kossek, Ruderman, et al. (2011) has provided evidence for this variation in boundary management profiles and shows they are linked to many critical outcomes from depressive symptoms to work engagement to dysfunctional work behaviors like surfing the Internet.

To produce positive EOR outcomes, organizations should not neglect both environmental and personal factors. When the environment and personal factors match well, it can synergize autonomous work motivation, which will lead to a positive EOR. We argue that preferences for boundary blurring can impact the individual's motivation. Individuals want to work in different ways in how they manage work–family relationships. When they are able to work in ways that fit their values for boundary management and they can control work–life boundary management, they are likely to be more motivated and have higher EOR satisfaction because either they feel the social exchange is more balanced or they perceive greater POS for work–life demands. Overall, we believe that the preceding review in this chapter suggests that the more that a flexibility policy or practice is an idiosyncratic deal designed to meet employee needs and preferences, the greater the strength of the relation to positive EOR employee attitudes and behaviors.

Proposition 6: *Greater customization by an individual employee to tailor a work–family flexibility practice to meet his or her needs will increase the strength of its relation to employee membership attitudes and behaviors related to the employment relationship (e.g., turnover; work–family conflict).*

Imagine an organization with employees with all different types of personal flexibility preferences, which is likely to be the case in an organization. When implementing a work–life flexibility policy, it is not surprising that different employees will have different reactions to the policy. Take telecommuting as an example. Whereas integrators may be excited about the option, separators may be concerned about "doing it all, all the time" and may not choose to use the work–life flexibility arrangement that the company provided. Not being able to take advantage of the flexible work

arrangement may lead to separators having lower motivation based on social exchange theory and lower perceived organizational support. In fact, a recent study by Hammer, Kossek, Bodner, Anger, and Zimmerman (2011) found that individuals with low work–family conflict at time 1 had worse outcomes at time 2 when their supervisors were trained to give greater flexibility support.

However, how different types of flexibility styles interact with each other can form a part of the organizational culture. If a separator works in an integrator-dominated culture, he or she will feel pressured because getting e-mails at 11 PM is not very pleasant for some people. Vice versa, if an integrator works in a separator-dominated culture, he or she will feel frustrated because he or she may not get the support needed during after-work hours. With a good match between environment and individual flexibility preference, employees in the environment will be more motivated to work because they get the support they need. We believe that the greater the fit is between the type of flexibility policy offered and individual preferences for boundary blurring, the more that employees will view the flexibility policy as an inducement to motivate positive work behaviors. For example, separators who have a strong family identity may prefer part-time work because it allows them to focus on work when at work and family when at home without boundary crossing. Integrators will prefer telework and flextime as inducements because these allow them to blur boundaries. Cyclers/volleyers' preferences for telework and flextime use and the degree to which use of these policies acts as an inducement may vary depending on the time of the year. For example, for a businessperson who teleworks, telecommuting may be less attractive if his or her school-age children are now home for the summer and the house can no longer be used as an office. We believe that there is growing variation in how workers want to manage work and personal life relationships and that employers are not fully supporting this variation. The EOR would be enriched if policies and practices were implemented in ways that met employee preferences at the same time that discretionary performance or positive work behaviors for use were supported.

Proposition 7: *Individual preferences for boundary blurring will moderate the degree to which different types of flexibility will be viewed as an inducement.*

We believe that with employers' greater ability to control the power dynamics of how flexibility policies are implemented to date, flexibility policies have not been implemented with a mutual investment approach. Given this chapter's discussion that people want to work in different ways they can control and the importance of mutual EOR investment, we conclude with several final propositions covering the spectrum of preferences for boundary blurring:

Proposition 8A: *Individual performance will be highest when there is equal respect for times the employer prefers separation and for times the employee prefers separation. Assuming employees perceive that they can control boundaries style enactment, these effects will be strongest for employees favoring a separator style.* AQ12

Employee–organization policies that allow for a clear separation between work and family will be preferred by those employees who prefer separation as a boundary management strategy. When both the individual and the organization prefer the same separator strategy, performance will be impacted positively. Similarly, when the organization and the individual have different preferred values regarding separation, there will be negative impacts.

Proposition 8B: *Individual performance is likely to be highest when both the organization and the employee feel they are mutually investing in the work–family flexibility, such that there are generally equal trade-offs of work boundary blurring interrupting family and family boundary blurring interrupting work. Assuming employees perceive that they can control boundary crossings, these effects will be strongest for employees favoring an integration style.* AQ13

We argue that employee–organization policies that allow and encourage the blurring of boundaries will be most beneficial for employees who favor this style. It is also important that equal trade-offs are perceived and that the individual feels control over when a blurring style is used. There will be negative impacts when the individual and the organization have discrepant styles regarding integration. A clear example of when this lack of alignment occurs might be when an employee takes a sick child to work thinking that is acceptable to the organization when it is not. Similarly,

there is a lack of congruence when a boss in an integrator culture asks a worker valuing separation to unexpectedly prepare a presentation over the weekend.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Looking across the literatures focusing on the changing EOR and work and family offers several promising avenues for further interweaving of the literatures. Both literatures deal with the very nature of the relationships of individuals to their work and the importance of the processes that help individuals and organizations accommodate to one another. EOR emphasizes specific exchanges between the employee and the organization, whereas the work and family literature focuses specifically on the boundary between the employee and the organization. EOR focuses on the mechanisms of inducements and contributions influencing this relationship, whereas work and family literature looks at the roots of conflicts between roles and practices for regulating transitions between work and family domains. Although there has been some overlap of ideas, these two literatures diverge in focus. Looking at both literatures together yields a better understanding of the relationship between individual requirements and organizational resources and enriches the understanding of how flexible work policies can be used to improve person–organization relationships.

For example, the work–family literature emphasizes the importance of individual preferences for informal flexibility in blurring boundaries. Kossek and Lautsch (2008) have argued that optimal boundary arrangements between work and family are a matter of individual preference. Positive EOR is likely to result when employees can work in ways that suit their values and preferences for informal boundary blurring or separation. The work by Kossek and Lautsch clarifies the many ways preferences in flexibility differ and, as such, how they can be used as inducements in I-Deals. In doing so, it provides organizations with a richer understanding of the many ways flexibility can be used as a reward or a recruitment or retention tool. To be effective as an inducement, flexibility practices must recognize individual differences.

Using the EOR perspective to look at the work–family literature suggests the importance of considering the work–family boundary as a negotiated deal. EOR research does a better job of recognizing that work outcomes are influenced by exchanges of inducements and contributions. The EOR literature offers organizations a rich understanding as to how flexibility can be negotiated. It can provide guidance for organizations looking to use flexibility as a tool of recruitment, reward, and retention. Similarly, it can provide individuals with a better understanding of how to request flexible arrangements—by pointing out how flexibility is an inducement for commitment.

Future trends point to additional research needs. For example, the increase in life spans in many Western countries means that elder care will have a growing impact on both relationships between the employee and the organization and the competing demands of work and family. Similarly, the technology revolution is resulting in a diversity of ways to work and to structure tasks, time frames, and the nature of collaboration, all of which have continued potential to transform the employment relationship, as well as relationships between work and other roles.

The joint investigation of country differences in terms of cultural values and work–family legislation could further enrich integration of the two literatures. Future research should consider examination of cultural influences on the work–life issues relevant to the EOR at many levels: the institutional national public policy level, the organizational level, and the supervisory level. An example of a future research issue at the institutional level comes from Germany. Unlike the United States where flexibility policies are normally codified in formal and informal company policies, in Germany, flexibility can be regulated in the individual contracts in some German organizations (Homung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008). Individuals can bargain with the employer on the terms of flexibility that they are going to receive in the contracts. Homung et al. (2008) found that the flexibility in work schedules is negatively related to the work–family conflict. Do work–life outcomes differ if access to policies is regulated by contracts and law or employer policies?

At the organizational level, there is cross-cultural variation in how organizations take up innovative employment practices to support employees as they age, and work–life practices may alter the EOR relationship over the life course. One interesting flexibility practice for older employees who are at least 58 years old comes from Sweden. Some firms

offer an 80/90/100 employment model, which means "working 80% of normal working hours for 90% of normal pay and a 100% contribution" (Winkelmann-Gleed, 2009). Participating firms found this practice, which was used by 20% of eligible workers, to be cost neutral because it "reduced sick leave and helped lessen rehabilitation costs" (Winkelmann-Gleed, 2009).

The role of the supervisor in managing work–life-relevant EOR also varies. For example, compared to the United States, in China, the supervisor's control over employees' personal life is much greater. Traditionally, Chinese supervisors of the nation-owned companies have some control over employees' marriage plans. (In order to get married, employee needs to get approval from their company/supervisors, even though this could be "just perfunctory in some firms.") As China globalizes and adopts some Western practices, will this lessen the supervisory influence on employees' nonwork lives?

In sum, the negotiated reality that is at the heart of the exchange process can be very much influenced by the cultural and national boundary conditions set by governing bodies with regard to labor and family affairs. Flexibility as an inducement can be better understood by looking at the relationship in countries where the governments promote flexibility and in those countries where they do not. Looking at the work–family and EOR perspectives together within and between nations and cultures holds greater promise for helping organizations understand the impact of our changing world than either perspective in isolation.

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Author Queries

AQ1: Please confirm that sentence beginning "The number of single-person households is increasing…" is correct as meant.

AQ2: Please provide reference and page number for the quoted material in the following sentence: Over half of employees state that "they often or very often worked on too many tasks and multi-tasked too much."

AQ3: Please include page number for Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004 quote.

AQ4: There is no reference in the reference list for the following citation: Boswell, Colvin, & Darnold, 2008. Please either provide a reference and page number of quoted material.

AQ5: Please include page numbers for quotes in sentence beginning "Those women who stayed…"

AQ6: Please confirm that the sentence beginning "Management of both the employment…" is correct as edited.

AQ7: There is no reference in the reference list for the Hill et al., 2008, reference. Please provide a reference for this citation and the page number for quoted material.

AQ8: There is no reference in the reference list for the Allen, 2001, reference. Please provide a reference for this citation.

AQ9: There is no reference in the reference list for the Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011, reference. Please provide a reference for this citation.

AQ10: Please confirm that Kossek, Pichler, et al., 2011, reference is the correct reference cited in sentence beginning "Research show that supervisors. …"

AQ11: Sentence beginning "From the organizational perspective, greater cultural support of work–family flexibility policies..." okay as edited?

AQ12: Proposition 8A okay as edited?

AQ13: Proposition 8B okay as edited?

AQ14: Please provide exact page number for the two Winkelmann-Gleed, 2009 quotes.

AQ15: The Grotto and Lyness, 2010, reference was not cited in text. Please cite reference or delete reference from reference list.

AQ16: Please update the Kossek, Baltes, & Mathews, in press, reference, if possible.

AQ17: Porter et al., 2004, reference was not cited in text. Please either cite reference or delete from reference list.