Less need to be there: Cross-level effects of work practices that support work-life flexibility and enhance group processes and group-level OCB

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Less need to be there: Cross-level effects of work practices that support work-life flexibility and enhance group processes and group-level OCB

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ABSTRACT

Flexible work arrangements that give employees more control over when and where they work (such as part-time, flextime, and flexplace) have resulted in growing workplace trends of reduced face time, namely less visible physical time at the workplace. Most previous writings highlight negative effects on work group processes and effectiveness. In contrast, we develop a cross-level model specifying facilitating work practices that enhance group processes and effectiveness. These work practices: collaborative time management, re-definition of work contributions, proactive availability, and strategic self-presentation enhance overall awareness of others' needs in the group and overall caring about group goals, reduce process losses, and enhance group-level organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Our model presents testable propositions to guide empirical research on potentially positive effects of individual reduced face time on group outcomes.

KEYWORDS

cross-level effects on group ▪ discretionary behavior ▪ enhanced group effectiveness ▪ group processes ▪ new ways of working ▪ organizational citizenship behavior

'Face time' is employee physical time at the workplace that is observed by co-workers, supervisors, and customers (Brubaker et al., 1999). Face time includes face-to-face interaction, working in the presence of others (Goffman, 1963), and 'being there' at work (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). In many organizations, time seen at work is equated with productivity (Munck, 2001). Consequently, many professionals experience pressure to manage their face time and be present when and where their peers and supervisors work (Hooks & Higgs, 2002).

An interesting countervailing trend to this social norm is the growing use of employee-initiated flexible work arrangements – such as part-time, flextime, and flexplace – that has led to a general widespread reduction in face time for many employees (Kossek & Van Dyne, in press). This is a particularly important organizational phenomenon – especially for professionals who are typically expected to work as many hours as it takes to get the work done – without punching a time clock or being paid for overtime (Kossek & Lee, 2005). Professionals are able to self-regulate work hours and effort as they manage their identities at work (Ibarra, 1999) and are cognizant that face time is socially constructed as a sign of professional, career, and job commitment (Munck, 2001). Today, there is growing ambiguity about how to manage employees under these flexible work arrangements. Thus, employers and professionals need new ways to manage social systems that enhance work unit effectiveness while facilitating reduced face time.

The increase in reduced face time is a function of three forces: technological advances that facilitate nontraditional work arrangements; competitive pressures that require employees to work nontraditional days and hours; and professionals who seek more job flexibility (Bailyn, 2006; Gottlieb et al., 1998; Kossek et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2000; Perlow, 1998). Many of the same competitive forces have simultaneously created pressures for employees to go beyond minimum requirements and perform organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) that is not explicitly required by their jobs but which in aggregate promotes organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Organ, 1988).

To date, most research on flexible work arrangements has focused on individual users (see O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Rothausen, 1994; Trent et al., 1994) and tends to highlight benefits to individual users (e.g. see reviews by Baltes et al., 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Lobel, 1999). Studies suggesting positive outcomes from the presence or use of flexible work arrangements include greater loyalty (Roehling et al., 2001), more extra-role behavior such as employee suggestions (Lambert, 2000), greater control and lower strain (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), lower turnover intentions (Rothausen, 1994), job satisfaction (Hill et al., 1998), lower absenteeism (Dalton & Mesch, 1990),

higher commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995), increased organizational productivity (Konrad & Mangel, 2000), and increased organizational performance (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). For example, one empirical study that focused specifically on professionals found that accountants working under flexible arrangements reported higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions, burnout, and stress (Almer & Kaplan, 2002).

Other research, however, fails to show performance benefits (Dunham et al., 1987; Hill et al., 1998; Judiesch & Lynness, 1999) and sometimes demonstrates higher work–family conflict for users of work-life policies as well as backlash from co-workers (Rothausen et al., 1998). In reviewing the flexibility literature, scholars have generally concluded that the potential benefits of flexibility have not been fully realized and more theory building and research are needed (Avery & Zabel, 2001; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Perlow, 1997). In particular, Baltes and colleagues' (1999) meta-analysis noted that flexibility has limited positive benefits for professionals who already have job autonomy and control built into their job design.

In our work, we propose that performance decrements associated with flexible work arrangements stem from the coordination and motivation challenges that individual flexibility poses for professionals in the work group. To overcome these challenges, we need cross-level theory and research on ways that reduced face time influences work group peers and group processes (for exceptions, see Kossek et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2002). In this article, we address this need by focusing on bottom-up cross-level effects. In other words, we explain how individual use of flexibility has cross-level implications for the groups in which these individuals are embedded (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). As such, we emphasize the group context surrounding an individual's decision to use flexibility. This approach should complement past research, which has tended to examine top-down cross-level effects, such as individual employee responses to flexibility options offered by the organization. Our goal is to enrich the literature by identifying facilitative work practices that can enhance group processes and effectiveness. Focusing on these intermediate outcomes should contribute to future research by specifying ways in which flexible work arrangements can lead to positive outcomes for individual users as well as for work group peers and managers.

We focus on bottom-up processes in groups of professionals holding jobs characterized by high task interdependence for three reasons. First, organizations are increasingly using groups to coordinate the work of professionals, such as accountants, financial analysts, auditors, engineers, programmers, lawyers, and consultants. Groups are ubiquitous and form the most proximal context for individuals in their jobs. In addition, an increasing number of organizations require professionals to coordinate their work

efforts with peers (Ilgen, 1999). With fewer hierarchical levels and fewer managers due to downsizing and reorganization, professionals must plan, organize, and monitor their work jointly to achieve team goals. When professionals work interdependently in teams, face time is especially salient and has implications for team coordination, motivation, and performance. Second, organizations often find it necessary to offer flexibility to attract and retain highly qualified professionals. In some cases, this is because those with scarce skills demand flexibility. In other cases, it is because the personal situation and preferences of valued employees change and they need flexibility (Freidson, 1986; Lee et al., 2000). Third, the economic value of time is explicit for non-professionals (employees who are paid by the hour). In contrast, the value of time is more ambiguous for professionals (Kalleberg & Epstein, 2001; Zerubavel, 1981) who are exempt from overtime, are not paid by the hour, and do not automatically receive additional pay for exceeding standard hours. Similarly, professionals typically do not receive less pay for working fewer hours. As a result, the value of inputs and outcomes for these professionals is not explicit and instead is socially constructed (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). In sum, considering bottom-up cross-level processes in interdependent groups of professionals makes issues associated with individual use of flexible work arrangements especially salient to peers, groups, and organizations.

Since individual flexibility typically triggers reduced face time, 'not being there' can have cross-level effects on group processes and outcomes (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). Accordingly, it is important to consider group- and individual-level work practices that have the potential to enhance group-level coordination, motivation, and OCB performance when professionals have reduced face time. In developing our model, we build on Lambert's (2000) research that investigated the effects of perceived usefulness and actual use of work-life benefits on individual OCB (e.g. likelihood of attending a quality meeting or making suggestions). Our assumption is that giving professionals more control over the integration of work and life has potential for process losses *and* potential for positive social benefits that go beyond the immediate personal use of flexibility. Figure 1 summarizes the proposed relationships.

The remainder of our article is structured as follows. We first describe the group-level process losses that can occur when interdependent professionals reduce their face time at work. We then specify individual- and group-level facilitating work practices that mitigate potential negative effects of reduced face time on group processes of coordination and motivation. Then we integrate the components of our model by considering the overall

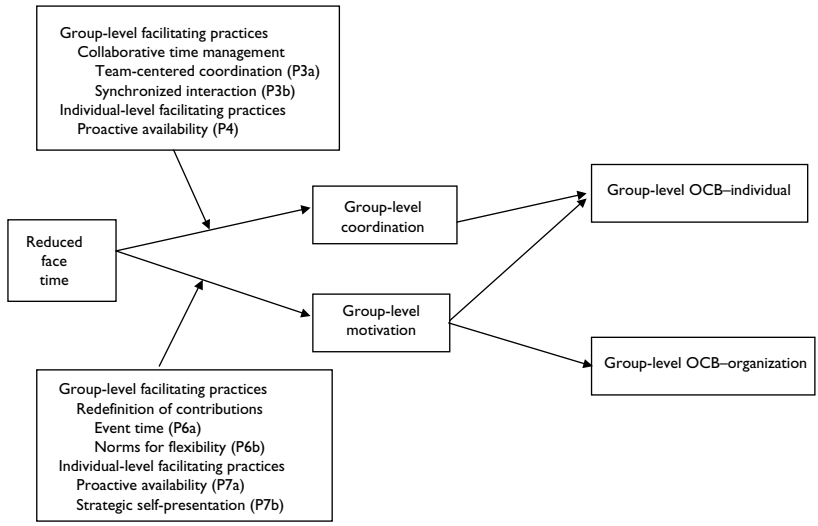

Figure 1 Reduced face time, facilitating work practices, and group-level organizational citizenship

effects of reduced face time on group-level OCB. Overall, our model aims to guide future research on the cross-level effects of reduced face time.

Individual user reduced face time and cross-level group effects

Levine and Moreland (1998) and Steiner (1972) emphasized group coordination and group motivation as the two most important group processes that influence effective transformation of resources into group outcomes. Group coordination is the interaction among group members that is required to perform the job when work cannot be done alone (Wageman, 1995). Group motivation is the overall intensity, direction, and persistence of effort that group members apply to group tasks and group goals (Levine & Moreland, 1998). According to Hackman (2002) and Steiner (1972), group resources (e.g. task type, context, tangible and intangible assets, member knowledge, skills, and abilities) provide opportunities and constraints that influence group outcomes. Whether or not a particular group achieves its potential is a function of group processes – what the group does with its resources in terms of coordination and motivation. Group processes can result in positive synergy (process gains based on high quality processes of coordination or

motivation), neutral effects (maintenance of status quo), or negative synergy (process losses when group processes interfere with group outcomes; Hackman, 2002).

Group-level coordination

We start by considering cross-level effects of reduced face time on group-level coordination. Coordination losses occur when group member contributions are not combined optimally (e.g. due to improper sequencing of tasks or interruptions in workflow). Coordination losses result from misunderstanding and production-blocking which occur in large groups when communication links among individuals increase exponentially (Hackman, 2002). In most work groups, conversion of inputs to outputs requires shared awareness, sequencing, and coordination among interdependent group members. These processes are significantly influenced by structural characteristics of how work is organized (Saavedra et al., 1993).

When professional employees use flexibility, reduced face time can create structural challenges that reduce overall awareness of the needs of others in the group. Structural challenges refer to the coordination problems that can arise when team members have different work schedules, times, and places and accordingly are less aware of others' needs. This makes it more difficult to coordinate work (Rapoport et al., 2002) for two basic reasons. First, awareness is lower because less face-to-face interaction reduces the quantity and quality of communication (Graetz et al., 1998). Indirect communication among peers can reduce clarity and increase misunderstanding because the richness of communication is decreased (Daft & Lengel, 1984; DePaulo & Friedman, 1998) and non-verbal cues (e.g. tone, gestures, and facial expressions) are lost (Ekman & Oster, 1979). Second, reduced face time typically increases asynchronous communication where group members make contributions at different times, possibly on different topics (Burgoon et al., 2002). Asynchronous communication reduces awareness based on delayed feedback, pauses, and lack of non-verbal cues (McGrath, 1991). In sum, reduced face time creates structural barriers that change group communication processes and reduce the overall level of shared awareness of others' needs in the group.

The literature includes a number of examples of coordination process losses. For example, Cooper and Kurland (2002) described professional isolation and reduced informal communication as challenges for those who work at remote locations. Consistent with this, a manager in a Catalyst (1997) study reported 'You can either be work-at-home or on some off-hour

shift, basically out of contact with everything that's going on; ensuring that you are part of the team has been very difficult, and that's been a common complaint among team members' (p. 62). Invisible employees can create production blockages and make overall coordination of work within the group more difficult (Perlow, 2001). Consistent with this, another Catalyst participant (1997) reported 'It is incredibly frustrating because she [the user] is . . . rigidly sticking to this part-time plan. As a result, all the other people who are working around this associate are paying the price' (p. 62).

In situations such as these, where flexibility options have been added to traditional management systems without also adding new coordination mechanisms, reduced face time can create structural barriers that detract from group coordination processes. Thus, we predict negative cross-level effects of individual reduced face time on group-level coordination (see Figure 1).

> *P1*: Individual reduced face time has a negative cross-level effect on group coordination.

Group-level motivation

We now consider cross-level effects of individual reduced face time on group motivation. Motivation losses occur when group members fail to exert maximal effort (Steiner, 1972). This includes social loafing where group members withhold effort because they lack evidence that others are contributing. It also includes contributing less to avoid being taken advantage of by others. Motivation in groups is significantly influenced by social comparison, affective reactions, and the overall sense of shared caring about group goals. For example, Shamir (1990) conceptualized group motivation based on the value-expectancy framework (Vroom, 1964) where group members decide if they care enough to exert effort directed at collective goals.

When professional employees have reduced face time, this can create affective challenges that reduce overall caring (by others in the group) about group goals. Affective challenges refer to the motivation problems that can arise when team members have different work schedules, times, and places and accordingly may seem to care less about group goals. This makes it challenging to manage group motivation processes (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003) for at least two reasons. First, reduced face time creates uncertainty about capabilities, commitment, and the overall level of caring in the group. Second, those who do not use flexibility may feel that their workload has increased. Since employees do not like feeling they are 'suckers' who are

taken advantage of by invisible peers (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993; Salomon, 1995), resentment can cause motivational challenges in the group. Thus, individual reduced face time can trigger negative affective responses that reduce the overall level of caring in the group directed at group goals and group outcomes.

The literature includes salient examples of motivational process losses. For example, a Catalyst (1997) participant commented 'When people are here very late at night, it's probably natural to be resentful that they're here and [the user] is not' (p. 57). Similarly, another participant commented 'I think a lot of the reasons for working at home are selfish; you don't have to drive in, shave, you can be home as soon as your shift is over' (p. 57). Consistent with this, Grover (1991) emphasized negative peer reactions and low motivation in employees who believed they would not use flexibility. Thus, when social comparisons are negative, individual use of flexibility options can trigger negative affective challenges that detract from group motivation processes. Accordingly, we predict negative cross-level effects of individual reduced face time on group-level motivation.

> *P2*: Individual reduced face time has a negative cross-level effect on group motivation.

Our first two propositions have described negative, bottom-up cross-level effects. This is consistent with existing literature and empirical findings that highlight the difficulties and challenges that confront individuals and groups when some members use flexibility (Corwin et al., 2001; Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Perlow, 1998, 1999). For example, even though Perlow described the short-term benefits of specific interventions that facilitated individual flexibility, employees were not able to sustain the interventions over time and returned to past practices of interrupting each other throughout the day. Like Corwin and colleagues (2001), however, we adopt a more positive approach and emphasize facilitating factors that have the *potential* to minimize and/or eliminate process losses.

Thus, our purpose is to consider ways in which *combined* group and individual facilitating factors *have the potential* to help employees and their work groups successfully cope with the challenges of flexibility. We do not mean to imply that these interventions would be easy to implement or that they would automatically be successful. Instead, our goal is to advance theory by building on existing work to propose a complex set of approaches that should help individuals and groups deal with the challenges presented in propositions 1 and 2. Although it would be possible to focus at length on potential problems and reasons why these facilitating factors might not work, that is not our objective.

Collaborative time management

Scholars who consider group and organizational implications of reduced face time (e.g. Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Kossek et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2000) emphasize the critical importance of actively managing the implementation of these new ways of working. Building on this point, we describe work practices that *have the potential* to facilitate coordination in groups where individual employees have reduced face time. Perlow (1999, 2001) described collaborative approaches to time management as critical steps that professional groups can use to enhance overall interaction and awareness of the needs of others in the group, while avoiding demands for excessive face time, rigid work schedules, excessive work hours, disruptive interruptions, routine weekend overtime, cancelled vacation plans, and overall 'time famine'. Building on this work, we describe two forms of collaborative time management: team-centered coordination (Perlow, 2001) and synchronized interaction (Perlow, 1999) as facilitating work practices that enhance group coordination. Table 1 summarizes these facilitating work practices.

Table 1 Reduced face time and facilitating work practices

Facilitating work practices	*Implications for group processes*	*Key causal mechanism*	*Implications for group OCB*
Group facilitating work practices			
1. Collaborative time management Team-centered coordination Synchronized Interaction	Group coordination	Awareness of others' needs in the group	OCBI
2. Redefinition of contributions Event time Norms for flexibility	Group motivation	Caring about goals of the group	OCBI and OCBO
Individual facilitating work practices			
3. Proactive availability	Group coordination and	Awareness of others' needs in the group	OCBI
	Group motivation	Caring about goals of the group	OCBI and OCBO
4. Strategic self-presentation	Group motivation	Caring about goals of the group	OCBI and OCBO

Team-centered coordination

A key conclusion of Perlow's (2001) in-depth study of professional groups was that team-centered coordination best facilitates interdependence and completion of work projects while simultaneously allowing individual employees to use flexible work arrangements. In team-centered coordination, all group members are generalists and are cross-trained. There is high substitutability, an emphasis on group problem solving, and the group leader is a group member. This enhances shared awareness so each professional does not need to be present at the same time and does not need to work excessively long hours on an ongoing basis. Team-centered coordination contrasts with manager-centered coordination where the manager coordinates work and all employees must be present during regular work hours. It also contrasts with expertise-centered coordination where individual group members must coordinate their work with each other. Unlike manager-centered or expertise-centered coordination, which emphasize long hours, pressure to 'be there', and a lot of emphasis on face time, team-centered coordination allows employees to work a flexible number of hours (reduced workload), flextime (flexible timing of work), and flexplace (flexible location of work).

Synchronized interaction

In another study of professional work groups, Perlow (1999) identified synchronized interaction – defined as a work practice where group members specify when interaction should occur and when individual contributor work should occur – as a key technique that allows professionals uninterrupted time for individual cognitive activities, while simultaneously assuring adequate time and availability for group collaborative activities. This reduces disruptive interruptions so professionals have longer blocks of time to concentrate individually on their 'real work'. In contrast, prior to use of collaborative time management, engineers spontaneously interrupted each other – creating fragmented days, a crisis mentality, pressure to be present, and a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle where employees had little flexibility and felt they never had adequate time to complete their own work. In sum, synchronized interaction allows greater flexibility in number of hours worked, timing of work, and location of work.

Collaborative time management and group coordination

Based on Perlow's (2001) research, we propose that collaborative time management work practices facilitate effective use of individual flexibility and enhance group coordination. For example, if a group adopts team-centered

coordination, professionals need not work during the same hours in the same place. Instead, cross-training, substitutability, and group problem solving provide overall coordination and shared awareness of others' needs at the group-level, even if individuals have reduced face time. Likewise, if a group adopts the collaborative time management work practice of synchronized interaction, all group members need not be present simultaneously during all work hours. Instead, having an agreed upon time for interaction and joint problem solving facilitates group coordination, even if individual employees have reduced face time.

In sum, as depicted in Figure 1, we predict that collaborative time management work practices will moderate the cross-level relationship between individual reduced face time and group coordination, such that there will be fewer process losses associated with individual use of flexibility and this will weaken the negative relationship between individual reduced face time and group coordination. Restated, collaborative time management work practices function as mitigating forces that allow individual flexibility while minimizing negative effects of individual reduced face time on overall coordination in the group. Thus,

> *P3*: Group-level work practices of collaborative time management (3a: team-centered coordination; 3b: synchronized interaction) influence the relationship between individual reduced face time and group coordination, such that the effect of reduced face time is weaker when collaborative time management is high (compared to low).

Individual user proactive availability and group coordination

Group-level work practices, however, are not adequate interventions to insure overall group coordination when employees have reduced face time. In addition, the behavior of professionals who use flexibility options is also critically important. Here, we draw on Lawrence and Corwin (2003) to discuss the benefits of user proactive availability. Those who use flexibility options and have reduced face time must be proactive to avoid coordination problems and overcome the challenges of integrating their work with that of the group. They need to be available (physically or electronically) in a timely manner for key events and rituals; they need to be proactive to anticipate and coordinate work with the group.

When individuals with reduced face time demonstrate proactive availability by initiating formal and informal communication and by being flexible (Corwin et al., 2001), this heightens shared awareness among group members, helps coordinate temporal interactions in the group, and reduces

coordination challenges such as those experienced in virtual teams and by those who do not always work in face-to-face proximity (Kurland & Egan, 1999; McGrath, 1991). For example, a Catalyst (1997) study described one manager's view of responsiveness: 'I have one woman who works four days a week but it's variable depending on our needs. She sets it herself and it centers on the work she needs to get done . . . She also checks her messages three to four times' a day (p. 67). Consistent with this, Lee and Kossek (2004) showed that those who were proactively responsive were able to sustain successful part-time work arrangements over time. In sum, proactive availability allows individual flexibility, while minimizing negative effects of reduced face time on overall coordination in the group. In other words, the individual work practice of proactive availability moderates the cross-level relationship between individual employee reduced face time and group coordination, such that there will be fewer process losses associated with reduced face time and this will weaken the negative relationship between individual reduced face time and group coordination. Accordingly, as illustrated in Figure 1,

> *P4*: The individual user work practice of proactive availability influences the relationship between reduced face time and group coordination, such that the effect of reduced face time is weaker when user proactive availability is high (compared to low).

Acknowledging the importance of both group and individual facilitating work practices, we suggest that the combined effects of group-level collaborative time management and individual user proactive availability will be stronger than the effects of either alone. Combining the effects of P3 and P4, we propose that the joint effects of group and individual facilitating work practices will neutralize (remove) any negative effect of reduced face time on group coordination. In other words, combined group and individual facilitating practices substitute for face time, such that individual use of flexibility does not detract from group coordination processes. Figure 2 illustrates the form of this proposed interaction, showing a weaker relationship (P3/P4) in the presence of one facilitating factor (either group or individual) and no relationship (no decrease in coordination) when both individual and group facilitating factors are present (P5).

Rapoport and colleagues' (2002) description of collaborative research teams illustrates the benefits of combined group-level collaborative time management and individual-level proactive availability. These groups agreed on work norms that supported 'work focused flextime' where meetings were scheduled during core work hours (e.g. 9:30–3:00) and individuals took the

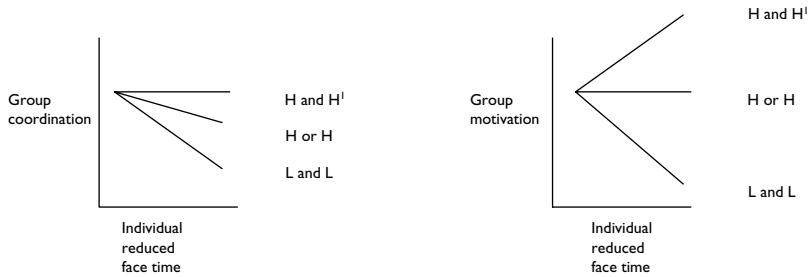

Figure 2 Reduced face time and the combined effects of facilitating work practices
Notes: [1] H and H = High individual and group facilitating work practices;
H or H = High individual or group facilitating work practices;
L and L = Low individual and group facilitating work practices.

initiative to keep others informed, especially if they were using flexibility options that reduce their face time. Consistent with this, we predict the joint effects of group and individual facilitating work practices allow groups to maintain high quality group coordination, even when individuals have reduced face time.

> *P5*: The combined effects of group-level facilitating work practices (collaborative time management) and individual-level facilitating work practices (user proactive availability) change the nature of the relationship between reduced face time and group coordination, such that the effect of reduced face time on coordination is neutral when both group and individual facilitating factors are present.

Redefinition of work contributions

We now shift our focus to facilitating work practices that enhance group motivation – the second group process highlighted by Levine and Moreland (1998). Lawrence and Corwin (2003) emphasized group sense-making about work and work contributions. We suggest these are key work practices that influence overall group commitment and caring about group goals while facilitating individual member use of flexibility options and reduced face time. Drawing on Lawrence and Corwin we describe two work practices that re-define the meaning of work contributions: event time (rather than clock time or face time) and norms for flexibility (rather than rigid expectations for equal inputs and outcomes). In both cases, we propose that sense-making practices that redefine work contributions reduce feelings of uncertainty,

anger, and frustration; and thus enhance caring and group motivation. Table 1 summarizes these facilitating work practices.

Event time

Event time emphasizes interaction rituals (such as regular meetings, coffee breaks, fantasy football, birthday celebrations, cookie exchanges, and drinks after work). These routine and recurring events have symbolic meaning and allow group members to negotiate shared interpretations of group membership and expected member involvement. In contrast, when social construction of the meaning of work marginalizes those who do not work full time, social contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994) can be negative and the group can develop a negative affective tone (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Perlow, 1999). For example, if colleagues expect work group peers to show their commitment by being 'always available' and 'ever present' (Zerubavel, 1981), use of flexibility and reduced face time can trigger negative group mood (Bartel & Saavedra, 2000). Thus, when groups emphasize event time as more important than constant face time (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003), it is more likely that the group will have a positive affective tone.

According to Thompson and Bunderson (2001), the subjective meaning of time is more significant than actual number of hours worked face to face. If groups emphasize event time work practices (being present and fully involved in key group interaction rituals) as more important than constant face time (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003) and group members participate in key interaction rituals, then differences in workload, work schedule, and work place (Kossek & Van Dyne, in press) become less salient. Instead, participation in key interaction rituals symbolizes commitment to the group and overall caring about group goals and group outcomes.

Norms for flexibility

When members use flexible work arrangements, groups may need to establish new work norms for defining equitable contributions (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). According to equity theory (Adams, 1965), individuals make social comparisons of relative inputs and outcomes in judging whether their own outcomes are fair. Perceived equity sustains positive feelings, while perceived inequity creates frustration. When group norms emphasize flexibility (part-time, flextime, flexplace) in valued contributions, groups negotiate shared understandings of 'just' or 'fair' contributions (Greenberg et al., 1991; Grover, 1991). In other words, they redefine the meaning of equitable contributions so that 'see and be seen' is not the implicit norm

(Munck, 2001). Instead, the group redefines work contributions to emphasize relative contributions that allow for differences in amount, timing, and place of work (equitable – although not equal). Since professional work is often intangible and difficult to document, it is important that groups explicitly agree not to view low visibility as lack of commitment, lack of contributions, or lack of capabilities.

As Perlow (2001) observed, group norms can vary in their emphasis on face-to-face interaction. If professional groups re-define work contributions to focus on norms for flexibility that emphasize the ratio of inputs to outputs (rather than on visible quantity of inputs), individuals will not be pressured to contribute in an identical manner (same workload, same timing, same place). Instead, the group will recognize that individuals can use flexibility and still care about group goals and high performance. Broadening the conceptualization of work contributions should facilitate implementation of flexibility and support the dual agenda of benefiting the firm and individual employees at the same time (Fletcher & Bailyn, 2005).

Redefinition of work contributions and group motivation

Integrating these points about work practices that facilitate individual use of flexibility while maintaining an overall sense of fairness and caring about group goals, we predict that participation in important event time rituals and group norms for flexibility (equitable, rather than equal contributions) will moderate the relationship between individual employee reduced face time and group motivation (see Figure 1). When groups understand that some events represent critical interaction rituals – where face time and active participation signal commitment – and other events allow individual flexibility and do not require face time, groups can support flexibility use and overall caring about group goals. Similarly, if groups endorse norms for flexibility (equity rather than equality), all need not contribute in the same manner, at the same time, or in the same place. Instead, expecting equitable (not equal) work contributions provides a sense of fairness and acknowledges variation in the ways group members demonstrate caring about group goals.

When groups re-define the meaning of work contributions (event time or norms for flexibility), reduced face time will not diminish group motivation. Restated, these contemporary work practices neutralize negative effects of reduced face time on overall group motivation. In contrast, if groups adopt traditional sense-making about work contributions (face time and rigid expectations for equal contributions), reduced face time will lead to feelings of inequity that detract from overall group motivation. Thus, we

predict that event time and norms for flexibility serve as substitutes for individual face time. In other words, these practices prevent reduced face time from reducing group motivation. This allows individual flexibility without negative effects on overall motivation.

> *P6*: Group-level work practices of re-definition of work contributions (6a: event time; 6b: norms for flexibility) influence the relationship between individual reduced face time and group motivation, such that the effect of reduced face time is neutral when redefinition of work contributions is high (versus low).

Proactive availability, strategic self-presentation, and group motivation

Group-level work practices, however, are not adequate to insure overall group motivation when individuals have reduced face time. In addition, the behavior of professionals who use flexibility options is also critically important. Here, we emphasize the benefits of proactive availability and strategic self-presentation as individual work practices that signal commitment and caring about group goals in ways that overcome the challenges that individual reduced face time can pose for group motivation.

User proactive availability includes anticipating and integrating work as well as initiating contact with co-workers. Proactive efforts provide tangible evidence of felt responsibility, commitment, and contributions; they also reduce uncertainty about user motivation (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003), increase the overall level of comfort in the group (reduce concerns about being 'suckers'), and enhance caring about group goals. For example, if an employee who typically performs remote work (e.g. telecommuting) takes the initiative to document work contributions and circulate updates strategically to others (not excessively, but when relevant to the group), this initiative demonstrates commitment to group goals even without face-to-face interaction.

Strategic self-presentation is behavior aimed at creating and maintaining positive impressions that others have of the self (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Jones & Pittman, 1982). When situations are ambiguous or provide few cues about individual contributions (such as when professionals use flexibility options and have reduced face time), strategic self-presentation can influence observer attributions (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). For example, Arkin and Shepperd (1989) emphasized the strategic benefits of impression management strategies (self-enhancement that stresses internal attributions of competence and hard work). We suggest that when flexibility users place proactive emphasis on competence and hard work, this signals commitment and caring. For example, proactively scheduling office visits to coincide with

key group meetings, getting personal work projects on the agenda, and volunteering to present to the group are proactive impression management strategies that signal competence and hard work, especially for those with reduced face time.

Combining these arguments, Figure 1 illustrates our prediction that proactive availability and strategic self-presentation will moderate the relationship between individual employee reduced face time and group motivation. When individuals anticipate the needs of others and emphasize their own commitment and contributions to the group, they signal their commitment to group goals and neutralize the negative effects of individual reduced face time on group motivation (no relationship). In contrast, if users do not exhibit proactive behavior (proactive availability and strategic self-presentation), reduced face time will detract from the overall sense of fairness in the group and lower group motivation. In sum, we predict that proactive availability and strategic self-presentation serve as substitutes for individual face time.

> *P7*: The individual user work practices (P7a: proactive availability and P7b: strategic self-presentation) influence the relationship between individual reduced face time and group motivation, such that the effect of reduced face time is neutral when proactive behavior is high (compared to low).

As with coordination processes, we also consider the combined effects of both group and individual facilitating work practices. In P3 and P4 we proposed that the facilitating factors would weaken (mitigate) the negative effects of individual reduced face time on group coordination, and in P5 we proposed the combined effects of individual and group facilitating factors would substitute for face time (eliminate any negative effect). In contrast, P6 and P7 proposed substitute effects for either individual or group facilitating factors relative to group motivation. This is because each of these facilitating factors has positive affective implications (Brief & Weiss, 2002) for caring about group goals and should reduce feelings of frustration, anger, and resentment (Totterdell et al., 1998). A growing literature focuses on the importance of caring and positive affect in groups (collective mood: Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; group emotion: Barsade & Gibson, 1998; group affective tone: George, 1990, 1996). For example, Barsade (2002) demonstrated that positive emotional contagion improved cooperation in the group; Bartel and Saavedra (2000) demonstrated that collective mood was manifested behaviorally; and George (1990) demonstrated that group affective tone predicted group-level prosocial behavior.

Integrating these arguments, we suggest that the combined effects of group and individual facilitating work practices (re-defined work contributions and individual user proactive behaviors) will be additive. Thus, they will trigger positive emotional contagion in a synergistic manner that creates overall process gains in group motivation. More specifically, when groups re-define work contributions (event time and norms for flexibility) and flexibility users are proactive (proactive availability and strategic self-presentation), the overall level of caring about group goals and motivation in the group increases. Figure 2 illustrates this proposed interaction, showing no relationship (P6/P7) in the presence of one facilitating factor (either group or individual) and a positive relationship (process gains) when both individual and group facilitating factors are present (P8).

As an example of how this might work, Hopkins (2005) suggested that managers should meet with groups when there is an upcoming planned birth. In this meeting, the manager can emphasize the importance of event time and norms for flexibility (equity not equality) and encourage the flexibility user to show commitment and anticipate the needs of others in the group. This approach to maternity leave should reinforce positive social relationships, mutual social support (from the group to the user and from the user to the group), and overall commitment and caring about group goals. Similarly, if groups understand and expect differential member contributions and individual users are considerate (stay in close communication and volunteer to help with urgent projects), this combination of group and individual facilitating work practices should enhance overall caring about group goals and motivation in the group.

> *P8*: The combined effects of group-level facilitating work practices (re-definition of work contributions) and individual-level facilitating work practices (user proactive behavior) change the nature of the relationship between individual reduced face time and group motivation, such that the relationship is positive when both group- and individual-level facilitating practices are present (compared to neutral if one facilitating practice is present and negative if no facilitating practices are present).

Organizational citizenship behavior

Having described facilitating work practices that allow professionals to benefit from reduced face time without reducing group-level coordination or motivation, we now consider effects on OCB. In this final section of the article, we integrate earlier propositions and propose that process gains and

losses in group coordination and motivation will mediate the effects of reduced face time on group-level OCB. This allows us to highlight the importance of the group and individual facilitating work practices that we addressed in P3 (collaborative time management), P4 (proactive availability), P6 (re-definition of work contributions), and P7 (individual proactive behaviors).

OCB is discretionary behavior that promotes organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). One important approach to OCB differentiates OCB that is interpersonal and directed toward specific individuals (OCBI) from OCB that is directed toward the organization (OCBO) (Williams & Anderson, 1991). A growing body of empirical research demonstrates differences in the antecedents and consequences for these two types of OCB (Ilies et al., 2007; Kaufman et al., 2001; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002).

Building on this distinction between OCBI and OCBO, Moon et al. (2004) contrasted helping and sportsmanship (OCBI) with conscientiousness and voice (OCBO). Helping, defined as assisting peers with their work; and sportsmanship, defined as acting as a peacemaker and tolerating less than ideal circumstances without complaining, emphasize interpersonal relationships. In contrast, conscientiousness, defined as contributing extra effort and high quality work; and voice, defined as making constructive suggestions for change, emphasize contributions to the organization. We consider conceptual differences in individually focused OCBI and organizationally focused OCBO as we develop our propositions for the effects of group coordination and group motivation on group-level OCB.

Group coordination and motivation effects on organizational citizenship behavior

When groups have high quality coordination processes, group members understand roles and responsibilities and integrate work effectively. With high quality coordination, group members are aware of others in the group and they are aware of interpersonal opportunities to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the group in a timely manner. We suggest that this awareness has direct relevance to OCB that is directed specifically at work group peers (peer-directed OCBI). For example, awareness of roles and responsibilities makes the needs of other group members salient. This could include awareness of need for assistance with the work, such as helping, or awareness of difficulties and acting as a peacemaker. In sum, high quality group coordination processes should enhance overall awareness of others' needs in the group and lead to high levels of OCBI in the group (see Figure 1). Here, the linking mechanism is awareness of others based on high quality group coordination.

Awareness of the needs of others in the group, however, has less direct relevance to OCB that is directed at the organization (OCBO). For example, awareness of others' needs does not have immediate implications for organizationally directed OCB. An individual can be aware of others' needs but not necessarily feel free to speak up with suggestions for changes in organizational procedures or not be motivated to perform work with exceptionally high quality and attention to detail. Hence, we proposed:

P9: Group coordination has positive effects on group OCBI.

When groups have high quality motivational processes, group member efforts (intensity, direction, and persistence) focus on constructive contributions and high quality relationships (Dutton, 2003). These motivational characteristics of high performance groups (Lawler, 1986) have direct relevance to both forms of organizational citizenship: OCBI (directed at specific individuals) and OCBO (directed at the organization). For example, high quality motivation in the group should trigger reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Reciprocity includes interpersonally oriented cooperative efforts (OCBI) such as assisting other group members (helping), or working to resolve difficulties or tolerating less than ideal circumstances (sportsmanship). Reciprocity also should enhance contributions directed at the organization (OCBO) such as performing work with extra attention to quality (conscientiousness) or proposing innovative ideas to improve work processes (voice). Thus, we propose that high quality group motivational processes should enhance both types of group-level OCB. Here, the linking mechanism is overall caring about group goals based on high quality group motivation.

P10: Group motivation has positive effects on group OCBI (P10a) and OCBO (P10b).

Integrated model of reduced face time and organizational citizenship behavior

We first consider overall effects of reduced face time and group coordination on OCB. Earlier in the article, we described facilitating work practices. These are strategic practices that work groups and individuals can adopt to mitigate against process losses that might otherwise occur when employees do not always work face-to-face. The combined effects of group facilitating work practices (team-centered coordination or synchronized interaction) and individual facilitating work practices (proactive availability) substitute for

physical proximity. Thus, they neutralize any negative effects of reduced face time and protect overall group coordination processes. Group coordination, in turn, enhances shared awareness in the group and mediates the combined effects of reduced face time and the facilitating practices on OCBI. Thus, coordination processes in the group mediate the effect of reduced face time on group-level OCBI. Consistent with our earlier logic that interpersonal awareness has less direct relevance to OCBO, we do not predict a mediating effect for group coordination on organizationally focused OCB.

Turning now to overall effects of reduced face time and group motivation on OCB, we predict that the combined effects of group facilitating work practices (event time or norms for flexibility) and individual facilitating work practices (proactive availability or strategic self-presentation) enhance overall group motivational processes. Group motivation, then increases overall caring about group goals and transfers (mediates) the combined effects of reduced face time and the facilitating factors on OCBI and OCBO. Thus,

> *P11*: Group coordination and group motivation mediate the effects of reduced face time and the facilitating work practices on OCB. Whether reduced face time has negative, neutral, or positive indirect effects on OCB depends on the facilitating work practices. Reduced face time has no negative effect on group OCBI when the group utilizes collaborative time management (team-centered coordination or synchronized interaction) and individual users engage in proactive availability. Reduced face time has positive effects on group OCBI and OCBO when work contributions are re-defined and individual users engage in proactive behaviors.

Discussion

Our objective in this article was to develop a cross-level model of facilitating work practices (two at the group-level and two at the individual-level: see Table 1) that allow individual professionals to benefit from using reduced face time while supporting overall awareness and caring in the work group and sustaining group-level OCB. More specifically the model proposes that when facilitating work practices support group coordination, enhanced awareness of others in the group leads to OCBI. In contrast, when facilitating work practices support group motivation, enhanced caring about group goals leads to OCBI and OCBO. Overall, we have emphasized proactive facilitating work practices that can help managers and employees

benefit from increased individual flexibility (in workload, work timing, and work place), while at the same time sustaining and/or enhancing group-level OCB.

Theoretical contributions

The model we present in this article aims to make several contributions. First, although Bailey and Kurland (2002), Lawrence and Corwin (2003), and Perlow (1999) acknowledged the importance of group-level effects of reduced face time, prior research has not explicated these processes. Thus, our model should have implications for contemporary work practices such as reduced workload, job sharing, flextime, flexplace, telecommuting, remote work, and satellite offices (Olmstead & Smith, 1997). Since we emphasized specific facilitating work practices that influence the effects of reduced face time on group coordination (team-centered coordination, synchronized interaction, and proactive availability) and group motivation (event time, norms for flexibility, proactive availability, and strategic self-presentation), the model should also have implications for the groups literature and contemporary approaches to organizing work.

Second, past research has typically emphasized either individual user interventions (Baltes et al., 1999; Scandura & Lankau, 1997) or group-level interventions (Kossek et al., 1999; Rapoport et al., 2002). Thus, another contribution is the combination and integration of group- and individual-level facilitating work practices that enhance group processes. Fundamental differences in the nature of group coordination processes (e.g. structural mechanisms) and group motivation processes (e.g. affective states) are the basis of our differential predictions. Specifically, because coordination is a structural requirement for group performance in interdependent groups, the combined effects of group and individual facilitating work practices should neutralize negative effects of reduced face time on group coordination. In contrast, because motivation is less structural and more susceptible to the positive effects of emotional contagion (process gains) (Barsade, 2002; Hatfield et al., 1994), the combined effects of group and individual facilitating practices should create a positive relationship between reduced face time and group motivation. In sum, we suggest that the complexity and interdependence of cross-level relationships necessitates consideration of both group and individual work practices.

Third, the model specifies causal mechanisms that link individual reduced face time with group processes and group-level OCB. Thus, the model includes group coordination and enhanced overall awareness of needs of others in the group as predictors of OCBI. It also includes group motivation and overall enhanced caring about group goals as predictors of both OCBI

and OCBO. Thus, the model responds to calls for enhanced understanding of processes that link individual actions, such as reduced face time, with group processes and group outcomes (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003).

Fourth, our work is explicitly cross-level and acknowledges the social context surrounding individual employee behaviors, with an emphasis on awareness and caring in the work group. Previously, researchers have not considered the bottom-up cross-level effects that occur when individual employees use flexibility work arrangements. Thus, our work extends Lambert's (2000) empirical research on how the provision of employer work/life benefits (e.g. onsite child care) influences individual OCB, such as making suggestions on how to improve the workplace. As a result, the model should have implications for the OCB literature. More specifically, we propose cross-level effects of individual reduced face time on group-level OCB. In addition, we predict differential effects of reduced face time on the two most commonly contrasted forms of OCB: OCBI – focused on specific individuals and OCBO – focused on the organization.

Finally, we hope that our specification of four facilitating work practices (collaborative time management, re-definition of work contributions, proactive availability, and strategic self-presentation) will stimulate empirical research across these domains. Thus, the model and the logic for our predictions should serve as a guide for future research on factors that can mitigate the potential negative effects of reduced face time on group coordination, enhance positive effects of reduced face time on group motivation, and facilitate overall group-level OCB.

Practical implications

Should empirical research support this model, there would be a number of important managerial implications. Specifically, we have explicated four key facilitating work practices that managers could consider in implementing nontraditional work arrangements that support individual flexibility. Since Generation X and Y workers value work–life balance more than previous generations and thus are more likely to use flexibility programs (Hochschild, 1997; Smola & Sutton, 2002), it will be especially important for managers to reinforce collaborative time management (team-centered coordination and synchronized interaction) and re-definition of work contributions (event time and norms for flexibility) for these employees. This could include flexibility coordination boards, such as described by Rapoport and colleagues (2002), which encourage groups to self-manage the use of flexibility.

In addition, by differentiating the effects of group coordination and group motivation processes on OCB, the model offers practical insights for ways managers can enhance OCBO compared to OCBI. Managers also could

use the model as a diagnostic tool to identify work practices that are more likely to influence group coordination versus group motivation. Also, managers could use the model as a discussion tool to help employees consider specific steps they could take to enhance their contributions (proactive availability) and reputation (strategic self-presentation) within the work group. Managers could share the model with the group and explore ways to encourage acceptance of individual flexibility in a manner that enhances rather than detracts from group processes and OCB. When approaching a busy season (e.g. taxes) individuals could notify others of key personal events and the manager could develop a schedule that allows each person some flexibility during the busy season.

The framework also should have implications for individual employees. When employees have reduced face time at work, they can consider proactive availability and strategic self-presentation as techniques they can use to reduce negative reactions of others, while simultaneously facilitating group coordination and motivation. An example is telecommuters or part-time employees who encourage peers and clients to call them at home for critical issues. In sum, these individual facilitating work practices should help those with reduced face time to enhance perceptions others have of their contributions and reputation (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003).

Limitations, future research, and conclusion

Although we drew on contemporary approaches to work to identify the facilitating work practices highlighted in the model, we did not include all potential facilitating practices. Accordingly, we recommend that future research expand and refine these ideas. Based on existing literature, we focused on two sets of group facilitating practices (collaborative time management and redefinition of work contributions) and two individual user-facilitating practices (proactive availability and strategic self-presentation). Future research could consider additional work practices such as organizational support for flexibility, top management attitudes toward flexibility, and a group climate that supports flexible roles for all employees (single, married, gay, older, younger). This is important because employees sometimes feel work–family flexibility (e.g. child or elder care) is more supported than flexibility for other purposes (e.g. exercise, pets, volunteer work, etc.).

Finally, Corwin and colleagues (2001) emphasized the benefits of champions who provide social support to employees who have reduced face time. For example, the overall level of perceived organizational support in the group may be a critical facilitating factor that allows groups to support

those who use flexibility options without detracting from overall group coordination or motivation. Also, the overall level of social support that group members provide to each other could be another key facilitating factor that enables positive effects of reduced face time and has positive implications for group-level OCB.

We also note that these same facilitating processes most likely have implications for other group outcomes. For example, this could include group cohesiveness, group potency, and group identity. The facilitating processes most likely also reduce voluntary turnover and strengthen continuity of group membership. Thus, although we chose to focus on OCB, future research could consider a wider array of outcomes.

Another potential limitation of the article is our focus on individual reduced face time as a key aspect of contemporary work practices that has cross-level implications for group processes and outcomes. Thus, it will be important for others to build on our model and consider additional aspects of work and work relationships that most likely influence group coordination, motivation, and OCB. For example, a large and growing body of literature documents differences in the psychological contracts that individual employees have with their organizations. Employees also differ in their identity orientations, leader–member exchange (LMX) relationships, and the extent to which they consider themselves insiders. These suggest additional sources of positive and negative cross-level effects of reduced face time on group processes and outcomes.

In developing our multi-level model, we focused on cross-level effects of individual reduced face time on groups, with subsequent group-level effects on group OCB. Another interesting extension of our approach would be to consider how overall use of flexibility in the work group influences group-level coordination, motivation, and OCB. This could be a group-level construct based on central tendency (average use of flexibility in the group). Alternatively, given the recent research on fault lines (Lau & Murnighan, 2005), it would also be useful to consider ways in which group composition, such as fault lines (groups with subgroups versus fragmented groups with no strong subgroups), influences use of the facilitating factors in our model.

Another important consideration is the sheer enormity and challenge of trying to implement the facilitating practices described in our model. We realize that it is difficult to change organizational culture, work group routines, and employee assumptions about the meaning of work, key interaction rituals, and norms for flexibility. Accordingly, implementing the ideas delineated in our model may be more realistic in newly created groups or in groups that have been reconstituted, reorganized, or are under new

management. For example, Johnson et al. (2006) demonstrated that it is much easier for groups to change from cooperative to competitive reward structures. Since our proposed model is based on cooperative assumptions, major structural changes may be necessary to unfreeze behavior and allow implementation of new practices. Then, over time, attraction-selection-attrition processes would reinforce these changes such that new hires understand expectations and those who do not fit in choose to leave the group (Schneider, 1987).

As another example of a situation where these interventions might be more successful, it is possible that employees may be more open to these sorts of difficult and highly nuanced changes when a major external threat causes them to see change and internal commitment to change as necessary for survival. Thus, we recognize that our model is necessarily simplified and that it ignores many of the complexities and complicating factors that would make implementation challenging. Our purpose was not to detail problems, but instead to propose facilitating factors that have the potential to support reduced face time without negative effects on group processes or outcomes.

Finally, we note our exclusive focus on professional employees. We did this because professionals increasingly perform in groups where some employees have reduced face time and organizational citizenship behavior of professionals is critical to group and organizational success. It would be useful to consider whether these same relationships apply to technical and support staff in jobs that historically have been less autonomous and typically involve less discretionary behavior. Perhaps the facilitating work practices are different for jobs where role expectations are more explicitly specified and tightly linked. Finally, since we limited our attention to employee-initiated flexibility, future research could also consider employer-initiated (mandated) forms of flexibility such as temporary lay-offs, rotating shifts, and required telecommuting.

In conclusion, we have explicated group and individual-level facilitating work practices that can reduce coordination problems and enhance motivation when professionals have reduced face time. The model proposes that high quality coordination processes enhance overall awareness of the needs of others in ways that increase OCBI. It also proposes that high quality motivation processes enhance overall caring about group goals in ways that increase OCBI and OCBO. In sum, the model emphasizes theoretically based approaches for thinking of new ways of organizing and conceptualizing work. It also describes facilitating factors that have the potential to enable individuals to benefit from flexible work, while simultaneously facilitating group OCB. Overall, the model aims to support the dual agenda of benefiting employees and their work groups (Perlow, 1997) by supporting individual

flexibility while facilitating group-level OCB. We hope future research will use these cross-level propositions to guide empirical studies.

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