

“Good Teleworking”: Under What Conditions Does Teleworking Enhance Employees’

Well-being?

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Myth: The home is a benign place to work and enables teleworkers to “have it all” -- excel at both work and family. Work is portable to home without any downside.

Reality: For many employees, moving the work place to the home can hurt an employee’s home life and create new social dilemmas, especially if employees do not perceive control over the timing, location and process of work, and believe they are able boundaries that allow them to sometimes separate work and family roles.

Given the increasing availability of formal and informal access to teleworking and other flexible work arrangements, in this chapter our goal is to enhance understanding of the kinds of psychological working conditions under which use of teleworking is more likely to enhance employee well-being. We will show that “good teleworking” or teleworking where use is likely to be related to favorable outcomes for the workers’ well-being has several psychological job design characteristics. We draw on survey and interview data from a sample of 316 professional employees in two Fortune 500 firms. Our chapter emphasizes two main features of good teleworking.

First, perceived psychological control over when, where, and how one teleworks matters for well-being. We will show that employees with higher perceived personal control over the location, timing, and process of work experience significantly lower work-family conflict, turnover intentions, and are less likely to want to move to a new career.

Second, how an employee manages psychological and physical boundaries between work and family roles is another critical influence on whether the use of teleworking enhances well-being. We will show that a boundary management strategy favoring separation of work and family is significantly related to lower family-to-work conflict. Other types of flexible job design, including access to formal telework arrangements, working in multiple locations, and schedule irregularity will not significantly relate to lower turnover, career movement

preparedness (cf Kossek, Roberts, Fisher & De Marr, 1989), or work-family conflict. Our chapter will argue that mere formal access to teleworking is a necessary but insufficient condition to enhance professional workers well-being. What matters more is when employees psychologically perceive they have higher personal control over work schedules, process, and location, and when workers believe they are able to choose to create boundaries to separate work and family roles. For example, are workers able to set time boundaries when they can focus or be available only to family and not to their job colleagues, as well as the reverse. This perceived ability to separate is important as it enables employees to not have role overload through multi-tasking at times that the employee would rather focus on one role- either their job or the family.

Theoretical Background

Early work-family research viewed work and home as independent systems (Parsons & Bales, 1955), where a structural and emotional separation of work and family evolved for individuals and organizations (Homer, 2002). Given current shifting labor force composition toward growing numbers of employees managing caregiving and other nonwork demands, more recently, scholars have argued that the enforced separation of work and family spheres in traditional workplaces leads to work-family role conflict (Friedman, Christensen, & DeGroot, 1998; Kanter, 1977). As potential solutions, researchers and practitioners advocate employers adopt flexible work arrangements such as flexible schedules and teleworking to help employees integrate and restructure work and family roles to reduce conflicts (Golden, 2001). National surveys show that 84% of major employers have adopted flexible schedules and nearly two-thirds (64%) offer telecommuting (Alliance for Work/Life Progress, 2001) with these policies most accessible to professional employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000). However, questions remain concerning whether the integration of work and family reduces conflicts,

whether flexible work arrangements, namely teleworking, provide the intended benefits to the synthesis of work and family roles, and in particular, whether flexible work schedules and teleworking practices provide professional workers the control they may need to jointly manage often unbounded work hours with nonwork demands. We define professional workers as individuals with at least a college level degree who are not paid for overtime and exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act. They have occupational norms to work as long as it takes to get the job done and usually have some control over starting and stopping times for work and do not punch a clock.

In a classic meta-analysis on flexible work arrangements, Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright and Neuman (1999) argued that the positive effects of flextime for employees reported in the literature generally did not carry over to professional workers. These findings and other reviews (Avery & Zabel, 2001) suggest some writings in the work-family field have not sufficiently examined whether all forms of flexibility are equally beneficial, nor have they considered whether they benefit professionals - many of whom are typically in jobs that have norms favoring long and unlimited work hours.

Applying Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics theory, Baltes and his co-authors argued that one important mechanism by which flexibility programs generate positive outcomes is through shifting job designs to enhance worker autonomy or control. Professional workers, they argued, benefit least from flexible work arrangement programs because their jobs incorporate substantial autonomy prior to any shift to an alternative work schedule. However, the Baltes et al. (1999) study was not able to test this perspective in the meta-analysis because the study did not include measures of job control. Nor were there studies to examine whether

variation in the nature of job flexibility predicted varying work and family outcomes- that is, whether all types of flexibility were equally beneficial for professional employees.

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate and extend previous research on flexible job schedules, design, and teleworking in order to understand how they may relate to work and family outcomes; to distinguish between the effects of availability and use of different types of flexibility, which we argue could be more clearly assessed in the work-family literature on flexible work arrangements; and to investigate relationships to individual boundary management and personal job control. Specifically, we examine how professional workers, who have the greatest access to flextime and flexplace job designs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003), might benefit most from them. We investigate variation in the features of flexible jobs, including the degree to which jobs are designed to increase personal control over the timing, location, and process of work, and the effect of these characteristics on work and family outcomes.

Managing boundaries between work and family roles is a critical aspect of the control issues we see influencing the effects of flexible work arrangements in general and teleworking in particular. In particular, despite flexible job designs, managers may still attempt to exert "boundary control", which Perlow (1998) has explained includes various efforts to induce professional workers to work longer hours and other actions that shape the boundary between work and family time. Once professional work extends into the home, managers may begin to call workers at home or expect them to answer emails in the evenings and on weekends, for example. Introducing work into personal times and spaces also raises the potential of work being increasingly shaped by the employee's management of boundaries in relation to the family role. Recent developments in boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000), highlight the fact that integrating work and family in time and space, as in flextime and flexplace

job designs, means that borders between the two domains are permeable; work may be more interrupted by family influences and vice versa.

For professional workers to really have control over when they shift from work to home or other nonwork responsibilities may not only require a job design that provides autonomy, but also a boundary management strategy, which Kossek, Noe and DeMarr (1999) define as the principles one uses to organize and separate role demands and expectations into specific realms of home (e.g., dependent care giving) and work (i.e., doing one's job). Some professionals with jobs that allow flex-time and telecommuting may also desire a segmentation boundary management strategy; that is, they may seek to establish boundaries between work and home by, for example, setting their own work hours and turning off their cell phone or pager at the end of the day, not checking email in the evenings or weekends, or by working in a home office with a door to shut out family interruptions. More research is needed on the effects of these strategies in the context of flexible job schedules and telecommuting practices, which this study was designed to address.

Variation in the Nature of Flexibility: Implications for Work and Family Outcomes

Work-family researchers have recommended flexibility practices to improve a range of work and family outcomes including work-family conflict (Kirchmeyer, 2000), performance (Pierce, Newstrom, Dunham & Barber, 1989), intention to turnover, and preparedness to move to a new job (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Empirical evidence on relationships has been mixed, but most commonly flexibility practices are found to have some positive effects on both individual and organizational outcomes. (See, for example, Mokhtarian, Bagley & Saloman, (1998) for a study in which flexible work decreases work-family conflict;

Hill, Miller, Weiner & Colihan, (1998), for the opposite result; and Baltes et al., (1999) for a positive assessment of overall effects across multiple studies.)

However, several reviews have noted weaknesses in the current literature that have hampered progress in understanding the effects of flextime and telecommuting programs and suggest more research is needed before these results can be viewed with confidence as definitive. Empirical studies are often atheoretical (Baltes et al., 1999) and sometimes lack methodological rigor by over-relying on same source or anecdotal data rather than on statistical analysis or control groups making it difficult to overcome a positive bias toward the effects of using flexibility in work-family programs (Gottlieb, Kellowy & Barham, 1998). Research has also under-examined the reality that employees often use different and multiple forms and amounts of flexibility and that access does not necessarily capture use (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Accordingly, we focus on a number of types of flexibility that have been identified in prior research, and we adopt a control perspective to understand the effects of flexible work, combining insights from job characteristics theory with theory on control of work-family boundaries. In particular, we argue that it is personal autonomy or control over the timing, location and process of work that will have the most positive effects for professional workers, rather than other dimensions of job flexibility, and that in fact some types of flexibility may even have negative effects on work-family conflict.

Traditional job characteristics theory predicts that autonomy or control, along with four other core job characteristics, will lead to enhanced motivation, satisfaction and performance (See Fried & Ferris, 1987, for a meta-analysis supporting the basic propositions of the theory). Further Baltes et al., (1999) have argued that it is only flexible job designs that provide workers increased control over how the work is done that will lead to better individual and organizational

outcomes. We agree with this argument, but note that it is based on a traditional view of control, which focuses on personal job autonomy in how the work is done at the workplace (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Recent changes in technology and the nature of professional work are making other forms or aspects of control and autonomy important. Apgar (1998) has noted that professional work has become increasingly portable because of increasing use of cell phones, email and lap tops. We theorize that individual control over where and when one worked are additional key aspects of job autonomy that should be assessed to update measures of autonomy within work environments in which work can increasingly be done away from the main workplace at different times of the day. In sum, we predict that designing flexible jobs to give professional workers control over not only the process, but also the timing and location of work will enhance effectiveness. We define this as *personal job flexibility control*, which is control over where, when, and how one works. We surmised professionals with personal job flexibility control may experience lower work-family conflict since they will be able to restructure work and family demands as needed. Their performance may be enhanced since they will experience fewer work or family interruptions due to the ability to rearrange roles as needed. They also will be more likely to want to stay in their job and in their career, as the ability to control work hours is generally highly valued by skilled professional workers. They will have lower career movement preparedness (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, and DeMarr, 1989) which is defined as self-management behaviors such as feedback seeking and networking to have readiness to change careers, since they will find their current career more satisfying due in part to the ability to have higher personal job flexibility control.

Hypothesis 1: Personal job flexibility control will be positively related to performance and negatively related to work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, turnover intentions, and career movement preparedness.

We next consider four other aspects of flexibility that have previously been considered in the literature: formal access to flexible work programs, amount of use of flexibility practices, schedule irregularity, and working in multiple locations. Work-family researchers have argued, based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) that formal access to supportive human resource policies like telecommuting will lead to more positive outcomes as employees who value the policies reciprocate with improved workplace attitudes and behaviors (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Roehling, Roehling & Moen, 2001; Allen, 2001). However, recent research shows the importance of not confounding access and use. Allen (2001) finds that greater use of work-family policies providing flexibility such as telecommuting, flex-time, and compressed weeks is related to less work-family conflict, while mere formal availability is not. Eaton (2003) also finds that usability of work-family policies -- that employees feel free to use actual flexibility -- is what is critical for positive outcomes, rather than simply availability. As a result, we hypothesize limited effects on work-family effectiveness for this dimension of flexibility (*formal access*).

Hypothesis 2: Formal access to telework will not be significantly related to work-family effectiveness, including work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, turnover intentions, career movement preparedness, or performance.

Given the generally positive results across many studies for flexibility programs, individual use of flexible job designs is expected to generate positive effects across a range of work and family outcomes. However, in examining use of flextime and flexplace practices,

much of the literature has framed use of flexibility as a dichotomous variable. For example, if one used a flextime program, writings in the work-family literature seemed to assume that the individual had a flexible job and if they didn't, then they had an inflexible job. We argue research should also consider the *extent* to which jobs are flexible, and whether results will be uniformly positive across all varying degrees of use and for all outcomes.

Baltes et al (1999) find that highly flexible flextime programs (i.e., those with fewer core hours during which employees were required to be in the office, and greater numbers of flexible hours during which employees could determine their start and end times) were less effective in terms of work-related outcomes. Too much flexibility, they argue, may create coordination problems for the worker and colleagues and be simply too complex to manage. Supervisors may rate the performance of workers who are heavy users of flexibility lower than others, since they may be seen as increasing managers' need to coordinate work (Kossek, Barber, & Winters, 1999). We predict, then, that while use of flextime and telecommuting practices is likely to have beneficial effects on individual psychological outcomes, including work-family conflict (both directions), turnover intentions and career movement preparedness, those who use higher volumes of flexibility are likely to receive lower performance ratings by their supervisors.

Hypothesis 3: Volume of flexibility will be negatively related to turnover intentions, career movement preparedness, work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, but also negatively related to performance.

We also conceptualized two variables capturing other types of flexibility that could be significantly related to work and family outcomes: *schedule irregularity* (i.e., frequent changes in daily working hours) and *place mobility* (e.g., working at multiple locations, such as at home, the office, a client's office, and on the road). We believed that given the higher likely number of

process losses and transaction costs resulting from shifting between varying work schedules and/or multiple places (Ashforth et al., 2000), these aspects of flexibility might actually worsen individual work-family attitudes and performance.

Hypothesis 4: Schedule irregularity and place mobility will be negatively related to performance, and positively related to work-family conflict (both directions), turnover intentions, and career movement preparedness.

Flexible Work and Controlling the Work-Family Boundary

We argue that preferences for work and family boundaries are socially constructed, and there is some social choice in how individuals define boundaries, as do Ashforth and colleagues (2000). Kossek, Noe and DeMarr (1999) hold that a boundary management strategy is part of one's preferred approach to work-life role synthesis. Individuals have a preferred, even if implicit, approach for meshing work and family roles that reflects their values and the realities of their lives for organizing and separating role demands and expectations in the specific realms of home and work. This view is consistent with what Zedeck (1992) argued is at the heart of the issue of work/family balance: the way individuals shape the scope and parameters of work and family activities, create personal meaning, and manage the relationships between families and employees in organizations.

In order to organize their varying work and family roles, Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests that individuals construct mental and sometimes physical fences as a means of ordering their social, work and family environments. Through ethnographic interviews, she found that some individuals are mainly integrators. These people like to blend work and family roles, switching between baking cookies with the kids and downloading email. Other individuals are mainly

separators - they prefer to keep work and nonwork separate, rarely working from home or on the weekends, for example.

Limited empirical research has been conducted on the implications of different boundary management strategies, in part because the concept is relatively new in the literature. We consider the linkages of boundary management strategy to types of flexibility used, and work and family outcomes.

Implications of Boundary Management Strategy

Noting that it is difficult today for growing numbers of employees to perform their jobs without interaction with the caregiving role and vice versa, many work-family theorists argue that greater integration between work and family roles is a way to balance work and family life and even to use one to catalyze positive effects in the other (Friedman et al., 1998; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). Yet recent theory runs counter to the prevailing belief that integration is generally a “good thing” for individuals. Boundary theory suggests that the increased process losses, role transitions, and transactions costs often associated with role switching from family to work or work to family may not necessarily lead to less inter-role conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000). For example, workers may find their ability to attend to both work and home demands undermined by more frequent interruptions if no limits are placed on times when colleagues could phone home or family members could walk into the home office. Therefore, we predicted higher family-to-work and work-to-family conflict for strategies favoring integration.

Hypothesis 5: A boundary management strategy favoring integration will lead to less favorable work and family outcomes (particularly higher work-to-family and family-to-work conflict).

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study relied on a sample of 316 professionals. These employees worked in professional jobs in information technology and systems engineering, communications, finance, marketing, and human resources at two large information and financial services organizations geographically distributed across the U.S.. The firms were similar in work environments and had similar professional job requirements (e.g., writing, email and use of internet, programming, phone sales and project management) where many job tasks could be done as easily virtually as in the formal company office. Over the past few years, both of these firms had growing numbers of professionals who had access to telework during the workday or evenings and weekends.

The sample was well educated: 80% of these employees held at least a bachelor's degree. The sample was 57% female and 90% Caucasian. About half (48%) had dependent children and four percent had at least one elder dependent for whom they regularly cared. Nearly three-fourths (72%) had formal permission to telework. Since some professional workers telework informally, the actual number of workers who report teleworking is even higher. 86% and 80% of our respondents at the two companies we studied report doing at least some work away from their main office. Approximately thirty percent of the sample was 35 years of age or younger, 48% were between 36 and 45, and 22% were 46 years of age or older.

We contacted 626 professional workers at the two companies we studied. Prior to data collection, all individuals signed a voluntary written consent to participate after reviewing the purpose of the study (i.e., to examine the work and family effects of teleworking and job flexibility) and a statement ensuring the confidentiality of all individual results. Professional workers who consented to participate were sent a survey (either written or emailed, as they

preferred) covering demographics and job and family background. They subsequently participated in a taped telephone interview that was about 45 minutes in length. Three months later, interview data on performance ratings were collected from a sub-sample of 90 participants' supervisors. The response rate for both the employee and the supervisor data collections were 50% and 52% respectively, with similar response rates at both firms.

Measures

Flexibility type. Five measures were developed to assess flexibility type. The *personal job flexibility control* measure assessed personal freedom to control where, when, and how one did one's job with six items. When we looked at traditional measures of autonomy in job design, we did not see measures of control over the location and timing of work being fully captured as basic elements of job design in widely used measures such as the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), which only measures autonomy in how the work is done. Our measure includes two items from the original JDS that capture traditional job autonomy over how the work is done. They were: (1) "How much autonomy is on your job? To what extent does your job permit you to decide on your own about how to go about doing the work?"; and (2) "The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work". We then constructed 4 items to capture flexibility control over work location and scheduling, since personal control over when and where one works (i.e., time and place autonomy) are new facets of the personal autonomy construct we assessed. These were "To what extent does your job permit you to decide on your own about WHERE the work is done?; To what extent does your job permit you to decide about WHEN the work is done?; I have the freedom to work wherever is best for me – either at home or at work.; I do not have control over when I work (reverse)." The items were scored on a 1 to 5 Likert-type response scale, with

higher numbers indicating more personal job flexibility control. Coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was .74.

Formal access to telework was coded a dummy variable. It was based on employee records provided by the human resource department regarding who had official permission to conduct any part of their work remotely.

Flexible work volume, defined as work done at a distance from the main workplace was measured with the item, “What percent of your job do you currently do away from your main office or customer?”

Place mobility measured the number of different places that individuals worked during a week. Participants indicated during a typical week whether they worked at home, on site, and/or at other places. Working in one place was coded as 1 (low mobility), two places was coded as 2 (medium mobility), and three or more places was coded as 3 (high mobility).

Schedule irregularity assessed whether an individual tended to have the same predictable daily schedule throughout the week or had a schedule that changed from day to day. To develop this measure, employees were asked to indicate their typical daily work schedule for an average week, using the most recent average week. Respondents with two or more different schedules, defined as differing by at least one hour in starting time, stopping time, or nonwork gaps were coded as “1” for having significant schedule irregularity and respondents with the same schedule all week were coded as “0” for having little or no schedule irregularity.

Boundary management strategy. This measure was derived from Kossek, Noe, and DeMarr’s (1999) definition of the construct of boundary management strategy. It ranged from a strategy favoring high separation, where one strives to keep their work and personal roles very separate, to a strategy favoring high integration, where one strives to let work and family roles

blur. During the taped interview, individuals were first read the statement, “With the increasing demands of work and home, employees may work in different ways to handle these demands.” They were then asked, “All in all, do you currently see yourself as someone who tries to keep work and personal roles separated most of the time, or someone who tries to keep them integrated?” Employee responses were dummy coded (0=separate; 1=integrate).

Individual difference measures. Three variables were included to control for job and individual differences that affect work and family outcomes. If an employee had at least one dependent child, partner, or elder for whom they provided *regular dependent care*, this item was coded as a 1. Otherwise the item was coded as a 0.

Gender was dummy coded: male (coded 0) or female (coded 1).

Total work hours measures the total number of hours the employee typically works in a week.

Dependent Variables

Turnover intentions. This construct was measured with two items developed by Boroff and Lewin (1997). They were: “I am seriously considering quitting this firm for an alternate employer,” and “During the next year, I will probably look for a new job outside the firm.” These items utilized a 5-point Likert-type response scale with higher responses indicating more agreement. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was .86.

Career movement preparedness. This construct was measured with four 5-point Likert-type items from the scale developed by Kossek, Roberts, Fisher and DeMarr (1998). Sample items include, “To what extent do you/have you: explored job opportunities on the internet.” The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was .71.

Work-family conflict. We used a 4 item work-to-family conflict scale and a 3-item family to-work conflict scale adapted from Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991). Sample items include: “My work takes up time that I’d like to spend with my family and friends,” and “My supervisors and peers dislike how often I am preoccupied with my personal life while at work (reversed).” Coefficient alpha reliabilities for the two subscales were .73 and .71, respectively.

Supervisor performance rating. We conducted phone interviews with supervisors for a subsample of our employee sample, and asked them to respond to eight items developed by Fedor and Rowland (1989) stating, “Please rate employee X’s overall performance on the following characteristics:”. The list of characteristics included “Overall performance quality,” “Avoiding mistakes,” and “Performing up to the supervisor’s standards”. The higher the score on 5–point Likert-type scale, the better the performance. Coefficient alpha reliability was .91.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for all variables in this study.

Insert Table 1 about here

We used ordinary least squares regressions to test our hypotheses. Table 2 shows the results for regressions with career movement preparedness, work-family conflict (both directions), and turnover as dependent variables, and Table 3 shows the results for the regression with performance as an outcome.

The regression results show that flexibility type significantly predicted work-family effectiveness. We predicted in hypothesis 1 that greater personal job flexibility control would

improve professionals' well-being. We found significant support for this idea. While our results show that personal job flexibility control does not affect performance, it does significantly reduce work-family conflict (in both directions) as well as career movement preparedness and turnover intentions. We argued (in hypothesis 2) that mere access to telecommuting would not have these beneficial effects and our results support this: Formal access had no significant relationship to any of our dependent variables. Turning to hypothesis 3, we predicted that individuals who spent a greater portion of their time telecommuting would benefit in terms of lower work-family conflict and reduced desire to leave their organizations, but that they might pay a penalty in terms of performance as working high volumes at a distance can create coordination problems with colleagues and supervisors. However, our results only partially support these ideas. We found that a higher volume of hours spent telecommuting reduced career movement preparedness, but had no other significant effects on the outcomes we examined. We also examined 2 further aspects of flexible work – the irregularity of individuals schedules and the extent to which individuals worked in multiple locations. We anticipated that flexible jobs with these characteristics would have negative effects, but contrary to our expectations, found no significant relationships to work-family well-being.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 here about here

Hypothesis 5, which predicted that boundary management strategies focused on integration would lead to worse outcomes for individuals, also received partial support. Boundary management strategy was a significant predictor of family-to-work conflict.

Employees with a boundary management strategy favoring integration experience significantly higher family-to-work conflict.

Finally, results for our control variables show that long work hours are positively associated with work-to-family conflict, that responsibility for dependent-care increase family-to-work conflict, and that being female and performance ratings are positively associated in our sample. Regarding the later relationship, given the fact that nearly three-fourth of the sample did some teleworking and often individuals with family caregiving demands have greater interest in these arrangements, it may be that the better performing women were more interested in and able to get supervisory approval to use flexibility practices.

Discussion:

Challenging the Myth that Teleworking Necessarily Enhances Work-Family Balance

Our study's results challenge the myth that telework necessarily enables work-family balance. There is a great deal of hype oversimplifying the wonders of the virtual workplace. Our results show that higher individual control over the location, timing, and process of work has beneficial effects for work-family conflict, turnover intentions and career movement preparedness; however, other types of flexible job designs, including access to formal teleworking arrangements, working in multiple locations, and schedule irregularity may have less positive effects on work and family outcomes. The management literature has overlooked many of these differences in flexible job designs and oversimplified the benefits of making jobs flexible and virtual. A main issue our study raises is that there may be costs associated with flexibility and with moving work into the home, which used to be a place of personal respite and

peace. What other problems and conflicts did the workplace of the 21st century create and what myths of flexibility need to be debunked or at least examined? For example for some jobs, flexibility means an employee is available to workers 24 hour-7days a week! In the long run, is this really good for employers, individuals, and their families?

Our results suggest that for many employees, moving the workplace to the home can hurt an employee's home life and create new social dilemmas, especially if workload is not reduced, space and technological infrastructure inadequate, and the family has little understanding of these roles. We also collected some qualitative data that triangulates nicely with our quantitative results noted above. One key subtheme we found was that teleworking changes family and friend's expectations as indicated by some responses below by different teleworkers.

Teleworking Changes Family and Friends' Expectations

Here are some quotes from some of the employees we interviewed on problems they were having with managing new social relationships with families and friends while teleworking. These qualitative comments help us delve deeper to better understand our quantitative findings of why a separation strategy of having times when a teleworker was not available to family or friends or work was significantly related to lower work-family conflict for teleworkers.

- "They think you're available, and people tend to think you're not really working."
- "They expect that I'm available at home. When I'm not, it annoys them."
- "My wife is always looking for me to do other things besides work."
- "My husband goes out of his way to stay with the schedule. The children have a harder time understanding, though."
- "My children call from school more often than when I am at work. My family expects that I can do things like running errands at lunch."
- "They think I won't get as much done, my co-workers. My children think I'm available when I'm at home."

- “My friends will want me to do lunch with them. My kids are more demanding when I’m at home.”
- “My kids and even my wife don’t understand that my focus is on work.”
- “They think I’m not working. It’s very annoying. That happened more in the beginning.”
- “Yes, it’s hard for them to understand that I’m working for my office and not available.”

A review by Kellogg (2001) notes that negotiating boundaries and understanding issues of time and space is an increasingly important issue in the modern organizational and family environment. As we have discussed above in the literature review, Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr (1999) refer to this issue as one of work-family role synthesis: the strategies an individual uses to manage the enactment of work and family roles. It involves decision-making choices governing boundary management and role embracement of multiple roles. Some employees are integrators, preferring to mix boundary roles throughout the day; while others are segmenters, preferring to separate roles (Kossek, et al., 1999; Nippert-Eng (1996).

Despite these theoretical papers, very little empirical investigation has been done on how teleworkers actually enact boundary, time and space negotiation. Future research should build on this study and examine how boundary management strategies relate to the activities of family members, how it affects an employee’s work practices, and how it shapes personal and organizational outcomes (Kellogg, 2001).

Sadly, unless employees are able to control when they mix work and family roles in a way that is congruent with their personal preferences for integration or separation, our study suggests that the benefits expected from telework, like having more time with one’s children and an easier time meeting family demands, may actually be elusive. For example, children and elders may become confused as they “see mom and dad as physically available,” but

become annoyed when they are not mentally available. Neighbors may call on the phone and become perplexed when the employee is unavailable. Issues over space and who get to use the home computer are also raised. Barking dogs and crying babies and other distractions may create problems when clients call a home number. We hope future research will continue to build on this current study and follow up on these issues raised.

Teleworking may lead to overwork.

Telecommuting also will not lead to lower work-family conflict or to greater well-being if it increases the risk of individuals' overworking. If professionals are unable to set boundaries or limits around their work, telecommuting can lead to colleagues, clients or supervisors contacting the worker 24-7 and to expectations of constant availability. The "flexibility" in this kind of work arrangement may only or largely benefit the organization and client, and may mean frequent and unpredictable interruptions of family time for the individual. A further problem is that individuals may have trouble "turning work off". Work is a very powerful force as employees must subjugate their personal needs to those of the employer and their financial livelihood. As work is increasingly coming into the home, it may be more and more difficult for individuals to feel that there are times that they can adopt a separation strategy. The comments of telecommuters quoted below illustrate these dynamics:

- "I get weekend calls and evening calls. When I'm sick, they (at work) still expect me to get work done since I don't have to come into the office"
- "My flexibility includes carrying a pager and understanding interruptions."

For some professionals, this kind of constant availability to work may result in longer work hours. One issue that managers, employees, and organizations must ponder in today's world of growing telework or portable work is "How much work is 'too much?'" At what point should we label an individual's work hours as "overwork" and see it as a problem causing work contagion or "bad teleworking"? The perspectives and interests of employees and employers are likely to differ on this matter. One view is that an employee works "too much" when the employee is unhappy and is showing physical and psychological signs of stress. These might include difficulty separating from work mentally, rarely taking breaks, not getting any exercise at all, and being physically able to unwind.

Another perspective is that an employee works "too much" when the total hours worked by teleworking employees are at least several hours a week more than the total hours worked by others with the same job who are working in the office. We believe that work hours may be labeled overwork when both these factors are combined – when the portable worker is clearly working more hours than his/her non-portable counterparts and he/she is unhappy about it.

Why do we have the bar of more than the number of hours usually worked by office workers? One critical issue is who owns the "extra" work hours saved from portable work, such as those saved by not having to commute, not having to shave or put on nice clothes or makeup, and not having to spend much time schmoozing at the coffee stand or waiting to make copies at the copy machine. Also, there is a big difference between working one or two extra hours a week and working ten, fifteen or more hours beyond what is "normal." A social dilemma that teleworking raises for organizations and employees is the growing lack of clarity in the psychological employment contract regarding mutual expectations of "normal working hours."

A worker could be working two extra hours a week but still have an extra four hours with family beyond those he/she would have without portable work. This could occur, for example, if six hours were saved by not spending time commuting and chit-chatting at the office, and the worker devoted two of these hours to work and four of these hours to the family. If the worker is happy with his/her work hours and the company is getting a benefit from portable work, maybe then it is okay if portable workers work a little longer than office workers. The employee is willing to work a little longer and is more focused than when in the office in return for the reduction of stress related to no commute, control over work schedules, and more family and personal time. So to be a win-win option, both the organization and the worker have to be somewhat satisfied with the level of work output – the complication here is to not confuse effort and time (hours per day) with output, especially in jobs where the output is hard to measure, so we evaluate the success of the work *process*. By evaluating the work process, we mean determining whether the way of teleworking is working well for the individual and the organization- and the employee feels they have some control over when and where and how they work- our personal control measure. If the company is not getting its fair share or if the person feels they have little personal flexibility job control, is showing signs of stress or burnout or has a high work- family conflict level, then the teleworking arrangement is not working. On the other hand, if the company is satisfied and the worker and the family overall feel they are psychologically benefiting from the teleworking arrangement, then this would be a win-win option. It is important for managers and employees (and even the worker with their families) to set aside times at least once or twice a year to discuss whether the telework arrangement is benefiting the worker and the company in a mutually beneficial way- i.e. “good teleworking” what is win-win for the employee and the employer.

Theoretical and Future Research Implications

The results of our survey and qualitative interviews have important implications for theory and for future research on flexible work and telecommuting. Although leading work-family theorists have suggested that the field needs to shift from a focus on policy alone to the practice and processes of change (cf Rapoport, et al., 2002), few studies have done so to date. We show that those with formal access did not have significantly lower work-family conflict (in either direction), contrary to much of the existing work family literature. Future research should not confound availability and use or assume that the mere availability of flexibility (such as telework access) is enough to reduce work-family conflict.

Another important finding for future research was that all forms of flexibility are not necessarily good for individual well-being and job performance. We offer new theory on how to conceptualize flexibility, that it includes the availability of formal policies, the type of flexibility used on the job (how much work is done away from the main place of work, how irregular the schedule, and mobility or how many places in which it is done), and the amount of personal control over flexibility use. These measures and concepts should enable future researchers and organizations to better understand the varied nature of flexibility for employees and firms.

Personal job flexibility control was the most important aspect of flexibility for positive employee experiences of lower levels of work-family conflict, lower intention to turnover, and lower career movement preparedness. Thus, we build on classic job design theory (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), which predicts that autonomy or control over the work process will lead to improved employee attitudes and performance, and show that control over the timing and location of work is also important for these outcomes and for other measures of work-family effectiveness. Our findings suggest that formal human resource policies offering flexibility such

as teleworking may not help employees manage work and family conflicts, unless employee users also experience an ability to have some job schedule control.

We have moved the workplace into the home for at least part of the work week or evenings and weekends, for many professionals without enabling workers and managers and families to fully develop new social, cultural, and structural systems to delineate roles and effective coping strategies, supports, and expectations. The work family literature may have overstated the upsides of flexibility access and “integration” boundary management strategies, and this research has shown they are not a panacea. Access is a necessary but insufficient condition for higher personal effectiveness in areas such as reducing work and family conflict.

Another important finding of this chapter is that higher family-to-work conflict is associated with an integration-oriented boundary management strategy. These results are consistent with theory and evidence developed by Ashforth and colleagues (2000) that, contrary to the popular press, an integration of work and family boundaries does not necessarily correspond with less family-to-work conflict. This finding may be due to increased role transitions and process losses from having to switch back and forth and refocus between work and family roles. An integration strategy may also allow for greater permeability between roles. When something good or bad is happening in one domain, it may be more difficult to buffer good or bad things entering the other life space.

Study Limitations and Practical Implications

Despite its strengths, there are several limitations to this study. Although we report results on teleworkers and non-teleworkers, and have performance data collected from supervisors separately from the employee data, a study limitation is that it uses cross-sectional self-report data for some measures. Cross-sectional research, of course, cannot demonstrate

direction or causality of effects, so integration boundary management strategies may be a result rather than a cause of higher family-to-work conflict. Longitudinal research, measuring both family-to-work conflict and boundary management variables at different points of time would help to clarify this relationship.

We should also note that we only measured work-family conflict in this paper. Well-being is more than just the lessening of negative effects, it can also include positive aspects of well-being, for example, balance and enrichment. Future research should also include studies of work-family enrichment and positive spillover from teleworking, which was beyond the scope of the current study.

Scholars could also extend our work by considering other populations of workers, and other influences on boundary management strategies. Our sample is solely professional with similar kinds of work – future researchers would surely want to broaden the lens to look at more kinds of employees in a wider variety of jobs at all levels of organizations. A final limitation of our study that further research should address is that this study does not explore fully the interplay in how boundaries are enacted not only on an individual level but also as a culturally-driven phenomenon. For example, Poster and Prasad (2003) found differences in how professionals in the U.S. and in India had very different cultural norms about boundary management and that workaholicism can be as much a function of societal and organizational norms as of individual proclivities.

Future research might also use time diaries and beepers or shadowing in order to more finely measure different kinds of boundary management strategies and flexible job designs. These methods are very expensive, but may be well worth the investment. Despite these potential areas for improvement, this study adds to our knowledge by examining the mixed

effects and multi-faceted aspects of flexibility. A clear practical implication of the study is that work-family boundary integration may arise naturally with flexible working arrangements as volume and irregularity of flexible work increases, unless individuals strive to counter this with strategies to segment work and nonwork roles, and organizations allow them to do this. An example of a personal strategy is having a separate door to a home office and hiring a full-time babysitter while working. We have downloaded the office onto some employee's homes, and they and their families may not yet have learned effective strategies to manage these new work arrangements.

Additional studies should build on our research on the construct of boundary management strategy to further examine how people may shift rhythms over daily, weekly and lifespan changes and how they are associated with different types of flexible job designs. As noted, the work-family literature places boundary management on a continuum from segmentation to integration, and there may be more complexity to this issue to investigate in future work. For example, if an employee is working at home with the door closed while his/her child is watching television; some could say he/she is physically integrating roles; he/she is working at home and is physically there, but is mentally segmenting as he/she is not interacting with his/her family. People cannot move work into the home without changing their social relationships. Future research should develop additional measures of the various aspects of boundaries that are being integrated/separated – physical, mental, behavioral, temporal, the implications of integrating on some parts of the boundary, but not others and the waxing and waning of the process of boundary management over a work day, work week, and the life course. More research is needed on coping strategies individuals can adopt to help set boundaries that fit with their preferences. Negotiation skills training might be helpful so that individuals feel

empowered to speak up and negotiate flexibility enactment approaches that help not only their work effectiveness but also their personal and family effectiveness. Supervisors also may need additional training on how to better manage and provide more effective support to employees in these transformational work arrangements.

Conclusion

We have written this chapter to with the goal of contributing to future studies on the effects of enhanced control and autonomy over one's work characteristics upon personal and organizational outcomes. Unlike many earlier studies, the chapter outlines a theory based model which is then empirically tested. We argued that in addition to traditional work design theory and elements, increased autonomy/control over timing, location, and work processing, which is afforded by technological developments will have main effects on control, and do have positive effects on avoiding or lowering of work-home conflicts (two directional) for professionals.

In this chapter we make a distinction between access and use of flexible arrangements, which has sometimes been confounded in the literature. Our results show that more access to flexibility is not always better (cf Kossek and Lautsch's (2008) discussion of flexstyles in their new book, *CEO of Me.*) Too high levels of flexibility may yield negative rather than positive outcomes as such flexibility may create new demands that are difficult for many individuals (and families) and organizations to handle without new social learning. A home and work integration approach may be problematic as the two realms become too mixed to be effectively controllable. Having formal access to flexibility is not the same as having control. Even when working at/from home, we are not always alone. There are the expectations, preferences, and time use by others with whom we have to communicate even at/from home. Colleagues, bosses, and clients from

the work realm and new expectations and preferences of family members may enlarge and extend work conflicts, home conflicts, and between-work-and-home conflicts. Teleworking as a panacea may, therefore, be an illusion of detachment and extra freedom, not necessarily a reality.

Rapoport and her colleagues (2002) call for integrated action research by scholars and organizations. We concur and hope this chapter will prompt future scholarly work to tease out more about how organizations adopt, distribute and enact flexibility; the individual and job conditions that lead to the effectiveness of flexibility practices; and develop greater understanding of how flexible work arrangements can provide greater benefit to individuals and organizations.

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Flexible Job Design and Work-Family Effectiveness

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations

	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Work-to-family conflict	316	2.81	0.75	1.00							
2 Family-to-work conflict	316	1.78	0.47	0.09	1.00						
3 Supervisor performance rating	84	3.91	0.62	0.02	-0.08	1.00					
4 Career movement preparedness	316	2.36	0.83	0.14 *	0.05	-0.22 *	1.00				
5 Turnover intentions	316	1.95	0.95	0.18 **	0.12 *	0.16	0.47 **	1.00			
6 Personal job flexibility control	316	3.84	0.77	-0.11 *	-0.17 **	-0.01	-0.21 **	-0.29 **	1.00		
7 Formal access to telework	316	0.72	0.45	0.01	0.01	0.29 **	-0.21 **	-0.16 **	0.31 **	1.00	
8 Volume of Portable work	316	43.24	39.48	-0.11	-0.05	0.22 *	-0.26 **	-0.17 **	0.36 **	0.54 **	1.00
9 Schedule irregularity	299	0.66	0.47	0.14 *	-0.07	0.05	-0.01	-0.01	0.10	0.12 *	0.10
10 Place mobility	305	1.65	0.68	0.13 *	-0.06	-0.08	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.00	-0.22
11 Boundary management strategy	314	0.58	0.91	0.02	0.13 *	0.22 *	-0.01	-0.04	0.00	0.10	-0.02
12 Dependents	310	0.49	0.50	0.03	0.17 **	-0.01	-0.08	0.04	0.09	0.12 *	0.09
13 Gender	316	0.57	0.50	0.03	0.02	0.29 **	-0.06	-0.10	-0.05	0.02	-0.01
14 Total Work Hours	316	45.11	8.25	0.30 **	-0.11 *	-0.02	-0.07	0.02	0.06	0.07	-0.04

	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
8	1.00						
9	0.10	1.00					
10	-0.22 **	0.22 **	1.00				
11	-0.02	0.05	0.11	1.00			
12	0.09	-0.01	0.11	0.07	1.00		
13	-0.01	-0.10	-0.21 **	0.11 *	-0.02	1.00	
14	-0.04	0.45 **	0.29 **	0.03	-0.14 *	-0.21 **	1.00

*p<.05, **p<.01

Flexible Job Design and Work-Family Effectiveness

TABLE 2

Results of Regression for Work and Family Attitudes^a

	Work-to-Family Conflict	Family-to-Work Conflict	Career Movement Preparedness	Turnover Intentions
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Controls				
Gender	.10	-.04	-.05	-.11
Dependents	.09	.17**	-.04	.08
Total Work Hours	.31**	-.07	.06	.02
Flexibility type				
Personal job flexibility control	-.13*	-.18**	-.14*	-.27**
Formal access to telework	.06	.07	-.08	-.06
Volume of flexible work	-.09	-.05	-.16*	-.05
Schedule irregularity	.02	-.01	-.01	.01
Place mobility	.04	-.08	.02	-.00
Boundary management strategy	-.02	.14*	-.01	-.03
Total ΔR^2	.13**	.09**	.10**	.11**

Note: After pairwise deletion n=292

^a standardized beta coefficients reported

*p<.05, **p<.01

Flexible Job Design and Work-Family Effectiveness

TABLE 3

Results of Regression for Performance^a

	Performance Rating
	Beta
Controls	
Gender	.27*
Dependents	-.04
Total Work Hours	.01
Flexibility type	
Personal job flexibility control	-.13
Formal access to telework	.23
Volume of flexible work	.14
Schedule irregularity	.04
Place mobility	-.02
Boundary management strategy	.17
Total ΔR^2	.22*

Note: After pairwise deletion n=80

^a standardized beta coefficients are reported

*p<.05, **p<.01