

Kellogg Journal of Organization Behavior

2000 Issue

Leigh Thompson, Editor

Online at <http://www.kellogg.nwu.edu/research/ktag/kjob.htm>

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Flexible Work Arrangements: A Study of Anticipation of Regret

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Abstract

This research aims to highlight a component of the decision-making process that individuals face regularly: the anticipation of regret. Set in the context of dual-career families and their decisions regarding flexible work arrangements, the goal of this study is to investigate the impact of anticipation of regret on one's ultimate decision to take advantage of a flexible work arrangement. Specifically, this paper examines how situational factors, such as the amount of feedback expected, in both the work and personal environments affect a person's decision to take advantage of an FWA.

Some of the biggest decisions we make in our lives revolve around our careers and our families. Since dual career couples are no longer a rarity, but rather oftentimes a necessity, these decisions have become the focus of organizations, the media, and society overall. A recent statistic from the U.S. Census Bureau states that families with children in which both spouses work reached an all-time high in 1998 of fifty-one percent (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000). In 1995, eighty-three percent of new mothers returned to the labor force within six months of childbirth (Glass & Riles, 1995). Many, if not all, of these families are simultaneously battling the implicit demands, needs, and hopes of conflicting work and family roles. Leading organizations are trying to help individuals with these choices between work and family (Osterman, 1995). Sixty-six percent of such leading companies surveyed by the Families and Work Institute offered flexible work arrangements in 2000 (“Study Released,” 2000).

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) can be defined as formal organizational programs including modified work weeks, compressed work weeks, job sharing, flextime, variable hours or telecommuting. The currently unanswered question is whether FWAs help married couples with their work-family conflicts, and if so, how much.

For FWAs to be a solution, men and women alike must consider the impact that they will have on their careers and families. It is not difficult to imagine the thought processes that parents might experience. First, if a FWA is offered at their organization, they might wonder about the impact that it will have on their career path. The CEO of a professional services firm captured this succinctly, “There is still skepticism about whether an individual can really advance while on such an arrangement” (Hooks, 1996). People are also likely to consider the impact on their family. A study of over 700 infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers enrolled in 120 child-care facilities was conducted to determine the effects of quality of care and work-family conflict on

children's social outcomes (McCartney et al., 1997). Their most significant finding was that higher work-family conflict was generally associated with poorer social outcomes. Interestingly, they found no significant negative correlation between teacher-child interaction and children's social outcomes. These two findings indicate that the issue of work-family conflict is extremely important in children's development, to the extent that seventeen percent of new mothers decide to leave the workforce altogether after childbirth (Glass & Riles, 1995). A large body of research continues to grow and highlight the anxiety individuals face when considering these work-family uncertainties (Perlow, 1995). Parents envision stunted career paths on one hand and socially maladapted children on the other.

Additionally, FWAs must be fully embraced by organizations for them to be a solution to the work-family balance issue, and this has been an issue to date. One CEO admitted, "We have not been completely successful in communicating the message that it is okay to take advantage of our flexible programs" (Hooks, 1996). In a recent field study of a Fortune 100 firm three barriers to effective work-family policies were identified: to succeed, an individual has to be at work, they have to be there for long hours, and they must reiterate their commitment to work as their top priority (Perlow, 1995). A significant number of companies are plagued with the culture that rewards employees more for the time they put in, or "face time," than for the work they produce (Hochschild, 1998).

However, companies also need to assess how many of their employees will take advantage of these programs and if they can still meet their production goals given these numbers. Several studies indicate that productivity, and thus profitability, may increase given flexible arrangements, however, this is by no means the general consensus as of yet ("Royal Bank," 1998; "Surveys Reveal," 1999). Also, if organizations do support FWAs, which can be

very costly, and no one participates, they risk a real financial loss. Therefore, organizations must ultimately consider whether FWA programs are mutually beneficial for both themselves and their employees.

All of these decisions involve emotions and strategic decision making. Specifically, the decision an individual makes to participate in a FWA is full of emotion, and the potential regret anticipated with either the choice to take advantage of a FWA or not is clearly an influential factor. Therefore, this study will continue to bridge the gap between regret research and work-family issues (Seiden, 2001) by focusing on an area that has not yet been studied, the anticipation of regret and its influence on FWA decisions.

Anticipation of Regret

Regret can be defined as “a more or less painful cognitive and emotional state of feeling sorry for misfortunes, limitations, losses, transgressions, shortcomings, or mistakes. It is an experience of felt-reason or reasoned-emotion” (Landman, 1993, p. 36). Regret considers the possibility of “what might have been,” and thus is a consequence of counterfactual thinking (Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). In the literature, counterfactual thinking has been divided into upward and downward counterfactuals. Upward counterfactual thoughts compare reality to more positive alternatives, whereas downward counterfactuals compare reality to more negative alternatives (Markman & Tetlock, 2000; Galinsky, Moskowitz, & Skurnik, 2000). The emotional responses to these two dimensions range from joy and relief in the case of downward thoughts (the individual has avoided the “worse” situation) to regret and disappointment in the case of upward counterfactual thoughts (the individual has missed the “better” situation). Also, “different paths to the same outcome can lead to the consideration of

very different counterfactual alternatives and thus induce very different levels of regret” (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995, p. 380). Therefore, when deciding to take advantage of a FWA, the perspective individuals take regarding the potential change, whether it be framed as either positive or negative, can impact the level of resulting regret.

Regret theory has been built around two main assumptions (Bell, 1983; Loomes & Sugden, 1987). First, people tend to compare their outcome after making a decision with what they would have received had they chosen differently. For example, if an individual is happy with their outcome in comparison to other options, they rejoice; if they are unhappy with the outcome, they regret their decision. Second, anticipation of regret has been shown to impact current choices (Bell, 1983; Loomes & Sugden, 1987). People tend to anticipate these feelings of regret prior to making the decision and thus “shift their preferences” to avoid the potential regret (Larrick & Boles, 1995). This anticipation of regret might cause the parent to shift their preference toward or away from a FWA. For example, parents may anticipate regretting the portions of their career that they have given up, or they may envision the regret they would feel if they did not spend more time with their families, each of these potentially influencing their decision to participate in a FWA.

Long versus Short-term Actions and Inactions

Regret is also temporal in nature. Typical work-family measures reflect individual’s assessments of their current situation, whereas measures of regret reflect people’s more long-term evaluations of their life choices (Seiden, 2001). In a series of studies, Gilovich and Medvec (1994, 1995) have illustrated that actions generate more regret in the short term, but inactions produce more regret in the long run. More simply, although a regrettable action might affect a

person greatly, this regret seems to dissipate with time. However, those things that the individual did not do, their regrettable inactions, seem to remain with them for a lifetime. Seiden recently looked at this more closely in relation to quality of work-life (2001). As compared to regrets of action, she found that regrets of inaction were more strongly associated with a low quality of both personal life and work-life, and that the most frequently mentioned regrets of inaction were “not spending time with family” (with relation to personal life) and “missed opportunity” (with relation to work-life).

The Impact of Feedback

Feedback also has an impact on regret if decision makers expect to receive feedback on foregone alternatives. They tend to anticipate more regret than if the outcome of their choices remained unknown or ambiguous (Larrick & Boles, 1995; Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, & van der Pligt, 2000). Decision makers who are protected from the knowledge of their foregone alternatives can believe that they made the right choice. If they obtain information on the foregone options, and it reveals that they made the correct decision, the individual will rejoice. If they obtain feedback through, for example, a promotion process, and it reveals that they made an incorrect decision, the individual will be disappointed. However, it has been shown that the dissatisfaction associated with receiving a relatively worse outcome is greater than the satisfaction associated with receiving a relatively better outcome (Boles, 1991, 1992). Thus, anticipated feedback can increase anticipated regret.

An Expectancy Model for Anticipation of Regret

Zeelenberg et al. suggest that one way to cope with this uncertainty is to develop expectancies about the possible outcomes of the different alternatives and evaluate each as if they were to be chosen (2000). They present a model, based on previous research, which extends expected utility theory by including potential regret (and disappointment). Specifically, they add two variables (for regret and disappointment, respectively), each weighted for the personality of the decision-maker (i.e. are they risk averse or risk seeking) and the situational factors (i.e. the importance of the decision, the amount of feedback expected, etc). Consistent with Kahneman and Tversky's prospect theory, where losses loom larger than gains (1979), regret is modeled as more potent than rejoicing. The core tenet in their model is that decision-makers not only seek to maximize their utility in the traditional sense, but they also tend to avoid regret and seek more positive emotions.

Therefore, as we might expect, the anticipation of regret has an impact on our everyday decision making (Zeelenberg et al., 2000). For in every decision we make, we weigh the potential outcomes and choose the one that will benefit us the most, the option that will cause us the least regret and the most positive emotional response. Thus, naturally this also extends to decisions regarding FWAs. Research participants have indicated that their greatest regrets in life have included: should have spent more time with family (Kinnier & Metha, 1989), "should have reared children differently," "should have pursued a career or a professional interest; aimed higher in career," and "should have continued to work when children were young." (Hattiangadi, Medvec, & Gilovich, 1995) Each of these reflect regrets associated with either work and/or family. The anticipation of these types of regret could easily play into a person's decision to take advantage of a FWA.

Regret research provides some insight into what people feel they “should have done differently” in hindsight regarding work and family (Seiden, 2001), but it doesn’t tell us why they made the decision they did. Studies conducted around FWAs indicate that they can be positive experiences for both the employee and the organization (“Royal Bank,” 1998), however, we still find employees reluctant to take advantage of these programs. The decisions people make in general, and specifically with regard to FWAs, are bounded by their desire to maximize their outcomes, to feel good about the decision, and to avoid regretting the decision. Employees want to feel confident in their decision to participate in a FWA. They want to believe that their career will still be on track, even if it is a slower track, and they don’t want to regret their decision.

Ultimately, people’s decisions are driven by their anticipation of regret. Gilovich and Medvec (1994, 1995) illustrate how the choices that haunt us longest are our choices not to act, or rather our inactions. Several studies have highlighted the regret associated with both not spending more time with family, and not achieving career goals because of missed opportunities. Thus, again we see reinforced the tremendous need to balance work and family, and the obstacles implicit within. These are the issues that plague individuals their entire lives. When we expect to receive feedback on these choices, we experience even more anxiety about the ensuing regret. This feedback comes from our careers, through our supervisors, peers, and promotion opportunities, and from our families, through our spouses and children. Our anticipation of regret leads us to shift our preferences, based on this expected feedback, to the least regrettable option.

Therefore, this paper examines how situational factors, such as the amount of feedback expected, in both the work and personal environments affect a person’s decision to take

advantage of a FWA. It is somewhat easier to imagine the responses an individual might have in their workplace after assuming a FWA, as feedback is provided more routinely and consistently through organizational processes. They probably began with concrete goals and aspirations, thus they might more easily generate increased counterfactual thoughts (“what might have been”) and feel a greater sense of loss at not having met all of their original goals. Performance evaluations, missed promotion opportunities, and a slower career path are each types of feedback the individual could expect to receive, thereby reinforcing their regret. In contrast, in an individual’s personal life, there typically are not as many formalized procedures to provide feedback. Thus, it might be more difficult to generate the same types of responses and a comparable level of anticipated feedback. The study also evaluates whether the anticipation of regret in the short-term or the anticipation of regret in the long run is more potent in the context of FWA decisions. As Seiden (2001) learned, managers’ regrettable inactions in both the work and personal contexts lead to lower quality of work and personal life, respectively. Therefore, because of this dissatisfaction with their personal and/or professional lives and their anticipation of further regret due to inaction, individuals are forced to take a long-term perspective in making their decisions regarding FWAs. This temporal perspective may also be enhanced for older individuals, as they would likely have more work experience and a more long-term outlook.

Hypotheses. This paper tests the assertion that, when choosing a FWA, individuals will expect to receive more negative feedback from their careers than their families, thus causing a higher level of anticipation of regret and a decision to not choose the FWA. However, when choosing a FWA, the anticipation of regret in the long-term will be stronger than that in the short-term.

Study Overview

Two studies will be presented. Study 1 will consist of surveys of individuals that have the ability to take advantage of flexible work arrangements in their workplace. This study will focus on articulating and quantifying the career and family-related feedback associated with FWA decisions. Study 2 will consist of scenario studies, building off of the information gained in Study 1 and presenting several scenarios highlighting the long- versus short-term perspective in this decision.

Study 1: FWAs in the Workplace

Method

Participants and Design. Surveys will be sent out to 600 participants (50 percent male and 50 percent female) who were randomly selected across all grade levels (both administrative and client service) at a multi-national professional services firm. Only those respondents who are in dual-career families will be selected for the final sample. Formal flexible work arrangement programs have been offered at this firm for the past five years, and encompass all of the components typically referred to, such as flextime, telecommuting, modified work weeks, compressed work weeks, job sharing, and variable hours.¹ Surveys will be administered electronically through the internet and corresponding communications will be sent via electronic mail.

A description of the current FWA program offered by the firm will be provided. Participants will respond to a series of questions about FWAs at their firm, their considered or actual participation in a FWA, their reactions to such a decision, and the actual or expected

feedback from their peers, supervisors, and families. Sample survey questions are included in Appendix 1.

Additional questions will be asked regarding work-family issues focusing on factors beyond work, focusing on work-family balance, and looking at how family may interfere with work. Appendix 2 reports the specific items used to develop these scales, which are based on a psychological construct developed by Seiden (2001).

Two free-response questions will also be asked. The first will target the respondents that are not in a FWA and will ask about their anticipation of regret in either taking or not taking advantage of a FWA, and their reasons behind this anticipation. The second question will focus on the respondents that are currently in a FWA and will ask them to describe the decision process they went through prior to choosing the FWA and to list as many factors as they remember considering. These questions are included in Appendix 3.

Finally, demographic characteristics will be requested including such things as age, marital status, does the spouse work outside the home, gender, number of children, current position, length of employment with current firm, and work experience.

Data Analysis. The participant's free-response answers will be coded and judged by three graduate students, all of whom are unaware of the hypotheses. The judges will be thoroughly trained to categorize the responses to each of the two free-response questions according to conceptualization of timeframe (long-term versus short-term perspective) and categorization of potential outcomes (career versus family). The judges will also code for the degree of perceived salience of the outcome on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being low and 7 being high). Discrepancies will again be resolved by an expert judge who is aware of the hypotheses, but is blind to the condition in which the materials being evaluated were generated.

Study 2: FWA – A Scenario Study

Method

This study builds off of the information gained in Study 1 specifically through the free-response questions. It will however focus on the long-term versus short-term perspective in making the FWA decision.

Participants. The sample will include 100 graduate management students (60 percent male and 40 percent female) at Northwestern University participating to receive extra class credit toward their participation grade in the core Organizational Behavior class. The mean work experience of this population is 5.2 years and they range in age from 23 to 44 years.ⁱⁱ

Procedure. The instrument will be sent to the respondents via electronic mail, and will be returned to the researcher via either hard copy or electronic mail (to allow for the respondent to feel secure with the level of confidentiality). One of the four following scenarios will be presented randomly to each participant. Scenarios 1 and 2 will be presented in a between-subjects format, and Scenarios 3 and 4 will be presented in both a within-subjects design (where they are asked both questions a and b) and a between-subjects design (where they are asked either a or b).

Scenario 1. You are a male/female (to match the sex of the respondent) manager at a company you have been with for 10 years. You are *32 years old*, your spouse also works full-time, and you have three children, 8, 6, and 4 years of age. You are a regional vice president and work 50 hours a week. Your company offers flexible work arrangements (including flextime, telecommuting, compressed work weeks, and variable work weeks) and the HR manager has approached you specifically, believing that you could benefit greatly from such a program.

From your work experience, how would you react to the HR manager and the opportunity to participate in a FWA? For example, is this a golden opportunity or a real career-stopper?

Flexible Work Arrangements

Please indicate if you would choose the FWA. Yes No (please circle)

Please rank the below factors based on their importance to your decision.ⁱⁱⁱ (1 being high)

Scenario 2. You are a male/female (to match the sex of the respondent) manager at a company you have been with for 10 years, and in the workforce for an additional 10 years. You are *42 years old*, your spouse also works full-time, and you have three children, 8, 6, and 4 years of age. You are a regional vice president and work 50 hours a week. Your company offers flexible work arrangements (including flextime, telecommuting, compressed work weeks, and variable work weeks) and the HR manager has approached you specifically, believing that you could benefit greatly from such a program.

From your work experience, how would you react to the HR manager and the opportunity to participate in a FWA? For example, is this a golden opportunity or a real career-stopper?

Please indicate if you would choose the FWA. Yes No (please circle)

Please rank the below factors based on their importance to your decision. (1 being high)

Scenario 3. Chris and Pat do not know each other, but both work as manager's at the same corporation. Both are married, have spouses who work full-time, and each has three children, 8, 6, and 4 years of age. Their company offers flexible work arrangements (including flextime, telecommuting, compressed work weeks, and variable work weeks) and both are considering beginning one. *They are on similar career paths, although Chris will be up for a promotion next year, whereas Pat will need to work for close to 3 more years prior to promotability.* Each agonizes over the decision, weighing the impact both on their families and careers. They ultimately make different decisions: Chris opts to do the FWA and Pat decides not to do the FWA.

Suppose their decisions turn out badly for both of them: Chris is passed over for the promotion and Pat's hours continue to increase thus decreasing the time spent with family.

- a. Who do you think would regret their decision the most upon realizing that it was a mistake?

Why?

- b. Who do you think would regret their decision the most in the long run? Why?

Scenario 4. Chris and Pat do not know each other, but both work as manager's at the same corporation. Both are married, have spouses who work full-time, and each has three children, 8, 6, and 4 years of age. Their company offers flexible work arrangements (including flextime, telecommuting, compressed work weeks, and variable work weeks) and both are considering beginning one. *They are on similar career paths.* Each agonizes over the decision, weighing the impact both on their families and careers. They ultimately make different decisions: Chris opts to do the FWA and Pat decides not to do the FWA.

Suppose their decisions turn out badly for both of them: Chris is passed over for a promotion and Pat's hours continue to increase thus decreasing the time spent with family.

- c. Who do you think would regret their decision the most upon realizing that it was a mistake?
Why?
- d. Who do you think would regret their decision the most in the long run? Why?

After providing their responses, participants will be asked to complete a brief demographic profile indicating such items as their gender, age, marital status, number of children, and work experience. Before leaving the study, participants will be thoroughly debriefed, receiving a written explanation of the nature and purpose of the study.

Data Analysis. The participant's answers will be coded and judged by three graduate students, all of whom are unaware of the hypotheses. The judges will be thoroughly trained to categorize the responses according to whether the outcome is career or family-related. Discrepancies will be resolved by an expert judge who is aware of the hypotheses, but is blind to the condition in which the materials being evaluated were generated.

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Appendix 1

Sample survey questions include:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Does your firm offer flexible work arrangements (FWAs)? | Yes | No |
| 2. Does your firm visibly support FWAs? | Yes | No |
| 3. Are you eligible to take advantage of a FWA at your company? | Yes | No |
| 4. Have you considered trying a FWA? | Yes | No |
| 5. Have you taken advantage of a FWA at your current company? | Yes | No |
| a. If so, are you still on the FWA? | Yes | No |

- | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|-------------------|-----|
| | Very likely | | | | Not likely at all | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 6. How likely are you to take advantage of your firm's FWA program? (Please circle 1 if you are currently on a FWA.) | | | | | | |

- | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|-----------------|-----|
| If you were to take advantage, or are currently in a FWA : | Very positively | | | | Very negatively | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 7. How will a FWA affect your career within the first 6 months? | | | | | | |
| 8. How will a FWA affect your career in the next 18 months? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 9. How will a FWA affect your career over the next 5 years? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 10. How will a FWA affect reaching your career-related goals? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 11. How will a FWA affect your productivity at work? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 12. How will a FWA affect your personal life within the first 6 months? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
| 13. How will a FWA affect your personal life in the next 18 months? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |

Flexible Work Arrangements

14. How will a FWA affect your personal life over the next 5 years? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. How will a FWA affect reaching your personal goals? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. How will your supervisor respond to your participating in a FWA? Very positively 1 2 3 4 Very negatively 5 6 7

17. How will your peers respond to your participating in a FWA? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. How will you family respond to your participating in a FWA? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix 2

Work Satisfaction

Work satisfaction was derived from scales of organizational loyalty, career loyalty, extrinsic satisfaction with work, intrinsic satisfaction with work, and autonomy at work. It also included single item indicators of organizational satisfaction, job satisfaction, and career satisfaction. Coefficient alpha was .88.

The scale of organizational loyalty consisted of the following items: *If I had to choose all over again, I would take a job with this company, I would recommend this company to a friend as a good place to work, I would be willing to spend the rest of my career working for this company, I feel a sense of pride working for this company, I would be willing to change companies for career advancement (R), I feel little loyalty to this organization (R), I find my values and the organization's values are very similar, Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake (R)*. Coefficient alpha was .89

The scale of career loyalty consisted of the following items: *A great deal of satisfaction comes from my professional life, I would be a less fulfilled person without my career, I enjoy talking about my work with other people, If I had to do it all over again, I would not have chosen this career (R)*. Coefficient alpha was .70.

The scale of extrinsic satisfaction with work consisted of the following items: *My future with this company looks bright, The chances for promotion are good, The job security is good, The pay is good*

The scale of intrinsic satisfaction with work consisted of the following items: *The work is interesting, The work is challenging, The work is boring (R), The job gives me the opportunity to*

develop my skills, The problems I am expected to solve are hard enough. Coefficient alpha was .70.

The scale of autonomy consisted of the following items: *I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my own work, My responsibilities are clearly defined, I have enough authority to do my job, I can see the results of my work.* Coefficient alpha was .88.

All of the above items were scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree.”

Single item indicators of job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, and career satisfaction were phrased in the following way “*All things considered how happy are you with the following: your job, your organization, your career,*” and were scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “very unhappy” and 5 indicating “very happy.”

Career Limitation

Career limitation is a measure of the degree to which participants felt that their careers would be limited as a result of individual, educational, qualification, and performance constraints.

Participants were asked to indicate “*How likely or unlikely are the following to limit your career progression in the next five years: individual performance, age, formal qualifications, career experience?*” These items were scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “very unlikely” and 5 indicating “very likely.”

Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction is a measure derived from scales of importance of family and marital satisfaction as well as a single item indicator of family satisfaction. Coefficient alpha was .86.

The scale of importance of family was adapted from Yogeve & Brett (1985) and consisted of items scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree:” *A great deal of satisfaction comes from my role as a parent, I am very much personally involved in my family members’ lives, the most important things that happen to me are related to my family roles, I enjoy talking about my family with other people.* Coefficient alpha was .82

The marital satisfaction scale consisted of items taken from Yogeve & Brett (1985) and Spanner (1976). Measured on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree” were the following: *A great satisfaction in my life comes from my role as a spouse, I would be a less fulfilled person without my role as a spouse.* Measured on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “very unhappy” and 5 indicating “very happy” was the following: *All things considered how happy are you with your marital relationship.* Coefficient alpha was .80.

The single item indicator of family satisfaction asked participants “*All things considered how happy are you with your family situation,*” and was scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “very unhappy” and 5 indicating “very happy.”

Work Interferes with Family Life

Work interfering with personal life is a measure derived from scales of job interfering with family, stress, preoccupation with work, and job effort. Coefficient alpha=.76.

The scale of job interfering with family consisted of the following items: *Feeling that you cannot accomplish everything that you would like to at home, Feeling that your job interferes with your family time, Feeling that your job interferes with your personal time, Feeling that you do not have enough time to yourself, Feeling that you do not have enough time for your family, Feeling that you do not have enough time for your friends.* These items were measured on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “never” and 5 indicating “very often.” Coefficient alpha was .86.

The scale of stress consisted of the following items: *Feeling that your job negatively affects your psychological well-being, Feeling that your job negatively affects your physical health, Feeling tension about balancing all your responsibilities, Feeling that you should change something about your work in order to balance all your responsibilities, Feeling that personal commitments interfere with your job.* These items were measured on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “never” and 5 indicating “very often.” Coefficient alpha was .79.

The scale of work overload was measured on a 5 point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale and consisted of the following items: *After work I am too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do, I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interests, My family/friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I'm at home, My work takes up time that I like to spend with family/friends.* Coefficient alpha was .80

The scale of job effort was also measured on a 5 point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale and consisted of the following items: *My job requires that I work very hard, My job requires a great deal of physical/mental effort.* Coefficient alpha for job effort was .81.

Focusing on Factors Beyond Work

Focusing on factors beyond work is a single item indicator that asked participants the following. *“How well does the following describe where you are in your career: focusing on factors beyond work, e.g., family, friends, activities?”* The item was scored on a 4 point scale with 1 indicating “not much at all” and 4 indicating “a lot.”

Focusing on Achieving Balance Between Work and Family

This is a single item indicator that asked participants the following. *“How well does the following describe where you are in your career: focusing on achieving balance between work and family?”* The item was scored on a 4 point scale with 1 indicating “not much at all” and 4 indicating “a lot.”

Family Interferes with Work

Family interferes with work is a single item indicator. Participants were asked to indicate *“How likely or unlikely is the following to limit your career progression in the next five years: family responsibilities?”* This item was scored on a 5 point scale with 1 indicating “very unlikely” and 5 indicating “very likely.”

Appendix 3

Free-response questions:

If you are not currently participating in a FWA please respond to question A. If you are currently participating in a FWA please respond to question B.

- A. Please discuss your thoughts about taking advantage of a flexible work arrangement. We are interested in understanding the reactions you anticipate from both your work and family. Please consider these expectations from both a short-term (in the next 12 – 24 months) and a long-term (over two years from now) perspective, and list them in rank order (1 being the highest).
- B. Please discuss the decision process you went through prior to choosing to take advantage of the FWA. Please list as many factors you remember considering and rank order them (1 being the highest).

Footnotes

ⁱ This firm has made FWAs a major priority and a part of several initiatives, thus reinforcing the quantity of communications and the accessibility of information regarding such programs.

ⁱⁱ I felt this was an appropriate sample population as the majority of these individuals have spent a considerable period of time in the workforce, and thus should be able to comment on potential decisions they might make regarding their career and career paths. Additionally, the age range would suggest that the majority are also in a period where a significant percentage may be considering or have already started families, therefore lending more weight to their comments regarding the balance between work and family.

ⁱⁱⁱ These are the top 15 factors, balanced to reflect both career and family-related issues, that were elicited in Study 1 from the free-response questions.