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Deconstructing "Family Supportive Cultures": A Vision for the Future

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Most research on work and family has been conducted in liberal market economies where the integration of paid work and personal roles is considered primarily a private matter. In these contexts work-life support is dependent on market forces, rather than being viewed as a public concern requiring government regulation (although in the UK this is tempered to some extent by European Union requirements). Consequently the focus has been on "family supportive organizations" to a greater extent than family supportive cultures and societies. Nevertheless the study of family supportive organizational cultures remains important for the field of work-life research more broadly, because even in more family supportive national contexts, public policies have to be implemented at the workplace level where culture and management support also matter and, increasingly, global forces intersect with national cultures.

Given the origins of research on support for work and family in western liberal market economies, dominated particularly by scholars from the USA, it is not surprising that this literature often advocated organizational work-life or family-friendly policies and, more recently, supportive organizational culture and practice, to minimize work-life conflict and stress. A significant shift occurred with the gradual recognition that work-life policies without organizational support were insufficient for organizational change. Concepts such as "family supportive organizational cultures" (Thompson et al., 1999) and "family supportive supervisors" (Allen, 2001) provided an important milestone in shifting away from individualized accounts of "successful policies" to the need to foster "supportive cultures". As research on workplace support continued to evolve, the assumptions embedded in this literature

have also begun to be questioned. Four main assumptions inform the critical reflections set out in the rest of the chapter.

First, family supportive cultures are generally defined as being based on "shared values". This is not always the case, as there can be more than one discourse on work–life integration within an organization (see Stepanova, this volume) and values are often ambiguous, although dominant discourses based on hegemonic power are often privileged over "voices in the margins" (Mescher et al., 2010). Second, the relative lack of cross-national research assumes universality of findings from limited contexts. National context is important for employees' experiences of work and family (Lewis et al., 2009), although this is often undermined at the workplace level as employers demand more and more of their workers in the context of globalization and the spread of competitive capitalism (Gambles et al., 2006; Lewis et al., 2009). Hence the focus on organizational policies and practices to support the integration of work and personal life has remained central, often at the cost of examining wider contexts. This reinforces and privileges the western dominated discourses on work–life issues, and wider international, cross-cultural and non-western contexts remain sidelined (see Rajan-Rankin et al., this volume). Third, the concept of "family supportive" cultures tends to neglect diversity and complexity of families and implicitly assumes that the families that organizations are attempting to support are homogeneous (mostly white middle class, married with children). This privileges a heteronormative view of family life and does not take into account diversities in race, gender, ethnicities or sexualities and across life-course (Chatrakul Na Ayudhya & Lewis, 2010; Kamenou, 2008). Finally, the nature of "support" provided in the workplace needs to be unpacked and located within hierarchies of power within organizations. Work–life discourses in organizations are created by those in power, for privileged groups and less powerful members are expected to passively accept dominant discourses (Beauregard et al., 2009; Mescher et al., 2010), even as voices of collective resistance and individual agency may also emerge.

In the remainder of this chapter we first briefly overview some of the literature on family supportive organizational culture and then consider how the evolution of this field was reflected at the International Centre for Work and Family (ICWF) conferences between 2005 and 2009, before moving on to discuss the importance of critical approaches to work–life support in a wider range of social contexts and the issues/questions that this raises. We conclude with a critical vision for future research by problematising and unpacking taken for granted notions of "family", "support", "culture(s)" and societal and organizational priorities.

The evolution of research on "family supportive organizations"

Initial research on organizational culture assumed that work and family were separate spheres and focused entirely on workplace processes and

experiences (e.g., Schein, 1985). The notion that organizational cultures tend to be family unfriendly began with Rhona and Robert Rapoport's (1969) focus on dual career families in Britain and especially issues of gender equity which, they argued, would require changes at many societal levels. Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) research on workers in American corporations who were expected to work "as if" they had no personal life beyond work further developed this view. In countries where support for work and family was left to unfettered market forces, the initial response to the identification of family unfriendly workplaces, and the burgeoning literature on work–life conflict in the 1980s and beyond, focused on the advocacy and development of workplace policies. However, research evaluating the impact of such initiatives showed that at best they resulted in "changes around the margins" but rarely deeper systemic change (Allen, 2001; Callan, 2007; Kossek et al., 2001; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Lewis & Taylor, 1996; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). It became clear that changes in organizational cultures and support were also necessary.

Evidence of the limited impact of formal policies in the absence of cultural changes crystallized the centrality of gendered organizational assumptions – a legacy of separate spheres thinking. Work–life policies came to be regarded as artefacts, underpinned and undermined by values and assumptions that conflate ideal workers with hegemonic masculinity (Bailyn, 1993; Lewis, 1991). Aspects of culture, such as the assumption that availability and visibility in the workplace are essential to demonstrate commitment and productivity, often coexisted with more surface manifestations of work–life support (Bailyn, 1993; Holt & Lewis, 2010; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Lewis & Humbert, 2010; Perlow, 1998; Rapoport et al., 2002). Those who take up formal work–life policies thus risk being stigmatized and they fear, often with good reason, that this would be career limiting. The socially constructed ideal worker conflicts with the social representation of the ideal mother in many contexts (Ladge, 2009; Lewis, 1991; Lewis & Humbert, 2010) and while it is more congruent with traditional models of fatherhood it can also make it more difficult for the growing number of men who wish to be active fathers (Brandth & Kvande, 2002; Ladge & Harrington, 2009). These ideological aspects of culture influence day-to-day workplace practices particularly through the supportive or unsupportive behaviours of managers (Kelly et al., 2008; Lewis, 1997; Perlow, 1995; Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Work–life supports and practices hence remain entrenched within static organizational discourses, thereby potentially perpetuating not only "separate spheres" but also "separate worlds" thinking.

The development of specific measures of work–life organizational culture further consolidated the importance of family supportive organizational cultures. Drawing on theories of organizational and social support, Thompson and her colleagues (Thompson et al., 1999) developed a measure of perceived organizational family support (POFS), assessing perceived instrumental, informational and emotional support for work–life needs and incorporating

perceived career penalties, time demands and management support. Another scale (Allen, 2001) examines global employee perceptions of the extent to which their organizations are supportive. Both measures are widely used and predict work-related outcomes in the expected directions, including enhanced organizational commitment, job satisfaction, women's intentions to return to work more quickly after childbirth, turnover intentions and work-life conflict (Allen, 2001; Lyness & Brumit-Kropf, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006; Thompson et al., 1999) and have been found to mediate the relationship between flexible working arrangements (FWAs) and work-related behaviours and attitudes (Apospori, 2009; Logue & Ayman, 2009). There is some suggestion however that the impact of support may be gendered; more important for women than men (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Hill et al., 2004), reflecting ideal worker and ideal mother assumptions. Recent research extends understanding of the complexity of organizational cultural support for families, including relational support from managers (Hammer et al., 2007) and colleagues (Dikkers et al., 2007). Hammer et al. (2007), for instance, identified four types of family supportive supervisor behaviours (FSSB): emotional support, instrumental support, role model behaviours and recognition of the strategic importance of work-family issues, which emerge as significant when considering managerial/supervisor support for work-life integration at different levels of the organizational hierarchy.

There are however a number of critiques, which emerge from the implicit assumptions embedded within these research approaches. First, there are assumptions that organizational cultures are unitary, shared and static. Second, much of the research attempts to generalize the dimensions and impacts of family supportive organizational cultures over many workplaces. The implicit assumption here is that specific workplace contexts are not important. These assumptions make it more difficult to understand processes for achieving culture change. It is clear that organizational supportiveness cannot be characterized as a simple continuum between supportive and obstructive, but it is often perceived as uneven and contradictory (Dikkers et al., 2007; Lewis & Smithson, 2009). This may be due to subgroup cultures (see Stepanova, this volume), to differences among managers who may not share the same values (Hammer et al., 2007; Lewis et al., 2009) and to the coexistence of contradictory workplace discourses and practices (Dikkers et al., 2007; Holt & Lewis, 2010; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Lewis & Humbert, 2010). These contradictions are often accepted and taken for granted by employees.

Qualitative research, in particular, highlights the processes whereby employees – especially mothers, describe their organization and managers as highly supportive, while accepting that there will be a price to pay in terms of career advancement (Herman & Lewis, 2009; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Lewis & Humbert, 2010). The construction of policies as favours to

be reciprocated leaves the normative male model of work untouched and is often associated with a low sense of entitlement to be supported without making trade-offs (Herman & Lewis, 2009; Lewis & Smithson, 2001). The conflicting discourses that underpin coexisting contradictory practices are nicely illustrated in a textual analysis of company statements about their support for work-life balance on their websites (Mescher et al., 2010). On most of these websites, explicit messages about support for work-life balance being available to all workers coexist with implicit messages about ideal workers (and ideal mothers) and the gendered use of work-life arrangements, constructed as "favours". Such fine grained understandings require a focus on specific workplaces. Thus while the bulk of research on family supportive cultures operates within a positivist paradigm, a more qualitative, contextualized approach is important for exploring situated experiences. An important direction of recent research has been to move beyond documenting the impact of supportive cultures to the development of context-specific culture change initiatives (Bailyn, 2011; see Kelly et al., 2010; Kossek et al., 2010; Lewis & Cooper, 2005).

We now turn to consider how the evolution of family supportive culture research been represented in the ICWF conference series.

Organizational culture stream at ICWF conferences

By 2005, when the first ICWF conference was held at *Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa* (IESE), Barcelona, Spain, it was already acknowledged that formal work-life policies and benefits were not enough to bring about systemic change, as evidenced by a shift from a policy to culture discourse in work-life research. Only two papers addressed this explicitly in the 2005 meeting, but both contributed new perspectives, arguing for a multi-layered and contextualized approach to understanding family supportive workplace culture (Thompson & Prottas, 2005) and a transformational approach to organizational change to support work-life integration (Lewis, 2005). Both were based on research carried out in contexts with minimal state regulative support (USA and UK) although they acknowledged the importance of specific national contexts. By the 2007 conference there was burgeoning interest in family supportive workplace culture. This was reflected in responses to this stream which comprised nine papers examining various aspects of family supportive organizational cultures. Papers took account of various layers of context from the micro level of organizational sub-cultures (Grotto & Lyness, 2007) to the macro level of impact of national context (Allen & CISMII, 2007). Papers also broadened the national contexts studied, including single country papers acknowledging the impact of national policy and legislative context in Spain (Chinchilla & Torres, 2007), the Netherlands (den Dulk & de Ruijter, 2007) and the USA (Dickson, 2007; Harrington, 2007), as well as a cross-national study explicitly comparing the

impact of welfare state support for gender equitable work-life integration (Allen & CISMII, 2007). These papers extended earlier research on the multi-dimensional nature of support and particularly the important role played by supportive managers (den Dulk & de Ruijter, 2007; Hammer et al., 2007). Research on family supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) continued to proliferate and there were 11 papers in this stream at the 2009 conference. Papers built on and extended a number of trends in the family supportive workplace culture research including: the moderating role of cultural and relational support on individual and organizational outcomes (Apospori, 2009; Logue & Ayman, 2009); managerial beliefs and leadership styles (Dunn-Jensen & Lipjankic, 2009; Kossek et al., 2009a); occupational and professional subcultures (Kossek et al., 2009; Stepanova, 2009); the impact of gendered workplace assumptions on the experiences of motherhood and fatherhood (Ladge, 2009; Ladge & Harrington, 2009; Lewis, 2009); the reorganization of work (Kossek et al., 2009; Lewis, 2009) and consideration of the impact of contemporary context such as the global economic crisis (Casey, 2009; Kuschel, 2009). Papers also encompassed a range of methodological approaches, from multi-level modelling (Kossek et al., 2009a) to in-depth qualitative studies (Kossek et al., 2009b; Ladge, 2009; Ladge & Harrington, 2009; Lewis, 2009), providing rich and complementary datasets. Again a range of national contexts was considered, but not all of these studies explicitly took this into account, reflecting an ongoing gap within wider research. Family supportive culture is still viewed as a largely western concept, and discourses from other non-liberal economies and non-western countries are thinly represented in the literature (Rajan-Rankin & Tomlinson, 2009).

From this wide selection of papers, we were mindful that the "best paper" for the organization and cultures stream across the three conferences would need to demonstrate a dynamic view of organizational cultures from a multi-layered perspective, and our preference was to highlight research in an under-examined national context. We selected a paper by a PhD student, Elena Stepanova, who innovatively examined work-life integration approaches and subgroup cultures in a Spanish context. Her study challenges taken for granted assumptions of a unitary and static organizational culture and demonstrates some diverse ways in which work-life discourses are constructed across different subgroups. By focusing on a non-liberal western country context and examining "culture" at a micro level subgroup context, this paper begins to highlight the different ways in which organizational cultures can be constructed and analysed within familialistic welfare state regimes. Situating ourselves within the difficulties all researchers may face in contesting dominant discourses, we acknowledge the challenges that early career researchers may experience in doing this. Nonetheless, this study exemplifies a progressive, nuanced, multi-layered understanding of work-life experiences from a micro-layer perspective and, by doing so, privileges voices that may not be easily heard.

Drawing on our critique of the literature and the conference series, we now consider some examples of what can be learnt from challenging assumptions of "universality of effects" in relation to work-life support and acknowledging the importance of studying diverse people and wider contexts.

Work-family culture in non-liberal market economies

In previous sections, we have argued that family supportive cultures need to move beyond an examination of organizational cultures, and consider the national and institutional contexts within which work and family life are located. Given the predominance of western research we explore work-life culture in non-liberal market economies not only in developed countries, but also in transitional and developing countries. National culture, like organizational culture, is not unitary and must be viewed as dynamic and subject to change, both from *within* (for example, demographic transitions and population change) and also from *without* (globalization and labour dumping to reduce wage costs). In neo-liberal contexts a business case argument has been the main driver of developments in work-family policies, practices and supportive culture and later, in some cases, a dual agenda of gender equity and workplace effectiveness (Rapoport et al., 2002). Despite evidence to support the business case, however, many organizations remain family unsupportive (Thompson & Prottas, 2005). Initiatives thus became available to some workers employed in certain organizations and sectors but not to others, for example, employees in smaller organizations or on low wages, or where policies are available but at a cost in career terms and therefore tend to be used mainly by women. Moreover, in countries which rely on market welfare, all workers, but particularly the most vulnerable, are affected by changing contexts such as the current economic recession, which can deepen worker insecurity and reduce feelings of entitlement to work and family support.

Looking beyond liberal market economies, within Europe there are different welfare state systems and ideologies which emerge, reflecting a range of arguments for supporting work and family, from a business case to a moral/gender equality argument. The European Union mandates a certain level of support including equal treatment for part-time workers and entitlements to parental leaves, although there is considerable variation across Europe in how these are implemented, with France and particularly the Nordic countries the most progressive in terms of childcare support and work-life entitlements. For instance, Southern welfare models characterized by micro-solidarity models and familialistic welfare ideologies (see Ferrera, 1996; Stepanova, this volume) are less likely to provide public policy provisions for informal care which is absorbed by the family/community, despite overtly seeming to promote gender equity. This illustrates coexisting contradictory values mirroring those in organizations. Similarly, national level differences are also evidenced within the Nordic countries where, despite

high levels of social provision, entitlements to receive benefits are contingent on a citizen worker model, which is itself gendered, thus while social justice is explicitly the goal of such national policy endeavours, they can have unjust outcomes (see Rothstein, 1998). Whether social policies in different national contexts are effective in producing family supportive cultures is also influenced by the extent to which they achieve defamilialization and commodification of care (Hantrais & Morgan, 1994; Ungerson, 2004). Esping-Anderson (1999), for instance, re-typologized welfare states based on the extent to which family policy decommodes unpaid care work performed in the home. Thus, the Scandinavian countries would be "defamilialized", while Southern welfare models were "familialized" and liberal welfare states are "non-familialized". Such characterizations, while operating within the "three worlds of welfare" ideology (a problematic assumption in itself), at least make strides in including family responsibilities and unpaid care within public policy provision at the national context.

It is important to examine how workplace support is understood in these diverse contexts and the impact of local and global forces. Employees may feel more entitled to workplace support in more regulated societies with a commitment to gender equality (Lewis & Smithson, 2001) and day-to-day support such as subsidized childcare make life easier for working parents, but the impacts of such societal supports are complex (Lewis et al., 2009; Nilsen et al., 2012). For example, while gendered organizational cultures and ideal worker ideology were initially identified in liberal market economies there is growing evidence that they also exist in some organizations elsewhere, especially (though not exclusively) multinational corporations or those operating in a competitive global market, including France (Fagnani & Letablier, 2004; Lewis & Humbert, 2010) and egalitarian Scandinavia (Brandth & Kvande, 2002; Haas & Hwang, 2007; Holt & Lewis, 2010). The spread of global neo-liberalism and competition can also undermine national policy initiatives (see Lewis et al., 2009). For example, intensive workload and tight workforces often mean that while employees are supported in taking up entitlement to flexible family leaves and reduced hours work, the full workload must still be accomplished by the flexible workers or by his or her colleagues, resulting in intensified workloads and often deterring people from using work-life initiatives (Lewis et al., 2009; Nilsen et al., 2012). Thus national context still matters, but global context and the interaction between local and global contexts is also important for understanding supportive workplace cultures.

Beyond non-liberal Western European countries, an examination of shifting work-family cultures and practices in transitional Eastern European economies is also revealing. In a qualitative eight country European study, Lewis et al. (2009) illustrate how both national and workplace contexts, and also time or phase in an organization's trajectory, influence the impact of managers on workplace culture. Parents in this study talked about the

shifting role of managers and identified old and new type managers who varied in supportiveness. For example, in a Bulgarian finance institution at a time of transition to a capitalist market economy, new style managers regarded support for parents as incompatible with business needs while old style managers (schooled in socialism) tended to provide informal support to parents. In contrast, in a similar institution in the UK it was the new style managers steeped in high commitment management techniques who were most likely to offer informal support and flexibility for parents, with much resistance to this from older style managers. In the post-communist regimens of Eastern Europe, workers expect support from the government in terms of childcare and leave entitlements (Cernigoj Sadar, 2009; Kovacheva, 2009) but do not expect organizational or managerial support beyond complying with state regulation. This must be understood within socio-historical context that may change at some point in the future. In these contexts the concept of family supportive organizational culture may be irrelevant, at a certain point in time.

An examination of national contexts in non-liberal economies presents a more complex and nuanced picture where socio-cultural and historical trajectories of nation states are instrumental in shaping change within multiple work-life discourses. As Ozbilgin et al (2011). (forthcoming) observe, positivist work-life studies focusing primarily on the individual level of analysis often overlook research that is sensitive to context and history. Intersectionalities between social and organizational policies and individual experiences need to be rooted within systemic relations and structures of power. This becomes particularly relevant when considering the dearth of work-life research in developing country or non-western contexts. The hegemonic western model of work-life research (another taken for granted assumption) has overshadowed the complex and often divergent discourses around work-life policies which emerge in non-liberal non-western countries.

In recent years, a small but burgeoning body of cross-cultural research has focused on non-western work-life studies (Aryee et al., 1999; Choi, 2008; Coffey et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2004; Luk & Schaffer, 2005; Mortazavi et al., 2009; Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007; Spector et al., 2007). However, as Powell et al. (2009) observe, most of these studies do not explicitly examine "culture" as an analytical category, but focus more on the reproduction of western models and tools of measurement in non-western settings. A few qualitative studies have begun to explore culturally explicit research questions about the ways in which work-life policies and culture are adapted and reproduced. Poster (2005), for instance, drew on critical theory approaches and developed a transnational approach to work-life balance based on nodes of power between parent multinational firms in the USA and local subsidiary firms in India. Rajan-Rankin and Tomlinson (this volume) challenge the assumptions that global work is reproduced within a vacuum, and explore regional and subgroup differences in work-life experiences among workers

in Indian call centres. Gender equity and paternalism coexist as drivers, to on the one hand protect employees from undesirable effects of work strain, while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender roles.

Examination of work-life discourses in transition economies and developing countries is particularly helpful, in shifting the focus away from western and especially liberal discourses, and highlighting the dynamic nature of organizational culture. However, when considering work-life policies in non-liberal economies, it is important to caution that the same rigidities in liberal market economies may apply, if one is not sensitive to context, history and societal factors. A major flaw of the existing literature is the assumption of universality of effects (Stavrou & Kilaniotis, 2010) and the oversimplification of national, regional and cultural differences. Just as individual work-life experiences are influenced by embodied values and assumptions about gender, work-family and parenting roles, organizations do not exist in a vacuum but operate within the fabric of socio-cultural realities and systems of power allocation. Any investigation into family supportive cultures in their broadest sense must hence accept the dynamic, shifting and ever-changing multitude of contexts within which work-life discourses and experiences are framed.

Concluding comments: a vision for the future

Our chapter critically reviews some of the key studies on family supportive organizational cultures, and, though not exhaustive, highlights some taken for granted assumptions which remain to be challenged. Family supportive organizational cultures both conceptually and empirically make an important contribution to work-life research, by (re)focusing on institutional and organizational contexts, rather than work-life policies as the way forward in integrating work and family life. We have argued, however, that the next step is to continue to move away from static thinking about organizational cultures, and consider a more systemic analysis of cultures from a multi-layered standpoint, spanning national, institutional, global and transnational contexts. Our vision for the future attempts to subvert conventional wisdom and proposes alternative approaches as set out below.

First, family supportive organizational cultures are important, both as a layer of context, but also as a space for progressive organizational change and as an intersection with global and national cultures. By viewing organizational cultures as dynamic and ever-changing, and as diverse and plural in their construction (there are not one but many organizational cultures) we challenge the hegemony of dominant discourses and provide fertile ground to consider voices of less powerful members within organizations. Work-life discourses and organizational cultural practices may not be shared by all employees, and opening up dialogue on differences, rather than similarities, may help to break the hegemony of power. Locating organizational

culture within implicit power relationships within organizations hence highlights resistance to dominant discourses, and, by doing so, can also shift such discourses and work-place practices towards more progressive dialogues. Discussions around which groups are being supported (for example, male managers) and which groups are being excluded or expected to adapt (for example, mothers and single workers) can reveal systemic inequalities through which male models of work are being reinforced, even as explicit messages of family-supportive organizational cultures are being maintained. Thus, organizations which perceive themselves to be "family supportive" are themselves powerful in creating, legitimizing and reinforcing which work-life discourses should be privileged (for example, long working hours; visibility culture) and which discourses should be silenced (for example, supporting active fatherhood).

Such changes may need to address more fundamental value shifts and barriers. Context-sensitive research is a way of exploring implicit assumptions and values underpinning workplace practices (Bamberger, 2008), but often the more taboo aspects of intersecting organizational and societal values remain taken for granted and unexamined. For example, few people would explicitly agree that profits are more important than people, but many aspects of workplace cultures and practices in both the developed and developing world are based on such implicit beliefs (Gambles et al., 2006), which can be exacerbated by global competitive capitalism. Some countries are more proactive than others in attempting to counterbalance these assumptions and balance economic and social needs. Societal and organizational priorities thus form an important backdrop to discussion of family supportive organizations.

Second, while "families" occupy the central focus of family supportive cultures literature, researchers rarely unpack and challenge the "type" of family which organizations are meant to support. "Family-friendly" policies, for instance, are typically targeted at working mothers with young children, and even though both terminology and discourse around work-life balance have expanded to include all workers, the social construction of what type of worker and what type of family is being supported is rarely challenged in research and even less so in practice. Implicit support for mothers and not fathers reproduces a particular family pattern. Heteronormative assumptions, foregrounding married workers with children, marginalize the different work-life experiences of single workers, lone parents, gay and lesbian workers and older workers, who may have different work-life demands. For instance, "non-traditional" families such as extended family networks in one culture may be traditional in another. Older workers may also have different work-life or work-life needs in diverse societies. Broadening the focus from "families" to diversity discourses and recognizing the intersectionality of families, gender and other forms of diversity may create more inclusive dialogues about how to support employees' work and non-work

lives. However, caution is also needed in using a diversity approach. While it is important to recognize the limited nature of "family" addressed in the family supportive organizational literature, a diversity lens often focuses on needs and differences rather than the nature of work itself. Family unsupportive workplace cultures are based on particular models of work and working practices. It is by redesigning "work", not redesigning workers or families, that organizations can become supportive to the non-work lives of their employees across time and place.

Third, implicit within much of work-life research are some false dichotomies in the ways in which central concepts are defined – that it is either work *or* life, the ideal worker *or* the ideal mother, the supportive organization *or* family unfriendly organization. In reality, organizational cultures and work-life roles that are played out within them are fluid, dynamic and changing and are, more often than not, characterized by contradictions and complexities rather than simplistic linear discourses.

Moreover, wider contexts are also fluid, and a context-sensitive approach enables research to take bold steps towards rethinking work-life issues both now and for the future. For example, while the global economic recession has threatened the sustainability of some western countries, the global South has shown remarkable resilience to these changes. The power shifts between the North and South may force us to question the dominant western models upon which most work-life research and organizational culture research are embedded. We may also need to change our assumptions about work-life relationships, given recent developments such as social networking sites, which change the ways in which people interact, form relationships and seek intimacy. Therefore, we need to change and adapt our models for examining work-life relationships in the face of current dynamic modalities and contexts. Many different ideologies may drive an organization, which can make it family supportive in one dimension (for example, flexible working and employee control over schedules) and unsupportive in other (implicit targeting of women workers to take on part-time work). The issues surrounding career penalties are particularly important, and need organizational resolution, before truly progressive allocation and take-up of work-life policies may even be possible. Wider organizational involvement through cultural change programmes, for instance, can lead to a democratically constructed understanding of work-life needs and policies to address them – an endeavour which comes closer to the notion of "shared values" which are not assumed, but are actively negotiated.

Finally, we revisit the debates about "context" and "culture" and suggest a broader focus than organizational culture, to include national, international, regional and institutional level contexts. By expanding the focus of research beyond western liberal market economies to include transition economies and developing country contexts, a more diverse vision of work-life balance may evolve. A focus on organizational contexts does not preclude an analysis

of national contexts – nor vice versa – they are not mutually exclusive. By maintaining that organizational cultures are part of the socio-cultural and historical fabric of the nation states within which they are embedded, the values and assumptions surrounding work and life become more explicit.

To conclude, our vision for the future is an inclusive progressive discourse on work-life integration where the focus is on family supportive societies as well as organizations, and on strengthening of public responsibility for the integration of work and family life, as well as organizational change. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of these and other layers of context and the dynamic and complex nature of cultures and contexts. Finally it involves continuing to challenge taken for granted assumptions about families, supports and cultures as well as making visible the impact of fundamental but rarely explicit societal and organizational priorities that often coexist with and contradict expressions of organizational family supportiveness.

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