

Workplace Flexibility, Family Relationships, and Family Resources for Working Parents in the US

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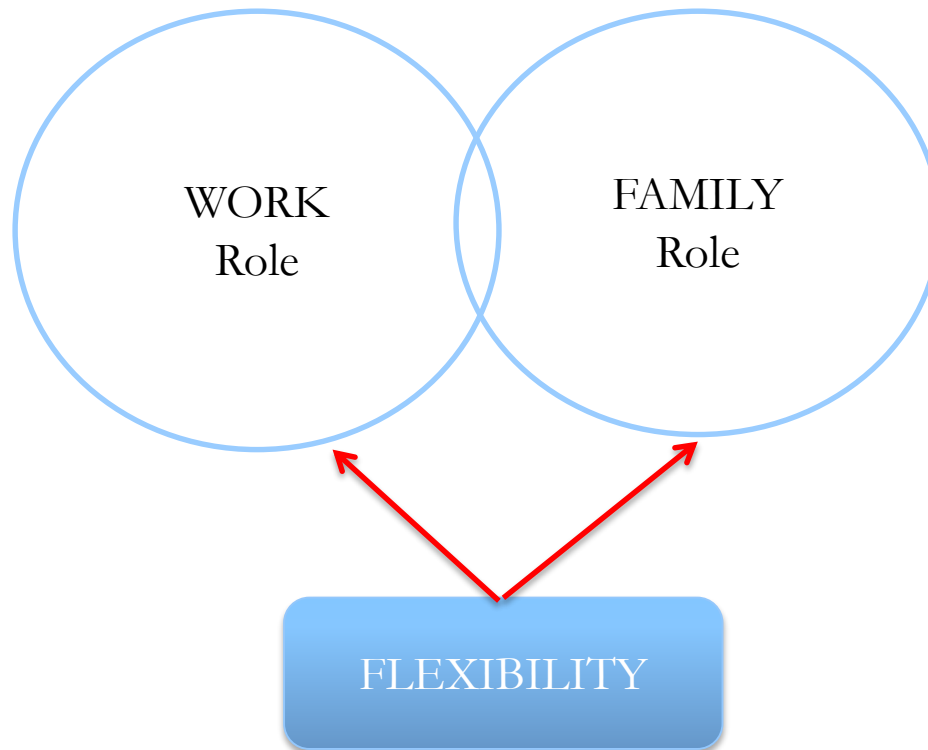
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Backgrounds

- Workplace Flexibility
 - Control over when, where, and how long workers engage in work-related tasks (Hill et al., 2008)
 - Flexible schedule
 - Ex) ability to change start/end times of work or take time off during day
 - Flexible work location
 - Ex) teleworking (working from home)
 - Flexible work hours
 - Ex) part-time employment, ability to change working hours
 - Flexibility for Whom?
 - Employee-centered flexibility is *discretion* (or worker control)

Conceptual framework

- Boundary-**spanning** resource perspective (Voydanoff, 2005)
- Boundary-**blurring** perspective, particularly for working at home (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000)



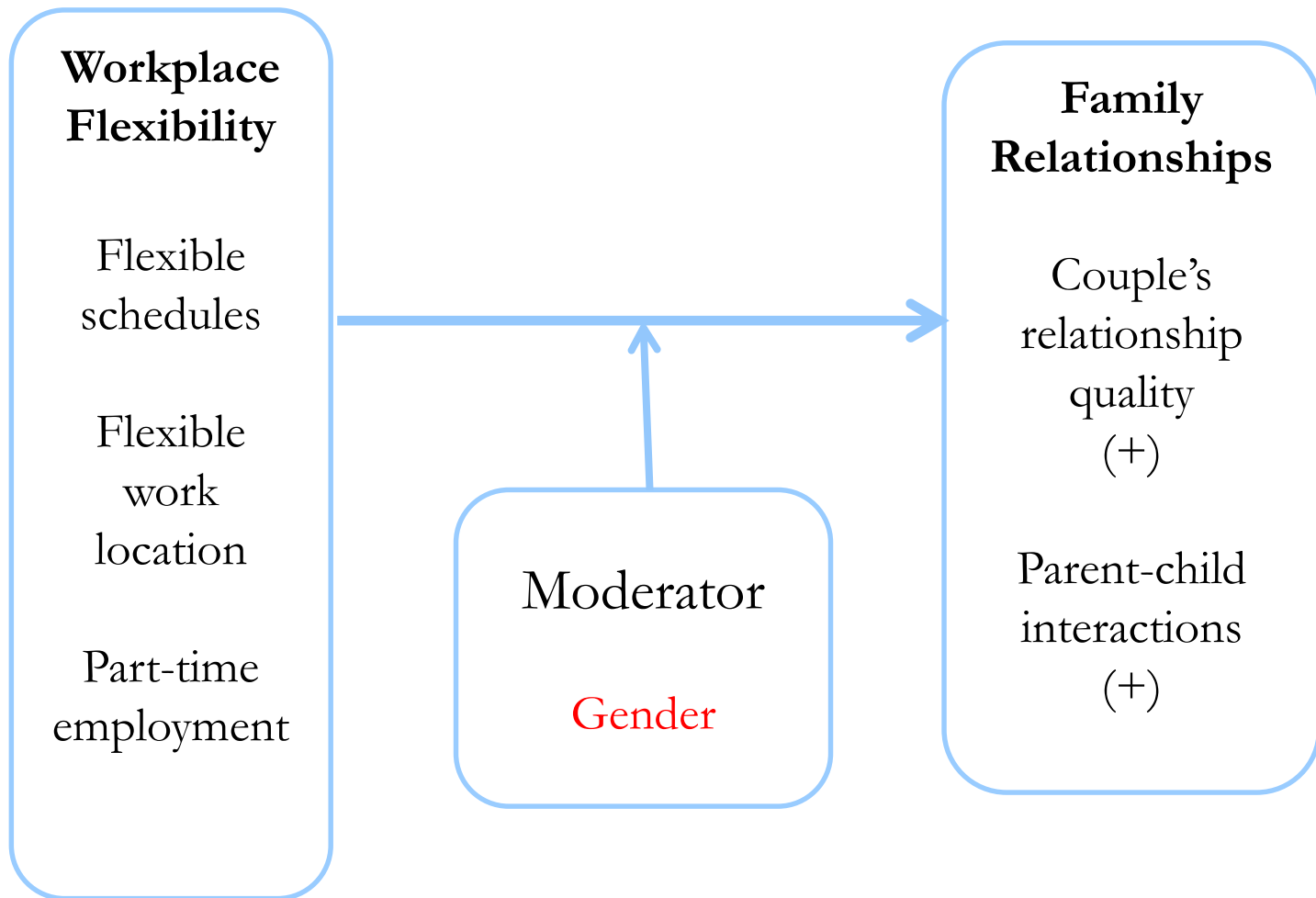
Background & literature review

- Empirical evidence
 - Abundant empirical evidence suggests the benefits and unintended consequences of workplace flexibility on **worker wellbeing** (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Carlson et al., 2010; Costa, Sartori, & Åkerstedt, 2006; Henly & Lambert, 2014; Hill, Jacob, et al., 2008)
- Gaps in research
 - Limited empirical attention to the impacts of workplace flexibility on *family interactions*, such as ***couple's relationship or parent-child interactions***, the key determinants of healthy marriage and child development.
 - Limited attention to ***father's involvement to parenting***.
 - Research is scarce using ***nationally representative longitudinal data***

Research Questions

- **(RQ1)** Are flexible schedules, working at home, and part-time employment associated with a **couple's relationship quality** among parents with young children?
- **(RQ2)** Are flexible schedules, working at home, and part-time employment associated with **parent-child interactions** among parents with young children?
- **(RQ3)** Do these associations vary **by gender** among parents with young children?

Hypothesized Model



Data and Sample

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), 9-month, 24-month, and 4 year survey
 - Restricted a longitudinal sample to respondents that answered three waves of data (8,800 mothers and 4,800 fathers)

	Mothers	Fathers
Age (M,SD)	29.9(6.3)	33.6(6.8)
White (%)	58.2	66.6
Married (%)	67.9	85.5
More than high school graduate (%)	53.7	60.6
Co-habiting partner (%)	80.5	100
Low income (below 200 % poverty threshold)	50.5	40.5
Employed at the time of the survey (%)	53	93.1

Measures	Construction
Flexible schedule	Are you eligible for the “ <i>flexible hours or flex-time</i> ” benefit through your current job? 0= No; 1= Yes
Ability to work at home	As part of your job, do you do any of your work at home? (This means you have a formal arrangement with your employer to work at home, not just taking work home from the job.) 0= No; 1= Yes; 2=self-employed
Part-time employment	How many hours per week do you usually work for pay? 0= full-time (work hours ≥ 35 hours ; 1= part-time (work hours < 35 hours)
Relationship happiness	Would you say that your (relationship/marriage) is... 0=not too happy/fairly happy ; 1=very happy (recoded)
Parent-child interactions	The average of the frequency for following types of activities: reading books, telling stories, singing songs, tickling their children, blowing on their bellies, holding their children, playing games with their children, taking their children out for a walk, and going out for dinner with their children

Analyses

Research Questions	Model Specifications
	Pooled-sample regression/logistic regression with extensive controls, using three waves
RQ1 & RQ 2	Lagged dependent variable (LDV) model : extensive controls + previous wave outcome variables (main model)
	Pooled-sample fixed effects model using three waves
RQ3	Sub-group analysis by gender and conduct the chow test

Descriptive tables

	Mothers	Fathers
	(%)	(%)
Workplace flexibility		
Flexible schedule/hours		
Yes	46.3	37.9
Working at home		
Yes	21.4	18.8
Self-employed	3.1	4.6
Part-time employment		
Part time	38.1	5.3
Dependent variables		
Relationship happiness (two-parent families only)		
fairly/not too happy	23.4	28.4
very happy	76.6	71.6
Parent-child interactions (mean, S.D.)	3.7(0.6)	3.5(0.5)
N (wave 1)	8,800	4,800

Note: Weight provided by ECLS-B was adjusted for all estimates

Research Question 1

The Association between **Workplace Flexibility** and **Relationship Happiness** for Mothers and Resident fathers

Results

	<u>Mothers</u>			<u>Fathers</u>		
	Pooled OR	LDV OR	FE OR	Pooled OR	LDV OR	FE OR
Flexible schedule	1.027 (0.071)	1.018 (0.088)	0.822 (0.101)	1.202** (0.074)	1.261** (0.099)	1.245 (0.144)
Working at home	1.151 (0.101)	1.069 (0.115)	1.143 (0.178)	0.854* (0.067)	0.841^ (0.083)	0.934 (0.139)
Part-time (<35hrs)	1.232** (0.097)	1.310** (0.122)	1.214 (0.176)	0.869 (0.107)	0.987 (0.172)	0.921 (0.228)
Previous relationship happiness		7.973*** (0.615)			7.010*** (0.569)	
N	16,850	10,500	5,200	13,650	8,300	4,300

Note: All models were controlled for demographic and work characteristics. Weight was adjusted for all models. Standard error was reported in parenthesis. The sample is limited to two-parent families.

+ p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 *p<.001**

Research Question 2

RQ2: The Association between **Workplace Flexibility** and **Parent-child interactions** for Mothers and Resident Fathers

Results

	<u>Mothers</u>			<u>Fathers</u>		
	Pooled	LDV	FE	Pooled	LDV	FE
	<i>Coef</i>	<i>Coef</i>	<i>Coef</i>	<i>Coef</i>	<i>Coef</i>	<i>Coef</i>
Flexible schedule	0.007	-0.023	-0.030	0.038	0.041	-0.015
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Working at home	0.090**	0.080**	0.015	0.033	-0.007	0.042
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.034)
Part-time (<35hrs)	0.108***	0.084***	0.028	0.227***	0.145*	0.200***
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.057)	(0.064)	(0.059)
Previous child interaction		0.439***			0.426***	
		(0.011)			(0.015)	
N	25,300	16,500	25,300	13,950	8,600	13,950

Note: All models were controlled for demographic and work characteristics. Weight was adjusted for all models. Standard error was reported in parenthesis. The sample includes two-parent and single-parent families . + p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 *p<.001**

Findings

- The association between workplace flexibility and couples' relationship quality is modest; **schedule flexibility** is beneficial to relationship happiness for fathers, mother's part-time is beneficial as well. Father's working at home has a modest negative impact.
- The positive association between workplace flexibility and parent-child interactions is more observed; **working at home** for mothers and **part-time employment** for both parents.
- **Gender difference** is pronounced in working at home; more positive impacts for mothers.

Implications

- The findings suggest the **benefits and unintended consequences** of workplace flexibility for a couple's relationship and parent-child interactions among working parents; Boundary-spanning vs. boundary blurring perspectives.
- In sum, a policy implication is **to secure more flexibility for working parents**, but a little bit ambiguous of work-at-home for fathers.
- The U.S. “Right to Request” Act would possibly not only benefit worker wellbeing, but also **promote worker's family relationships**.

Thank you!

Comments welcome!

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