Flexibility stigma and worker’s use of flexible work arrangements

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The project

- **Future Research Leader (Dec 2013 – Oct 2017)**
- Examines European/UK data to examine who has access to flexible working and its outcomes (especially on work-family outcomes)
  - Methods used: multilevel analysis, panel analysis, MG SEM
Flexible working is making us work longer

Flexible work is on the rise but research shows it often leads to people working longer hours than they would otherwise.
Right to flexible working

- UK right to flexible working – introduced in 2003, expanded in 2007 and again in 2014
- available for parents of children <6 and children with a disability <18 → carers of adults and children <17 → all workers
Table 3.1: The proportion of all employees taking up flexible working arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000 WLB1</th>
<th>2003 WLB2</th>
<th>2006 WLB3</th>
<th>2011 WLB4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time working</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexi-time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary reduced hours</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular home working</td>
<td>20¹%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed working week</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annualised hours</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-share</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term-time working</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not worked flexibly in last 12 months</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently working flexibly, or has done so in the last 12 months</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slacking off?
Flexibility stigma against those working flexibly is prevalent, making workers working flexibly work harder to compensate for this flexibility stigma.
“Flexibility stigma” (Williams et al., 2013) the stigma workers face when using various types of flexible working arrangements - deviate from the image of the ‘ideal worker’

Cech and Blair-Loy (2014) men especially in male dominated occupations face a further “femininity stigma” - deviates from the masculine worker’s image of being the providers rather than the carer (Williams et al., 2013; Cha and Grady, 2014)
Research question

- Flexibility stigma prevalence in the UK
- Examine how it influences take up of flexible working arrangements – gender differences / differences for parents vs non-parents
Data

- BEIS Work-Life Balance Survey of 2011 (4th wave)
- 1874 core+893 boost sample of parents

- Parents= with children under 12
- Flexibility stigma 1: “People who work flexibly create more work for others.”
- Flexibility stigma 2: “People who work flexibly are less likely to get promoted”
- strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree
Predicted probability of having flexibility stigma (BIS WLB 2011)

- **Generate more work**
  - Non-parent: 35.7%
  - Parent: 31.0%

- **Negative promotion**
  - Non-parent: 30.8%
  - Parent: 37.7% *****

Legend:
- Non-parent
- Parent
Predicted probability of having flexibility stigma (BIS WLB 2011)

- **Generate more work**
  - Women: 31.2%
  - Men: 38.1%

- **Negative promotion**
  - Women: 33.0%
  - Men: 33.7%

*** indicates statistical significance.
Proportion of individuals with flexibility stigma (BIS WLB 2011)

Flexible work creates more work for others

- Child <5
- Child 5-11
- Child 12-17
- No children

Women and Men

Working flexibly less likely to get promoted

- Child <5
- Child 5-11
- Child 12-17
- No children

Women and Men
When available, the likelihood of taking of flexible working arrangements and flexibility stigma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Doesn't Have Bias</th>
<th>Has Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telework</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telework</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender differences make work for others take up of flexible working arrangements

- Flexitime
  - Women: 50.0% doesn't have bias, 30.0% has bias
  - Men: 30.0% doesn't have bias, 20.0% has bias

- Telework
  - Women: 40.0% doesn't have bias, 20.0% has bias
  - Men: 30.0% doesn't have bias, 25.0% has bias
Conclusion

- Despite the increase in work intensity of workers working flexibly, flexibility stigma prevalent
- Parents more likely to fear the consequences of flexible working on their careers
- Men more likely to have stigma towards those who work flexibly (male-dominated workplaces)
- Flexibility stigma reduces the worker’s likelihood of taking up the arrangement
Tackling work culture

- Largely to do with the ideal work culture norm/presenteeism
- We need to tackle these culture – otherwise flexible working may not be as effective of a policy

- Senior managers setting a role model
- Campaigns
- Stronger rights – EC social pillar protection for flexible workers
Thank you!

For comments & questions
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