A workshop on Work-Life Balance: Towards a Research and Practice Agenda for Systemic Change

WLB: Employers’ Policies

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Structure of Talk

- WLB may have superseded family-friendly but still apt for employers’ policies
- Research mirrored family-friendly focus but limited in its own terms
- Interesting results from WERS
- Way ahead to overcome limits in family-friendly terms
- Towards more radical WLB research
Family-friendly terminology

• Apt: Policies are child and female-centric

• Albeit:
  - limited concept of family
  - flexible working and home working used by people without care-giving responsibilities
  - other non-work activities
The Research Agenda

• The nature to employers’ offerings
• The extent and location of family-friendly practice
• Effects of practice on:
  ➢ family-work conflict
  ➢ participation in the workforce and retention
  ➢ organizational performance
WERS 2004

- Data from the UK’s WERS2004
- The management survey was based on a face-to-face interview
- In a total of 2,295 workplaces (response rate: 64%)
- Sample covers the private and public sector and all industries
- Matched employee survey, with sample of 22,451 employees (61% response rate) in 86% of workplaces in the management survey
WERS research

• The Nature of Family-Friendly Management
• Where found?
• Performance effects
## The Usage of Family Friendly Practices – Panel

<table>
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<th>Panel</th>
<th>1998</th>
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<td>Parental leave</td>
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The usage of Family Friendly Practices in Britain in 2004

<table>
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<td>Childcare subsidies</td>
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<td>Time off for elderly care</td>
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<td>Parental leave</td>
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Scaling Family-friendly management

• 1998 Two factor solution: flexibility discrete from substitute caring.

• 2004 single factor: more integration
Correlates of Family-Friendly Management

Family Friendly Management is positively associated with:

- Size of the workplace
- Electricity, gas and water (2004), Health (1998)
- Financial Services
- Proportion of Females
- Equal Opportunity Management
- High Involvement Management (2004 only)

(Many variables not significant e.g. being part of a larger organisation, health care, high involvement management, proportion of managers, unionism)
Family-Friendly Practices & Performance

• Positive relationships in 3 US studies (Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000; Meyer, Mukerjee and Sestero, 2001, Vandenberg, Richardson, and Eastman, 1999)

• No relationship in Australia or Britain (Heiland and MacPherson, 2005; Wood and de Menezes, 2007; Bloom and Van Reenen, 2006); and one US (Baughman, Di Nardi and Holtz-Eakin (2003).
Performance study measures

- Family-Friendly Management & High Involvement Management – reflective scales based on practices
- Legitimacy – Investors in People
- Performance – financial performance, labour productivity, quality, labour turnover, absenteeism
- Commitment – workforce average on commitment scale
Key result

• In the workplaces with high levels of commitment, the greater the level of family-friendly management the higher the productivity and quality

• We have support for social exchange theory

• Family-friendly management may help individuals in handling personal or family problems and may be associated with commitment through its use.
Results: what we found not to be the case.

- No association between family-friendly management and social legitimacy
- No association between family-friendly management and performance
- The interaction of family-friendly management and the proportion of females in the workforce is not associated with management performance
- The interaction between family-friendly management and high involvement management is not significantly related to performance
- The interaction between the degree of commitment of the workforce and family-friendly management is associated with productivity and quality
- The three-way interaction involving family-friendly management, proportion of females in the workforce and the proportion of females with pre-school aged children is not significant
Limits of WERS other studies

• Insufficient on use
• Other formal policies e.g. involvement, minimum wage, hours worked
• Informal arrangements
• Culture
Practices in WERS 2011

- Flexi-time
- Job sharing (sharing a full-time job with someone else)
- Reduced your working hours (e.g. full-time to part-time)
- Worked the same number of hours per week across fewer days (e.g. 37 hours in four days instead of five)
- Working at or from home in normal working hours
- Changed working patterns (including shifts)
- Working only during school term times
- Paid leave to look after children, elder relatives or other dependents (in addition to time off for emergencies)
The new WERS question

In the last 12 months, have the following arrangements been available to you if you needed them and have you made use of any of them?

- Not available
- Available but do not use
- I use this arrangement
- Don’t know
Work-Non-Work conflict

• I often find it difficult to fulfil my commitments outside of work because of the time I spend on my job.
• I often find it difficult to do my job properly because of my commitments outside of work.
• Managers here understand about employees having to meet responsibilities outside work.
I’d like you to think about how people in your kind of job progress – for example, get a promotion. Do you agree or disagree that people in this workplace who want to progress usually have to put in long hours?
Towards new research

- Holistic approach: equal opportunities, WLB practices, involvement and job design
- Assessing organizations independent of work-family concerns
  - Visible time put in
  - Weight on input over output
  - Ideal worker concept
- Other employer practices: leisure in the workplace, facilities for administration of every day life


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