Rethinking the Clockwork of Work: Why Schedule Control May Pay Off at Work and at Home

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Abstract

The problem and the solution—Many employees face work–life conflicts and time deficits that negatively affect their health, well-being, effectiveness on the job, and organizational commitment. Many organizations have adopted flexible work arrangements but not all of them increase schedule control, that is, employees' control over when, where, and how much they work. This article describes some limitations of flexible work policies, proposes a conceptual model of how schedule control impacts work–life conflicts, and describes specific ways to increase employees' schedule control, including best practices for implementing common flexible work policies and Best Buy's innovative approach to creating a culture of schedule control.

Keywords

flexibility; control; work–family conflict; work hours

American workplaces and American families have changed rapidly—and in potentially contradictory ways—over the last 40 years. There are now more workers with extensive caregiving responsibilities for children (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006, Cohen & Bianchi, 1999) and elderly relatives (National Alliance for Caregiving and American Association of Retired Persons, 2004). At the same time, work organizations are demanding more time on the job while promising less in terms of job security, wage growth, and benefits (Moen & Roehling, 2005; Rubin & Brody, 2005).

The result? A recent study found that 44% of employees "often" or "very often" felt overworked in the last month, were overwhelmed by how much they had to do in the last month, or did not have enough time to step back and reflect on their work (Galinsky et al., 2005). Feeling overworked is related to making more mistakes on the job, being angry with one's employer, and feeling resentful toward coworkers as well as feeling stressed and reporting more symptoms of depression (Galinsky et al., 2005). Another study found that about half of employed Americans reported some conflicts between work life and personal or family life (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001).

Existing research demonstrates that these conflicts and overloads have consequences for health and well-being, family life, community engagement, and performance on the job.[1] Work–family conflict negatively affects mental health, including depression (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Frone, 2000; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Grzywacz & Bass,

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2003; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), anxiety disorders (Frone, 2000; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), vitality (Kristensen, Smith-Hansen, & Jansen, 2005), and general well-being (Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Moen & Yu, 2000). Work–family conflict has also been linked to problem drinking (Frone et al., 1997; Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003) and physical health problems such as minor physical complaints (such as headaches and insomnia), poor appetite, and lower self-reports of overall health (Allen et al., 2000; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Some research also shows a relationship between work–family conflict and cholesterol (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), unhealthy eating habits, and exercise (Allen & Armstrong, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 2001). Looking beyond the individual employee, work–life conflicts also impact family time, parenting behaviors, and the quality of parent–child relationships (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001; Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999; Crouter, Tucker, Head, & McHale, 2004; Repetti & Wood, 1997; Schneider & Waite, 2005). Employee performance and effectiveness suffers because of work–family conflicts and the health consequences of those conflicts (Madsen, 2003). Research demonstrates that work–family conflict is associated with lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, higher turnover intentions, and higher burnout and job-related stress (Allen et al., 2000; Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1996).

The increasing prevalence of work–life conflicts and increasing concern about these conflicts among organizational leaders present both a challenge and opportunity for the human resource development (HRD) field. Flexible work arrangements (including flextime, telecommuting, and reduced hours schedules) have become increasingly common over the last 20 years (Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield, 2005; Glass & Fujimoto, 1995), but their effects seem to be limited. One important reason is that many employees still do not have access to these arrangements (Golden, 2001). Another reason is that flexible work arrangements, as they are normally administered, rarely promote transformational change that deeply affects employees' experiences on the job or their ability to manage other parts of their lives (Henderson, 2002). In particular, flexible work policies rarely lead employees or leaders to question the baseline assumption that managers properly control the work process, including when and where work is done (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Instead, the new ways of working are often framed as individual "accommodations" that deviate from a set standard, rather than as opportunities for the organization to learn and adapt to a changing workforce and changing technologies (Lee, MacDermid, & Buck, 2000). This is not surprising because most work–life policies and programs are tasked to benefit managers or work–life specialists who have subject matter expertise but may lack HRD knowledge and skills. The work–life arena would benefit from HRD professionals' expertise in training and organizational development as organizations strive for more substantive change in work arrangements and organizational cultures.

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[1]Work–family conflict is now conceptualized as bidirectional, including work interfering with family life and family interfering with work life (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; MacDermid, 2005; Netemeyer et al., 1996). The broader concept of work–life conflict could also be examined in a bidirectional way. We use the terms *work–family conflict* and *work–life conflict* here for simplicity. Most of the literature we summarize is related to work-to-family conflict because we are concerned with organizational efforts to reduce work's interference with family and personal life. Also, work-to-family conflict is more extensive than family-to-work conflict (Frone et al., 1992).

We hypothesize that flexible work arrangements will be more effective—for both employees and organizations—when they increase employees' control over when and where they work. The concept of schedule control complements the concept of job control, which refers to latitude over *how* one works (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Research from a variety of fields and our own investigations of a diverse group of organizations suggest that schedule control helps explain whether and when flexible work policies and programs are effective. This article (a) describes some limitations of common flexible work policies, (b) proposes a conceptual model of how schedule control impacts work–life conflicts, and (c) describes specific ways for practitioners to increase employees' schedule control, including best practices for implementing common flexible work policies and Best Buy's innovative approach to creating a culture of schedule control.

The Limitations of Common Flexible Work Policies

Ironically, flexible work policies are often administered in ways that continue to limit employees' control over when and where they work. First, access to flexible arrangements is quite uneven and may seem unpredictable within organizations and even within departments. Supervisors generally decide whether any individual employee can alter his or her work arrangements, even when written, formal policies are in place in the organization (Kelly & Kalev, 2006; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2005; Lambert & Waxman, 2005). Such supervisor discretion may make sense from the perspective of management, but it clearly contradicts the goal of increasing workers' control over when and where they work. Managers are often given little guidance as to how they should evaluate requests for flexible work arrangements, and there is little tracking of requests or approvals across departments (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Some supervisors may take a "Let's give it a try" approach, others dole out flexible work arrangements as rewards to highly valued workers only, and still others resist any changes in the way work is done (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). Employees constrained by less adventurous managers will not feel in control and, in fact, may define the organization as unjust.

Second, some purportedly flexible work practices offer little discretion over schedules, instead creating new routines that are equally rigid. Thus flextime often means setting one's own starting and stopping times but employees must be present during designated core hours. Long core hours (e.g., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) obviously limit flexibility. Other policies require an employee to choose starting and stopping times and adhere to them for months, rather than allowing *daily* flextime—shifting hours as needed (Galinsky et al., 2005). Manufacturing workers may work compressed workweeks (e.g., four 10-hr shifts per week rather than five 8-hr shifts) but have no control over these schedules.

Third, if employees believe using flexible work arrangements will have negative career consequences, they will not feel in control of their schedules. Many employees believe that using flexible work arrangements will stall their careers and signal to management that they are not committed to the organization (Crittenden, 2001; Glass, 2004; Hill, Martinson, Ferris, & Baker, 2004; Hochschild, 1997; Perlow, 1997; Weeden, 2005), especially when performance review systems have not been updated to advise managers how to evaluate

workers using these arrangements (Kelly, 2005). In such climates utilization will likely be low, with men especially avoiding or hiding their use (Pleck, 1993; Williams, 2000).

The same conditions that are problematic to employees may seem appropriate, even necessary, to human resources managers and frontline supervisors (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Managers favor individually negotiated arrangements because they want to avoid a sense of entitlement, instead permitting flexible work arrangements quid pro quo, in return for superior performance. Managers see some jobs and some employees as unsuited to flexible arrangements. They sometimes prefer low flexibility utilization, fearing it would be difficult to coordinate work and ensure adequate coverage if flexible work was widespread (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Supervisors may worry that they would need to learn new ways to monitor and evaluate workers' performance. For all of these reasons, managers are tempted to limit access to flexible work arrangements, minimize the changes that really occur under the new arrangements, and continue to reward employees who work in the traditional manner. These understandable responses limit the schedule control that employees experience and therefore undermine any potential benefits of these policies to employees, their families, and their organizations.

To summarize, "flexible work arrangements" refers to practices that vary along a continuum from very minimal flexibility (e.g., the ability to request a change in normal hours once per year) to moderate flexibility (e.g., the ability to work at home occasionally with a supervisor's approval) to extensive flexibility (e.g., the ability to set one's own hours and perhaps work location with appropriate coordination with coworkers).[2] Unfortunately, the same term is applied to everything along the flexibility continuum, making it different to compare the benefits and impacts of these different practices and approaches. Accordingly, we refer to schedule control to emphasize the key aspects of more extensive flexibility.

Theorizing Schedule Control

Extending Previous Research

The concept of schedule control builds on the job demands–control model developed by Karasek and colleagues (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) but focuses on control over where and when work is done rather than how it is done. The demands–control model proposes that psychological and physical strain are more likely when workers face high work demands, when workers have little control over how work is done, and particularly when workers experience the combination of high work demands and low control (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). There is fairly strong evidence that job demands and job control are associated with mental health (Karasek, 1979; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999) and with physical health (particularly ambulatory blood pressure and cardiovascular or heart disease; see Belkic et al., 2000; Belkic, Landsbergis, Schnall, & Baker, 2004; Bosma, Peter,

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[2]A related issue is the fact that the terms *flexibility* and *flexible work practices* mean different things in different fields. Some scholars use the terms *flexibility* and *flexible work* to refer to contingent work, including contract work, temporary work, and independent contracting, shift work, and home-based work with no option of working elsewhere. These work arrangements often prioritize management's interests in reducing fixed labor and benefits costs while meeting production goals. Flexibility of this type may bring additional stressors such as job insecurity, insufficient benefits, and unpredictable income flows, and it may negatively affect employees' health and well-being (Landsbergis, Cahill, & Schnall, 1999). Our research does not investigate these questions directly; instead, we focus on schedule control and the voluntary flexible work arrangements described here.

Siegrist, & Marmot, 1998; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Schnall, Belkic, Lansbergis, & Baker, 2000).

Job control describes employees' control over how their work is done (skill discretion and decision-making authority) but does not attend to their control over the time and timing of their work. Schedule control, defined here as the ability to determine when one works, where one works, and perhaps how many hours one works, is a complementary dimension of job control that has received relatively little attention previously (see also Barnett & Brennan, 1995). Thomas and Ganster (1995) did demonstrate that perceived control mediates the relationship between the availability of flexible schedules and decreased work–family conflict. However, Thomas and Ganster's measures included perceived control over both dependent care services (e.g., "How much choice do you have over the amount and quality of day care available for your child/children?") and one's schedule (e.g., "How much choice do you have over when you begin and end each workday or each workweek?"). We hypothesize that it is *schedule* control that affects work–family conflict and other outcomes (see Moen & Spencer, 2007, on mastery and Moen & Huang, in press, on couple life quality). Furthermore, this conceptual model is appropriate for a much broader range of employees than the mothers studied by Thomas and Ganster. Other scholars have identified similar concepts with similar effects (e.g., Bailyn, 1997; Clark, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001) but rarely used the term *schedule control* or utilized the demands–control model as theoretical bases (cf. Barnett & Brennan, 1995; Fenwick & Tausig, 2004; MacDermid & Tang, 2006; Thompson & Prottas, 2005).

Modeling Schedule Control

We hypothesize schedule control is a crucial mediator between the organizational context and individual work–family conflict. Of course, work–family conflict is also affected by family demands (e.g., number and ages of children, adult caregiving duties), family resources (e.g., spouse's time, total family income), work demands (e.g., number of hours worked), and work resources (e.g., a supportive work environment). In particular, there is strong evidence that having a supportive supervisor is associated with less work–family conflict (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, in press; Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman, & Prottas, 2004). These demands and resources and employees' subjective assessment of the fit between demands and resources are crucial for understanding the work–family interface (Moen, Kelly, & Magennis, in press). Our focus here, though, is on the relationships between organizational policies and practices concerning work hours, schedule control, and work–family conflict (see Figure 1).

Schedule control is perhaps most likely to flourish in white-collar work-places where (a) some work can be performed at different hours and even off-site and (b) employees are accustomed to coordinating their work using technology as well as face-to-face interactions. However, the concept is applicable to a wide variety of industries and occupations. Some health care organizations, retail stores, and unionized government agencies that provide direct services to the public now have systems that allow employees to set, change, and coordinate their work hours (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2006; Henly, Schaefer, & Waxman, 2006; Trades Union Congress, 2007). A move away from mandatory

overtime is also one important way to increase employees' sense of schedule control (Williams, 2006). This change in staffing strategy could be facilitated with a "substitute" or "per diem" pool of contract or part-time employees (including older workers interested in fewer hours). Schedule control is also facilitated by cross-training that allows employees to cover for each other; increased cross-training may also improve the skills and foster the career development of employees. In short, schedule control may look different across organizations and occupations, but previous research and theory suggest it can benefit a broad assortment of employees.

This model distinguishes between perceived schedule control—the felt ability to alter one's work hours and/or work location in response to one's personal life as well as one's assessment of work demands—and enacted schedule control, the action of voluntarily altering work hours and/or work location on either a regular basis (e.g., telecommuting every Wednesday) or an as-needed basis (e.g., deciding each day when to come in). Bandura (1997) claimed that beliefs about control are key components of self-knowledge, which predict positive outcomes regardless of the enactment of those beliefs through specific behaviors. This suggests a direct effect of perceived schedule control on work–family conflict. On the other hand, Bandura also theorized that successful enactment reinforces and increases efficacy beliefs. This suggests that enacting schedule control by changing one's behavior will reduce work–family conflicts and simultaneously increase perceived control over when and where one works. Empirical research is needed to assess these direct, indirect, and reciprocal effects.

The model also distinguishes between flexibility policies and flexibility practices in organizations, noting that both may affect employees' control perceptions and behavior. Policies set out expectations explicitly, but employees are often ignorant of the policies (Still & Strang, 2003) or discount them because implementation does not seem to be in line with the stated policies (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Hochschild, 1997). In organizations with formal work-hour policies (which tend to be large, unionized, and/or public sector), policies, practices, and the consistency of how policies are enacted matter. In smaller organizations with no formal policies, everyday practices regarding working time and where work happens are paramount.

Schedule control may be more important for reducing work–family conflict among some employees. Three moderators are proposed. First, in addition to gender differences in family responsibilities and work experiences, we hypothesize that gender moderates the relationship between schedule control and work–family conflict (Moen et al., in press; Moen & Roehling, 2005; Moen & Spencer, 2007). Specifically, given different cultural expectations regarding mothers' and fathers' caregiving and housework, women may feel more conflicted despite any degree of schedule control. Second, life stage and generation may also affect employees' willingness to put up with the existing clockworks of work and therefore their enactment of schedule control when new ways of working are available (Galinsky et al., 2005). Third, perceived schedule control likely varies by occupation, and its effects may differ as well. Professionals often assume that schedule control comes with their professional status. Managers and other high-status workers are likely to have more schedule control than other workers (Kelly & Kalev, 2006; Swanberg, Pitts-Catsouphes, & Drescher-

Burke, 2005) although they may feel unable to change their work patterns because of the high job demands they face (MacDermid & Tang, 2006). Flexible work policies and initiatives may democratize schedule control in the same way that job enrichment and self-managed teams attempt to democratize job control.

Best Practices That May Enhance Schedule Control

What might organizations—and particularly HRD professionals—do differently to increase schedule control? This section draws upon our research on flexible work policies and practices in more than 50 diverse organizations in the United States (Kelly & Kalev, 2006; Moen, 2003) to propose two distinctive strategies for increasing schedule control and reducing work–family conflict. The first strategy is a systems-oriented implementation of the common flexible work policies. The second strategy is a culture change initiative that explicitly aims to increase schedule control.

Schedule control could be enhanced with better implementation of the common flexible work arrangements (such as flextime, telecommuting, and reduced-hours options), including more systematic communication of these policies and targeted training to help employees and supervisors utilize the existing options effectively. Table 1 contrasts the common practices regarding flexible work arrangements (which were previously discussed) with best practices that we have observed. Organizations adopting these practices as an integrated flexible work strategy would be truly innovative; fewer than 5 of the 50 companies we have studied have all of these components in place.

HRD professionals have the expertise and authority to further develop and implement the common flexible work policies in ways that improve employee and organizational effectiveness and potentially benefit families and the community at large by reducing employees' stress and facilitating their contributions outside of work. In terms of basic administration and understanding of flexible work arrangements, HRD professionals bring expertise about communicating to multiple audiences, increasing leadership commitment, and explaining the benefits of these initiatives for multiple stakeholders including the organization ("building the business case"), employees, families, and the community at large (Morris & Madsen, 2007, this issue). HRD expertise would also be helpful in making the administration of flexible work arrangements more transparent, through training and support to employees and managers, to minimize concerns about organizational justice (Swanberg et al., 2005). Best practices would also involve evaluation of employees' needs, utilization patterns, and the process to promote continuous learning about new ways of working. These, too, are skills that HRD professionals can bring to the work–life table.

Schedule control could also be enhanced through culture change initiatives. We are currently studying a novel initiative at the Best Buy corporate headquarters in Bloomington, Minnesota, in which employees are trained to question the traditional time and timing of work and to take control over when and where they work. The initiative is known as ROWE for Results Only Work Environment. ROWE was developed by HRD staff inside Best Buy after employee focus groups reported that being trusted by their supervisors to get their work done would help them manage their work and family responsibilities. This brief description

of the ROWE initiative highlights what makes it distinctive from other flexibility programs. ROWE may be of particular interest to HRD researchers and practitioners because it promotes organizational learning and, in particular, transformative learning and culture change (Gibson, 2004; Henderson, 2002; Mezirow, 1991; Nevis, Lancourt, & Vassalo, 1996; Senge, 1993).

ROWE seems to represent a promising and innovative approach to increasing schedule control because it avoids many of the problems previously outlined; however, research is still being conducted to evaluate how the initiative affects employees' health and well-being, performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or other outcomes. Our ongoing study treats ROWE as a natural experiment. We are conducting ethnographic observations of training sessions, ethnographic observations of the work progress, and in-depth interviews with employees going through the change initiative and with employees in comparison teams, and a longitudinal survey of more than 500 employees in both ROWE teams and comparison teams. Our research may reveal different problems than those previously discussed and limited effects of the ROWE initiative. Despite the fact that it is too early to tell whether ROWE will achieve all of its goals, learning about this innovation may help both practitioners and researchers think differently about how to increase schedule control.

ROWE's explicit goal is to increase employees' sense of control over their work lives. In training sessions, the definition given for ROWE is a work environment in which "people have complete autonomy. They are free to do whatever they want, whenever they want, as long as the work gets done."[3] Employees do not request a single work arrangement (e.g., flextime or working from home 2 days per week); instead they are asked to help create an organizational culture that assumes they have control over when and where their work is done. Employees in the new work environment routinely adjust their work schedules and their work location (depending on the technology available to them), on a daily or weekly basis, without getting permission for each of those changes or adjustments. It is important to note that this schedule control is available at all levels of the occupational hierarchy.[4]

Organizational needs—getting the work done—are still emphasized in the ROWE setting, and it is an open question whether increased control is actually beneficial when work demands are very high. But the increased control is a significant change from the normal corporate culture. Employees in the training sessions often emphasize their sense of having more autonomy and, implicitly, more dignity. "ROWE gives you an opportunity to really be an adult" is a fairly typical comment. Another employee noted, "I've always wanted to own my own business, to have that control. ROWE is giving me the ability to almost be my own boss. I can be myself. I like to work in the mornings and now I can do that, work early and then garden in the afternoon."

Work teams, not individual employees, participate in the ROWE initiative by going through training together and then experimenting with new ways to work. Individuals decide when

[3]All quotations in this section are taken from field notes of our observations of ROWE training sessions between April 2005 and May 2006.
[4]Higher-status employees are more likely to have laptops at this point, and this makes it easier for them to work from home. However, the organization is providing more laptops as old computers are replaced.

and where they will work, based on what is happening in their work and their personal lives. But teams learn about ROWE together, in interactive sessions that include managers and employees, and they are asked to support each other as they make these changes. For example, in the last session, each employee is asked to share a concrete change that they will make in the next few weeks. Common examples of these behavioral commitments include working from home 1 day per week, leaving earlier than normal without explaining yourself, or declining a meeting that does not clearly relate to your objectives. The team is explicitly asked to support each other as they make those changes. The team strategy is very different from most flexible work programs, and it reduces the risk that individual employees will be penalized—in evaluations of their work and their assumed commitment to the organization —for bucking the dominant culture. Indeed, ROWE teams are told that they are creating a "counterculture" within the organization and that they are now part of a "smart mob" that is changing the face of corporate America.

The ROWE initiative involves an explicit critique and reconstruction of the corporate culture (Kelly, Ammons, & Moen, 2007). Teams participate in interactive exercises to describe the current culture and how they feel in that culture. Most teams describe the current culture as being very oriented to meetings, assuming that more time in the office means you're more productive and more promotable, and being fast-paced with many last-minute "fire drills." Most individuals say they feel exhausted, overwhelmed, and stressed in the current culture. However, most teams also have one or more people who list engaged and energized, noting that they enjoy the fast pace and new challenges. Employees generally value the relationships and fun times shared by their teams but recognize that frequent meetings and "drive-bys" (when someone stops by your cube to ask a question or share information) interrupt the flow of work and contribute to a sense of being overworked. Teams are then also asked to "imagine a future state" where they have complete control over when, where, and how they work. They discuss how they could accomplish their tasks and how they might feel in that setting. The training also includes a critical analysis of everyday language and team interactions, such as offhand comments about work time (e.g., "Just getting in?") and a perceived need to explain yourself if you leave the work area at an unexpected time. ROWE facilitators argue that these kinds of comments reinforce the current culture and "snap people back into place" when they try to work differently. Employees are asked to change their own language and they also role-play how to respond to these kinds of comments. The opportunity for critical reflections (Mezirow, 1991), resocialization (Nevis et al., 1996), and behavior modeling (Gibson, 2004) are unusual compared to other flexible work programs, and these strategies suggest that the ROWE initiative is likely promote greater culture change than other programs.

The ROWE initiative is also distinctive, among flexible work programs, because it emphasizes employees' participation throughout the change process. The HRD professionals who developed ROWE firmly believe that teams must work out the details of how they will work effectively in the new environment on their own, with minimal support from the facilitators. Therefore, the sessions are very interactive and then teams "go live," experimenting for a period of about 6 weeks before a feedback session with the trainers to discuss what is working and what is still challenging. During the feedback session, ROWE facilitators ask others in the group to brainstorm about the questions and problems that are

raised rather than instructing them in what to do. In short, the ROWE initiative involves formal training sessions, but the change process is a participatory one in which employees have control over what exactly will change in the new work environment (Bond & Bunce, 2001; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Furthermore, the culture change is presented as continuous and adaptive, and employees are encouraged to continue experimenting, adjusting, and learning from each other (Henderson, 2002; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Although the ROWE innovators claim this is not a work redesign project, employees often begin to question some of the current work demands and to formulate new ways of working as a team. The ROWE sessions state that "every meeting is optional" and teach employees to ask for an agenda and to clarify what their role will be in a meeting before agreeing to attend. Meetings that are not clearly related to the individual's results can (and should) be avoided. Many teams decide to begin cross-training so that they can provide coverage for each other more easily, which has skill development as an added benefit. Some teams also use ROWE as a chance to resist customers' expectations or demands. For example, one team in our study agreed that they would respond to vendors' queries within 24 hr and take turns monitoring the group e-mail account for these questions. This change freed employees from feeling that they must be on e-mail at all times and that they should drop other projects to answer a vendor's question immediately. A desire for more control over when and where they worked led this team to take more control over how they worked as well. Other work redesign research confirms that work hours, burnout, and work–family conflict can decrease when teams look critically at how work is done and how they might work differently (e.g., Perlow, 1997; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002).

To summarize, the ROWE initiative is unusual because it is explicitly directed toward increased control, it involves teams rather than individuals, and it is a culture change project that involves questioning old assumptions and expectations to create a new work environment.[5]

Conclusions: Is Schedule Control an Idea Whose Time Has Come?

This article posits that schedule control—having discretion as to when, where, and how much one works—is an important remedy to both chronic and acute time pressures and work–life conflicts, with potential health, well-being, and productivity benefits. But schedule control is not simply having flexibility policies on the books. Flexible work arrangements are most likely to benefit employees and organizations if employees feel more control over when and where they work. Our own research investigates the effects of schedule control (and changes in it) on a variety of health and work outcomes, assessing how those relationships may vary by gender, life stage, family circumstances, occupational level, and supervisor status. There is suggestive evidence that women who reduce their work hours or use flextime may be better able to manage family goals and obligations but end up as stressed and exhausted as women working longer hours in a more rigid workplace (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). It is

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[5]Of course, ROWE is not a panacea for all the frustrations and dysfunctions of the workplace. Our ongoing analyses consider the unintended consequences of ROWE for employees' health and well-being, as well as the ways that ROWE avoids explicit challenges to occupational hierarchies and gender inequalities.

therefore important to investigate under what conditions employees, their families, and their organizations benefit from increased schedule control. Other contexts may matter as well. For example, it is essential to study whether schedule control will benefit employees and organizations in an era of high work demands and low job security. Is schedule control powerful enough to offset these other stressors? It is also important to investigate the dimensions and benefits of schedule control in a variety of industries and outside of white-collar occupations.

Future research should also examine any negative effects of schedule control. Does schedule control facilitate excessively high levels of work—by making it easier to work whenever and wherever, but harder to say no to work demands—and therefore negatively affect employees' health and well-being? Employees may also be tempted to take on more in their personal lives (e.g., volunteering in a child's class, taking a relative to the doctor) if they have more schedule control on the job. Those decisions may be beneficial to the family and community but leave workers feeling more stretched. How employees learn to set boundaries on their work demands to get sufficient time for rest, relaxation, and family when they work in high-control work environments is another important research topic. There may also be unintended consequences of schedule control for organizations. Does increased schedule control create additional coordination work? If so, is there so much coordination work that supervisors (or work teams) become less productive? Do relationships at work suffer, making employees feel less connected to the organization and perhaps more willing to leave? Schedule control offers a fertile agenda for scholars, but these issues are also essential for practitioners to consider and monitor when proposing, leading, or revising flexibility policies or initiatives in ways that move them closer to the schedule control end of the flexibility continuum.

Acknowledgments

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Erin Kelly is an associate professor of sociology and codirector of the Flexible Work and Well-Being Center at the University of Minnesota. She studies the development, diffusion, implementation, and implications of work–life initiatives, sexual harassment policies, and diversity management programs. She received the 2000 Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Work–Family Research.

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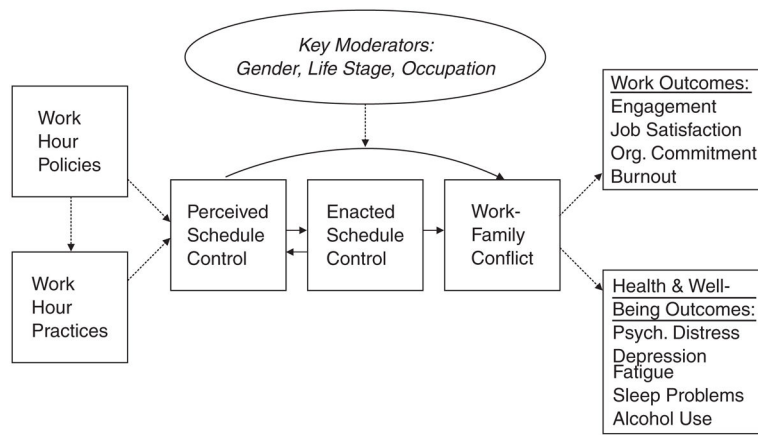
FIGURE 1.
Conceptual Model of Relationship Between Schedule Control, Work–Family Conflict, Work Outcomes, and Health and Well-Being

TABLE 1

Common Practices and Best Practices for Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

Characteristics	Common Practices	Best Practices
Administration of FWA	Ad hoc arrangements that can be withdrawn at any time.	Formalized, well-publicized policies that convey management's commitment to working in new ways.
Understanding of FWA	Viewed as reward for good performance or as "accommodations" for valued employees.	Viewed as tool for improving productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employees' health and well-being.
Access to FWA	Allocated informally and sometimes capriciously, with notable disparities across departments. Managers make decisions on their own, based on their management style and comfort with arrangements. Many employees—fearing that their requests would not be granted—do not express their interest.	All employees have a right to request arrangements; managers must provide clear reasons why arrangement is not feasible if they deny requests. Managers are trained to make decisions and encouraged to experiment with arrangements that feel challenging to them. HR experts consult with managers on decisions. Employees have access to materials that help them understand their options and make appropriate requests.
Evaluation of FWA system	No oversight of requests, decisions, or use of flexible work arrangements.	Tracking system to monitor requests, decisions, and use of flexible work arrangements. This system allows HR to check implementation across departments and evaluate program effects on retention, advancement.