Chapter 10
Ethical Imperatives of Work/Life Balance

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Over the past few decades, we have experienced demographic shifts, technological advances, and changing values that have led to a significant increase in the attention paid to the intersection of employees' work and personal lives. There is a global trend toward a higher proportion of women as well as a higher proportion of mothers in the workforce than ever before (Major & Germano, 2006). According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 60% of women in the USA are in the workforce (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).Women are more likely than men to work part time, but among working mothers in the USA, the vast majority (74%) are employed full time (Tomlinson, 2007). Another important demographic shift is the number of parents caring for children as well as aging parents, referred to as the "sandwiched generation" (Hammer & Neal, 2008). Advances in technology and communications have greatly increased the extent to which work can be reached anytime, anywhere. The use of smart phones, e-mail, and mobile broadband technologies permits employees to work anywhere at any time. Increased globalization and the rise of the service industry have created a much stronger need for a workforce that is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. As a result, employees are needing to cope with the intrusion of work into nonwork time, increased time pressure, working longer work hours, higher workloads, and more prevalent perceptions that work is stressful (Major & Germano, 2006; Milliken & Dunn-Jensen, 2005).

In this chapter, we describe the work/life interface and ethical imperatives pertaining to workers' achievement of work/life balance. We begin by describing how work/life balance has been conceptualized, including terms like work/life balance, work/family or work/life conflict, and work/family enhancement. Then we discuss why work/life behavior is an ethical issue at multiple levels, including the individual, family, and organization. We describe the type of work/life benefits and policies that have been implemented in organizations, including why such benefits *should* increase balance and review empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of

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work/life benefits and policies and the importance of organizational support for work/life balance. We describe the business case as well as the quality-of-life case for why individuals and organizations should strive for work/life balance. We describe work/life balance as a multilevel ethical dilemma and present a case study with a number of examples to illustrate the types of challenges an employee may face when trying to juggle work and family responsibilities. Lastly, we present some possible solutions and discuss practical implications.

What Is the Work/Nonwork Interface and Why Does It Matter?

A number of theories have been used to examine the work/life interface. According to role theory, individuals juggle multiple roles, and conflict may result from the demands of one role interfering with trying to meet the demands of another role (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). The conservation of resources model (Hobfoll, 1989) has also been utilized as a framework for understanding the work/life interface (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009). The conservation of resources model suggests that individuals are motivated to conserve or seek resources that are necessary for meeting the demands of various roles. Conflict or interference may emerge when resources are lost or threatened. This model also implies that work/life enrichment may take place when resources obtained in one domain can facilitate or enhance one's experience in another domain. Time and energy are frequently mentioned as resources relevant to the work/life interface. Consistent with both role theory and the conservation of resources model, Voydanoff (2005) developed a more recent conceptualization of the work/family interface. In particular, she proposed that work/life outcomes stem from work/life demands on individuals and the resources needed to obtain them.

Work/Life Balance

Work/life balance is a term which is frequently used but for which the definition and conceptualization is lacking relative to the degree of popular interest in the topic (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). To date, work/life balance has been generally defined by researchers as the ability to accomplish the goals or meet the demands of one's work and personal life (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004; Fisher, 2001) and achieve satisfaction in all life domains (Kirchmeyer, 2000). Consistent with Marks and MacDermid's (1996) approach to role balance theory which considers work/family balance as taking place across multiple roles rather than being specific to one's experience within a specific role, Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) defined work/family balance as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role" (p. 513). Others have offered similar conceptualizations, but have also referred to balance as the absence of conflict. For example, Clark (2000) indicated that work/life balance is "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict." (p. 751). Greenhaus and Allen (2006, 2011) described work/family balance as a psychological construct that involves "an overall appraisal of the extent to which individuals' effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are consistent with their life values at a given point in time" (p. 174). This definition suggests that the perception of balance is inherently in the eye of the beholder and that any one individual's idea of balance can change over time. Grzywacz and Carlson (2007), however, conceptualized balance as a social construct consisting of "accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related

partners in the work and family domains" (p. 458). As a result, researchers are still not in agreement with regard to the conceptualization of balance. Previous definitions of work/life balance have been criticized for emphasizing equality between work and family domains, as well as for relying on satisfaction as an inherent part of the concept (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

In spite of some of the challenges associated with defining work/life balance, this topic has received so much attention in the research literature as well as the popular press because it has emerged as an important value among employees and particularly among younger employees (Shellenbarger, 1999). The increase in this focus stems from the notion that high work demands have negative consequences for other life domains, including family and leisure. Lyness and Judiesch (2008) described a transition in values over the last 50 years, from Whyte's (1957) writings of *The Organization Man,* in which a successful manager is one who is very work-focused, to Friedman (2006), who emphasized the importance of work/life balance for success as a business leader. Greenhaus et al. (2003) found that work/life balance is related to quality of life. However, they found that role involvement and role satisfaction moderates the relationship between work/family balance and quality of life. Specifically, Greenhaus et al. found that work/family balance is only related to quality of life when individuals are involved in their work and family roles, as well as when they are satisfied with these roles.

Work/Family Conflict

In addition to work/life balance, work/family conflict is another term frequently used in the research pertaining to the intersection between work and nonwork. Work/family conflict is a specific work stressor that occurs when "the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Antecedents of work/family conflict include role-specific involvement and stressors (e.g., job involvement, time pressure, lack of autonomy, and role ambiguity as antecedents of work-to-family conflict; family involvement, parental stressors, and marital stressors as antecedents of family-to-work conflict; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992b), and personality (e.g., conscientiousness, which is associated with lower levels of conflict, and neuroticism, which is associated with higher levels of conflict; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). The literature is replete with studies that have found many negative attitudinal, behavioral, and other outcomes of work/family conflict. For example, individuals with higher levels of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict have lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), higher levels of absenteeism and turnover and lower levels of job performance, higher levels of stress and burnout (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Wayne et al., 2004), lower levels of marital satisfaction, poor physical health (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), and cognitive problems including poor concentration and low alertness (MacEwen & Barling, 1994). Aycan and Eskin (2005) identified guilt as a possible outcome of work/family conflict such that guilt may develop when an individual is not able to fulfill his or her prescribed gender role. Additional research has shown crossover effects in which work stress and work/life conflict may affect other family members (Westman & Etzion, 2005).

Work/family conflict is bidirectional, such that work can interfere or conflict with family responsibilities (i.e., work-to-family conflict), and family can interfere with work demands (i.e., family-to-work conflict; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). A number of studies have examined the important distinctions between these two directions of conflict. For example, prior meta-analytic research has found that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are both related to job and life satisfaction, but the strength of this relationship is smaller for family-to-work

conflict compared to work-to-family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). A recent meta-analysis investigated the relationships between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict and various outcomes related to work and family, as well as some outcomes that were not specific to either domain (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011). The results showed that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were both related to the work and family outcomes such as work satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to turnover, burnout, family and marital satisfaction, and family stress. In general, the meta-analysis also indicated that results are stronger for within-domain outcomes; in other words, work-to-family conflict was more strongly related to work-related outcomes than to family-related outcomes and the same was true for family-to-work conflict being more strongly related to family-related outcomes. However, both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict were most strongly related to the domain unspecific outcomes, such as life satisfaction and general stress. In general, employees are more likely to report work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992a). This may be due to family being a more important and salient role for many employees.

Some prior research has found gender differences in reports of work-to-personal life conflict and personal life-to-work conflict. For example, women were more likely to report work-to-personal life conflict than personal life-to-work conflict, whereas men were more likely to report life-to-work conflict (Perrewé & Carlson, 2002). A few studies have found that women tend to experience more work-role guilt than men (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Chappell, Korabik, & McElwain, 2005). Guilt is more strongly related to work-to-family conflict than to family-to-work conflict, and these findings were reported for women, but not men (Aycan & Eskin, 2005). It may also be that women and men differ in their reporting of work-family conflict. Streich, Casper, and Salvaggio (2008) showed that husbands' self-rating of work-to-family conflict was significantly higher than wives ratings of their husband's work-to-family conflict, but there were no differences in wives' self-ratings of work-to-family conflict nor in husbands' ratings of their wives work-to-family conflict. Considering all of the research to date regarding work/family conflict, it behooves individuals and organizations to minimize this type of conflict because it is clearly associated with a number of deleterious outcomes.

Work/Life Enrichment or Enhancement

Consistent with the recent trend toward positive psychology, researchers have looked beyond the negative aspects of the work/life interface and have begun to investigate the extent to which engagement in multiple roles, such as work, family, and/or community may enrich or enhance workers' lives (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). Work/life enrichment refers to the notion that participation in one role may lead to additional resources or benefits in another role. For example, work can enrich one's life outside of work by providing esteem, skills, income, positive mood, and other benefits that make it easier to perform nonwork roles. Carlson et al. (2006) conducted pioneering work in this area by developing measures to assess work/family enrichment and demonstrating that enrichment is empirically distinct from conflict. Work/life enrichment or enhancement has been shown to be positively related to important affective and behavioral outcomes, including job, life, and family satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2009), job performance, family performance (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Kacmar, 2010); and turnover intentions (McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2009).

Although the majority of this research to date has focused on work and family, some researchers have underscored the notion that we need to be more inclusive by considering more than just family and consider other aspects of one's personal life (Fisher et al., 2009; Frone, 2003).

Defining and measuring work/life more broadly is one mechanism by which we can offer a *voice* to all employees regardless of their family or personal life status. Therefore, we will use the term "work/life balance" for the remainder of this chapter when referring to this intersection between work and family or work and other nonwork roles.

Ethics and Work/Life Balance

Prior work/life research has demonstrated strong empirical support for the notion that work/life balance is related to important quality-of-work/life indicators. This research has implications for individual and organizational level issues at work, as well as individual and family level issues at home. Altogether, work/life research underscores the importance of work/life balance as an important part in achieving a high quality of life. The ethical imperative of *balance* is at the heart of this construct as individuals juggle multiple roles with limited resources. Employees who are struggling for balance may face ethical dilemmas in trying to meet the demands of work and the demands of their personal lives. Similarly, organizations may face ethical dilemmas in attempting to offer employees benefits that aid in attempts to balance while trying to meet the goals of the business. Next, we will describe ways in which organizations have taken some *responsibility* toward helping employees to achieve and maintain a work/life balance by offering work/life benefits and policies.

Work/Life Benefits and Policies

Given the clear negative impact of work/life conflict on employees, and the emerging evidence that work/life balance or enrichment has positive effects, organizations have increasingly begun to offer benefits and establish policies that are aimed at assisting employees with managing work and life demands (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). These benefits have often been termed "family-friendly" benefits (Allen, 2001). Examples of work/life benefits include flexibility in the time or location of work (i.e., flexible work arrangements), assistance with childcare, parenting resources/lactation support, elder care resources, employee health and wellness programs, (e.g., on-site fitness facilities, healthy food options), and other services aimed at assisting employees juggling multiple role demands (e.g., dry-cleaning, postal services). In addition, family-leave policies are offered by many organizations to assist employees with the birth or adoption of a child or a family member's illness.

Research on the prevalence of such benefits has clearly shown that the most commonly available work/life benefits are those related to childcare, flexible work, and employee health and wellness (e.g., Dikkers, Geurts, den Dulk, & Peper, 2001). However, Neal and Hammer (2007) note that the availability of work/life benefits may be limited to certain categories of workers. Some recent research supports this possibility. For example, the National Compensation Survey (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010) showed that among civilian workers, 10% of all workers and 17% of management/professional workers have access to childcare benefits, 5% of all workers and 16% of management/professional workers have flexible work options, 34% of all workers and nearly half of management/professional workers have access to employee wellness programs, and at least 50% of workers (including management/professional) have access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). In terms of family leave, 11% of all workers and 17% of all management/professional workers have access to paid family leave, whereas 86% of all workers and 91% of management/professional workers have access to unpaid family leave. This survey also showed

that these benefits are far more commonly available at large organizations that employ more than 500 workers. Similarly, a study conducted jointly by WorldatWork (a professional association for human resources professionals), the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (a not-for-profit professional association), and the Regional Research Institute for Human Services at Portland State University (WorldatWork, 2005) showed that salaried workers have more access to flexible work options than hourly employees. That study also found that flexible work may be more frequently available on an informal basis.

One work/life benefit now available to all working mothers who are breastfeeding a child up to 12 months old and employed at organizations with 50 or more employees is break time for breastfeeding or expressing milk. When the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed in March 2010 (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010), it included an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act such that working mothers are to be provided with a "reasonable break time" to express milk or nurse her child until the child is 1-year old. Further, the amendment stipulates that the organization provide a private space, not a bathroom, for this purpose. Under this act, employers are required to allow for breaks, but not required to compensate break time for breastfeeding, unless break time for other purposes is compensated. Further, while the act stipulates "reasonable" break time, the frequency and duration of breaks for breastfeeding is left to the employee to negotiate with the organization.

Who are work/life benefits designed to benefit? In other words, are work/life initiatives developed to meet business needs, employees' needs, or both? The cynical view suggests that family-friendly policies allow employees to adjust their lives so they can meet work demands and work longer hours (Grosswald, Ragland, & Fisher, 2001; Lambert, 1993). The mutually beneficial view suggests that employees are better able to juggle responsibilities due to increased flexibility and support, which should positively impact employee performance and attitudes. Employers benefit by being able to attract, retain, and motivate employees, and by having more satisfied and higher performing employees. Family-friendly benefits may also be seen as a valuable public relations tool (Nord, Fox, Phoenix, & Viano, 2002), which may serve to improve the organization's image. For example, Cascio (2000) indicated that firms rated as "best" (as in *Working Mother* magazine's Best 100 for working moms) get twice as many job applications.

How and Why Work/Life Benefits Should Increase Work/Life Balance

The notion that making available work/life benefits and policies should assist employees with managing work/life demands is both logical and supported by empirical findings. That is, logically, if employees have access to assistance with childcare or wellness programs, then they should be more able to manage the competing demands of work and children or to better care for themselves, thereby reducing the likelihood of illness. Ethically, benefits that afford employees some *autonomy* in managing their work and personal lives (e.g., flexible scheduling) should result in higher levels of employee well-being. Some research provides support for this notion. Advantages of flexible work arrangements include reductions in travel time and being home later in the morning or earlier in the afternoon to better meet family responsibilities (Tremblay, 2003). Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001) found that flexibility in both the timing and location of work helped employees achieve work/life balance. Similarly, Clark (2001) found that having the flexibility to alter one's work was related to increased work satisfaction and family well-being, both outcomes she defined as a part of the work/life balance construct. Valcour (2007) showed that there was an interaction between hours worked and control over work time on satisfaction with work/family balance, such that as work hours increased those with lower control over work time experienced lower satisfaction with balance while those with higher control over work time did not.

A qualitative study found that Canadian mothers had very positive perceptions of telework, appreciating the flexible scheduling and perceiving that it facilitated optimal time management (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Andrey, 2008). In terms of health-related issues, Väänänen et al. (2008) indicated that work-to-family conflict was a significant predictor of sickness absence, particularly among those in blue-collar and lower-level white-collar occupations. Thus, it seems that offering employees access to work/life benefits should help employees better manage their work and nonwork demands.

Effectiveness (or Lack Thereof) of Work/Life Benefits

The business case for offering work/life benefits often centers around the idea that making such benefits available to employees reduces work/life conflict and, thereby, enhances organizational performance (e.g., Beauregard & Henry, 2009). However, a great deal of research shows that the mere availability of benefits does little to reduce work/life conflict or enhance work/life balance. Kossek and Ozeki (1998) cited numerous studies from the 1990s showing that work/family practices did not reduce work/family conflict and called for research to show the link between such policies and work/life outcomes. Those same authors, in (Kossek & Ozeki 1999), concluded that work/family policies were expensive and not effective; their study showed mixed relationships between policies and organizational outcomes.

One reason for the ineffectiveness of work/life benefits may be attributed to underutilization. In a 2005 study from WorldatWork, human resource professionals indicated that, on average, 54–84% of organizations provided access to flexible work arrangements (across job types), yet only 11–15% of organizations reported that more than half of their employees made use of the arrangements. A study of civil engineers by Watts (2009) found that only those who have worked for employers for a long time manage to successfully utilize flexible working arrangements. Underscoring the potential utilization issue further, Dikkers et al. (2001) found that flexible work benefits were more often used than childcare benefits. Underutilization implies that benefits are available to employees but not taken up. However, as noted previously, not all workers have access to all types of work/life benefits (Neal & Hammer, 2007; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Golden (2001) analyzed data from the May, 2001 supplement to the US Current Population Survey (CPS) and found great disparities in who has flexibility. For example, Golden's study indicated that employees with higher flexibility included those in college, married, working part time, working more than 50 h per week, or individuals who were self-employed. Typically, these benefits are most readily available to individuals in professional positions and/or individuals at higher levels in an organization. These findings highlight the ethical imperative of *justice* in considering work/life initiatives. While it may be that there are some occupations (e.g., manual labor) that do not lend themselves well to flexibility regarding the time or location of work compared to other positions, it could be that many more organizations can adopt practices that are more widely available, thereby increasing justice perceptions. Organizations may be able to go a few steps further toward developing and offering successful work/life solutions by encouraging workers to have a *voice* and facilitating workers' *participation* in discussions to more clearly identify specific challenges that employees' face in trying to have a better work/life balance. Then these employees and others in the organization can work together to develop solutions that will meet both the needs of the employees and the organization.

Some research shows that it is not the mere availability of benefits that impact outcomes, but that satisfaction with benefits may also be important. For instance, Rosin and Korabik (2002) showed that satisfaction with work/life policies was related to reduced work/family conflict. Grawitch, Trares, and Kohler (2007) showed that satisfaction with work/life balance practices

was related to two aspects of well-being: increased organizational commitment and reduced emotional exhaustion. Thus, it may be that employees could give input as to the types of benefits needed, especially where flexibility is concerned, thereby positively impacting perceptions of having a *voice* in one's work life.

Dikkers et al. (2001) found that use of benefits was not related to reduced work/family conflict. Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman, and Prottas (2004) also found that the availability of benefits did not affect work/life outcomes. These findings suggest that having access to benefits does not translate to *participating* in these benefits. It may also be the case that simply having access to benefits does little to actually assist employees with managing work/life demands. This may further indicate that the utilization of benefits comes at a cost to employees. One cost could be in terms of how one who uses work/life benefits is perceived by other employees. For example, Parker and Allen (2001) examined perceptions of the fairness of work/family benefits and found that women, non-whites, parents of young children, and those who personally used benefits perceived them as more fair. These authors suggest that such disparities in fairness perceptions might be linked with a backlash toward the notion of "family-friendly" benefits. Similarly, Casper, Weltman, and Kwesiga (2007) studied the notion of a family-friendly backlash, but from the perspective of a singles-friendly work culture. The elements of a singles-friendly culture articulated by these authors include social inclusion in company events (e.g., not assuming singles would be uninterested in a family-oriented picnic), equal work opportunities (e.g., making promotions and training available to all employees, not just those who "need" extra income for family), equal access to benefits (e.g., offer more than just childcare benefits), equal respect for nonwork roles (e.g., acknowledge that everyone has multiple roles), and equal work expectations (e.g., do not assume that singles will always be available for travel). On this point, Sturges (2008) advised that "Organizations must develop policy and practices that support the view that work/life balance is not just an issue for parents but for all employees, whatever their family responsibilities and career stage." (p. 132). Taken together, these studies suggest that those who do not utilize work/life programs may avoid using benefits out of fear that others will look unfavorably upon them.

Further, our examination of work/life benefits and policies highlighted the notion that there may be ethical questions of *justice* in terms of the policies and benefits offered to employees. For example, an organization may offer paid parental leave time to all of its employees, but the length of paid time off may vary depending on job or organizational level. If higher level employees receive more paid time off than lower-level employees, this could easily lead to perceptions of injustice among those who receive less paid time off. Policies that offer similar benefits to all employees regardless of job level or classification would be more likely to be perceived fairly among employees.

Although flexible work arrangements and other work/life benefits are typically offered to facilitate work/life balance, there are some downsides as well. These include being unable to escape constant work pressure, higher levels of imbalance between work and personal life, and blurred boundaries between work and home. Thus, another potential cost could be related to the way that using work/life benefits changes expectations of employees. Towers, Duxbury, Higgins, and Thomas (2006) suggested that flexible work can have a "dark side" in terms of increased expectations from supervisors and coworkers related to availability and productivity. For example, an employee who occasionally works from home may be expected to do additional work at home even during nonscheduled work time. With the use of information technology, which facilitates employees being able to access e-mail almost anytime anywhere, coworkers and supervisors may expect to be able to reach employees during nonwork hours. Rogers and Spitzmueller (2011) examined information communication technology in relation to boundary preferences (i.e., integration or segmentation) and the work-family interface and concluded that technology can be a help or a hindrance, depending on the individual's boundary preferences. In a longitudinal study,

Glass (2004) found that, over time, the use of work/life benefits did not help and sometimes hurt mothers' wage growth. In looking at specific types of benefits, working from home had the strongest negative effect on wage growth. Kelliher and Anderson (2010) showed that while having flexibility positively impacted employee attitudes toward their job and organization, it also resulted in longer work hours, working off schedule, and working more intently. Thus, it may be that there are both advantages and disadvantages to using benefits. Eaton (2003) introduces the concept of perceived usability of benefits and showed that it was related to organizational commitment and to productivity. Eaton suggests that part of what makes benefits perceived as usable comes from the support for use of benefits from supervisors and the general culture of the organization.

The Importance of Support

Given the relatively clear empirical evidence that the mere availability of work/life benefits does not result in the intended positive outcomes, researchers have long investigated the role of various types of organizational support in relation to work/life benefits. Dikkers et al. (2001) showed that benefit utilization was related to positive work/family culture, which was also related to reduced work/family conflict. Allen (2001) introduced the construct family-supportive organizational perceptions and demonstrated that it is an important variable in work/life outcomes. For instance, family-supportive organizational perceptions were related to lower work/family conflict and turnover intentions and to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. O'Driscoll et al. (2003) found that family-supportive organizational perceptions mediated the relationship between benefits use and work/family conflict. Allen (2001) also showed that supportive supervision plays a role in reducing work/family conflict. Other research has indicated that reporting to a supportive supervisor has a positive effect on outcomes, like work/family conflict (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; LaPierre & Allen, 2006; Thompson et al., 2004; Thompson & Prottas, 2005). In line with these findings, Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hanson (2009) developed the construct of supportive supervision and found that it includes behaviors related to emotional support, role modeling work/life management, instrumental support for work/life management, and creative work/life management.

In addition to supportive supervision, much research has shown that employees must perceive that the opportunity exists to use benefits (Eaton, 2003; Thompson & Prottas, 2005). Opportunity to use benefits is linked to supportive supervision, but also to having both formal and informal flexibility and control to manage work/life demands (Behson, 2005; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; LaPierre & Allen, 2006; Shockley & Allen, 2007), and to organizational supportiveness or a culture that is supportive of work/life needs (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Michael, 2007; Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). Hobson, Delunas, and Kesic (2001) point out that offering work/life initiatives is one way an organization can communicate to its employees that it values them. However, in a recent study, Mescher, Benschop, and Doorewand (2010) found that the messages companies convey about work/life initiatives are most often mixed. That is, the explicit messages conveyed were of support for the work/life demands of employees, but the implicit messages conveyed the notion that having access to work/life initiatives was a privilege. Kossek et al. (2010) point out that there are two dimensions of support related to work/life initiatives: the structural support for work/life balance and the cultural support for work/life balance. Specifically, structural support simply involves making work/life benefits available, whereas cultural support relates to many of the ideas just discussed: that organizations need to foster an environment that places value on, and provides formal and informal support for, employees' multiple work and personal life roles.

From a Business Case to a Quality-of-Work-Life Case for Work/Life Benefits

As previously noted, the business case for making work/life benefits available to employees centers around the idea that offering such benefits will result in employees being better able to manage their work and nonwork demands, thereby increasing performance and positive attitudes and reducing withdrawal behaviors and intentions, which in turn may result in better organizational performance (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Dorio, Bryant, & Allen, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphes & Googins, 2005; Sutton & Noe, 2005). In one study investigating whether performance does increase as a result of offering work/life benefits, Cascio and Young (2005) found that between 1995 and 2002, the companies named as the 100-Best companies for working mothers by *Working Mother* magazine consistently performed higher than broader benchmark firms on both the Standard and Poor's 500 (S&P 500) and the Russell 3000, two common indicators of stock market performance. Their study also showed that the *Working Mother* 100-Best companies were at least as profitable and productive as other firms during that time period. In addition, the business case generally suggests that offering such benefits can be used as a recruiting and retention tool as well as a public relations tool (Kossek & Friede, 2006; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). Given this orientation, many managers view work/life benefits as "fringe" rather than as a legitimate and necessary human resources practice (Kossek, 2005). This viewpoint may be an underlying factor for the wealth of empirical evidence showing the necessity of managerial and organizational support for work/life balance in the effectiveness of work/life benefits.

Many researchers have begun to argue for a change in the case made for offering work/life benefits. Rothbard et al. (2005) found that among employees who evidenced a desire to integrate their work and family lives, having benefits available that promoted work/family integration was correlated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For example, for such employees, having access to on-site childcare had a positive impact. The study also showed that employees who evidenced a desire to keep work and family segmented were positively impacted by having access to policies that promoted segmentation. Given these findings, the authors suggest, first, that as organizations consider the types of benefits to offer, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. And, second, the authors suggest that the types of benefits offered imply organizational values. As such, organizations that offer integrating policies, such as on-site childcare, may be suggesting to employees that they most value work-life integration and, therefore, would prefer employees be open to bringing work home, answering work-related calls or e-mails on personal time, among other work/life integrating practices. This preference would work for some, but not all employees.

It may be that organizations need to work toward linking employee work/life balance with organizational strategy. Burke (2006) suggests that organizations should include employee personal life goals a part of the assessment of performance. Similarly, Fletcher and Bailyn (2005) argue that the concept of work/life integration should be a social and organizational issue, rather than an individual issue. Bailyn (2005) suggests further that employee personal life needs should, at minimum, be put on par with organizational needs. Pitt-Catsouphes and Googins (2005) noted that if work/life balance were to be seen as a part of corporate social responsibility, then businesses would focus on quality of work life as well as quality of nonwork life as a way of achieving organizational goals.

Along those lines, some authors note that to be considered essential to business success, work/life efforts need to be linked with the strategic goals of the organization (Murphy & Zagorski, 2005; Thompson, Andreassi, & Prottas, 2005). One way to do this is to begin with support for work/life initiatives at top levels of the organization, with training for managers and managerial accountability of the work/life balance needs of employees. Murphy and Zagorski (2005) also

note that organizational managers and leaders must role model work/life balance efforts for employees. These authors note, like Rothbard et al. (2005), that managing the demands of work and personal life is not the same for all employees. That is, the benefits offered and initiatives undertaken must *respect* employee needs and values (Rothbard et al., 2005), to the job or work being done (Murphy & Zagorski, 2005; Thompson et al., 2005), and that they should be directly linked with organizational strategy (Sullivan & Maineiro, 2007).

Summary

The research literature on work/life balance highlights the importance of work/life balance as an important indicator of quality of life. The ethical imperative of *balance* is at the heart of the matter, indicating that individuals need to be able to successfully manage responsibilities and accomplish goals in multiple life domains in order to achieve satisfaction in those domains and in life in general. Failure to achieve this balance has deleterious effects on individuals at home and at work, as well as on families and the organizations that employ these individuals.

Empirical support for the effectiveness of work/life programs to date has been mixed. Some have found that work/life programs are related to increased autonomy, flexibility, satisfaction in multiple life domains, and positive perceptions of the organization. Furthermore, work/life programs have been shown to facilitate workers' engagement in roles outside of work, thereby leading to higher levels of work/life enrichment or enhancement. However, work/life programs have received a bad reputation to the extent that there is a lack of utilization due to interest, relevance, a lack of communication about offerings, or fear among employees regarding how they will be perceived by others if they participate in such programs. In some cases, these programs fail to succeed due to organizational culture, leadership, and/or supervisors who do not support balance.

The Multilevel Ethical Dilemma

When it comes to achieving work/life balance, ethical dilemmas may be faced by all stakeholders. Employees who are juggling multiple demands face the dilemma of wanting to put in the necessary effort to achieve work and organizational goals as well as the necessary effort toward achieving the goals of their personal lives. Personal resources, like having the time and energy needed to complete work and personal goals and responsibilities, can be in competition. For example, an employee who receives a phone call from a school nurse notifying him of a sick child must determine whether he can leave his job early to attend to the needs of that child while still completing his work. The employee must also consider the impact his decision will have on his partner if he determines he cannot leave to pick up his child. An employee with a commitment to attend a child's soccer game but who needs to stay late at work may be faced with a difficult choice.

Supervisors, similarly, may face ethical dilemmas in managing direct reports who have different work and personal life needs, if their primary objective is to maximize employee performance with little regard for the effect this may have on employee personal lives. For example, supervisors might consistently assign work-related travel to employees who do not have children under the assumption that they do not have obligations at home that will make travel difficult, yet acknowledge that focusing only on child-free employees for this job duty is unfair.

At the most macro level, organizations may face ethical dilemmas in determining both whether to offer work/life benefits and how to construct a benefits package that meets both employee and

organizational goals. That is, much is made in popular media about the business case for family-friendly benefits. For example, witness the attention paid to the *Working Mother* magazine list of Best Companies, yet little attention is paid to the effectiveness of benefits in terms of their supposed aim at increasing employee work/life balance.

It may be useful to consider a few situations as part of a hypothetical case that lays out some of these dilemmas that might be faced by a parent with young children, her supervisor, and the organization for which they both work.

Scenario 1

Jane, a mid-level manager, has two children: a 3-year-old daughter and a 4-month-old infant son. Jane's spouse is a salesman who works on 100% commission. Before the birth of her son, Jane realized that, despite a very good salary, she and her spouse could not afford to keep both children enrolled in the daycare center her daughter was currently attending. Jane spent 2 months researching and visiting less expensive daycares. Her employer does not offer an on-site daycare, assistance with daycare expenses, or provide referrals for daycare arrangements. Therefore Jane was on her own to make affordable arrangements that would work with her and her husband's work schedules. Jane's supervisor, Mike, was sympathetic and allowed her to flex her hours by rearranging her work hours so that she could visit potential daycare settings. Jane still worked all of her scheduled work hours, but at alternate times of the day. Mike was also aware that some of the other managers he supervises would prefer more flexible hours and that they were feeling a lack of equity because of the accommodations Mike made for Jane. However, Mike could not see how to justify the flexible time for all employees who did not have the same family needs as Jane. On the other hand, Jane also worried that focusing too much attention on her family needs would lead others to think she was less committed to her work.

Ethical Dilemmas: Jane struggles with *balancing* her roles as an employee and mother due to time-based conflict in her quest for more affordable, quality childcare because she needs time during the workday (when daycares are open) to visit potential daycares. She needs to ask for help from her supervisor and organization, yet she is conscientious and concerned about how she will be perceived by her supervisor and coworkers. In other words, she is trying to *responsibly* meet her home and work-role demands. Mike wants to give her the time but also must consider the issue of *justice* – how others on his team who might like some flexible hours will respond to Jane getting time for dealing with childcare issues. It seems that Mike has a few options for how to handle the situation. First, he could grant Jane unpaid time off from work to search for daycare arrangements. Second, she could use paid vacation time. A third option would be to permit Jane to flex her hours, where she comes in early and leaves early to visit the various daycares she is considering. In addition, Jane's organization could offer more daycare benefits, such as resources to assist with finding daycare arrangements or establishing an on-site daycare, but what comparable benefits could it offer to those who do not need childcare in order to be seen as fair?

Scenario 2

Jane's organization does not have specific maternity or paternity leave policies beyond the federally mandated Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Although the FMLA permits employees to take up to 12 weeks off from work in such circumstances, this legislation does not require employers to pay employees for this time off from work. Instead, Jane's organization treats time off from work following the birth of a baby as disability leave. Jane was on paid leave for 6 weeks following the birth of her son. Because Jane could not afford any unpaid time off from work, Jane returned to work only 6 weeks following the birth of her son. Because Mike is supportive of work/family issues, he and Jane negotiated a change in which Jane could reduce

some of her responsibilities for a period of time upon her return to work. For example, Jane had planned to work on revising and updating a procedures manual used by members of her organization, but Mike agreed to postpone the deadline for the manual update for 6 months after Jane's return to work.

Ethical Dilemmas: Mike's willingness to negotiate Jane's job duties upon her return demonstrates his commitment to helping her *balance* her work and family responsibilities. Further, allowing her to postpone her deadline indicates that Mike trusts Jane to get her job done, implying that she has some *autonomy* over her work. However, both Mike and Jane would likely struggle with how this might be seen by others in the organization, particularly Jane's peers who might also struggle with work-family balance, but not have supervisors who are as open to idiosyncratic deals as Mike seems to be. This suggests that the organization should examine policies related to parental leave as well as to return to work. It may be that the organization could increase both *participation* and *voice* by working with employees to develop policies around these issues.

Scenario 3

Jane is breastfeeding her infant son and therefore has to express milk at work in order to have milk available for her son while he is at daycare. Jane has a private office which she can use for this purpose, but the process of expressing milk takes her away from her work for at least 20 min two or three times during the workday. Jane has made the case to Mike that taking these breaks is a benefit to the company because some studies have shown that breastfed babies are sick less often, meaning their parents are sick less often and less likely to be absent from work.

Ethical Dilemmas: Jane clearly wants to do what is best for her son's health and is convinced by the literature and her pediatrician that breastfeeding will be best for him. This demonstrates her *responsibility* regarding her role as a mother and the extent to which she values her son's health. She is aware that taking time out of her day to express breast milk takes her away from her work tasks and feels the compromise is necessary, but may also feel some guilt about being away from work. She may worry that she is not perceived as available to her own direct reports and that she is seen as getting special treatment. In other words, she is aware of and concerned about perceptions of *justice* among her coworkers. Mike needs to determine how to help all of his employees manage work and family demands and may be concerned with figuring out how to give each of his employees the time they need to do so. The organization may be wrestling with issues related to parental leave and comparable benefits for nonparents. Similarly, the organization might see the business case for supporting lactation in the workplace, but not know how to provide this benefit without comparable benefits (e.g., break time) for all employees. Both Mike and the organization may value *justice* and *balance.*

Scenario 4

Jane's regularly scheduled work hours are 9:00 a.m–5:30 p.m. However, Jane's new daycare arrangement requires her to work from 8:00 a.m–4:30 p.m, because the daycare is a 30-min commute from her office, and it closes at 5:30 p.m, meaning Jane has to leave her workplace at 4:30 p.m. in order to get her children on time while allowing sufficient time in case of traffic or inclement weather. Because Jane's spouse can drop the children off in the morning, she can come to work early to make up for the fact that she needs to leave an hour earlier at the end of the workday.

Ethical Dilemmas: Jane's new flexible schedule demonstrates the extent to which her supervisor is *responsible* and *responsive* to helping Jane meet her demands outside of work. Mike gave Jane a *voice* in determining what hours would work for her new daycare arrangements. This was helpful given her need to *balance* work and family responsibilities. However, as with the issue of finding a new daycare and Jane's flextime, Mike may struggle with a justification for providing others of his employees with flexible schedules unless the organization adopts policies or procedures for making this possible for all employees.

Scenario 5

Because there is only one provider at the home daycare, when the provider is sick or on vacation, Jane and her husband have no daycare arrangement. This leaves them juggling two work schedules and childcare responsibilities. Similarly, when the children are sick, they are not allowed to attend the daycare, and there is no sick childcare option at Jane's workplace. Jane must therefore use her own sick days to care for her children when they are sick and cannot go to daycare. This means that when Jane herself is sick, she often has to come to work because she needs to save her sick time for when she must be available to care for her children.

Ethical Dilemmas: This situation raises a number of ethical issues. The first of these is *balance*, as Jane is faced with having to manage responsibilities both at home and at work. The second issue is that of *responsibility*. Jane has a responsibility to care for her sick children and to care for herself, particularly when she is sick. However, there is also the issue of public health, and the notion that Jane may be putting her coworkers at risk of getting sick when she comes to work when ill. In addition, continuing to work rather than resting when ill means that it may take Jane a lot longer to get well than if she was able to stay home and rest. Jane is also likely contributing to the problem of *presenteeism*, being at work but not fully productive due to illness, by coming to work sick (Hemp, 2004). The third ethical issue is *justice*. As a manager, Jane has access to flexible scheduling. However, this same kind of flexibility may not be available to all employees. Jane faces a difficult decision when her children are sick: should she bring them to the office, take time unpaid to care for them, or use sick time? If she uses sick time and then becomes sick herself, should she use more sick time and stay home, or should she save her sick time and come to the office when she is unwell? Mike's flexibility in allowing Jane to schedule her time means that he must consider offering this benefit to the other managers he supervises. The organization could offer sick child benefits, such as a daycare for sick children, but the organization must determine the costs vs. benefits associated with doing so, as well as consider the extent to which this fits into organizational goals. With regard to *participation*, it seems that it might be helpful for Jane to solicit help from Mike so they can both participate in making decisions in terms of what is best for Jane, Jane's family, and Jane's employing organization. It may also be quite helpful for Mike to engage in participative decision-making with his staff as he works through these issues to arrive at solutions that will meet both his work-related needs, as well as those of the employees he supervises.

Scenario 6

The situation previously described in scenario 5 is complicated by the fact that Jane's spouse works on 100% commission and does not receive any paid vacation or sick time benefits. As a result, there are economic consequences to his taking time from work to stay home when one of their children is sick. Because Jane does have sick time available, albeit limited time, she is the more likely parent to be the one to miss work to care for a sick child.

Ethical Dilemmas: The fact that Jane's husband doesn't have any paid sick or vacation time raises the issue of *justice* with regard to the fact that his organization does not offer benefits to employees that many other organizations do. Further, Jane may sometimes resent that she is more often the one who takes off work to care for a sick child. This may then be an issue of *justice* between her and her spouse. However, her spouse accepted his job knowing that one of the terms of employment was that he would work only on commission, and his employer does not seem to take any *responsibility* for providing benefits such as paid vacation or sick time.

Scenario 7

One month after returning to work following her 6 weeks of disability leave, Jane finds herself struggling with having the energy to complete her work tasks and care for her children. Jane's son wakes during the night, leaving Jane trying to function in a demanding job while sleep-deprived.

She also sometimes comes home from work already exhausted and worries that she is not able to be at her best for her children. She is trying to decide whether to broach this issue with Mike. She sometimes even wonders whether it would be better for her and her family if she did not work.

Ethical Dilemmas: Jane would not want her work or her employees to suffer, but may worry that telling her supervisor she's struggling will create ill will or worse. Mike, who has been very supportive, may wish to be even more so, but may also begin to resent Jane if he believes enough has been done. That is, if Jane tells Mike she sometimes thinks about quitting, he may feel a bit betrayed because he has been so supportive and accommodating of Jane. The organization may acknowledge that parents of babies suffer a lack of sleep, but may not know what to do about the issue. Certainly, the company would not want to lose valuable employees and have to replace them, yet not know how to handle the work/life balance needs of its employees. Jane has a responsibility to perform all of her roles the best of her ability. Although Mike has given Jane a *voice* and been very supportive of her need to *balance* multiple responsibilities, Jane is afraid to say too much.

Solutions and Practical Implications

A number of work/life benefits and policies have been put in place by organizations to facilitate work/life balance. The business and ethical case for having these benefits and policies is clear. It is our view that individuals and organizations share the responsibility for finding a work/life balance. To date, empirical support regarding the effectiveness of these policies is mixed. One key factor is utilization – not everyone who has access to these benefits *uses* them. Organizations may need to do more to evaluate the reason for lack of utilization within their organization. For example, is it simply a lack of communication about the offerings? Do the offerings not meet employees' particular needs? Or is there a fear or concern about how they will be perceived by others if they take advantage of such programs? There are also many employees who lack options for benefits such as flexible work arrangements, paid parental leave, and paid sick time. In addition, it is necessary to establish and maintain an organizational culture that supports work/life balance. The organizational culture needs to support balance, and not just give lip service to the topic or offer benefits "in name only" that are not truly encouraged or supported by the organization. Senior level management should demonstrate positive examples of using these benefits. As we described earlier in this chapter, organizational, supervisor, and coworker support are absolutely critical to the success of work/life initiatives.

The good news is that we have some indications from empirical work regarding ways to improve work/life balance. Karasek's (1979) demand/control model of work stress purports that workers who have higher levels of control, discretion, or *autonomy* over their work can better cope with job demands and are less likely to experience strain. In addition to fostering organizational culture support for work/life balance, there are a number of additional organizational and job design implications, such that some jobs may need to be redesigned in ways to offer more autonomy and flexibility to employees. Batt and Valcour (2003) showed that flexibility of both work time and place (with the assistance of technology) increased perceived autonomy over work. However, their study also indicated that such flexibility was associated with higher work/family conflict. Further, the study showed that supportive supervision was related to both reduced work/family conflict and increased perceptions of autonomy. These findings underscore the idea that the effectiveness of work/life benefits is dependent upon many factors, and that the benefits cannot be offered without attention to the overall culture of the organization. Yet, these results also suggest that redesigning jobs to provide more autonomy could be an effective work/life initiative. Considering the case of Jane presented earlier, her job allowed for a good deal of flexibility in managing work and family issues, yet it did not negate the importance of having a

supportive supervisor like Mike. Further, the impact of the organizational strategy with regard to work/life benefits was highlighted by, for instance, the lack of attention to sick childcare in that case.

Increasing access to quality, affordable childcare is another way that organizations can improve work/life balance. In a study of working mothers, Poms, Botsford, Kaplan, Buffardi, and O'Brien (2009) found that financial considerations related to childcare were related to both satisfaction with childcare and job satisfaction, even after controlling for income. In addition, satisfaction with childcare was negatively related to work interfering with family. This suggests that for a working mother like Jane in our case above, work/life balance could be positively affected if an organization provides help with childcare. For instance, organizations might find ways to assist with the cost of childcare or might find it strategically beneficial and socially responsible to establish an on-site daycare that is very inexpensive or even free to employees.

Currently, many part-time positions do not offer the same benefits and other conditions that full-time positions do (Kropf, 2002; Tomlinson, 2006), which makes part-time work less desirable to some workers. Therefore, we recommend increasing the number of opportunities for part-time work, particularly in professional positions where fewer such positions seem to exist, while modifying the terms and conditions of those jobs to be more desirable to organizations and employees.

As described previously in this chapter, technology can serve as both a help and a hindrance. The degree to which technology may facilitate work/life balance seems to depend on whether the worker prefers to integrate work and nonwork domains or maintain a clear boundary between domains such that work happens only at work, and family and other nonwork domains are not handled at work. Additional research is needed to further determine when and how technology can both facilitate and interfere with individuals' abilities to achieve and maintain a balance between work and personal life.

We strongly advocate for effective assessment, measurement, and evaluation of work/life needs and initiatives. Specifically, human resources professionals within an organization should perform a needs assessment to first identify the work/life needs that its employees may have, seek employee *participation* to develop possible strategies for meeting those needs, and be sure to evaluate any new work/life benefits or policies that may be implemented. At the beginning of this chapter, we described some of the definitional challenges that research on work/life balance has faced – namely, that construct development and measurement has lagged behind popular interest in the topic of work/life balance. Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska (2009) were among the first to develop and validate a measure of work/life balance that differs from conflict and enhancement or enrichment. Many different measures of work/life conflict and enhancement have been developed and validated, including measures of work/family conflict and enrichment (Carlson et al., 2006) and work/personal life interference and enhancement (Fisher et al., 2009) to name just a couple. A detailed review of the measures is beyond the scope of this chapter. We encourage researchers to choose measures most appropriate for their research.

Concluding Thoughts

Linking work/life balance with organizational goals will be a strategic challenge for organizations. Despite that, we believe there is an ethical imperative for organizations to take up this challenge and make it clear to their employees that quality of life is a key factor in both individual and organizational well-being. As with most strategy initiatives, constructing the appropriate set of work/life benefits, clearly linking them with both individual and organizational performance, communicating the new status quo, and establishing a culture of support for balance will not be easy.

However, as we have discussed, the empirical literature offers clues for how to proceed. It may also be that, as recently suggested by President Barack Obama (2010), ensuring that "…our workplaces are mobile and flexible and accommodating enough to give people the opportunities they need to contribute and raise a family… (is) not just a work/family balance issue. It's an economic competitiveness issue."

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