



THE 2014 ROSABETH MOSS KANTER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH

AWARDED BY THE CENTER FOR FAMILIES AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY
AND THE BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR WORK & FAMILY

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Announcing the winner:

National context in work-life research: A multi-level cross-national analysis of the adoption of workplace work-life arrangements in Europe (2013)

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Authors: Laura den Dulk, Sandra Groeneveld, Ariane Ollier-Malaterre, and Monique Valcour



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Laura den Dulk

Associate Professor,
Department of Public Administration
Erasmus University Rotterdam

What were the major findings of your study?

Our study focuses on nation-level drivers of organizations' adoption of leaves/childcare and flexible work arrangements, beyond what is mandated by the state. It is one of the first studies to examine how different types of organizations are influenced by the country context they operate in. The data set included 19,516 organizations in 19 European countries (*Establishment Survey on Working Time and Work-Life Balance 2004-2005*).

Important findings from this study included:

- Organizations adopt more work-life arrangements when the government does as well.
- Cultural centrality of work, which refers to the degree in which work is valued and seen as a duty and an obligation in society, was negatively associated with the adoption of leaves/childcare and flexible work arrangements by organizations.
- Public sector and large organizations were more sensitive to state support, cultural centrality of work and male unem-

ployment than private sector and small organizations. In contrast, organizations employing a greater proportion of female employees were less sensitive to state support.

These findings illustrate that organizational policies are influenced by the national contexts in which they are embedded, although some organizations are more sensitive to these contexts than others.

Were you surprised by the findings?

We were surprised to find that organizations with a greater proportion of female employees are less inclined to offer additional work-life provisions when public provisions are more generous. We expected the opposite. Our finding might be related to the fact that female employees are more likely to use existing work-life provisions than male employees, which could make it simply too expensive for organizations with a large female staff to offer additional support.

What do you think are the most important implications of your findings for employees? For human resource practitioners?

For policymakers, our findings suggest that state support helping to aid families to successfully combine work and family life could act as a catalyst to encourage employers to provide work-life support to their employees. The positive relation between state support and provisions in organizations is an important finding in particular in the light of current trends in various countries to cut public support and the hope that organizations will compensate. ***If policymakers want organizations to invest in work-life support, the state needs to model the way.***

When developing support, policy makers and HR practitioners should reflect on societal attitudes regarding the centrality of work in their country and present work-life provisions in a way that are sensitive to prevailing attitudes and norms.

TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS FROM KANTER AWARD FINALISTS...

1. How important is it for leaders to act as work-life role models?

- Leaders who openly discuss their work-life experiences can show understanding and support for their employees' lives. Sharing common stressors with others in the community can lower the potential threat of work-life conflict. When women perceive their experience of work-life conflict is unusual, they exhibit greater distress (Young & Wheaton, 2013).
- Men who violate traditional gender roles by actively caring for children outside the home experience more workplace mistreatment than men who do not actively care for children (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). Male leaders can speak up about their own caregiving experiences to help minimize the harassment and mistreatment of caregiving fathers in the workplace.

2. Do alternate career paths encourage women to remain/progress in careers?

- Opting out of the workforce after having children is more prevalent for highly-educated women from top academic institutions, as they more frequently have the economic means to make this choice (Hersch, 2013). Alternative career paths can encourage this talent to stay engaged in work rather than opting out of the labor market.
- The impact of wives' continued employment varies depending on culture. In the US, wives' employment increases risk of divorce, but in Nordic countries wives' employment is linked to significantly lower risk of divorce. Policies that support employment equality more generally and women's employment specifically are correlated with lower risk that an employed wife will divorce. (Cooke, et al., 2013)

3. What is the best way to approach performance reviews in an unbiased manner?

- Gender bias persists in the evaluation and promotion of candidates for higher positions. Male candidates for vice president roles benefit from having children, but women who are candidates for these positions do not (Smith, et al., 2013). Awareness of these unintentional biases is critical to fair performance reviews.
- Organizations should implement gender-neutral performance standards to minimize bias against women, particularly mothers (Berdahl & Moon, 2013).
- Ensure that rewards and opportunities for on-the-job training are granted equitably to men and women, as the lack of these opportunities for women contributes to the gender gap in wages (Gronlund & Magnusson, 2013).

4. When implementing global work-life policies, how do we take national context into consideration?

- Predominant family structures in countries can be classified using three categories: traditional family, dual-earner family, dual-carer family. This context is important when considering how to best support families and women's advancement opportunities in each region of the globe (Korpi, et al., 2013).
- Large-scale changes in national policies can increase worklife conflict and lower worklife satisfaction during the transition (Trefalt, et al., 2013)
- Organizations often follow state examples when implementing work-life policies (den Dulk, et al., 2013). In countries that lack supportive policies, such as the United States, organizations can distinguish themselves as employers of choice by developing family supportive policies and cultures.

5. Does a results-oriented workplace culture have an impact on results?

- A results-only focus by employers can decrease work-to-family interference and increase healthy behaviors in both individuals and teams (Moen, et al., 2013a).

6. How do dependent care supports impact employees?

- Opting out by highly talented women has a direct effect on the number of women reaching high-level corporate positions (Hersh, 2013). Providing dependent care supports that allow women to continue on their career paths could improve the pipeline for women in leadership.

- Night shift work can impact the quality of maternal time with the children, leading to increased aggression, anxiety, or depression in children (Dunifon, et al., 2013). Offering quality childcare supports can alleviate some of the stressors these employees experience, and potentially improve the quality of interactions between mothers and children.

7. Does mother's employment improve or harm their children's academic achievement?

- Children of mothers who work, especially those in skilled or complex white and blue-collar jobs, tend to do better academically in reading and math (Yetis-Bayraktar, et al., 2013).

8. What can we do to promote pay equity?

- Providing equal pay to men and women can support dual-earner couples and improve women's opportunities in the workforce. Public-policy supporting pay equity helps women with low educational levels the most (Korpi, et al., 2013).
- Even in Sweden where gender differences in labor force participation are negligible, wage inequity continues to exist. This is often due to the preponderance of women in jobs with lower pay. Encouraging more even gender participation in various occupations can help to assist with improving gender equity in pay (Gronlund & Magnusson, 2013).

9. Should employers encourage family involvement?

- Employees' family orientation (focus on the importance of maintaining a harmonious atmosphere within the family) enhances their working lives. Spouses oriented toward family connections have an increased feeling of balance and decrease in work-to-family conflict (Ho, et al., 2013).
- Events like 'take your child to work day' can generate interest in kids for math and science, better preparing children for their own working futures (Yetis-Bayraktar, et al., 2013).

10. What is the business rationale for encouraging employees to take vacation?

- Work has intensified and become boundaryless (Moen, et al., 2013b). Vacations (not working vacations) and other uninterrupted "time off" is needed to for rest and renewal and to dedicate to family and leisure.

THE KANTER AWARD

Named in honor of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, who has been identified as the most influential contributor to modern literature on work and family, the Kanter Award is given for the best research paper(s) published during the year. The rigorous award process involves 60 scholarly reviewers from all over the world who decide on the Kanter winners from among over 2500 articles published in 77 scholarly journals. No applications or nominations are accepted. This award raises awareness of excellent work-family research, fosters debate about standards of excellence, identifies the "best of the best" studies on which to base future research and outlines specific implications of the research for work-life and human resource professionals. The Center for Families at Purdue University and the Boston College Center for Work & Family developed the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award to raise the awareness of high quality work-family research among the scholar, consultant and practitioner communities. Through the generous sponsorship of the Corporate Partners of the Boston College Center for Work & Family Roundtable, the standards of quality for work-family research will continue to rise, and actionable findings from the best studies will become more commonplace in business communities to inform policy and best people practices.

KANTER 2014 NOMINATED ARTICLES

- Berdahl, J. & Moon, S.H. (2013). Workplace Mistreatment of Middle Class Workers Based on Sex, Parenthood, and Caregiving. *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2), 341-366. jberdahl@rotman.utoronto.ca. **FINALIST**
- Cook, L.P., Erola, J., Evertsson, M., Gahler, M., Harkonen, J., Hewitt, B., Jalovaara, M., Kan, M.Y., Lyngstad, T.H., Mencarini, L., Mignot, J.F., Mortelmans, D., Poortman, A. R., Schmitt, C., and Trappe, H. (2013). Labor and Love: Wives' Employment and Divorce Risk in its Socio-Political Context. *Social Politics* 20(4), 482-509. l.p.cooke@bath.ac.uk **FINALIST**
- Den Dulk, L., Groeneveld, S., Ollier-Malaterre, A., & Valcour, M. (2013). National context in work-life research: A multi-level cross-national analysis of the adoption of workplace work-life arrangements in Europe. *European Management Journal* 31, 478-494. dendulk@fsw.eur.nl **WINNER**
- Dunifon, R., Kalil, A., Crosby, D. A., & Su, J. H. (2013). Mothers' Night Work and Children's Behavior Problems. *Developmental Psychology* 49(10), 1874-1885. red26@cornell.edu
- Grönlund, A. & Magnusson, C. (2013). Devaluation, crowding or skill specificity? Exploring the mechanisms behind lower wages in female professions. *Social Science Research* 42(4), 1006-1017. anne.gronlund@soc.umu.se
- Hersch, J. (2013). Opting out among women with elite education. *Review of Economics of the Household* 11(4), 469-506. joni.hersch@vanderbilt.edu
- Ho, M. Y., Chen, X., Cheung, F. M., Liu, H., & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2013). A Dyadic Model of the Work-Family Interface: A Study of Dual-Earner Couples in China. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 18(1), 53-63. myho@psy.cuhk.edu.hk
- Korpi, W., Ferrarini, T., & Englund, S. (2013). Women's Opportunities under Different Family Policy Constellations: Gender, Class, and Inequality Tradeoffs in Western Countries Re-examined. *Social Politics* 20(1), 1-40. walter.korpi@sofi.su.se **FINALIST**
- Moen, P., Fan W., & Kelly, E.L. (2013a). Team-level flexibility, work-home spillover, and health behavior. *Social Science & Medicine* 84, 69-79. phylmoen@umn.edu
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- Smith, N., Smith V., & Verner, M. (2013). Why are so Few Females Promoted into CEO and Vice President Positions? Danish Empirical Evidence, 1997-2007. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 66(2), 380-408. nsmith@econ.au.dk
- Trefalt, Š., Drnovšek, M., Svetina-Nabergoj, A., & Adlešic, R. V. (2013). Work-life experiences in rapidly changing national contexts: Structural misalignment, comparisons and choice overload as explanatory mechanisms. *European Management Journal* 31(5), 448-463. mateja.drnovsek@ef.uni-lj.si
- Young, M. & Wheaton, B. (2013). The Impact of Neighborhood Composition on Work-Family Conflict and Distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54(4), 481-497. myoung@mcmaster.ca
- Yetis-Bayraktar, A., Budig, M., & Tomaskovic-Devey, D. (2013). From the Shop Floor to the Kitchen Floor: Maternal Occupational Complexity and Children's Reading and Math Skills. *Work and Occupations* 40(1), 37-64. ayetis@soc.umass.edu **FINALIST**

For more information about the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award and other work-life research, please visit
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