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NOT ALL WORK-LIFE POLICIES ARE CREATED EQUAL: CAREER CONSEQUENCES OF USING ENABLING VERSUS ENCLOSING WORK-LIFE POLICIES

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Many employees hesitate to use work-life policies (e.g., flexible work arrangements, leave, on-site services) for fear of career consequences. However, findings on the actual career consequences of such use are mixed. We debundle work-life policies, which we view as control mechanisms that may operate in an enabling way, giving employees some latitude over when, where, and how much they work, or in an enclosing way, promoting longer hours on work premises. Drawing on signaling and attributional theories, we construe the nature of the policies used as a work devotion signal; specifically, we argue that supervisors attribute lower work devotion to employees who use more enabling policies than to employees who use more enclosing policies. However, this relationship is moderated by employees' work ethic prior to the use, by supervisors' expectations of employees, and by the family supportiveness of organizational norms. In turn, the work devotion attributions made by supervisors lead to positive and negative career consequences for work-life policies users, depending on organizational norms. Our model opens up new avenues of research on the work-life policies implementation gap by differentiating between the policies and by teasing out the roles played by policies, organizational norms, supervisors, and employees.

A great number of organizations across the world invest money, time, and energy into offering formal and informal work-life policies and arrangements to support their employees' involvement in multiple life roles (e.g., employee assistance programs, on-site childcare, flextime, part-time; Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). Paid and unpaid leaves are also provided to large populations of employees at the public policy level. These policies have been associated with positive outcomes both for employees (e.g., higher job performance: Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Lee, MacDermid, Williams, Buck, & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 2002; higher salaries: Gariety & Shaffer, 2001; Weeden, 2005) and for organizations (e.g., attraction and retention of top talents; Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). These positive outcomes following the use of work-life policies signify what has been called the "happy worker story" (Weeden, 2005: 478).

Despite these positive consequences, however, surveys in several countries have found that only a fraction of the employees who could benefit from work-life policies actually use them. In the United States, for instance, less than 50 percent of employees use available work-life policies and arrangements (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015). In fact, many employees report that they do not use such policies because they worry about career penalties that might result from doing so (Brescoll, Glass, & Sedlovskaya, 2013; Crittenden, 2001; Hochschild, 1997; Williams, 2000), such as wage penalties (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004), fewer promotion opportunities (Cohen & Single, 2001; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010), and reduced career mobility within and across organizations (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010). These

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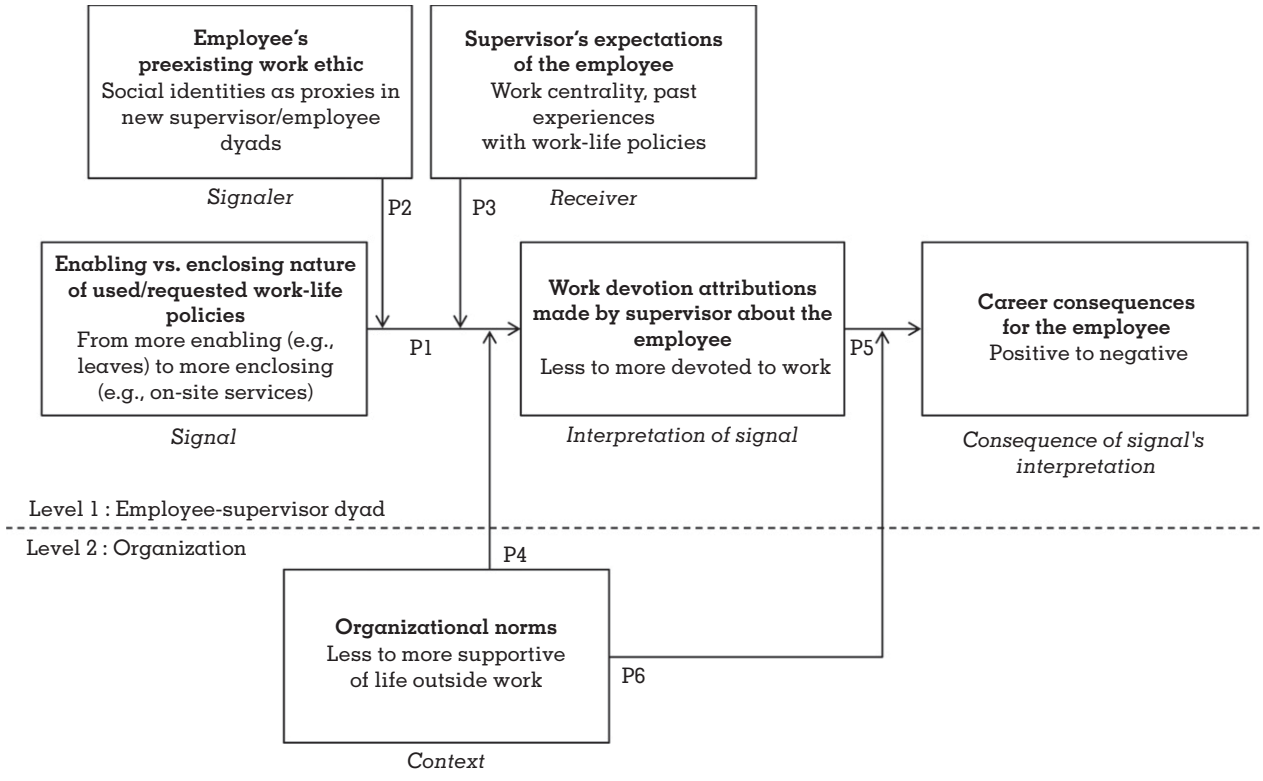
negative outcomes following the use of work-life policies have been construed as a "flexibility stigma" (Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). These concerns are reasonable, since negative career consequences have indeed been reported; for example, some work-life policy users (e.g., users of flexible schedules, telework, or job share) suffer wage penalties (e.g., Glass, 2004; Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012), lower performance evaluations (e.g., Leslie et al., 2012; Wharton, Chivers, & Blair-Loy, 2008), and fewer promotions (e.g., Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Leslie et al., 2012). In light of the flexibility stigma literature (Williams et al., 2013), employees who work flexibly are penalized because they deviate from the work devotion schema that places working hard at one's job at the center of one's life (Blair-Loy, 2003; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016; Williams et al., 2013) and construes ideal workers as being always available and committed to work (formerly, men cared for by homemaker wives; Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 1993; Reid, 2015; Slaughter, 2015; Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013).

Several shortcomings of the literature may explain these divergent narratives. First, work-life policies are often treated as if they were all created equal and were equally penalizing or rewarding. Prior research tends either to bundle different work-life policies together by using counts of available policies or to focus on isolated policies (Kelly et al., 2008). Moreover, there is much emphasis on leaves and flexible work arrangements (i.e., flextime, flexplace), while other work-life policies typically are not addressed in the literature (e.g., on-site facilities such as gyms or health clinics). Second, the empirical studies examining the issue have rarely distinguished between mere availability and actual use of work-life policies, thus confounding the findings regarding career consequences (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Kelly et al., 2014). Third, the reasons for the positive or negative impact of using work-life policies on one's career, above and beyond other factors such as job performance and tenure, have not been elucidated thus far, and the mechanisms through which supervisors interpret employees' use of work-life policies and make decisions regarding subsequent career consequences for those employees have not been thoroughly analyzed. We argue that these oversights obscure our understanding of career consequences for users of formal work-life policies and informal work-life arrangements.

Our core arguments in this article are as follows. First, we argue that using or requesting different work-life policies or informal arrangements has different outcomes for employees' careers, above and beyond other factors. In particular, we view work-life policies as one of the mechanisms through which organizations attempt to control employees' work-related behaviors and effort, because such policies may ensure the attainment of organizational goals (Baron, Jennings, & Dobbin, 1988; Flamholtz, Das, & Tsui, 1985; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990). We argue that, as control mechanisms, work-life policies differ in the way they exert control over employees. Specifically, *enabling* work-life policies, such as leaves and telework, give employees latitude over when, where, and how much they work, which enables them to spend time and energy outside of work to take care of themselves and their family members (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Kossek & Michel, 2011). In contrast, *enclosing* policies, such as on-site childcare centers and health clinics, promote greater availability for work and longer hours on work premises by providing services that employees would otherwise seek outside the workplace (Useem & Harrington, 2000), thus enclosing employees within the workplace.

Second, we theorize, as illustrated in Figure 1, that the nature of the work-life policies that are used acts as a signal (Spence, 1973) of work devotion such that the policies that fall on the enabling side of the continuum are more likely than those on the enclosing side to entail negative career consequences for their users, because supervisors attribute lower work devotion to employees who use or request more enabling policies (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Leslie et al., 2012). We further reason that the relationship between the nature of the policies used and supervisors' work devotion attributions is moderated by employees' work ethic prior to the use of work-life policies (Furnham, 1990; Kidron, 1978), by supervisors' expectations of employees (Kossek, Ollier-Malaterre, Lee, Pichler, & Hall, 2016; Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997), and by the supportiveness of organizational norms for life outside of work (Allen, 2001; Andreassi & Thompson, 2008; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Last, we explain how supervisors' work devotion attributions about employees, in turn, shape a range of

FIGURE 1
Work Devotion Attributions and Career Consequences Associated with the Use/Request of More Enabling Versus More Enclosing Work-Life Policies



positive and negative career consequences as a function of the supportiveness of organizational norms.

Our theorization of the differential nature of work-life policies, as well as of the signaling and attribution mechanisms at play in supervisors' interpretation of the nature of the formal work-life policies and informal arrangements used by employees, explains the career consequences experienced by employees and makes two important contributions to the work-life literature. First, whereas in previous research scholars have tended to bundle different policies without differentiating between varying consequences of use and without identifying the reasons for such consequences (Kelly et al., 2008), we propose a theorization of work-life policies based on the enabling versus enclosing way they exert control. This distinction, in our view, plays a major role in explaining why using different policies leads to different work devotion attributions by supervisors. This distinction could also shed light on the current inconsistency of findings pertaining to use of work-life policies and, thus, could open up new areas of research. By doing so this distinction would have important implications for individuals as they negotiate their career paths (e.g., wages, career moves, job satisfaction, justice perceptions), as well as for organizations attempting to reap the potential benefits of work-life policies (e.g., commitment, productivity, retention).

Second, our analysis of the combined effects of the more enabling versus more enclosing nature of these policies, employees' preexisting work ethic, supervisors' expectations of employees, organizational norms, and supervisors' work devotion attributions provides a robust multilevel (i.e., employee-supervisor dyad and organizational levels) rationale for predicting the positive and negative career consequences that employees experience when they use or request work-life policies. In doing so our model may help organizations predict negative career consequences while helping employees avoid them; this is important because career penalties

(e.g., pay cut) or the denial of career premiums that would otherwise have been attained (e.g., being passed over for a promotion) is associated with reductions in well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment (Boyce, Ryan, Imus, & Morgeson, 2007) and can lead employees to opt out of the workforce (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). Our model also sheds light on the implementation gap between available policies and employees' use of these policies. Bridging this gap is important because using the policies may alleviate the conflicts faced by employees between demands stemming from different areas of life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and because these conflicts have negative consequences for both individuals and organizations (see Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000, and Carlson & Kacmar, 2000).

In the following sections we lay the basis for our construal of work-life policies as control mechanisms and our core distinction between enabling and enclosing policies. We then articulate our view of the use of work-life policies as signals that are sent by the employee and interpreted by the supervisor in a given organizational context, resulting in work devotion attributions made by the supervisor about the employee. Finally, we explain how these work devotion attributions may lead to positive or negative career consequences, depending on organizational norms.

WORK-LIFE POLICIES AS CONTROL MECHANISMS

Work-Life Policies and Their Career Consequences

Employees face competing demands that emerge from different life domains. Major demographic shifts have occurred in industrialized countries in the past several decades (Williams et al., 2016), and the dual-earner family is now the modal American family (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Kossek, 2008). As a consequence, both men and women now actively participate in multiple life domains, including work, family, community, and self (Demerouti, 2012). On the home front, 43 percent of workers report they have a child under the age of eighteen living at home, and 35 percent have significant eldercare demands (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2003). On the work front, employees are facing increasing work demands (Kelly et al., 2014). Low-income employees work with increasingly unpredictable schedules (Henly & Lambert, 2014; Mishel, 2013), while the culture of long work hours and 24/7 reactivity among professionals and managers leads to chronic overwork (Brett & Stroh, 2003; Burke & Cooper, 2008; Cha, 2010; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). The rise in hours and in the intensification of the pace of work is particularly noticeable in consulting, law, and investment banking firms, which routinely operate on eighty-hour weeks (Kossek, 2008), as well as in self-oriented careers (e.g., architecture, entrepreneurship, journalism, teaching; Reid & Ramarajan, 2016).

Public policy and employers, especially large organizations, provide formal work-life policies that may help employees manage these demands. These policies encompass paid and unpaid leave, flexible working arrangements (e.g., flexible working hours, compressed workweeks, occasional or regular telework, reduced-load work), on-site facilities and services (e.g., childcare centers, gyms, health clinics, dry cleaning), and other resources pertaining to life outside of work (e.g., lunch-and-learn seminars, parenting networks among employees; Ollier-Malaterre, 2010). In addition to formal policies—or in place of such policies in smaller organizations—informal work-life arrangements exist in the form of flexibility that is negotiated between supervisors and employees or arranged within workgroups (Kossek & Michel, 2011).

As stated earlier, the findings pertaining to career outcomes associated with the availability and use of work-life policies are mixed (Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Leslie et al., 2012). On the one hand, some empirical data confirm the "happy worker story" (Weeden, 2005: 478) by showing that users of flexible work arrangements enjoy higher salaries (Gariety & Shaffer, 2001; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Weeden, 2005) and greater career satisfaction (Lee et al., 2002). An explanation of these outcomes is that flexible work arrangements may help employees enhance their job performance (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Lee et al., 2002). On the other hand, other studies support the "flexibility stigma" story, since working flexibly and taking leave are both associated with negative attitudinal and behavioral outcomes for workers, such as wage penalties (Budig & England, 2001; Glass, 2004; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Williams, 2000), lower performance evaluations (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Wharton et al., 2008), and slower career advancement

(Cohen & Single, 2001; Glass, 2004; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Williams, 2000). The flexibility stigma rationale explains these penalties in terms of an incongruence between using work-life policies and the work devotion schema (Blair-Loy, 2003; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Reid, 2015; Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013). Stigma is one of the mechanisms underlying work-family backlash—that is, the individual and collective negative attitudes, behaviors, and emotions regarding work-life policies (Perrigino, Dunford, & Wilson, 2018). Although several typologies of work-life policies have been proposed (e.g., Glass & Riley, 1998; Rau & Hyland, 2002), they have not shed light on the specific issue of career consequences. To address this gap, we build on the organizational control literature and differentiate between more enabling and more enclosing work-life policies.

Control Mechanisms

We construe work-life policies as control mechanisms that help organizations attain their goals by facilitating employees' fulfillment of their professional responsibilities. This construal is built on the premise that organizations strive to exert control over their employees' behaviors in a variety of ways in order to increase employee commitment (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990) and organizational effectiveness (Mintzberg, 1989). Organizational control, which Flamholtz et al. defined as "attempts by the organization to increase the probability that individuals and groups will behave in ways that lead to attainment of organizational goals" (1985: 36), is needed because other roles and social groups (e.g., family, church, community, alternative work roles) may claim portions of employees' time, energy, and loyalty (Kanter, 1977; Marks, 1977; Whyte, 1957) and may divert them from the pursuit of organizational goals.

Historically, organizational control has been ensured through a vast array of mechanisms and incentives (e.g., promotions, wage increases, bonuses, training; Clark & Wilson, 1961). It has largely evolved over time, from direct coercive and utilitarian mechanisms intended to foster employees' obedience and productivity (e.g., close monitoring by foremen, threats of unemployment, organizational hierarchy) to indirect control of employees through normative, associative, and unobtrusive mechanisms and incentives, such as participation in decision making, internal labor markets, or departmentalization (Baron et al., 1988; Clark & Wilson, 1961; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004). The indirect mechanisms of control are intended to replace the alienation and conflict typical of a mass-production factory with employee commitment and a sense of community and dependence on the organization (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990). They also tend to dissolve class, union, and occupational loyalties that would compete with loyalty to the organization (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990). Welfare at the level of the organization (i.e., welfare corporatism; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990), which is a typical form of indirect control, is of particular importance to understand work-life policies.

Enabling and Enclosing Work-Life Policies

All work-life policies, in our view, are control mechanisms. However, not all work-life policies are created equal in terms of *how* the control is conveyed. Some work-life policies, which we term *enabling*, give employees latitude over when, where, and how much they work, which enables them to spend time and energy outside of work to take care of themselves and their family members (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Kossek & Michel, 2011). For instance, job-protected leaves and options to switch between full- and part-time schedules give employees latitude over when and how much they work, thus enabling them to fulfill their personal responsibilities by working less or not at all for a period of time. Likewise, telework gives employees latitude over where they work, which facilitates the fulfillment of their nonwork roles by reducing commuting time and, in professional and managerial jobs, by allowing them to stretch their workday and to interweave work with household chores and family time.

We view enabling work-life policies as control mechanisms that ensure the attainment of organizational goals in at least two ways. First, policies such as job-protected leave and part-time work aim at reducing employees' work-life conflicts and therefore prevent the negative impacts of work-life conflicts on employee performance and commitment (Allen et al., 2000; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000). Second, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that employees who are treated kindly and supportively feel obligated to reciprocate in kind, which in the case of enabling work-life policies has been shown to translate into greater work effort (Kossek & Thompson,

2016), increased commitment (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999), loyalty (Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001), and retention (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015).

Other work-life policies maximize employees' availability for work, as well as the time they spend on work premises (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990). We term these *enclosing* policies because they enclose employees within the workplace by providing on-site services and facilities that are otherwise found outside the workplace; in fact, some companies provide so many on-site services and facilities they have been labeled "company towns" (Useem & Harrington, 2000). On-site facilities that maximize employees' availability for work include, for example, childcare facilities, which remove the need for employees to leave work earlier in order to drive to an off-site daycare center (Friedman, 2001). Likewise, health clinics, where employees can get flu shots, monitor their health, and learn about cancer screening, save precious work time by removing the need to attend off-site appointments during working hours (Ollier-Malaterre, 2010). In addition, on-site gyms, take-home meals, dry cleaning, and car services also maximize the time and energy employees spend at work (Useem & Harrington, 2000). More generally, enclosing work-life policies relieve employees from nonwork chores and obligations and shield them from a number of nonwork disruptions. These policies can be an efficient organizational control mechanism, in that making employees more available for work may increase work performance; for instance, reliable daycare reduces absenteeism and disruption in team work by eliminating care breakdowns. Enclosing work-life policies also fulfill a function of organizational control (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990), in that they foster a sense of dependence toward the organization that provides these facilities (Useem & Harrington, 2000).

While leaves and on-site services are clear examples of policies at the ends of the enabling versus enclosing continuum, others fall in the middle. For instance, employee lunchtime seminars are somewhat enclosing in that they encourage socialization and the development of friendships and communities *within* rather than outside the organization, further fostering employees' affective commitment (Ollier-Malaterre, 2010) and discouraging competing loyalties (Hochschild, 1997; Kanter, 1977). However, they also give employees the latitude to focus on nonwork responsibilities during their lunch time and therefore are less enclosing than on-site facilities that result in greater availability for work. Last, some work-life policies act as broad umbrellas encompassing policies that actually differ in terms of the control they exert. For example, flexible work hours may refer either to the ability to choose at what time one starts and ends the workday or to modest variations of the start and end times around core business hours during which one must be on work premises. We view the former policy as more enabling than the latter. In the following section we articulate our view of the enabling versus enclosing nature of used work-life policies as a work devotion signal sent by employees and interpreted by supervisors.

NATURE OF USED WORK-LIFE POLICIES AS A WORK DEVOTION SIGNAL

Building on signaling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Ross, 1977; Spence, 1973), attributional theories (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967), and Leslie et al.'s (2012) recent finding that supervisors attribute motives for the use of work-life policies, we argue that the use of work-life policies does not directly shape career consequences; rather, supervisors' attributions about employees who use or request work-life policies mediate the relationship between the nature of the used policies and career consequences (see Figure 1). More specifically, we extend Leslie et al.'s seminal study (2012), which focused on the attributions of productivity versus personal life motives for the use of work-life policies, by contending that, given the salience of the work devotion schema in industrialized societies (Blair-Loy, 2003; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Williams et al., 2013), the attributions that are likely to shape career consequences for employees are work devotion attributions. As a consequence, using or requesting more enabling versus enclosing work-life policies sends different work devotion signals, which influence supervisors' attributions.

The Work Devotion Schema

The work devotion schema refers to the belief that individuals should prioritize work over other life spheres, because hard work is an imperative that is central to life (Blair-Loy, 2003; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Reid, 2015) and a moral

responsibility to society (Williams et al., 2013). While it is rooted in the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1930), where work is viewed as a responsibility to God, today the work devotion schema transcends religion and influences individuals' spontaneous, intuitive, and automatic attitudes, without regard to their religious beliefs (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks, 2014). The work devotion schema mandates hard work for both higher social classes, where work is viewed as enhancing self-worth, and lower social classes, where work is considered a way to provide for the family (Williams et al., 2013).

The work devotion schema also refers to an implicit contract between an employee and their organization. For example, a widespread belief identified as a "career myth" by Moen and Roehling (2005) implies that an employee starting a job invests all of their time, energy, and engagement in work, with the implicit understanding that the employee will rise in the company later on (in the case of a professional or manager) or will be at a lesser risk of losing their job (in the case of a middle-class or blue-collar worker; Williams et al., 2013). This implicit contract legitimizes the work demands made by the organization and forges a strong identification with the employer and/or the occupation (Williams et al., 2013). A direct consequence of the work devotion schema is that employees face the ongoing expectation, institutionalized in organizational practices, that they need to minimize the time they spend on caregiving and maximize their investment in work, or they will risk being viewed as uncommitted to their work and will suffer the associated negative career consequences (Blair-Loy, 2003; Reid & Ramarajan, 2016; Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013).

Enabling Versus Enclosing Work-Life Policies As Work Devotion Signals

It has been documented that the use or even the mere request of some work-life policies, such as flexible work hours, is often seen by supervisors, coworkers, and sometimes employees themselves as a violation of the work devotion schema (Williams et al., 2013). The violation may be even more salient in the absence of formal policies, because in that case employees lack the organizational endorsement that may buffer them from lower work devotion attributions (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). In contrast, it is possible that the use of other work-life policies, such as on-site facilities, services, and resources, serves as a signal of work devotion, because using such policies maximizes the time spent at work and the interactions between coworkers (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008; Ollier-Malaterre, 2013).

Leslie et al. (2012) found that supervisors assign either productivity motives or personal life motives to employees' requests (Leslie et al., 2012), suggesting that the use or request of work-life policies acts as a signal of employees' underlying motives. Given the importance of control and commitment in an organizational context, we argue that supervisors interpret employees' motives as either organization- or self-helping (Halbesleben, Bowler, Bolino, & Turnley, 2010). Organization-helping behaviors signal commitment to the organization, while self-helping behaviors signal a lack thereof (Kanter, 1977; Leslie et al., 2012). Therefore, we construe the use or request of work-life policies as a work devotion signal emitted by the employee, which is then received and interpreted by the supervisor (see Figure 1). We now turn to examining how this signal translates into work devotion attributions.

Work Devotion Attributions

We theorize that the nature of the policies that employees use, or request, will influence supervisors' work devotion attributions about the employees, which we view as a continuous variable ranging from low to high work devotion. Specifically, we argue that the more enabling the policies used by employees, the less work devoted the supervisor will perceive the employees to be. On the one hand, using more enabling policies, such as family and personal leaves, part-time work, or reduced-load work arrangements, is likely to lead to lower work devotion attributions from supervisors, because such policies are mostly used to devote time and energy to life domains other than work. Furthermore, policies such as telework reduce face time (i.e., the time that an employee spends at work and that is visible to others; Bailyn, 1993). Because employers often equate face time, which enables the surveillance of employees (Sewell, 2012), with employee commitment to the organization (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008; Williams, 2000), they may view employees who work from home as less devoted to work.

On the other hand, using more enclosing policies, such as on-site services and facilities that maximize the time spent on work premises and

foster socialization within rather than outside the organization (Useem & Harrington, 2000), is likely to signal work effort (Kossek & Thompson, 2016) and organizational loyalty (Hochschild, 1997; Kanter, 1977). Although spending more time at work does not necessarily equate to working harder, supervisors often use face time in the workplace as a proxy for work devotion (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008; Williams, 2000), and we therefore posit that using enclosing policies leads to greater work devotion attributions by supervisors. We therefore propose the following (see P1 in Figure 1).

> *Proposition 1: The nature of the used/requested work-life policies influences supervisors' work devotion attributions about employees who use them such that supervisors attribute lower work devotion to employees when they use more enabling policies compared to when they use more enclosing policies.*

EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS AS SIGNALERS AND RECEIVERS

Signaling theory and attributional models suggest that the interpretation of an emitted signal depends on the signaler—that is, the employee—and on the receiver—that is, the supervisor (Green & Mitchell, 1979; Halbesleben et al., 2010; Hehman, Sutherland, Flake, & Slepian, 2017). Therefore, we argue that the employee's work ethic prior to each new use or request of a work-life policy (hereafter "preexisting work ethic") and the supervisor's expectations of the employee moderate the relationship between the nature of the used or requested policy and the supervisor's work devotion attributions about the employee. We first theorize about the employee-supervisor dyad and then discuss organizational norms as an organizational-level moderator.

Employees' Preexisting Work Ethic

Employees' work ethic is important to supervisors, since a strong personal work ethic bears the promise of hard work, organizational commitment, and job performance (Furnham, 1990; Kuhn, 2006). Personal work ethic refers to the ability to work efficiently without wasting time, to delay immediate rewards, to be self-reliant, and to believe in the importance of behaving morally and ethically (Christopher & Zabel, 2011; Furnham, 1990; Kidron, 1978). In other words, employees with a strong personal work ethic are typically seen as hard workers, whereas employees with a weaker work ethic might be seen as lazy (Furnham, 1990). Although scholars have conducted little research on work ethic in connection with work-life policies, in an extensive qualitative study Kossek et al. (2016) found that supervisors' view of reduced-load work arrangements depended on their perceptions of employees' work ethic prior to the request to work a reduced load. Specifically, supervisors were more likely to view these arrangements favorably when employees were "flexible on flexibility"—that is, when employees did whatever it took to meet the goals of the organization, despite the reduced load (Kossek et al., 2016: 11).[1]

We reason that employees' work ethic prior to the use or request of a work-life policy is likely to influence supervisors' work devotion attributions resulting from the nature of the used or requested policy. Work ethic, indeed, is part of the psychological contract between a supervisor and an employee (Rousseau, 2001). Because the involved parties focus primarily on information that will confirm rather than infirm the contract (Rousseau, 2001), supervisors are more likely to interpret the use of more enclosing and even more enabling work-life policies as signaling work devotion when they view employees as enacting a strong work ethic, as opposed to when they doubt employees' work ethic. For instance, a supervisor may interpret a request to telework from an employee with a strong work ethic as a desire to work more hours by reducing commuting time, thus signaling work devotion.

Conversely, a weak preexisting work ethic may lead supervisors to interpret the use of work-life policies as signaling lesser work devotion. For instance, a supervisor may view a request to telework by an employee whose work ethic they perceive as low as a risk that the employee will launch a side business, or the supervisor may

[1] An employee's preexisting work ethic may, of course, influence a supervisor's decision to grant or not grant a request for a flexible working arrangement. We do not focus on this relationship because, in our view, the request itself acts as a signal that has consequences for work devotion attributions, whether or not the request is granted by the supervisor. In addition, having a request for a flexible working arrangement approved by a supervisor does not buffer the employee from negative career consequences (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010), which, as we explain, are caused by work devotion attributions.

view attendance to an on-site gym or to parenting lunch-and-learn seminars by this employee as a means of spending less time at their desk. In sum, we argue that supervisors not only attribute motives for the use of work-life policies (Leslie et al., 2012) but also interpret the nature of the work-life policies used in terms of greater or lesser work devotion, based on their perception of employees' preexisting work ethic. Furthermore, we believe that supervisors may engage in such interpretations several times in the course of the supervisor-employee relationship, each time considering an employee's work ethic prior to the use or request of a given policy. For instance, work devotion attributions may change when an employee first uses a more enclosing work-life policy and then a more enabling one. We therefore propose the following (see P2 in Figure 1):

> *Proposition 2: Employees' preexisting work ethic moderates the relationship between the nature of the work-life policies they use/request and the work devotion attributions made about them such that (a) a stronger preexisting work ethic may buffer the employees from lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies and may enhance higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies, and (b) a weaker preexisting work ethic may worsen lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies and may attenuate higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies.*

Social identities as proxies for work ethic. Of course, supervisor-employee dyads change over time. New employees who are joining a team may already be using work-life policies; in addition, a supervisor may be assigned to a team where some employees already use work-life policies or ask to use a policy shortly after the supervisor joins the team. In the case of new employee-employer dyads, the supervisor has less time to ground their work ethic judgments on the employee's behaviors than when the supervisor has been working with the employee prior to the use or request. Therefore, it is likely that first impressions play an important role as the supervisor gauges the employee's work ethic and interprets the nature of the used or requested policies as a signal of greater or lesser work devotion. We argue that supervisors may use employees' social identities (e.g., gender, caretaker identity) as proxies for work ethic, because these identities convey stereotypical expectations.

Gender in particular entails stereotypical perceptions of men as *agentic* (i.e., "assertive, controlling, and confident") and women as *communal* (i.e., having a primary "concern with the welfare of other people"; Eagly & Karau, 2002: 574). Although gender roles have evolved such that men and women today may both engage in agentic and/or communal behaviors, the stereotypical view that women are likely to prioritize work-family balance whereas men are likely to prioritize their career continues to persist (Hakim, 2006; Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009; Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017; Powell & Mainiero, 1992). Because of these persisting societal expectations regarding men's and women's roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002), we posit that when supervisors resort to proxies to assess their employees' work ethic, they may assume a stronger work ethic for a male employee using a given work-life policy than for a female employee using the same policy. For instance, they may be more likely to interpret telework as a signal of higher work devotion when the user is male versus female.

Likewise, a proxy for work ethic may be the salience of caregiving responsibilities. We contend that supervisors who lack time to assess their employees' work ethic independently of the employees' social identities may assume a stronger work ethic for a "zero-drag" worker—that is, an employee with no care responsibilities (Hochschild, 1997)—than for a caregiver. The lesser work ethic associated with the caregiver identity is rooted in the view of care responsibilities as a competing loyalty that reduces employees' time and energy for work (Budig & England, 2001; Kanter, 1977). The status of motherhood in particular may undermine the credibility of an employee's organizational commitment (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), because working mothers are seen as warmer but less competent than childless women (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004). Therefore, employees who make their care roles salient to their supervisors by displaying family pictures at their desks or by discussing upcoming family obligations while at work may be perceived by their supervisors as prioritizing family over work (Brescoll et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2016) and as

behaving less professionally (Uhlmann, Heaphy, Ashford, Zhu, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013). It follows that supervisors may assess their work ethic as weaker and, as a result, interpret the nature of the work-life policies they use as a signal of lesser work devotion. In line with signaling theory (Spence, 1973), we now examine the perspective of the receiver of the signal (i.e., the supervisor) in the dyad.

Supervisors' Expectations of Employees

The literature points to two important factors that influence supervisors' expectations of employees with regard to work-life policies: supervisors' work centrality and their past experiences with work-life policies.

Work centrality. Supervisors differ with regard to the level of work devotion they consider to be required and expect from their subordinates. On the one hand, a supervisor who is work centric considers work a central part of life (Dubin, 1956; Kanungo, 1982; Weber, 1930); the supervisor may therefore view taking leave, for instance, as a low work devotion signal. On the other hand, a supervisor who is more family centric and values time spent with family members and friends (Kanungo, 1982) or a supervisor who is dual centric (Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012) may consider an employee to be work devoted even when the employee takes leave. At the extreme, very work-centric supervisors may be workaholics who work beyond organizational requirements (Scott et al., 1997). We argue that supervisors who are work centric are likely to expect more devotion from their employees than supervisors who are family or dual centric, because the former's very high standards may create stringent performance expectations for subordinates (Porter, 2004; Scott et al., 1997). For instance, work-centric supervisors might be more prone than family- or dual-centric supervisors to perceive using the on-site gym as a way for employees to slack off from work, rather than as a way for employees to become energized and more productive.

Past experiences. Supervisors' past experiences may influence their expectations of employees as well, to the extent that supervisors who have had positive experiences using work-life policies or supervising an employee who has used these policies are likely to expect that employees may use the policies in good faith (Kossek et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2002). For instance, managers who have found that working flexible hours allowed them to be more focused on work and more productive may not equate employees' use of this enabling work-life policy with low work devotion. In contrast, supervisors who have had negative experiences or who are inexperienced with work-life policies may worry that employees might abuse policies that give employees latitude, such as telework (Perrigino et al., 2018). Taken together, we argue that the more work centric supervisors are and the less they have had positive experiences with work-life policies, the higher their expectations of employees will be—that is, the more likely they will be to expect high devotion to work and little or no use of enabling work-life policies. We therefore propose the following (see P3 in Figure 1).

> *Proposition 3: Supervisors' expectations of employees moderate the relationship between the nature of the work-life policies employees use/request and the work devotion attributions supervisors make about the employees such that (a) lower supervisor expectations may buffer employees from lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies and may enhance higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies, and (b) higher supervisor expectations may worsen lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies and may attenuate higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies.*

Interaction in the Employee-Supervisor Dyad

The work devotion attributions resulting from the interaction between employees' preexisting work ethic and supervisors' expectations deserve in-depth theorizing because of the multiple combinations the moderations imply, as Figure 2 illustrates. Therefore, we detail them before turning to the organizational level. For the sake of clarity, in this section we label attributions as negative, neutral, or positive.

Even though the use of more enabling policies is likely to lead to lower work devotion

attributions than the use of more enclosing policies, we argue that using enabling work-life policies may still lead to positive work devotion attributions when employees' work ethic is perceived as strong and when supervisors' expectations are relatively low. We reason, indeed, that the combination of an employee's work ethic (Furnham, 1990; Kidron, 1978) and their supervisor's relatively lenient expectations (Kossek et al., 2016; Scott et al., 1997) may act as a buffer so that the employee is not viewed as less work devoted. For instance, a supervisor who holds lower expectations and views an employee as demonstrating a strong work ethic may view the employee as work devoted, even if the policy the employee uses is enabling (e.g., telework). However, the work devotion attributions about the same teleworking employee may only be neutral if the supervisor has higher expectations, because the employee's use of a work-life policy that the supervisor views as reducing surveillance over the employee (Sewell, 2012) is likely to disappoint the supervisor's expectations (Kossek et al., 2016; Scott et al., 1997). Clearly, the worst-case scenario (very negative work devotion attributions) will occur when an employee whose work ethic is not perceived as strong uses a more enabling policy and has a supervisor with higher expectations, because the use of a policy that gives latitude by an employee who may already be viewed in a negative light is likely to conflict with the supervisor's expectations and, thus, lead the supervisor to make lower work devotion attributions. We predict a less negative outcome for the employee whose work ethic is not perceived as strongly and who uses an enabling policy but has a supervisor with lower expectations, again because the supervisor's relative leniency may act as a buffer for the employee (see Figure 2).

The picture differs greatly in the case of more enclosing policies. Because more enclosing policies maximize availability for work and hours on work premises (Useem & Harrington, 2000), we argue that work devotion attributions will always be positive for employees using more enclosing policies, except when their preexisting work ethic

FIGURE 2
Work Devotion Attributions Following Use/Request of More Enabling Versus More Enclosing Work-Life Policies

Employee's preexisting work ethic	Supervisor's expectations of the employee: Lower	Supervisor's expectations of the employee: Higher
Higher	*More enabling policies* **Positive** work devotion attributions	*More enabling policies* **Neutral** work devotion attributions
Higher	*More enclosing policies* **Very positive** work devotion attributions	*More enclosing policies* **Positive** work devotion attributions
Lower	*More enabling policies* **Negative** work devotion attributions	*More enabling policies* **Very negative** work devotion attributions
Lower	*More enclosing policies* **Positive** work devotion attributions	*More enclosing policies* **Neutral** work devotion attributions

is viewed as weaker and their supervisors have higher expectations. In the latter case, attributions are likely to be neutral, because the supervisors' expectations may be disappointed by the employees' weaker work ethic (Kossek et al., 2016; Scott et al., 1997). In the case of more enclosing policies used by employees whose work ethic is viewed as stronger (Furnham, 1990), work devotion attributions are likely to be very positive to positive, decreasing as supervisors' expectations increase, because higher expectations may make supervisors more demanding (Kossek et al., 2016; Scott et al., 1997). In the case of enclosing policies used by employees whose work ethic is viewed as weaker, we argue that the work devotion attributions may still be positive when supervisors have lower expectations, because supervisors who expect less are likely to be more generous (Kossek et al., 2016; Scott et al., 1997) in their work devotion attributions (see Figure 2).

Organizational Norms As a First-Stage Moderator

Supervisors' attributions about the use of more enabling or enclosing policies are embedded in the social context of a specific organization. However, organizations vary in their degree of family supportiveness (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999) and, more broadly, in their supportiveness of life outside of work. Because social norms prescribe acceptable behaviors in a group (Jacobson, Mortensen, & Cialdini, 2011), we argue that organizational norms further moderate the relationship between the nature of the work-life policies used/requested and the work devotion attributions made about employees who use them.

Social norms (i.e., the "customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashions, and all other criteria of conduct which are standardized as a consequence of the contact of individuals" [Sherif, 1936: 3]) curb individuals' behaviors to a certain level of conformity (Bicchieri & Mercier, 2014; Chung & Rimal, 2016) and provide order and meaning in ambiguous or uncertain situations (Raven & Rubin, 1976). In particular, norms embedded in an organization's work-family culture shed light on "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson et al., 1999: 394). At the surface, artifacts (Schein, 1985) such as the availability of work-life policies (Lewis, 1997) indicate an organization's intention to be supportive. Values underlying such artifacts (Schein, 1985) are reflected in standards and rules of conduct, such as the importance placed on long working hours and unencumbered workers (Lewis, 1997). In turn, these values reflect deeper assumptions, such as the idea that face time is an indication of productivity (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008).

Given that the use of work-life policies is not solely focused on work (unlike, for instance, participation in training programs), we argue that a supervisor's interpretation of the ambiguous signal sent when an employee uses more enabling or enclosing policies may be influenced by organizational norms. These norms convey organizational expectations about how employees should behave at work (Schein, 2009); therefore, we posit that the relationship between the nature of the work-life policies used/requested and the work devotion attributions made about employees who use them is also moderated by organizational norms. Specifically, in a context where norms are more supportive of life outside of work, supervisors are likely to make more positive, or less negative, work devotion attributions as a result of the use of enabling and enclosing work-life policies, because family-friendly norms shed a positive light on the use of more enabling and enclosing work-life policies and make them more acceptable to use (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). We therefore propose the following (see P4 in Figure 1).

> *Proposition 4: The supportiveness of organizational norms for life outside of work moderates the relationship between the nature of the work-life policies employees use/request and the work devotion attributions made about the employees such that (a) more supportive organizational norms may buffer employees from lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies and may enhance higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies, and (b) less supportive organizational norms may worsen lower work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enabling policies*

and may attenuate higher work devotion attributions resulting from the use/request of more enclosing policies.

We now explain the mechanism through which the supervisor's attributions translate into career consequences for employees, depending on organizational norms.

CAREER CONSEQUENCES OF WORK DEVOTION ATTRIBUTIONS

In this section we argue that a supervisor's work devotion attributions concerning an employee influence the career consequences for that employee. We define career consequences as a continuum ranging from more positive to more negative observable work outcomes. On the positive side of the continuum, career consequences include premiums (i.e., gains such as salary or wage increases, bonuses, promotions, high-visibility assignments) as well as protection against penalties (e.g., staying employed during a recession or downsizing; Leslie et al., 2012; Ng et al., 2005). On the negative side, career consequences consist of penalties (i.e., losses such as income reduction, downgrading, or job loss) as well as the denial of premiums that would otherwise have been granted (e.g., being passed over for a promotion; Williams et al., 2013).

Career Consequences

Supervisors' work devotion attributions may impact career consequences for employees because supervisors have significant influence over their subordinates' career prospects (Judge & Ferris, 1993), even though additional factors (e.g., labor market, job level, tenure) beyond supervisors' control can also contribute to shape employees' career premiums and penalties. Supervisors may grant direct career premiums, such as pay raises and promotions, as well as indirect rewards, such as extra training or high-profile assignments that can eventually lead to further career premiums or protection against future career losses (Allen & Russell, 1999; Shore, Bommer, & Shore 2008). Likewise, they may penalize their employees' careers, or withhold rewards, in both the short and the long term.

We ground our reasoning that supervisors' work devotion attributions influence career consequences for their employees in the robust observation that cognitive, affective, social, and situational factors (e.g., Judge & Ferris, 1993; Mitchell, 2017), as well as bias (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Perrigino et al., 2018), are concomitantly at play in supervisors' subjective determination of career consequences for their subordinates. In particular, supervisors' perceptions of their subordinates' commitment are related to employees' career success, above and beyond employees' job performance (Leslie et al., 2012). More generally, leader-member exchange relationship quality positively predicts supervisors' evaluation of their subordinates, even after controlling for objective measures of performance (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016).

We build on this literature and particularly on the work of Feldman (1981), who holds that categorizing employees as more or less devoted to work biases their supervisors' subsequent search for information about the employees and their job performance. Therefore, we argue that supervisors who perceive that employees are devoted to work tend to reciprocate and reward the employees with career premiums above and beyond the career advancement that would have resulted solely from the employees' job performance in a given organizational context (Leslie et al., 2012; Shore et al., 2008). When the organizational context does not allow for career premiums, such rewards may translate into shielding devoted employees from losses that they would otherwise have experienced (e.g., maintaining their pay level while other employees take pay cuts, or keeping them on the payroll while letting go of others). In sum, higher work devotion attributions lead to positive career consequences for employees, because supervisors who perceive that the employees are devoted to work tend to extend greater career premiums to those employees when possible and to buffer them from career losses otherwise.

In contrast, lower work devotion attributions lead to negative career consequences for employees, because supervisors' perceptions that employees lack devotion may be associated with the withholding of career premiums (i.e., denial of career benefits that otherwise could have been attained) or with greater career penalties than otherwise would have been inflicted (Williams et al., 2013). Such penalties have been viewed as extrinsic punishments of employees (Perrigino et al., 2018). In light of these analyses, we propose the following (see P5 in Figure 1).

Proposition 5: Supervisors' work devotion attributions concerning employees

who use or request more enabling or enclosing work-life policies influence the employees' career consequences such that higher attributions will lead to more positive career consequences (i.e., greater premiums and/or lesser penalties) and lower attributions will lead to more negative career consequences (i.e., lesser premiums and/or greater penalties).

Organizational Norms As a Second-Stage Moderator

We discussed the role played by organizational norms earlier in our model. We argue that these norms also moderate the relationship between work devotion attributions that supervisors make about employees who use work-life policies and career consequences for these employees. Specifically, we believe that supervisors who are socialized into norms (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) that support life outside of work and that explicitly discourage managers from penalizing employees who are committed to work *and* other life roles (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999) may view devoting oneself to several life roles as socially acceptable, and the work devotion schema may be less salient to them. Therefore, compared to supervisors socialized into less supportive norms, they may be less likely to determine career consequences (positive and negative) as a result of their work devotion attributions, since work devotion is less emphasized in their organization.

Supervisors who are socialized into norms less supportive of life outside of work, in contrast, see their peers rewarding employees who conform to the work devotion schema and punishing those who do not (Blair-Loy, 2003; Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013); as a result, they may be more likely to mimic this pattern, either actively, in order to conform to organizational norms, or passively, owing to their internalization of the work devotion schema conveyed in organizational norms (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). Based on the above reasoning, we argue that supervisors socialized in more supportive organizational norms will be less likely than supervisors in less supportive environments to determine career consequences for employees as a function of their work devotion attributions (see P6 in Figure 1).

Proposition 6: The supportiveness of organizational norms for life outside of work moderates the relationship between work devotion attributions made by supervisors concerning employees who use work-life policies and career consequences for the employees such that more supportive organizational norms may buffer the employees from the negative career consequences resulting from lower work devotion attributions and may attenuate the positive career consequences resulting from higher work devotion attributions.

DISCUSSION

In this article we have theorized about the reasons why the career consequences associated with using work-life policies vary greatly. Building on the organizational control literature (Baron et al., 1988; Clark & Wilson, 1961; Flamholtz et al., 1985; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990), we have argued that the issue of organizational control over achievement of the organization's goals and objectives is central to understanding the career consequences of work-life policy use. Because the enabling versus enclosing nature of the work-life policies employees use sends a signal pertaining to the employees' work devotion (Spence, 1973), employees' use of more enabling work-life policies (e.g., leave, telework) leads supervisors to attribute lower work devotion to the employees (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). In contrast, employees' use of more enclosing work-life policies (e.g., on-site facilities and services) leads supervisors to assess the employees as more work devoted. These work devotion attributions, in turn, translate into career consequences for employees above and beyond what they would have otherwise experienced.

Furthermore, we have identified the individual and organizational factors that intervene as this process unfolds. Specifically, different supervisors may make different work devotion attributions about different employees' use of the same work-life policy, depending on the employees' preexisting work ethic, the supervisors' own expectations of the employees, and the supportiveness for life outside of work of the organizational norms in which they are embedded. In addition, compared to supervisors in

more supportive environments, supervisors in less family-supportive organizations may place more importance on their work devotion attributions concerning employees' use of work-life policies when they make career decisions for these employees.

Our article makes two important theoretical contributions to the work-life literature. First, conceptualizing work-life policies as control mechanisms for organizations to reach their goals provides a strong theoretical basis to differentiate work-life policies and their outcomes. Although work-life policies are quite heterogeneous (Den Dulk, Groeneveld, Ollier-Malaterre, & Valcour, 2013), very little theoretical work so far has attempted to conceptually debundle such policies, since most typologies offer pragmatic rather than theoretical distinctions (e.g., Glass & Riley, 1998). One notable exception is Rau and Hyland's (2002) work, which places the policies along a continuum from integration (i.e., low contrast between two roles) to segmentation (i.e., high contrast between two roles; Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1995). Although this categorization sheds light on individual preferences for the use of various work-life policies, we believe that the effect of employee segmentation and integration behaviors on work devotion attributions by supervisors is unclear. On the one hand, segmentors may be seen as more devoted to work because they may handle their role responsibilities better (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015) and refrain from referring to other roles while at work (Uhlmann et al., 2013). On the other hand, integrators may be seen as more work devoted because they respond to work demands even outside standard work hours (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008) and may be able to craft richer relationships with their colleagues (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015).

Our model, however, offers a clear theoretical explanation for how the enabling versus enclosing ways work-life policies exert control on employees fosters different work devotion attributions on the part of supervisors and, consequently, different career consequences for their users. In addition, our model can be applied to other behaviors related to the work devotion schema (e.g., time norms, working while on vacation), thus offering a number of interesting avenues for future research in the field.

Second, we provide clarity on the disputed issue of whether employees' use of work-life policies has positive or negative career consequences (see Leslie et al., 2012) by identifying the mechanisms leading to career consequences and by parsing out the roles played by policies, supervisors, employees, and organizational norms. We model career consequences associated with the use of work-life policies as a multilevel work devotion signaling process involving the nature of the used or requested work-life policy, employees' preexisting work ethic, supervisors' expectations of their employees, organizational norms, and supervisors' attributions. We thus point out the central role played by signals (Connelly et al., 2011; Ross, 1977; Spence, 1973) and attributional judgments (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967) and, hence, by the broader cultural schemas that surround these signals and judgments, such as gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002), work and family devotion schemas (Blair-Loy, 2003; Reid, 2015; Williams et al., 2013), and organizational work-life cultures (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999).

Our focus on work devotion attributions extends Leslie et al.'s work (2012) by pointing out that the cultural schemas underlying supervisors' attributions about employees' work devotion—that is, the work devotion schema (Blair-Loy, 2003; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Williams et al., 2013)—are at the root of career consequences for users of work-life policies. We also shed light on career consequences by construing positive career consequences as comprising both career premiums and protection against penalties, and negative career consequences as comprising both career penalties and withholding of career premiums that would have been attained otherwise. Taken together, we believe that our model provides a novel, comprehensive, and actionable explanation of career consequences associated with the use of work-life policies.

In addition, we believe that our model may, by extension, shed light on both employees' decision processes regarding whether to use work-life policies and the policies' resulting use (Eaton, 2003), as well as on family-supportive supervisory behaviors (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011) and the stigmatization of work-life policy users (Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013). For instance, our model suggests that policies on the enabling side of the continuum, for which supervisors tend to make lower

work devotion attributions, are likely to have lower utilization (Eaton, 2003) and elicit greater stigmatization (Williams et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013) and backlash (Perrigino et al., 2018) compared to policies on the enclosing side of the continuum. In addition, our model implies that when employees believe that their preexisting work ethic (Furnham, 1990) will shield them from low work devotion attributions (e.g., because they have been praised by their supervisor), they may be more inclined to use enabling work-life policies compared to employees who assess their work ethic credit as lower.

Last, our theorizing of the factors that influence supervisors' expectations of employees may shed light on the reasons why some supervisors enact more supportive behaviors than others (Hammer et al., 2011). Likewise, our model suggests that the same supervisor may behave in a more supportive way toward employees who convey a stronger work ethic than toward employees who convey a weaker work ethic.

Agenda for Future Research

Our model opens up important new avenues of research. First, future research should further investigate the placement of the whole range of work-life policies on the enabling versus enclosing continuum. We suggest this could be done by conducting benchmark studies in which HR managers, supervisors, and employees rate work-life policies as more enabling versus more enclosing based on how much a policy gives employees latitude over when, where, and how much they work (i.e., enabling) or contributes to maximizing their availability for work and time spent on work premises (i.e., enclosing). Furthermore, future research may seek to investigate the impact of the duration of the use/request of work-life policies, since it is possible that long-term use of a policy will be more noticed by a supervisor—and therefore more associated with work devotion attributions—than will episodic use. Relatedly, the signal sent by requests that are not granted by the supervisor, while being consequential, may not last as long as the signal sent by actual use.

Another interesting question pertains to the use of multiple work-life policies. What would be the additive effect of requesting/using multiple policies, especially when some policies are enabling and others are enclosing? Based on our theorization, we can speculate that the prior use of policies has the potential to affect the way an employee's work ethic is perceived. Hence, it is possible that the initial use of enabling policies (prior to more enclosing ones) may have a long-lasting negative influence on a supervisor's work devotion attributions, even when more enclosing policies are used later on. Longitudinal studies monitoring the nature and number of policies used by an employee over time could provide insight into this matter.

Second, we call for future research on the factors that render salient an employee's work ethic prior to the use of a work-life policy, as well as research on the factors that influence a supervisor's expectations of the employee. For instance, age and race are important social identity markers (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) that may also be taken as proxies for work ethic. Importantly, the intersection of an employee's gender and social class should be examined as well. For instance, specific stereotypes pertain to how low-wage mothers experience work-family conflict, since such mothers are often viewed as irresponsible for having children they cannot adequately care for (Dodson, 2013; Williams et al., 2013). Employees' impression management strategies (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) may also color supervisors' perceptions of their work ethic. For instance, female professionals and managers tend to display fewer family pictures on their office desks than do female entry-level employees and male professionals and managers (Hochschild, 1997). This suggests that the former may be underplaying their caretaker identity so as to proactively project a higher work ethic; moreover, it also suggests that employees' agency in crafting the work devotion attributions made by their supervisors is a worthwhile topic for investigation.

Regarding supervisors, their expectations of a given employee could be influenced by other factors, such as gender, age, social class, and race homophily with the employee (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987). It is also possible that supervisors hold different expectations for jobs they deem to be conducive to a specific work-life policy (e.g., part-time or reduced-load work arrangements may be easier in a non-client-facing or single contributor job) than for jobs they view as nonconducive (Kossek et al., 2016). Accounting for supervisors' perception of job demands would explain Glass's finding (2004) that reduced hours, flexible hours, and telework

hindered working mothers' wage growth significantly more when they held managerial and professional positions than when they held lower positions.

Third, attributions made by those other than the direct supervisor (e.g., coworkers, people higher up in the hierarchy) may shape career consequences as well. In particular, the use of policies that put more strain on coworkers (e.g., poorly managed compressed workweeks in which coworkers are expected to take up the remainder of the work) may backfire, leading coworkers to express resentment at the less work-devoted policy user (Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007; Rothausen, Clarke, Gonzalez, & O'Dell, 1998), and this, in turn, may influence the supervisor's own attributions. In addition, work devotion attributions made by higher-level supervisors may directly impact employees' career consequences when higher-level supervisors participate in career decisions. It would be fruitful to theorize about the impact of these other attributions and about their combined effects.

Fourth, enabling and enclosing work-life policies may impact career outcomes through mechanisms other than work devotion attributions—particularly through job performance. Notably, this could be the case for supervisors socialized into family-supportive norms where work devotion attributions determine career consequences to a lesser extent than in less family-supportive organizations. Telework, for instance, may increase an employee's productivity and therefore their job performance; however, less face time may result in a loss of important information and therefore reduced performance (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). These possibilities call for research on the combined effect of the impact of using a policy on job performance and on supervisors' work devotion attributions.

Last, we call for research examining the impact of cultural variations on the processes we outline in the model. Cultural schemas related to work and life rules are deeply embedded in specific national cultures (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017; Powell, Francesco, & Ling, 2009). Therefore, it is important to understand to what extent the work devotion schema is pervasive outside the United States. This schema originated in Protestant communities in Europe and is typical of American ways of working (Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks, 2014). However, a growing stream of research has focused on investigating the Islamic work ethic (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008), and a thirty-nine–country study showed that respondents reported strong intrinsic work values in countries where Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam play an important role, whether or not the respondents themselves were religious (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003).

Conclusion

There is evidence that the use of work-life policies is beneficial for employees who use them, consistent with the "happy worker story" (Weeden, 2005: 478). However, there is also evidence that those who use such policies may be penalized in the form of lower wages, fewer promotions, and reduced career mobility, which suggests the presence of a flexibility stigma (Williams et al., 2013). One reason for this seeming contradiction is that not all work-life policies are equivalent. In this article we have theorized about the different nature of work-life policies that may exert control over employees in more enabling versus enclosing ways. Furthermore, we have proposed a detailed explanation of the signaling and attributional mechanisms at play in supervisors' interpretation of the used work-life policies, which result in positive and negative career consequences for employees. We hope that the proposed model guides future work-life research and practice in a dual-agenda perspective—to support employees as they manage their work-life interface, as well as to enhance organizational performance.

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