

**FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS:  
ATTRACTION TO FLEXTIME, FLEXPLACE, OR BOTH?**

A Thesis

by

REBECCA JEAN THOMPSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

December 2011

Major Subject: Psychology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Stephanie C. Payne
Committee Members,	Winfred Arthur, Jr.
	Aaron Taylor
	Murray Barrick
Head of Department,	Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

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## ABSTRACT

Flexible Work Arrangements:

Attraction to Flextime, Flexplace, or Both? (December 2011)

Rebecca Jean Thompson, B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Committee: Dr. Stephanie C. Payne

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are widely implemented in organizations today. Yet very little information exists about why individuals are attracted to organizations that offer FWAs. The purpose of the current study was to tease apart the influence of the dimensions of FWAs: flextime and flexplace (both structural and perceived), as well as the combination of the two on organizational attraction and anticipated organizational support. Individual difference variables that have the potential to impact individuals' attraction to organizations that offer FWAs were also examined as moderating variables. The mediating effect of anticipated organizational support was also examined. Upper level undergraduate students ( $N = 190$ ) participated in a 3x3 within-subjects experiment in which they rated nine hypothetical organizations that varied in flextime and flexplace. Results from multilevel analysis indicated that significant variance in organizational attraction as well as anticipated organizational support is attributable to the type of work arrangement offered (both flexibility in time and place), with flextime having a stronger effect than flexplace. Contrary to expectation, effects were independent; there was not a significant interaction between

flextime and flexplace. The relationship between (both structural and perceived) flexplace and organizational attraction was stronger for individuals who prefer to integrate their work and nonwork roles. Additionally, the relationship between (both structural and perceived) flextime and organizational attraction was stronger for individuals who reported a stronger need for medical treatment. Finally, the relationship between perceived flextime and organizational attraction as well as the relationship between perceived flexplace and organizational attraction were stronger for those who reported more role demands. Contrary to expectation, sociability did not moderate the flexplace-organizational attraction/anticipated organizational support relationships. Limitations and future directions for research on FWAs are discussed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW .....	1
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) .....	2
Flextime .....	3
Flexplace .....	6
Perceived Flexibility .....	8
FWA and Organizational Attraction .....	10
Autonomy .....	10
Expectancy Theory .....	12
FWA Dimensions .....	14
Flextime .....	14
Flexplace .....	14
Anticipated Organizational Support .....	18
Who is most attracted to organizations that offer FWAs? .....	20
Attraction Selection Attrition .....	21
Individual Differences and FWAs .....	23
Role Demands .....	23
Sociability .....	24
Other Predictors of Preferences for FWAs .....	25
Need for Medical Treatment .....	25
Preference for Integration .....	27
II METHOD .....	30
Participants, Design, and Procedure .....	30
Measures .....	31
Pilot .....	31
Demographic Variables .....	31
Manipulation Check Items .....	31
Role Demands .....	33

	Page
Need for Medical Treatment .....	33
Sociability.....	34
Preference for Integration.....	34
Organizational Attraction.....	34
Perceived Flexibility .....	35
Anticipated Organizational Support.....	35
Control Variables .....	35
Analyses .....	36
III RESULTS.....	38
IV DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	47
Flextime, Flexplace, or Both? .....	47
Individual Difference Characteristics.....	50
Theoretical and Applied Implications .....	52
Limitations and Directions for Future Research .....	54
REFERENCES.....	57
APPENDIX A .....	67
APPENDIX B .....	73
APPENDIX C .....	74
APPENDIX D .....	81
VITA .....	85

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1 Study Design and Experimental Conditions .....	5
Figure 2 The Role of Structural and Perceived Flexibility on Anticipated Support and Organizational Attraction. ....	11
Figure 3 Interaction between Need for Medical Treatment and Flextime on Organizational Attraction .....	45
Figure 4 Interaction between Preference for Integration and Flexplace on Organizational Attraction .....	46
Figure 5 Interaction between Role Demands and Perceived Flexibility in Time on Organizational Attraction.....	69
Figure 6 Interaction between Role Demands and Perceived Flexibility in Place on Organizational Attraction .....	70
Figure 7 Interaction between Need for Medical Treatment and Perceived Flexibility in Time on Organizational Attraction.....	71
Figure 8 Interaction between Preference for Integration and Perceived Flexibility in Place on Organizational Attraction .....	72



**LIST OF TABLES**

	Page
Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables. ....	41
Table 2 Means of Organizational Attraction by Condition. ....	42
Table 3 Means of Anticipated Organizational Support by Condition. ....	42

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Today more organizations are recognizing that employees have lives outside of work and that employees seek opportunities to balance work and nonwork roles (Mantell, 2011; World at Work, 2009). One way organizations acknowledge employees' multiple roles is to give employees more flexibility as to when and where they work. Specifically, organizations offer flexible work arrangements (FWAs) as a part of their benefit packages, so employees have more opportunities to fulfill needs that arise for these various life roles. Whereas it is not always feasible to offer the same types of FWAs to all employees in various jobs (particularly those whose jobs are constraining in time, place, or both), some researchers argue that the consideration of flexibility should not be limited by the job and that organizations should attempt to offer some form of flexibility to all employees (Williams & Huang, 2011).

When applicants are deciding which organizations to apply to, one of the things they are likely to consider is the extent to which organizations offer policies designed to facilitate balancing work and nonwork roles. Research has shown that organizations that offer FWAs are more attractive to applicants than organizations that do not offer FWAs (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Rau & Hyland, 2002; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). Theoretically, this attraction may be enhanced for people with certain characteristics;

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This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

however this has not been empirically tested. As a result, organizations may not be marketing these benefits to the people who would be most interested in them and/or benefit from them. This study responds to calls for a greater understanding of who needs, wants, and uses FWAs in organizations and *why*, as well as *how*, the use of these benefits affects organizational outcomes (Frone, 2003; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Shockley & Allen, 2010).

FWAs alter the time or place in which work may be conducted. Thus, FWAs vary on two dimensions: (flex)time and (flex)place. However, it is not clear which of these two dimensions or the combination of the two is perceived as more attractive and supportive. This study begins to address this gap in the research literature.

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to identify the extent to which flextime, flexplace, and the combination of the two influence applicant attraction to the organization and anticipated organizational support, and (2) determine the extent to which these relationships are enhanced by the following individual difference characteristics: role demands, sociability, need for medical treatment, and preference for integration between work and nonwork roles.

### **Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)**

FWAs are “employer provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside of the standard workday” (Lambert, Marler, & Gueutal, 2008, p. 107). Two of the most widely implemented and therefore studied FWAs are flextime and flexplace (SHRM Foundation, 2010). Galinsky, Bond, and Hill (2004) examined data from the 1992 and 2002 National Study of the Changing

Workforce surveys and determined that wage and salaried employees with access to traditional flextime had increased from 29 to 43 percent. They also noted that employees with access to daily flextime, in which employees are permitted to change their schedules on a daily basis, increased from 18 to 23 percent. Additionally, Galinsky et al. (2004) reported that 73% of the wage and salaried employees who have flextime available use it. With regard to flexplace, Galinsky et al. (2004) found that 82% of the employees surveyed worked mainly at the employer's fixed location, while only 2% worked mainly from home. However, the authors noted that "among employees who do not work any regularly scheduled hours at home (89% of wage and salaried workers), 43 percent would like to be able to do so" (p. 20). They also noted that 79% of employees surveyed indicated a desire to have more flexible work options. They concluded that flexibility is no longer just a perk to be offered but a competitive tool that organizations can use to meet their objectives.

### **Flextime**

The U. S. Department of Personnel Management defines flextime or flexible hours as:

The times during the workday, workweek, or pay period within the tour of duty during which an employee covered by a flexible work schedule may choose to vary his or her times of arrival to and departure from the work site consistent with the duties and requirements of the position. (para. 2)

A traditionally defined flextime schedule includes "core time" (e.g., 9 am – 3 pm) that corresponds to certain hours that employees are required to conduct work at the

main work site, as well as a “flexible time” which corresponds to the hours when employees can choose to work at the main work site (Cohen & Gadon, 1978, p. 34). Although core times tend to be similar across organizations, the specific times an employee is required to be at the main work site are decided based on the needs and expectations of the organization (Cohen & Gadon, 1978).

Theoretically, flextime allows employees to choose the times they start and end their work day around a core time; however some organizations require employees to choose set starting and ending times that are the same each day (Galinsky et al., 2004). Thus, employees may choose their times (based on the core work hours) independent of other employees and must arrive and depart each day at their specified times. Other arrangements permit employees to choose when they arrive and leave on a daily basis (Galinsky et al., 2004). The latter type of flextime permits even more flexibility.

Although the term “flextime” is frequently used to refer to a schedule in which employees have core time, consistent with Shockley and Allen (2007), I use the term flextime to refer to a *continuum of discretion over when employees conduct their work*. Correspondingly, for the present study, I operationalize flextime as a trichotomous variable, as depicted in Figure 1. The extremes of the flextime continuum are no discretion (i.e., set hours every work day) and complete or full discretion (work can be conducted at any hour of any day). Thus, this FWA dimension refers to the amount of discretion employees have over when they start and stop work time.

I use the phrase “flextime schedule” to refer to a schedule with core time. I define core time as *certain hours that employees are required to conduct work*. This

limits the definition to only work time and does not place any restrictions on workplace and prevents confounding between flextime and flexplace. Within the flextime continuum, a flextime schedule with core time would be considered a moderate amount of flextime as depicted in Figure 1.

		Flextime				
		No Discretion Over When Work is Conducted	Some Discretion Over When Work is Conducted	Complete Discretion Over When Work is Conducted		
Flexplace	Complete Discretion Over Where Work is Conducted	Telework from 8-5	Telework with Flextime Schedule	Operational telework	Most attractive	
	Some Discretion Over Where Work is Conducted (e.g., 3 days a week)	Some Telework from 8-5	Some Telework with Flextime Schedule	Some telework (any hours)	Moderately attractive	
	No Discretion Over Where Work is Conducted	Traditional Work Arrangement	Traditional Flextime Schedule (Core Time 10-3)	Work at main site, no set time	Least attractive	

*Figure 1*  
Study design and experimental conditions. Flexplace denotes amount of discretion over work outside of the main worksite.

## **Flexplace**

Flexplace is another dimension on which FWAs can vary. I define flexplace as a *continuum of discretion concerning how frequently employees conduct their work away from the main work site*. Employees have discretion over the amount of time they spend away from the main worksite. The extremes of the flexplace continuum are (1) no discretion over working away from the main work site and (2) full discretion over how much they work away from the main worksite. Correspondingly and similar to the operationalization of flextime, for the present study, I operationalize flexplace as a trichotomous variable, as depicted in Figure 1. I operationalize partial-flexplace as working away from the main work site two days a week which is close to half of the work week.

Flexplace is frequently implemented as telework or telecommuting (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Gajendran and Harrison (2007) define telecommuting as “an alternative work arrangement in which employees perform tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace, for at least some portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to interact with others inside and outside the organization” (p. 1525). Telework is often perceived as a valuable alternative to traditional work arrangements for employees, because it reduces the amount of time employees spend commuting to work.

Garrett and Danziger (2007) posit that there are four dimensions to the definition of telework (flexplace) that have been studied in the literature. First, work takes place in a location other than the organization’s central office. Second, the work is facilitated

through technology. Third, work time is distributed across different locations. This recognizes that some individuals work away from the office some of the time but may work at the central office as well. Thus, individuals perform at least some portion (if not the majority) of their work away from the central office. Fourth, there is a relationship between the employer and the employee. This differentiates teleworkers from self-employed home-based workers (Garrett & Danziger, 2007).

While it is theoretically beneficial for all employees to have flexibility in where they are permitted to work, it is important to acknowledge that not all jobs permit flexplace or telework. Many tasks cannot be conducted away from the main job site or in a time other than that specified by the organization. Some jobs require being physically present, often at a specific time, to use specialized equipment or to serve clients at the workplace. Additional job confines may include reliance on sensitive or secure materials that have to be accessed and reviewed in a secure location, thus not permitting employees the ability to take their work outside of the office. However, flexplace is an option that many employees are interested in (Galinsky et al., 2004), and many employers could potentially implement some form of this arrangement depending on the nature of the work in their organization. In a 2011 survey, approximately, one-half of all employers who responded to the survey and did not offer these types of arrangements indicated jobs were not conducive to FWAs as the primary reason for not offering these arrangements (WorldatWork, 2011). Thus, many organizations not currently utilizing FWAs could offer these programs to some if not all of their employees, but are not currently doing so for other reasons (e.g., resistance from management).



Theoretically, flexplace is a continuous variable that is independent of flextime (as depicted in Figure 1; Shockley & Allen, 2007). However, teleworkers are often given flexibility over *when* they work, thus they are permitted to alter both the time and place in which they conduct their work. As a result, it is unclear if many of the outcomes including organizational attraction associated with telework are a function of flextime, flexplace, or both. In this study, I avoid this pitfall by manipulating flextime and flexplace independently, so as to examine the perceived attractiveness and supportiveness of flextime, flexplace, and the combination of the two in a recruitment context.

### **Perceived Flexibility**

FWAs modify structural aspects of the job, and in the current study, they are manipulated in descriptions of hypothetical organizations. Whereas the structural aspects of such policies are important to assess, I argue that it is even more important to assess the perceptions of associated psychological states (e.g., flexibility) which are likely mediating mechanisms that explain relationships between structural variables and various outcomes (Gajendran & Harrison, 2002). Theoretically, structural aspects of the environment should correspond to perceptual evaluations of the environment. However, perceptions can be idiosyncratic and relative to personal standards; thus they do not always align with structural aspects. Research examining other situational characteristics and experimental conditions has demonstrated the need to make the structural versus perceptual distinction (e.g., task complexity, Campbell, 1988; interdependence, Wageman, 2001). Correspondingly, in the current study, I also measure perceived

flexibility in time and place and expect the structural or manipulated variables to positively relate to perceptions of these same constructs.

*Hypothesis 1: Flextime will be positively related to perceived flexibility concerning when one is expected to work.*

*Hypothesis 2: Flexplace will be positively related to perceived flexibility concerning where one is expected to work.*

It could be argued that the outcomes associated with flextime and flexplace are contingent on perceptions of flexibility. For example, Woodward (2000) identified three components to successful implementations of FWAs. He argued employees must *perceive* the arrangements as truly flexible (rather than organizationally mandated) in order for FWAs to have the desired impact, both for current employees and for potential applicants. As Kelly and Moen (2007) note, there are conceptual differences between perceived flexibility, or “the felt ability to alter one’s work hours and/or work location in response to one’s personal life as well as one’s assessment of work demands,” and actual flexibility (p. 493). Thus perceptual variables convey psychological states and are therefore likely to explain why structural variables relate to various outcomes. In other words, perceptions are likely to serve as explanatory mechanisms for relationships between manipulated (structural) variables and theoretically relevant outcomes.

Given the strong association expected between structure and perception, all hypotheses concerning flextime and flexplace will be tested with both manipulated (structural) flextime and flexplace variables, as well as perceived flexibility with regard

to time and perceived flexibility with regard to place (see Appendix A for results for the perceptual variables).

### **FWA and Organizational Attraction**

The first objective of the current study is to identify the extent to which flextime and flexplace influence applicant attraction to organizations. I use need for autonomy, expectancy theory, and anticipated organizational support to explain why both flextime and flexplace are desirable states for employees to pursue.

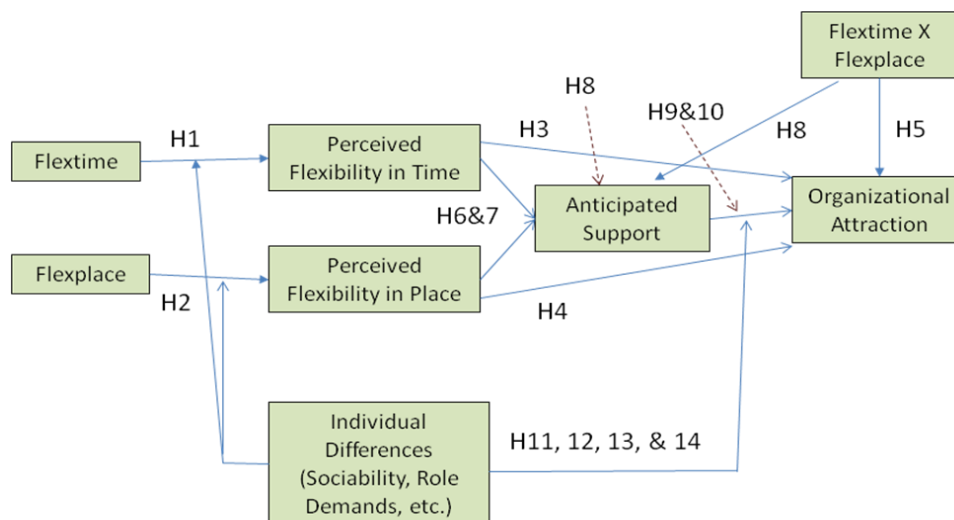
#### **Autonomy**

In theory, FWAs are desirable because they increase the extent to which employees have the ability to alter the time and/or place in which they conduct their work. Having such flexibility enhances perceptions of self-control or autonomy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Nieminen, Nicklin, McClure, & Chakrabarti, 2010) which are associated with many positive outcomes including lower stress (Halpern, 2005) and better health (Butler, Grzywacz, Ettner, & Liu, 2009). Recognizing the value of FWAs requires applicants to potentially associate flexibility with perceptions of control and contemplate strategies on how they can utilize this control to achieve outcomes of interest to them (e.g., more work-life balance).

Consistent with Karasek's (1979) job demands-control model, individuals with little control over extremely demanding jobs (i.e., work load) experience negative outcomes such as mental strain, dissatisfaction, and other outcomes (Ganster & Perrewé, 2010). FWAs have been described as a mechanism by which individuals can control some aspects of their work environment that would facilitate positive outcomes such as

job satisfaction (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Correspondingly, individuals should be more attracted to organizations they perceive as more flexible or offering more control.

Organizational recruitment is about marketing an organization to prospective applicants, appealing to the applicants (often assessed as attraction to the organization), and convincing qualified applicants to apply for a job at the organization. In recruitment research studies, applicant ratings of organizational attraction and job pursuit intentions are the primary dependent variables (Chapman et al., 2005). Correspondingly, in this study, I measure organizational attraction. Theoretically, I expect FWAs to foster perceptions of flexibility which in turn relate to organizational attraction (Figure 2).



*Figure 2*

The role of structural and perceived flexibility on anticipated support and organizational attraction.

## **Expectancy Theory**

Why individuals are attracted to an organization that offers FWAs and therefore apply to or accept a job offer can also be explained by Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory (Rynes, 1991). Expectancy theory posits that motivation can be calculated based on an algebraic formula using three main components: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy. While these concepts are traditionally used in the Industrial and Organizational (I/O) psychology literature to explain motivation to perform, they can also be used to explain applicant motivation to apply and accept job vacancies (cf. Rynes, 1991).

Expectancies refer to individuals' subjective beliefs about the likelihood that desired outcomes will follow from their actions. In a recruitment context, this is the likelihood that if individuals apply (and get the job), they will have access to FWAs. Other expectancies would be the likelihood that having access to FWAs leads to the ability to take advantage of FWAs which leads to greater perceived flexibility. Instrumentality is the degree to which one outcome leads to another. In a recruitment context, this is the likelihood applicants will experience favorable outcomes such as greater flexibility and work-life balance from using FWAs. Valence refers to an individual's feelings toward specific outcomes (e.g., benefits, etc.) such that a positively valent outcome is one that an individual desires (e.g., FWA) and a negatively valent outcome is one that an individual would like to avoid (e.g., a traditional, less-flexible work arrangement, in either time or place). In a recruitment context, valence is the desirability of specific vacancy characteristics like flextime and flexplace.

Rynes (1991) noted that applicants can perceive the likelihood of successful job pursuit (expectancies of offers), as well as the instrumentalities (organizational benefits and their associated outcomes) for the available alternatives. Organizations may be able to influence these uncertainties through the manipulation of instrumentalities associated with the job and the organization as a whole. Thus, organizations can actively attempt to influence how attractive they appear to applicants and therefore increase the likelihood that applicants will accept offers once they are made. One way to do this would be to offer benefits that applicants clearly value. Barber and Roehling (1993) found that compared to information adequacy and probability of hire, vacancy characteristics received the most attention and appeared to play the largest role in applicants' decisions to interview. Benefits are a key factor that applicants attend to when deciding to interview (Barber & Roehling, 1993). Based on a verbal protocol analysis, Barber and Roehling found that participants contemplating whether or not to interview at fictitious organizations paid a substantial amount of attention to benefits packages. The package that offered “competitive benefits, including three full weeks of vacation for new hires” received the most attention (p. 853) which they suggest supports Rynes’ (1991) argument that individuals are likely to consider unusual benefits when considering job decisions. Further, Williams and Dreher (1992) found that flexibility in benefit choice, or the extent to which employees can tailor benefits to their needs, was negatively related to the amount of time it took an organization to fill open positions.

To summarize, organizational attraction research has shown that applicants attend to and make decisions based on the benefits that are offered by organizations.

Whereas research studies indicate that the benefits an organization offers (such as healthcare options, vacation time, and FWAs) are likely to influence applicants' decisions, the extent to which flextime, flexplace, and the combination of the two influence employee attraction has not been empirically determined. Further, because FWAs vary on two independent dimensions (flextime and flexplace), a targeted study comparing applicants' preferences for each arrangement relative to the others would be theoretically and practically beneficial to organizations.

### **FWA Dimensions**

The degree to which a benefit varies along the FWA dimensions (flextime and flexplace) can also impact how flexible an individual perceives a benefit. I now discuss how each of these dimensions can lead to perceptions of flexibility and therefore other outcomes.

***Flextime.*** When employees are given discretion over when they work, they have more autonomy over when they can take care of nonwork activities (e.g., school appointments, doctor's appointments) as well. Correspondingly, flextime is believed to enable employees to better accommodate their family-related needs and thus reduce work-family conflict (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Shockley & Allen, 2007); and empirical research supports reduced work-family conflict (Dunham, Pierce, & Castañeda, 1987; Guerts, Beckers, Taris, Kompier, & Smulders, 2009). Thus, I expect participants to report that organizations that offer more flextime are more attractive than organizations that offer less flextime.

*Hypothesis 3: Participants will report stronger attraction to organizations that offer more flextime than to organizations that offer less flextime.*

**Flexplace.** When employees have discretion over how frequently they work away from the worksite, they can reduce the amount of time they spend commuting which has been proposed to lead to lower gas usage and greenhouse emissions (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Lister & Harnish, 2011). They also have more discretion over what types of nonwork tasks they can complete simultaneously while accomplishing work tasks (e.g., being present for children when they arrive home from school, being available for appointments when repair people visit one's home; Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

In a study of teleworkers and nonteleworkers, Thompson, Cook, Payne, and Henning (2011) recently content coded answers to the survey question "Why do you telework?" Responses included both flextime- and flexplace-related reasons. Flexplace-related reasons included personal needs (e.g., the need to commute to a doctor's appointment that was closer to home than the main worksite), perceived greater productivity at home (e.g., fewer distractions from coworkers or additional assignments from supervisors), and the opportunity to wear preferred attire (i.e., wear more comfortable clothes). Thus, there appear to be a wide variety of reasons why flexplace is perceived to be attractive.

What is less clear is how important it is for employees to work *at* the main work site. Some researchers have proposed that "face time" or visibility at an organization's central location is important for individual career success (i.e., promotions; Gajendran &



Harrison, 2007; O'Mahoney & Barley, 1999). Working at the main work site gives employees the opportunity to demonstrate performance to others (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; McCloskey & Igarria, 2003). Therefore face time may actually be beneficial for employees in the long term. To the extent that individuals perceive this benefit or enjoy interacting with others face-to-face, they may actually prefer to work at the main worksite at least some of the time. That said, flexplace reflects a continuum of discretion with the highest level of flexplace consisting of complete control over how much time employees work at the main work site. Given all the benefits associated with control and flexibility, I hypothesize more discretion over where work is conducted will be most attractive.

*Hypothesis 4: Participants will report stronger attraction to organizations that offer flexplace than organizations that offer a traditional work schedule.*

As Karasek (1979) explains, job strain can often be alleviated by allowing employee's the opportunity to have decision latitude over their jobs without sacrificing productivity. Thus, individuals have better outcomes when they are given the ability to choose aspects of their task structure. When employees are given discretion over *both*, when (flextime) and where (flexplace) they work, they should perceive the highest level of flexibility and control. Thus, together the combination of flextime and flexplace gives employees the most flexibility and therefore is expected to yield the highest level of attraction and corresponding benefits. As previously mentioned, teleworkers are often given discretion over when they work in addition to discretion over where they work. Whereas these circumstances confound flexplace and flextime, they may also

demonstrate the potential joint effects that result when employees have both flextime and flexplace. Theoretically, I conceptualize flextime as the moderator as it enhances the perceived flexibility and corresponding benefits associated with flexplace. By having the ability to work at different times at home, employees can quickly switch between work and nonwork roles at times that are most convenient for each. For example, an employee can participate in a conference call with clients in another time zone early in the morning and then make breakfast for his/her children before sending them off to school. That is, flexplace is even more attractive when offered with flextime.

Consistent with my proposition, telework has been associated with various positive outcomes (Fonner & Roloff, 2007; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). I expect the combination of a high level of flextime and a high level of flexplace to yield the highest level of organizational attraction. This type of arrangement allows individuals the ability to control both where they work and when, thus offering the most control, and therefore potentially the most positive outcomes (Fonner & Roloff, 2007; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Karasek, 1979). Correspondingly, I expect the combination of a high level of flextime and a high level of flexplace to yield the highest level of organizational attraction.

*Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant interaction between flextime and flexplace on organizational attraction such that participants will report the strongest attraction to an organization that offers both flextime and flexplace.*

### **Anticipated Organizational Support**

To date, little is known about which dimensions of FWAs (i.e., flextime, flexplace) are most appealing to potential applicants and to what extent applicants may be interested in these benefits. Some research suggests that organizations that offer FWAs are more attractive than organizations that do not offer FWAs (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Rau & Hyland, 2002; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). For example, Casper and Buffardi found that hypothetical organizations were more attractive to potential hires if they offered flextime than if they offered a traditional schedule. I extend Casper and Buffardi's research by examining flexplace and the interaction between flextime and flexplace.

FWAs may also make organizations more attractive, because they are a sign of organizational support. As Casper and Buffardi (2004) note, although applicants cannot directly experience an organization's culture, they can become aware of and form opinions about the culture through information gathered through the recruitment process. "Information about an organization's work-life benefits might foster expectations that the organization would be supportive of employees' personal needs" (Casper & Buffardi, 2004, p. 394). Similarly, Grover and Crooker (1995) argue that by formally sponsoring these types of policies, organizations offer symbols of concern. Thus employees perceive that they are cared for by the organization, regardless of whether they personally benefit from these policies (Grover & Crooker, 1995). I extend this logic to applicants. Correspondingly, I predict that flextime and flexplace will be positively associated with anticipated organizational support, and I expect participants to report

that organizations that offer more flextime and flexplace are more supportive than organizations that offer less flextime and less flexplace.

*Hypothesis 6: Organizations that offer more flextime will be perceived as more supportive than organizations that offer less flextime.*

*Hypothesis 7: Organizations that offer more flexplace will be perceived as more supportive than organizations that offer less flexplace.*

*Hypothesis 8: There will be a significant interaction between flextime and flexplace on anticipated organizational support, such that participants will report the strongest anticipated support from an organization that offers both flextime and flexplace.*

Indeed, in a study examining applicants' intentions to pursue jobs, Casper and Buffardi (2004) found that schedule flexibility uniquely predicted anticipated organizational support and that anticipated organizational support mediated the relationship between schedule flexibility and job pursuit intentions. Additionally, Grover and Crooker (1995) found that employees had greater affective attachment for organizations that offered "family-friendly policies" regardless of whether they personally benefitted from these policies. They also found that this did not predict turnover intentions for individuals who did or could benefit from those policies better than those that could not. They argue that one explanation for these findings is that individuals are more attached to organizations that offer policies that they perceive as supportive, due to the symbolism of the policy (Greenberg, 1990; Grover & Crooker,

1995). It is likely that applicants can and would perceive these same types of symbolic cues as well.

Thus it seems applicants and employees can and do infer organizational support from the benefits/policies offered which can impact decisions they make in regards to the organization. Therefore it is likely that individuals will be attracted to organizations offering FWAs, at least in part because they perceive them as being supportive.

*Hypothesis 9: Anticipated organizational support partially mediates the relationship between flextime and organizational attraction.*

*Hypothesis 10: Anticipated organizational support partially mediates the relationship between flexplace and organizational attraction.*

#### **Who is most attracted to organizations that offer FWAs?**

The second objective of the current study is to determine the extent to which attraction to organizations that offer flextime and flexplace depends on individual difference characteristics.

In a policy capturing study, Thompson and Aspinwall (2009) modeled the extent to which four work/life benefits predicted potential job choice. They found that childcare benefits influenced the likelihood of accepting a job for 58% of the sample, flextime influenced 33%, eldercare benefits influenced 33%, and telecommuting influenced 26%. Thus, most individuals indicated that they would be likely to accept jobs that offered one or more of these benefits, yet not all of the benefits were preferred equally. Therefore it may be important for organizations to consider the unique needs and preferences of applicants when designing and marketing benefits packages.

### **Attraction Selection Attrition (ASA)**

Organizations recruit employees in the hopes that they will become productive, contributing members of the organization. One way for individuals to identify if an organization is one in which they will be comfortable staying in for a long period of time is by assessing characteristics of the organization such as the benefits that are offered. By offering FWAs, organizations directly communicate their values to potential employees. Thus employees use job descriptions and vacancy information in order to determine if they are compatible with an organization.

Schneider (1987) proposed a framework for understanding organizational behavior based on the makeup of the individuals that comprise the organization. The differences between organizations can be explained, in large part, by the attraction, selection, and attrition (ASA) of the employees within the organizations. Although organizations select employees, as Schneider (1987) points out, individuals also select into organizations. They are attracted to organizations that they perceive are made up of individuals that are similar to themselves. I propose that offering FWAs enable organizations to attract a wider range of applicants in both quantity and quality by allowing applicants to identify an organization as a place where they would be likely to fit in and succeed.

Schneider's (1987) ASA model has been used to explain person-organization (P-O) fit or the extent to which an employee perceives he/she fits the organization. P-O fit is an extension of person-environment fit or the match between an individual and his/her environment. In a way, FWAs manipulate the environment (time and place) to

accommodate more employees, expanding the number of employees who will “fit” into a given organization. In other words, they allow more individuals to identify the organization as a good match or one where they will succeed.

Not only do FWAs enable organizations to attract more applicants, FWAs can directly facilitate employee productivity (Baltes, 1999). First, most individuals have peak or prime times in which they are more alert and focused (Belanger, Collings & Cheney, 2001; Horne & Ostberg, 1977), and these may not match up with typical work schedules for all employees. Flextime gives employees the opportunity to work more hours during their prime time, which in turn is likely to increase the amount of work that they are able to accomplish. Pierce and Newstrom (1980) suggested that individuals should link their circadian rhythms to their work schedule via FWAs in order to maximize productivity, noting that research suggests implications for performance with attaining balance for each individual employee. Second, flextime and flexplace give employees the flexibility to take care of non-work issues (e.g., doctor’s appointments, be home for repair person) that traditionally take place during a standard work week away from the work site. This reduces employee tardiness and absenteeism. Third, because FWAs give employees the flexibility they need to take care of nonwork-related issues, employees may be less distracted by these traditionally competing demands. Employees may even use time during the work day to take care of some of these non-work issues at the main work site (e.g., scheduling personal appointments) when, if their schedule permitted, they would be more likely to take care of these things at a more convenient

time (for them and the organization) away from the office. Thus, FWAs might enable employees to be less distracted by lingering nonwork activities.

Organizations that offer FWAs are not only offering a potential benefit, they are offering potential employees a preview of what they can anticipate if they choose to work there. Thus based on ASA, individuals who seek flexibility and organizational support are likely to be attracted to organizations that offer FWAs. Correspondingly, individuals who perceive organizations that offer FWAs as ones in which they would succeed are most likely to be attracted to, apply to, and accept job offers from those organizations.

### **Individual Differences and FWAs**

In this study, I examine four individual difference variables theoretically expected to relate to a preference for flextime, flexplace, or both. These are role demands, sociability, need for medical treatment, and preference for integration. Each of these is discussed in turn.

#### **Role Demands**

I propose that individuals with a large amount of role demands or life responsibilities will be especially attracted to organizations that offer flextime and flexplace. There is a well established link between role conflict and negative outcomes such as lower job satisfaction, (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993) as well as performance, and fatigue (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). When the expectations for certain roles exceed the amount of time or resources individuals have, they may feel overloaded



(Agho et al., 1993; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Therefore the amount of role demands an individual has is likely to directly affect his/her desire for flexibility.

Shockley and Allen (2010) hypothesized that individuals with a high need for occupational achievement consistently need to accomplish difficult tasks and compete with their peers. They proposed that individuals with a strong need for occupational achievement use flextime to maximize their productivity, taking advantage of “personal peak efficiency times” (Shockley & Allen, 2010). Contrary to expectation, Shockley and Allen (2010) did not find a direct relationship between need for occupational achievement and flextime use or flexplace use. However, they found that family responsibility (a limited operationalization of role demands) moderated the relationship between need for occupational achievement and flextime use, such that need for occupational achievement was positively related to flextime use for those with a high level of family responsibilities. Need for occupational achievement and flextime use were negatively related for those with a low level of family responsibilities. Likewise, Rau and Hyland (2002) found that individuals with a high level of role conflict (Work-to-Family, Family-to-Work, and Work-to-School) were more attracted to organizations that offered FWAs, whereas individuals with low levels of role conflict preferred organizations that offered telework. Consistent with role theory and previous empirical research, I propose that flextime and flexplace will be more attractive to individuals with more role demands.

*Hypothesis 11: Role demands will moderate the relationship between (a) flextime and organizational attraction and (b) flexplace and organizational attraction*

*such that individuals with a high level of role demands will report stronger attraction to organizations that offer both flextime and flexplace.*

### **Sociability**

Sociability, a facet of the Big Five factor Extraversion (Moon, Hollenbeck, Marinova, & Humphrey, 2008) is likely to negatively relate to applicants' attraction to flextime and flexplace. Individuals with a high level of extraversion are often described as sociable, outgoing, talkative, and energetic (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Watson and Clark (1997) explain Extraversion can be divided into two separate constructs: ascendance/surgency and sociability. Subsequent research supports sociability as a meaningful facet of extraversion (e.g., Moon et al., 2008). Individuals with a high level of sociability are friendly, expressive, and enjoy being around other people (Watson & Clark, 1997).

Shockley and Allen (2010) suggested that need for affiliation is negatively related to FWA use; however, they did not find evidence of this. This may be because need for affiliation does not adequately capture the elements of socialization that individuals miss when they are not a part of the standard work schedule and/or work environment. Sociability, however, may better capture this desire to interact and socialize with coworkers.

Because individuals who have high a level of sociability typically enjoy interacting with others, they may look forward to daily contact with their coworkers. Whereas there are many potential opportunities for individuals to have social interactions, it is likely that highly sociable individuals will feel left out if they do not

experience face-to-face interactions with colleagues on a regular basis. Thus, highly sociable employees are expected to prefer to work at the main worksite on a regular basis and therefore be less attracted to opportunities to work from other locations (i.e., flexplace).

*Hypothesis 12: Sociability will moderate the relationship between flexplace and organizational attraction such that individuals with a high level of sociability will report weaker attraction to organizations that offer flexplace.*

### **Other Predictors of Preferences for FWAs**

***Need for medical treatment.*** Individuals with serious illnesses, diseases, or disabilities are likely to be attracted to organizations that offer FWAs as they may better accommodate their sometimes frequent treatment schedules. For example, there are approximately 26 million adults in the U.S. with Chronic Kidney Disease which can lead to kidney failure (National Kidney Foundation, 2010). Individuals with end stage kidney failure need regular dialysis treatments in medical facilities or at home. Approximately 110,000 individuals began treatment for kidney failure in 2007 (CDC, 2010). The standard schedule for treatment is three times a week for three to four hours at a time (Davita.com). Similarly, people with cancer require regular radiation and/or chemotherapy treatments. If these individuals do not receive regular treatment, their health will suffer resulting in complications and/or hospitalization. Therefore employees with medical conditions can benefit from being able to control when and/or where they work.

Flextime gives employees the autonomy to work around doctors' appointments and treatments. Flexplace gives individuals the privacy to take care of health-related activities and work tasks simultaneously or with shorter time lags in between. This can offer individuals with health issues the privacy to complete their treatments discretely in a clean and comfortable environment rather than in a work setting that may be less private, clean, and/or comfortable. Additionally, they may have health issues that manifest in an overtly physical manner causing them to feel more comfortable working from home. Finally, individuals may have issues that require treatment or other related needs that prohibit working in public view all of the time. So, a full-time or even part-time flexplace arrangement may enable them to continue working while meeting normal productivity standards. Some researchers are beginning to suggest that FWAs would be a reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities (Lister & Harnish, 2011), however little research has examined these issues. Overall, organizations that offer FWAs are likely to be more attractive to individuals who need frequent medical treatment than organizations that do not offer FWAs.

*Hypothesis 13: Need for regular medical treatment will moderate the relationship between (a) flextime and organizational attraction and (b) flexplace and organizational attraction such that individuals with a need for regular medical treatment will report stronger attraction to organizations that offer flextime and flexplace.*

### **Preference for Integration**

Preference for integration, a construct that has been repeatedly linked to work-nonwork conflict, describes the extent to which individuals maintain boundaries between their various work and nonwork roles (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Some people prefer to keep roles integrated and work best when boundary lines are not clearly defined, whereas others prefer clearly identifiable boundaries that separate their multiple roles.

Shockley and Allen (2010) found that individuals with higher levels of a “need for segmentation” (the opposite of preference for integration) used FWA less than those with less of a need for segmentation. Thus need for segmentation was negatively related to FWA use. FWAs are frequently portrayed as the universal cure for work-nonwork conflict in the popular press. However, these results suggest that FWAs are not a practical way for all individuals to manage conflict, especially those who prefer to segment their roles (Shockley & Allen, 2010).

In addition to “need for segmentation,” other researchers have examined similar constructs and referred to them as “preference for segmentation” (Kreiner, 2006) and “boundary management strategy” (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). I examine preference for integration and individual’s tendencies to integrate their work and nonwork roles. I propose that individuals with a strong preference for integration will evaluate organizations that offer flexplace as more attractive than organizations that do not offer flexplace.

*Hypothesis 14: Preference for integration will moderate the relationship between flexplace and organizational attraction such that individuals with a high preference for integration will report stronger attraction to organizations that offer flexplace.*

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### Participants, Design, and Procedure

Study participants consisted of undergraduate students from a large university in the southwest in various majors in upper level classes. Professors of junior and senior level classes were contacted and asked to offer their students the opportunity to participate in the current study, with the option of awarding extra credit as determined by the instructors. One hundred ninety individuals responded; the majority (63%) were women ( $N = 119$ ). The mean age for the sample was 21.13 ( $SD = 1.14$ ). The sample was primarily (75%) White, and the second largest race/ethnic group was Hispanic (18%). Fifty-one percent of participants indicated they were single (i.e., never married), 40% were in a committed/dating relationship, and two individuals indicated they were married. The majority (77%) of the participants were juniors or seniors and graduating within 18 months; therefore, they were likely to be looking for jobs in the near future. Indeed, 68% of the participants indicated they intend to apply for jobs after graduation.

One advantage of utilizing a young sample was that it is unlikely that the participants would have dependents, allowing for a test of the appeal of FWA dimensions to individuals who do not currently have dependents. Indeed, only two individuals in the entire sample indicated that they had children (both indicated having one child). When the participants were asked about plans to have children, 66% of the participants indicated they definitely wanted to have children at some point in the future, whereas only three individuals indicated they definitely did not want children. Other

information related to role demands such as expectations concerning caring for parents was also asked. On average, participants anticipated they would likely play a role in taking care of their parents in the future (1 = Not at all, 3=Somewhat, 5=Definitely;  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ).

A 3 (flexplace: no discretion over working away from the main work site, some discretion over how frequently they work away from the main work site, full discretion over how frequently they work away from the main worksite) x 3 (flexitime: set work time, core hours, no discretion; see Figure 1 and Appendixes A and B) within-subjects experimental design was conducted. Participants read nine vacancy descriptions that represented fictitious organizations offering benefits packages which had constant levels of both salary and benefits but varied in levels of flexplace and flexitime offered. Participants were asked to rate perceived flexibility (both of flexitime and flexplace), anticipated organizational support, and organizational attraction for each description. Each job description included a generic, nondescript organization name (e.g., “Organization BCA”) and some information about salary and a general benefits package (e.g., 401(k), maternity leave, etc.).

Graham and Cable (2001) note that policy-capturing approaches are likely to be most effective when participants are familiar with the situations they are evaluating. The sample in this study, juniors and seniors in college, are frequently the target of recruitment efforts by organizations. These individuals were likely to be evaluating organizations and determining what they are looking for from prospective employers (as indicated by the majority with plans to seek full-time employment after graduation). As

























































































































