

Family-Friendly Management in Great Britain: Testing Various Perspectives

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Five main perspectives on family-friendly management are differentiated by their conceptions about the nature of such management and not just by its assumed predictors. Multivariate analysis of the relationships among a set of family-oriented practices shows that some but not all are used in a systematic way. Regression analysis reveals that employers' adoption of family-friendly approaches is explained by factors that span all five perspectives, but overall, the organizational adaptation perspective fares best.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY MANAGEMENT INVOLVES EMPLOYERS having an underlying commitment to help employees obtain a balance between work and family obligations. This commitment or orientation is expressed in management policies, so there should be some pattern to the provision of a range of family-friendly practices. For example, we expect practices concerned with childbirth to coexist with those related to child rearing.

The recent wave of research in the United States on family-friendly practices concentrated on the predictors of their adoption rather than on the relationships among them (Goodstein 1994, 1995; Milliken, Dutton, and Beyer 1990; Ingram and Simons 1995; Osterman 1995). Researchers sought to test a particular theory or adjudicate between theories based on characterizing them according to their determinants of family-friendly

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practices. Typically, the number of family-friendly practices used was regressed on the determinants associated with each theory. In so doing, researchers attributed equal status to family-friendly practices and implied that a managerial orientation underlay their use.

Different theories of family-friendly management, however, can be differentiated by what is being predicted and not simply by their predictors. To test these theories requires an analysis of both the nature of employers' involvement in work-family management (the dependent variable) and its determinants (the independent variables).

In this article we first identify five perspectives on family-friendly management: (1) institutional theory, (2) the organizational adaptation variant of institutional theory, (3) the high-commitment perspective, (4) the equal-opportunity perspective, and (5) the situational perspective. We show that in their strong versions they yield different hypotheses and have conflicting concepts of family-friendly management. In the institutional theory, family-friendly management, as defined above, is assumed to be an identifiable and integrated phenomenon, and hence there is a coherency to the use of family-friendly practices that reflects an underlying managerial orientation. In the high-commitment and equal-opportunity perspectives, such a family-friendly management is part of a bigger approach. By contrast, from the situational perspective, the provision of family-friendly practices at best would be fragmented, whereas under the organizational adaptation perspective, the expected pattern of associations is an open question.

Second, we assess which of the five perspectives, either alone or in combination with others, best predicts the nature of any adoption of family-friendly practices and which are the determinants of this adoption. We use data from Great Britain's Workplace Employee Relations Survey of 1998 (WERS98). The study is in two stages:

1. Multivariate analyses of the association among a set of family-orientated practices in order to establish whether family-friendly management is an integrated concept that is summarized in a single dimension
2. Given coherence in the provision of family-friendly practices, an assessment of the relative importance of the major predictors of the various theories

The first stage has not been undertaken by U.S. researchers—although Wood (1999a) conducted similar analysis of Osterman's U.S. data. This article thus brings some British data to bear on a problem that until now largely has been addressed with U.S. data.

Five Perspectives on Family-Friendly Management

Demographic changes such as the increased participation of women in the workplace have highlighted the importance of achieving a work-family balance. This has created institutional pressure on employers to “assume a more active role in helping employees balance work and family demands” (Goodstein 1994:356). Employers have begun to respond by offering work-family practices or benefits. This chain of reasoning is captured most directly in the institutional perspective.

Institutional theory. According to institutional theory, the adoption of family-friendly practices is a way of conforming to normative pressures from the wider society and of institutionalizing family-friendly management. Consequently, underlying the adoption of all practices ought to be an orientation on the part of management toward resolving work-family conflicts. Variability in the adoption of such practices is explained by the extent to which the maintenance of social legitimacy is salient to the organization. Large private firms and public-sector organizations, being more visible, are assumed to be more compelled to conform to societal pressures; also, they may have more to gain by doing so (Oliver 1991; Goodstein 1994). It has been argued that the pressures to respond to the specific work-family issue might be greater in some industries, e.g., health care (Morgan and Milliken 1992:228). Here we thus test the following hypotheses of institutional theory:

Hypothesis 1. Family-friendly practices coexist and the pattern of associations among them is reducible to a unidimensional structure.

By unidimensional structure we mean that the correlation between practices reflects a common concept; that is, they reflect in this case a single form of management, a holistic family-friendly management.

Hypothesis 2. Large organizations, public-sector organizations, and health care organizations are more likely to conform to institutional pressures to adopt family-friendly management.

Organizational adaptation theory. Organizational adaptation theory is best seen as an extension of institutional theory in order to allow for the strategic choice exercised by management (Goodstein 1994, 1995). Its starting point is institutional theory—the premise that organizations must respond to demands embodied in regulations, norms, laws, and social expectations—but it departs from institutional theory in two ways. First, it assumes that organizations do not passively conform to normative pressures and that management has discretion over its response to environmental

challenges (Oliver 1991; Daft and Weick 1984). Management may even choose to ignore or actively oppose societal pressures to balance work and family. Second, organizations are assumed to differ in how they scan and define these apparent external pressures. Thus weight is given to how management perceives and interprets or “recognizes” the institutional environment.

The normative pressures arising from the changing structure of the family inevitably impose constraints on employers’ actions, but under this perspective, managers can interpret these issues in different ways. Some may treat family-work pressures as given and even assimilate them into a new high-commitment management. Others may interpret the issues as pertaining to women or particularly women with young children. Some may ignore the normative pressures by regarding family-related issues as the employee’s private responsibility and thus of little direct concern to the organization. Accordingly, family-friendly management is, under this perspective, not necessarily a one-dimensional concept because it suggests that clusters or subsets of practices may well exist. For example, there may be no association between the two types of family-oriented practices that are commonly differentiated—those which provide a substitute caregiver for the employee and those which create flexibility in the timing and location of work so that the employee can more readily accommodate family demands (Bailyn 1993:67 and Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg 1998).

Goodstein (1994:363–5) bases his index of “responsiveness to institutional pressures for involvement in work-family issues” on this distinction between child care and flexible working practices. However, he neither assumes nor tests a general relationship between these practices. He in fact assumes a connection only at high levels of responsiveness, since his index grades employers’ responses according to Oliver’s general fourfold classification of responses—acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, and defiance—and *acquiescence* is measured by whether the organization adopts at least one or more of both types of practices. *Compromise* is when the organization provides only one type but adopts multiple kinds of it. *Avoidance* is when the organization provides one practice only, which can be of either type. Finally, *defiance* is when the organization provides none of the practices. Goodstein thus prespecifies the link between practices and the underlying orientation of management toward assumed societal pressures. Nevertheless, taken to its logical extreme, the organizational adaptation perspective implies that the nature of any family-friendly management is an open empirical question.

This perspective also broadens the range of predictors of the provision of family-friendly practices. Technical factors, competitive pressures, and local situational factors enter management’s deliberations because the interpretation

process is not simply a matter of ethical considerations. Consequently, in addition to the predictors of the institutional theory, in the organizational adaptation perspective we have (1) the values of senior management, (2) the information senior management has on institutional pressures (particularly through its knowledge of its own employees, past, potential, and present), and (3) the perceptions of the economic outcomes associated with the provision of family-friendly practices. It is therefore thought that employers are more likely to be family-friendly if they value their employees having a healthy work-family balance, consult their employees regularly about their needs and concerns, and associate family-oriented management with tangible performance effects (see especially Goodstein 1995:1660–1; Milliken, Dutton, and Beyer 1990:101; Morgan and Milliken, 1992:230–1). In this study we will test the core of the organizational adaptation perspective by

Hypothesis 3. The more highly management values employees having a balance between work and the family, the greater will be its adoption of family-friendly management.

Hypothesis 4. The more management is aware of its workforce's needs, the greater will be its adoption of family-friendly management.

The organizational adaptation literature also accepts that organizations' responses reflect variations in the intensity of pressure at the local level. For example, managements faced with problems of absenteeism arising from family problems are more likely to be concerned about family-friendly issues. Pressures employees bring to bear on senior management within an organization also may affect the prominence given to societal pressures. Hence, if women are the constituency that makes the strongest demands for work-family accommodation, organizations with a high proportion of females in the workforce will be more likely to provide work-family facilities. Also, employees who are in a strong position because of their transferable skills (e.g., professional staff) may articulate their views and influence management to a greater extent than less powerful employees (Goodstein 1995:1661). Thus, organizations with a high proportion of professional staff are more likely to practice family-friendly management. We thus test

Hypothesis 5. The higher the proportion of the organization's employees who are women, the greater will be its adoption of family-friendly management.

Hypothesis 6. The higher the skill level, the proportion of professional employees, and the proportion of managerial employees in the organization, the greater will be its adoption of family-friendly management.

In its strongest form, the organizational adaptation approach assumes that managements have near-complete freedom in interpreting issues and scanning the environment. We would expect the organization's reaction to external pressures to depend on its managers' concern for their employees' work and family balance. This therefore would moderate the relationship between organizational size and family-friendly management. Accordingly, we will test

Hypothesis 7. The effect of size in family-friendly management is intensified when management values a balance between work and the family.

The organizational adaptation approach could be taken further beyond institutional theory by incorporating the strategy of the organization. Using Porter's (1985) distinction between cost-minimization and high-quality strategies, Milliken, Dutton, and Beyer (1990:98) argue that organizations adopting the high-quality strategy are more likely to see work-family matters as a strategic concern. The question then is whether the organization's strategy is just an additional factor affecting the priority that the dominant coalition gives to family-work issues, or whether it is the primary determinant of family-friendly management (as it would be in a pure strategic-choice model). This entails testing

Hypothesis 8. Organizations adopting high-quality strategies are more likely to adopt family-friendly management.

The high-commitment perspective. The high-commitment perspective¹ as developed by Osterman (1995) hypothesizes that the rise of high-commitment management explains the increasing adoption of work-family programs. However, a core element of the human resources management debate (see, for example, Appelbaum and Batt 1994; Huselid 1995; MacDuffie 1995; Wood 1996, 1999b; Wood and Albanese 1995) is whether this high-commitment management is universally applicable. If its adoption is contingent on the business strategy, then high-commitment management will mediate the relationship between it and family-friendly management. This effectively amounts to an extension of Milliken, Dutton, and Beyer's Porterian hypothesis.

Osterman does not comment on the possible contingent nature of high-commitment management in his family-friendly article, but he associates

¹ There are several terms currently being used to describe a form of management similar to high-commitment management (see Walton 1985), including high-involvement management (Lawler 1986) and high-performance management (e.g., Appelbaum and Batt 1994:5). The term *high commitment* will be used here because it corresponds to Osterman's terminology.

high-commitment management with “performance gains” (Osterman 1995:698) in a way that suggests that it is increasingly generally relevant (see also Kochan and Osterman 1995; Capelli et al. 1997). This implies that high-commitment management is a main predictor. Thus

Hypothesis 9. Managements that place a high value on obtaining employee commitment and are implementing high-commitment management are more likely to adopt family-friendly management.

Taking the argument to its extreme, high-commitment and family-friendly practices would reflect a single underlying managerial approach. We will thus test

Hypothesis 10. Family-friendly practices and high-commitment practices co-exist, and the pattern of associations among them reduces to a one-dimensional structure.

The equal-opportunity perspective. The equal-opportunity perspective refers to the use of family-friendly practices to remove discrimination particularly on the basis of gender, race, or age. Reconciliation of employment and family life is central to any discussion of equal opportunities for men and women. Several authors have claimed that meaningful family-friendly management involves “confronting the issues of discrimination—based not just on gender, but also on race, ethnicity, and other kinds of differences” (Hall 1990:69). Unless this is done, it is claimed, organizations will treat family-friendly practices as part of their fringe benefits and are only likely to introduce them in a half-hearted and piecemeal way, not as part of broader program that aims to reduce unequal opportunities (Gonyea and Googins 1996:69; Lewis 1997:15). The minimal conclusion of this argument is

Hypothesis 11. Managements that have equal-opportunity policies are more likely to adopt family-friendly management.

Taking the argument further, it may be that equal-opportunity and family-friendly practices will reflect a single managerial approach. Thus

Hypothesis 12. Family-friendly practices and equal-opportunity practices coexist in a unidimensional structure.

Finally, as part of a switch in emphasis from removing disadvantages to valuing differences, family-friendly practices and equal-opportunities policies have been linked with high-commitment management. Bailyn (1993:87) argued that equality and diversity agendas imply that any effective high-commitment management must be extended from employee involvement to embrace issues of working time. It should be based on the belief that

“personal time is a legitimate employee need.” This argument is normative, but it does imply that any serious move toward any one of the triad—equal-opportunity management, high-commitment management, and family-friendly management—will involve the others. All will reflect the same fundamental change in employers’ orientations. Accordingly, we will test the strongest version of this perspective:

Hypothesis 13. Family-friendly practices, equal-opportunity practices, and high-commitment practices coexist in a one-dimensional structure.

The situational perspective. The situational perspective, or what Osterman (1995) calls the “practical response perspective,” is a complete break from institutional theory. Under this perspective, managements adapt to local circumstances rather than to societal normative pressures. On the personnel front, managements adapt to the idiosyncrasies of their workforce and other local labor market pressures. Accordingly, we would expect the characteristics of the workforce to be the major predictors of the degree of family-friendly management. More specifically, we would assume gender composition to be important. Thus hypothesis 5—the higher the proportion of the organization’s employees who are women, the greater is the adoption of family-friendly management—becomes the main hypothesis of this perspective.

In addition, employers who perceive that labor problems such as absenteeism and stress are related to family problems will respond by adopting family-friendly practices. Since one expects such problems to be related to the age of the employees’ children, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 14. The greater the proportion of employees with young children, the greater will be the adoption of family-friendly practices.

A tight labor market also may prompt employers to offer family-friendly practices as a way of attracting potential candidates. Thus

Hypothesis 15. The greater the difficulties an organization experiences in filling vacancies, the greater will be the adoption of family-friendly practices.

Under the situational perspective, we would not necessarily expect employers to think of the family “problem” as a holistic issue. Managers would be more likely to adopt family-friendly practices in a piecemeal way. Consequently, a test of hypothesis 1—that the association between family-friendly practices is reducible to a unidimensional structure—is also a test of this perspective. A rejection of this hypothesis would imply an ad hoc or fragmented adoption of family-friendly practices.

A coherent response across organizations is only likely if it is widely accepted that family-friendly practices have positive payoffs. If there are any economies of scale in the provision of family-friendly practices, then we might view the size of the organization as another predictor.

We have shown that the five perspectives can be differentiated by their conceptions of family-friendly management and not simply by their predictions. In strong institutional theory, family-friendly management is considered a one-dimensional concept, whereas in the situational perspective, this is highly unlikely. In the high-commitment management and equal-opportunity perspectives, family-friendly management is part of a broader managerial approach. Finally, in the organizational adaptation perspective, the form of any collective adoption of family-friendly practices is an open question.

In this study we first test the various assumptions about the nature of family-friendly management. Subsequently, we test the predictors associated with each perspective. If it is found that the provision of family-friendly practices is ad hoc, the analysis must be limited to predicting the adoption of individual practices. In the less extreme case, where there is still no unified family-friendly management but only discrete elements of it, the analysis will focus on each element separately. Finally, if family-friendly management is part of a broader high-commitment approach and/or equal-opportunity policy, the task will be to predict this overall approach.

We aim to assess the various perspectives outlined above by analyzing the following:

1. Whether family-friendly practices are provided in a systematic way
2. Whether there is ad hoc provision of family-friendly practices
3. Whether there are different dimensions to family-friendly management
4. The relationship between the provision of family-friendly, high-commitment management and equal-opportunity practices
5. The relative importance of institutional factors, values, employers' awareness of their employees, high-commitment management, equal-opportunity policy, and local situational factors in explaining the adoption of family-friendly practices

We address the first four questions using latent variable analysis. We then use regression analysis to assess the relative importance of the different factors. Table 1 summarizes the main hypotheses, their linkages to the five perspectives, and the test procedures that we adopt.

TABLE 1
RESEARCH HYPOTHESES BY THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Hypotheses	Perspective	Testing Method
1. Family-friendly practices coexist and the associations reduce to a unidimensional structure.	Institutional	Latent variable analysis
2. Large organizations, public-sector organizations, and health care organizations are more likely to conform to institutional pressures to adopt family-friendly practices.	Institutional	Regression analysis
3. The greater the extent to which management values employees having a balance between work, the greater the use of family-friendly practices.	Organizational adaptation	Regression analysis
4. The more management is aware of its workforce's needs, the greater the adoption of family-friendly practices.	Organizational adaptation	Regression analysis
5. The greater the proportion of women in the workforce, the greater the use of family-friendly practices.	Organizational adaptation/situational	Regression analysis
6. The higher the skill level and the proportion of professional employees in the organization, the greater the adoption of family-friendly practices.	Organizational adaptation	Regression analysis
7. The effect of size on family-friendly management is intensified when management values having a balance between work and family life.	Organizational adaptation	Regression analysis
8. Organizations adopting high-quality strategies are more likely to adopt family-friendly practices.	Organizational adaptation	Regression analysis
9. Management placing a high value on employee commitment and implementing high-commitment practices are more likely to adopt family-friendly practices.	High commitment	Regression analysis
10. Family-friendly practices and high-commitment practices coexist and the associations among them are reducible to a unidimensional structure.	High commitment	Latent variable analysis
11. Managements that are oriented toward equal-opportunity practice are more likely to adopt family-friendly practices.	Equal opportunity	Regression analysis
12. Family-friendly practices and equal-opportunity practices coexist and the associations among them are reducible to a unidimensional structure.	Equal opportunity	Latent variable analysis
13. Family-friendly, equal-opportunity, and high-commitment practices coexist and the associations among them are reducible to a unidimensional structure.	Equal opportunity	Latent variable analysis
14. The greater the proportion of employees with young children, the greater the use of family-friendly practices.	Situational	Regression analysis
15. The greater the difficulties in filling vacancies that an organization experiences, the greater the use of family-friendly practices.	Situational	Regression analysis

The Data Set

Workplace Employee Relations Survey of 1998 (WERS98). The WERS98 data set is the fourth in a series of surveys, the Workplace Industrial Relations Series (WIRS), that is aimed at achieving a “better understanding of the processes which underlie employment relationships” through a large-scale survey of a “broad range of industrial relations and employment practices” (Millward et al. 1992). Its unit of analysis is the workplace or establishment.

Three research instruments make up WERS98. These are a structured interview with the senior manager at the site responsible for employee relations, a structured interview with an employee representative (where such a person existed), and a questionnaire completed by a random sample of up to 25 employees in the majority of workplaces. The analysis in this article uses data from both the management and employee interviews.

Field work was carried out between October 1997 and June 1998. Workplaces employing 10 or more employees (excluding agriculture, fishing, and deep coal mining) were randomly sampled from the official *Inter-Departmental Business Register* (of 1997) that is used for most British government surveys of employers. The sampling frame was stratified by workplace size and industry sector. A sample of 2191 workplaces was achieved, representing a response rate of 80.3 percent for the senior management interview. Managers at 85.8 percent of the 2191 workplaces agreed to cooperate with the employee survey. The employees who filled out the employee questionnaire were sampled randomly from a list provided by management at these workplaces. In practice, there were nil returns of employee questionnaires from 4.4 percent of workplaces, so 81.4 percent of the workplaces in the management survey (totaling 1783) participated in the employee survey. Of the 44,283 questionnaires sent to individual employees, 28,215 were returned, for a response rate of 64 percent.

In the analysis that follows we use the weights provided in the WERS98 data set whenever we investigate effects on the population or make any inference regarding Great Britain. In doing so, we correct the sample bias that results from the design of the sample, which led to an overrepresentation of large workplaces and certain industries [see Airey et al. (1999:4–8) for more details of the sample and (1999:88–92) for the weighting of the data].

Variables used in the study. The family-friendly practices in the data set all relate to nonmanagerial employees. They include both flexible working practices and child care assistance. More specifically, there is information on whether employees are entitled to parental leave, work at home,

term-time-only contracts, part-time work (once having been full time), job sharing, use of a workplace nursery, and a financial subsidy toward child care. There is no information about elder care arrangements or employee assistance with retirement or drug or alcohol abuse.²

The high-commitment practices in the data set, which will be used in the subsequent analysis, are quality circles, functional flexibility, teamwork, suggestion schemes, induction, interpersonal skills training, team briefing, information disclosure, and appraisal.

The measures of equal-opportunity practices are as follows (all phrased as in the interview schedule): maintenance of workplace records on ethnic origin of employees; collection of statistics on posts held by men and women; monitoring of promotions by gender, ethnicity, and so on; revision of selection and other procedures to identify indirect discrimination; revision of relative pay of different groups; and adjustments to accommodate disabled employees.

In WERS98, there are several measures associated with the *institutional* perspective: the employment level of the workplace and the employment level of the total organization of which the workplace is a part, whether the workplace is in the public or private sector, and the industry group to which it belongs.

A variable of particular relevance to the organizational adaptation perspective's hypothesis 3 is the employers' concern for their employees' balance between work and family life. Another set of variables is related to the employer's ability to be aware of their employees' needs (hypothesis 4): the degree to which management consults with the workforce, the existence of a personnel department, and the availability of employee voice through a recognized trade union.

Hypothesis 5 is tested using the proportion of females in the workforce. Hypothesis 6 is tested using the extent of education of the workforce, the proportion of employees who are technical and professional, and the proportion of employees who are managerial. We lack a precise measure of whether the workplace pursues a high-quality strategy, but we use a measure of total quality management (TQM) as a proxy to test hypothesis 8.

Four measures related to the high-commitment perspective are included: the extent to which management accords importance to employee commitment, the importance given to human resources management in the planning process, management's orientation toward high commitment (see below for the development of the measure of this based on high-commitment practices),

² An influence on the survey design was the Labour Party's encouragement of family-friendly practices in its Manifesto of 1995 and the way that this was associated with child care.

and the extent to which the employees in the largest occupational group have enriched jobs. These will be used to test to hypothesis 9.

The key variable for the equal-opportunity perspective is the extent of equal opportunity measured by a scale (as shown below) based on all the equal-opportunity practices.

The measures of situational factors, apart from the proportion of females in the workforce, are the proportion of employees who have children of preschool age and the proportion of employees who have children below the age of 19 (hypothesis 14). The extent to which the employer is faced with labor market problems is measured by whether there have been difficulties filling vacancies (in the workplace) in the year previous to the data collection (hypothesis 15). We lack variables indicating the level of absenteeism due to family problems or the perceived benefits from family-friendly practices.

Finally, we include the following controls in our analysis: whether the workplace is part of a larger organization, employment change, the proportion of part-timers, and some additional occupational composition measures such as the percentage of clerical and secretarial employees.

Table 2 outlines the independent variables that are used in the regression analysis.

The Analysis of Family-Friendly Management

Latent variable analysis is used here to make inferences from the relationships among the practices, be these family-friendly, high-commitment, and equal-opportunity practices. Latent variable models, of which factor analysis is the oldest and best known, assess whether the association between a set of manifest or observed variables (in this case management practices) can be explained by a common (unobserved) factor.³ Different models can be used, depending on the type of data, because our manifest variables—family-friendly, equal-opportunity, and high-commitment practices—are binary, latent trait, and latent class models. The difference between these models is whether the underlying unobservable variable is continuous (in the latent trait model) or categorical (in the latent class one). The logit-probit (latent trait) model (Bartholomew and Knott 1999) is used to test hypotheses

³ See Bartholomew and Knott (1999:1–39) for an account of latent trait models, and Bartholomew, de Menezes, and Tzamourani (1997) and the Appendix in Wood (1999c:411–4) for the logit-probit model used here. For other applications of the latent trait model, see Bartholomew, de Menezes, and Tzamourani (1997), de Menezes and Bartholomew (1996), Wood (1996, 1999a, 1999c), Wood and Albanese (1995), and Wood and de Menezes (1998).

TABLE 2

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES USED IN REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY MANAGEMENT

Institutional perspective*Employment level*

Total number of full- and part-time employees in the workplace.

Size of the total organization of which the workplace is a part

Categorical variable indicating the total number of employees in the company of which the establishment is a part. (In the case of the single-site workplace, this is the same as the employment level.)

Industry

Nine different industry groups, each with workplaces in the private and public sector.

Public

Whether the workplace belongs to the public or private sector, regardless of its industry group.

Organizational adaptation perspective*Employers' concern for their employees' balance between work and family life*

The management's orientation toward family issues, measured on the basis of a question in which respondents were asked, "It is up to individual employees to balance their work and family responsibilities?" (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree). The variable has been recoded binary one. It is positive for values 3 to 5 (16% of workplaces).

Consultative approach

An index of the extent to which management consults with its workforce, created from a question asking whether the organization had employee-management committees or regular meetings of employees and managers to discuss five issues: health and safety, productivity, training, technology and work organization, work roles or job descriptions. A latent trait model was fitted to the data on the set of five types of committees/meetings (% of $G^2 = 77.24$). The variable included in the regressions is the resulting latent trait score.

Personnel department

There is a personnel specialist who spends at least 25% of his or her time on personnel matters.

Union representation

At least one union is recognized at the workplace.

The percentage of female employees

Proportion of regular (full- and part-time) employees who are female.

Educated workforce

Positive if more than half the employees have a university degree.

Proportion of technical and professional employees

Proportion of employees in the workplace belonging to the professional and technical occupational group.

Proportion of managerial employees

Proportion of employees in the workplace who are managerial.

Quality strategy (total quality management)

Latent trait score resulting from a model with the following practices: self-inspection, keeping records on faults/complaints, customer surveys, nonconfidential quality records, and training in quality control. (% $G^2 = 73.51$)

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

High-commitment perspective

Importance accorded to employee commitment

Based on the agreement index to the statement, "Employees are led to expect long-term employment in this organization," and recoded so that 1 means strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree.

Importance given by management to human resources

Variable measuring if (1) the strategic plan includes employee's development and (2) the person responsible for employee relations was involved in the plan design. It can take the values 0, 1 or 2.

High-commitment management

A classification of workplaces into three different categories (minimal, partial, and full high-commitment management). This grouping is the result of a latent class analysis of nine practices found to belong together: teamworking, functional flexibility, quality circles, suggestion schemes, team briefings, induction procedure, training in human relations, and information disclosure (see Table 7).

Enriched jobs

Average of three items (job variety, job discretion, and job control) from the manager's questionnaire. Each item is measured on a four-point scale, from none to a lot.

Equal-opportunity perspective

Equal-opportunity orientation

An index of the extent to which equal-opportunity policies are implemented, based on the latent trait analysis of equal opportunity practices described in the text (model 8 in Table 5).

Situational factors perspective

Difficulties in filling vacancies

Management has encountered difficulties in filling vacancies over the previous year.

Proportion of employees who are parents with children aged 4 or less

Proportion of all employees who are parents with children aged 4 or less.

Proportion of employees who are parents with children aged 18 or less

Proportion of all employees who are parents with children aged 18 or less.

Control variables

Part of a larger organization

Measures whether the workplace is an independent or stand-alone site (1, if the organization is part of a wider organization or enterprise).

Change in employment size

Measures the difference between the number of employees (full- and part-time) employed at the workplace at the time of the interview and 1 year before.

Additional occupational composition measures

Variables indicating the proportion of employees in the workplace belonging to the following occupational categories: routine and skilled, operational, clerical and secretarial.

Number of part-timers

Proportion of employees who work part time.

1, 10, 12, and 13. This is consistent with the definition of *unidimensionality* as “the existence of one latent trait underlying the data” (Hattie 1985:157).

The goodness of fit of the latent trait model is judged by two methods. First, we look at overall fit measures. One of them is the percentage of G^2 (the log-likelihood ratio statistic for complete independence) that compares the fit with what it would be if there were an association. The closer this statistic is to 100 percent, the better is the fit of the model. Another measure is the chi-square for all observed response patterns. Second, we assess the fit by comparing the observed (O) and expected (E) response patterns for pairs and triplets of items. This is done by constructing the statistic $(O - E)^2/E$ for each response pattern. The closer this is to zero, the better is the fit of the model. When a significant number of these statistics are large, there are residual associations between items that are not attributable to the latent variable(s). Furthermore, if the same observable items (e.g., family-friendly practices as in our main analysis) are found in the problematic pairs and triplets, it suggests that they are the cause of bad fit. Such a pattern would contradict the basic assumption of the model: that our latent variable (family-friendly management) is the only source of correlation among observed family-friendly practices.

Testing hypothesis 1: The latent variable analysis of family-friendly practices. Table 3 (columns 2 and 3) records the relative adoption of particular family-friendly practices, revealing that there is considerable variation in adoption. No practice is adopted in the majority of the workplaces across the whole economy. The most frequently available practice is the entitlement to work part time (46 percent of all workplaces in the economy, 58 percent of the sample); this is followed by parental leave (34 and 43 percent) and job sharing (28 and 38 percent). The provision of a workplace nursery and child care subsidies is very rare, the figures for the whole economy being 3 and 4 percent, respectively (8 and 9 percent in the sample).

TABLE 3
PROVISION OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES FOR NONMANAGERIAL EMPLOYEES

	In WERS98 (Unweighted Proportion)	In the Economy
Parental leave	43	34
Working from home	18	13
Term-only contracts	20	16
Working part time	58	46
Job sharing	38	28
Workplace nursery	8	3
Child care subsidies	7	4

TABLE 4
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES: CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Parental Leave	Working from Home	Term-Only Contracts	Part Time	Job Sharing	Workplace Nursery
Parental leave						
Working from home	62.09					
Term-only contracts	70.04	86.7				
Part time	207.6	117.4	170.4			
Job sharing	227.9	157.5	201.1	561.7		
Workplace nursery	28.7	63.6	142.5	42.2	109.4	
Child care subsidies	36.9	60.9	7.3	34.6	89.1	92.6

NOTE: All the chi-square tests are significant at 0.001 level.

As Table 4 shows, chi-square tests on all the pairs of family-friendly practices imply coexistence within the data. The associations among variables turned out to be positive in all cases, including that between workplace nursery provision and child care subsidy. Contrary to what one might expect, we find no substitution effect between the provision of these two practices. That is, a workplace that has one of the two practices is more likely to have the other.

The latent trait analysis of all family-friendly practices, which tested whether the associations among family-friendly practices are reducible to a unidimensional structure, was not successful. All goodness-of-fit measures that we used rejected these hypotheses. Table 5 shows that $(O - E)^2/E$ is above 4 in eight pairs of items in this model (1). The two child care items—provision of a workplace nursery and child care subsidy—are responsible for these high residual associations.

We thus tested whether this reflects the existence of two underlying variables, perhaps one relating to flexible working practices and the other to child care facilities by fitting a two-factor model. The results displayed in Table 5 (model 2) do not support this hypothesis: The fit does not improve, and the same child care items are the problematic pairs and triplets. That is, such items are associated independently of the variables being measured and could themselves be conceived of as a single variable. However, combining the two child care items into one does not solve the problem. When provision of a workplace creche and child care subsidy are removed from the model, the fit improves dramatically (Table 5, model 3), and all $(O - E)^2/E$ statistics are nearly zero. This suggests that the relationship between the family-friendly practices associated with flexible working arrangements is explained by a common factor, but the provision of facilities and/or financial support for child care is discrete from this. We thus reject our first

TABLE 5

DISCRIMINATION COEFFICIENTS FROM LATENT TRAIT MODELS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY, HIGH-COMMITMENT, AND EQUAL-OPPORTUNITIES PRACTICES

Model Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	α	α	α	α	α	α	α	α
Number of factors	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Family-friendly practices								
Parental leave	0.74	0.61	0.41	0.73	0.77	0.70	0.72	
Working from home	0.77	0.64	0.42	0.75	0.74	0.67	0.67	
Term-only contracts	0.80	0.67	0.44	0.80	0.77	0.71	0.71	
Working part time	0.94	0.78	0.52	0.95	0.90	0.78	0.79	
Job sharing	0.96	0.80	0.53	0.95	0.91	0.84	0.84	
Workplace nursery	0.82	0.68	0.45					
Child care subsidies	0.76	0.64	0.42					
High-commitment management								
Teamworking				0.68		0.66	0.65	
Functional flexibility				0.25		0.26	0.30	
Quality circles				0.56		0.58	0.59	
Suggestion schemes				0.54		0.53	0.53	
Team briefing				0.79		0.77	0.76	
Induction				0.67		0.67	0.68	
Training in human resources				0.69		0.63	0.61	
Information disclosure				0.76		0.71	0.70	
Appraisal						0.52	0.50	
Equal-opportunity policies								
Records on ethnic origin of employees					0.90	0.89	0.90	0.88
Statistics on posts held by men and women					0.96	0.94	0.95	0.95
Promotions monitored by gender, ethnicity, etc.					0.97	0.95	0.96	0.95
Review of selection to identify indirect discrimination					0.93	0.92	0.93	0.92
Review of relative pay of different groups					0.81	0.76	0.80	0.77
Adjustments to accommodate disabled employees					0.87	0.89	0.88	0.89
No. of actual response patterns	90	90	33	1,212	61	1,907	1,311	568
No. of $[(O - E)^2/E] > 4$	8	8	0	131	2	465	54	43
Maximum $[(O - E)^2/E]$	8.07	8.31	0.57	25.84	5.41	32.4	16.34	81.08
% G^2 explained	60.29	60.28	68.96	31.92	87.83	27.02	39.82	59.94
N	2,191	2,191	2,191	2,191	2,191	2,191	2,191	2,191

NOTE: α is the standardized alphas or discrimination parameters of the practice.

hypothesis because our results show that employers approach flexible working arrangements and child care in distinct ways. Family-friendly management is not a single unidimensional phenomenon.

Table 5 displays the standardized coefficients (analogous to factor loadings in factor analysis) for the latent trait model of the flexible practices. They show that all practices contribute strongly to the latent variable, offering the opportunity to work part time and job sharing are the strongest indicators of this measure.

Testing hypothesis 10: The latent variable analysis of family-friendly and high-commitment practices. Family-friendly and high-commitment practices do not form a unity in the data. Leaving out the two family-friendly practices that are not indicators of the underlying family-friendly management orientation (workplace nursery and child care subsidy), neither a one-factor latent trait model (see Table 5, model 4) nor a latent class model fitted well. Furthermore, they do not imply two distinct factors because a two-factor model also did not fit the data. As a consequence, we reject hypothesis 10.

Testing hypothesis 12: The latent variable analysis of family-friendly and equal-opportunity practices. Table 5 (model 5) shows the results of fitting one single latent trait model to both family-friendly and equal-opportunity practices. We again left out workplace nursery and child care subsidy. The lack of fit of this model suggests that family-friendly and equal-opportunity practices do not form a unity. We therefore can reject hypothesis 12.

Testing hypothesis 13: The latent variable analysis of family-friendly, equal-opportunity, and high-commitment practices. A latent trait model of all family-friendly, high-commitment, and equal-opportunity practice was unsuccessful (see Table 5, model 6), suggesting that they are different underlying concepts. This negative result could be due to the difficulty in fitting any latent trait model to such a large number of practices (20). Yet we also know that two of the three possible combinations of two subsets are not reducible to a single dimension—family-friendly plus equal-opportunity practices and family-friendly plus high-commitment practices. The analysis of the remaining combination—high-commitment and equal-opportunity practices—confirmed the discreteness of the three subsets of variables (Table 5, model 7). Consequently, we reject hypothesis 13.

So far our results reject hypotheses 1, 10, 12, and 13. However, we were able to fit a latent trait variable to the set of flexible working practices that excluded nursery and child care subsidies practices. This latent dimension

reflects the dependencies among only a subset of family-friendly practices. Accordingly, we cannot treat it as a measure of a holistic friendly-family management. We therefore will treat the latent variable based on the flexible practices as a measure of family-oriented flexible management. We thus have to assess the determinants of this underlying factor separately from the determinants of the provision of child care.

In the analyses that follow, family-oriented flexible management is measured by a latent score of each workplace in the latent dimension (respective value of the latent variable) that resulted from fitting the logit-probit latent trait model to the data. As in factor analysis, factor scores rank individuals according to the discriminatory importance (as measured by the standardised coefficients) of the practice in the model. These scores are more appropriate than an index that aggregates the family-friendly practices. The latter would imply that management does not discriminate between practices, an assumption that is not supported by our results.

In order to measure child care provision, we created an ordered variable that takes the following values: 0 if neither a workplace nursery nor child care subsidy is provided, 1 if one or other of them is offered, and 2 when both practices are available.

The family-oriented flexible management and child care measures are only weakly correlated (weighted $r = 0.25$). This relationship is strongly affected by the fact that 25.9 percent of workplaces in the WERS98 sample (equivalent to 37.64 percent in Great Britain) have none of the flexible practices or the child care practices. All those with no child care practices score below average on the family-oriented flexible management scale. In contrast, those who have some form of child care have a 95 percent chance of being in the top half of the distribution on family-oriented flexible management.

The family-oriented flexible management is barely correlated with the measure of the employer's commitment to help employees balance work and family responsibilities ($r = 0.12$). This implies that the systematic provision of flexible work practices is an expression of an underlying managerial orientation that is not strongly rooted in values. The child care measure is more strongly correlated with this employer's commitment ($r = 0.30$).

Regression Analysis of the Determinants of Family-Friendly Management

The second stage of this study aims at explaining the variability in the provision of the family-friendly approach. Having found that flexible and child care types of family-friendly management are discrete, we test the

TABLE 6

LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS OF HIGH-COMMITMENT PRACTICES: THE PROBABILITY OF HAVING A PRACTICE IF WORKPLACE IN CLASS

Model	Three Classes		
	Minimal HIM	Partial HIM	Full HIM
Teamworking	0.39	0.64	0.90
Functional flexibility	0.32	0.40	0.70
Quality circles	0.10	0.44	0.75
Suggestion scheme	0.09	0.35	0.59
Team briefing	0.51	0.92	0.99
Induction	0.51	0.85	0.96
Training in human relations	0.09	0.45	0.79
Information disclosure	0.47	0.89	0.97
Appraisal	0.25	0.48	0.82
Percentage (weighted)	26.3	49.4	24.2
Chi-square			453.9
Log likelihood			395.1
Degrees of freedom			265
<i>N</i>			2,060

hypotheses about the predictors of family-friendly management on both. We used regression analysis, employing the measures of family-oriented flexible management and child care provision that were outlined earlier as the dependent variables.

Further investigation of the relationships among the nine high-commitment practices revealed that neither a one-factor nor a two-factor latent trait model fitted the data as well a three latent class model. This implies that the underlying orientation toward high-commitment management is categorical rather than continuous. There is a progression along the high-commitment scale that is not an inevitable characteristic of latent class models with good fits. The three classes can be taken to represent minimal, partial, and full high-commitment orientation (Table 6) and were used in the analysis as an independent variable.

Analysis of the six equal-opportunity practices also showed that a one-factor model could be fitted (Table 5, model 8). While two pairs of items had residual values over four, these involved only two separate pairings, and the percentage of G^2 explained was relatively high (87.93). The latent scores derived from this latent trait analysis of equal-opportunity practices were used for measuring an equal-opportunity orientation.

Testing hypotheses 2 through 9, 11, 14, and 15: Predictors of the flexible family-friendly orientation. The results of the regression analysis on

family-friendly flexible management are presented in Table 7.⁴ They first reveal that some of the predictors related to the institutional perspective are significant. The adoption a family-friendly flexible management is related to being in the public sector and health industry. It also appears to decrease when the overall organization to which the workplace belongs is small. However, its extent does not increase consistently with size. By contrast, the number of employees in the workplace and whether it belongs to a larger organization do not seem to relate to family-oriented flexible management. In addition to the health sector, workplaces in financial services are more likely to adopt this style than the reference category (wholesale and retailing).

As for the predictors associated with the organizational adaptation perspective, employers' concern for the employees' work-family balance is not significant. Only the presence of a personnel department among the employer awareness variables is significant. Having a consultative approach and union representation has no strong impact. When the significant variable, personnel department, is omitted from the equation, the other measures of a consultative approach remain insignificant. The proportion of women in the workplace is strongly linked to family-oriented flexible management. In contrast, having an educated workforce or a high proportion of professional and technical employees or managers is not. There is also no support for the business strategy thesis, since the adoption of TQM strategy is not associated with the family-oriented flexible management. Size of either the workplace or the larger organization does not moderate the impact of concern on family-oriented flexible management.

None of the variables relating to the high-commitment perspective are significantly related to family-friendly orientation. There is strong support for the equal-opportunity perspective: An equal-opportunity orientation has a strong positive impact on family-oriented flexible management.

Finally, only the proportion of females emerges as significant within the situational factors perspective. The difficulty in filling vacancies and the proportion of employees with children of various ages appear to exert no influence on adoption of family-oriented flexible management.

The analysis thus supports hypotheses 5 and 12 concerning the proportion of females in the workplace and equal opportunity. Key elements of hypothesis 2 are supported, including the association of high levels of family-oriented flexible management with the health sector. Since only one

⁴ Because of the high frequency of workplaces at the low end of the distribution of family-oriented flexible management, we would have used a tobit regression. However, this model is not available in conjunction with the STATA command that is required to handle a weighted analysis in STATA. Hence we ran an interval regression. The results were similar to the ordinary least squares model, with the exception of a few higher coefficients.

TABLE 7
 PREDICTORS OF FAMILY-ORIENTED FLEXIBLE MANAGEMENT
 (WEIGHTED ORDINARY LEAST SQUARES MODEL)

	β	<i>t</i>
Institutional perspective		
Employment level	0.00	0.3
Size of larger organization < 100 employees	-0.35***	2.8
Size of larger organization 100 to 999 employees	-0.15	1.4
Size of larger organization 1000 to 4999 employees	-0.34***	3.5
Size of larger organization 5000 to 49,999 employees (reference category)		
Size of larger organization > 50,000 employees	0.21**	2.1
Public sector	0.24**	2.1
Industry		
Manufacturing	-0.06	0.7
Electricity, gas and water	0.10	0.5
Construction	-0.01	0.1
Wholesale and retailing (reference category)		
Hotels and restaurants	-0.03	0.3
Transport and communication	0.15	1.2
Financial Services	0.28*	1.7
Other business services	-0.00	0.0
Public Administration	0.29	1.4
Education	0.17	1.1
Health	0.22*	1.8
Other community services	-0.01	0.0
Organizational adaptation perspective		
Concern for family-work balance	-0.03	0.2
Concern for family-work balance \times employment level	0.00	0.2
Consultative approach	0.02	0.4
Personnel department	0.29***	3.7
Recognized union	0.02	0.3
Educated workforce	-0.02	0.2
Percentage of female employees	0.51***	3.8
Proportion of technical and professional employees	0.00	0.2
Proportion of managerial employees	0.01	1.4
Quality strategy (total quality management)	0.03	0.8
High-commitment perspective		
Importance given to commitment	-0.04	1.5
Importance given to human resources	0.06	1.7
Minimal high-commitment management	-0.07	1.0
Partial high-commitment management (reference category)		
Full high-commitment management	-0.03	0.4
Enriched Jobs	-0.01	0.5
Equal-opportunity perspective		
Equal-opportunity practice	0.2***	5.6
Situational perspective		
High proportion of parents with children at preschool age	0.0	0.6
High proportion of parents with children under 18	-0.03	0.4
Difficulties in filling vacancies	0.01	0.3
R^2	0.49	
<i>F</i> statistics (42, 1214)	25.97***	
<i>n</i>	1325	

NOTE: Controlling for being part of a larger organization, employment change, proportion of part-timers, and additional occupational composition measures.

*, **Significant at, respectively, 5 and 1 percent level in a one-tailed test.

of the variables used to measure employers' awareness is significant, hypothesis 4 is only supported to a very limited extent.

Hypotheses 3 and 7—two strong hypotheses of the organizational adaptation approach—concerning employers' values and their interaction with workplace size are not confirmed. In addition, we tested whether the significant employee awareness variable (personnel department) or equal-opportunity orientation mediates the impact of concern for work and family balance, but this is not the case.

Child care provision. In order to assess the determinants of child care provision, we conducted an ordered-probit analysis on the measure of child care provision. The results are presented in Table 8. Only a very limited number of variables that were significant predictors of family-oriented flexible management have an impact on child care provision. In particular, the presence of a personnel department, being in health and financial services, and the percentage of women exert a positive impact on both child care provision and family-oriented flexible management.

There are several important differences in the predictors. First, child care provision is associated with the workplace size measure, not the organizational one. Second, it is related to a larger range of industries. Only manufacturing and transport and communications are less likely to adopt child care provisions relative to wholesale and retailing. Third, the values of managers toward the family-work balance and TQM are both significant. Fourth, full high-commitment and two of the situational measures—parents with children under 18 and difficulties in filling vacancies—are significantly negatively, not positively, related to the provision of child care. In addition to organizational size, being in the public sector and the proportion of females have no effect on child care provision.

Conclusions

The most significant finding of this research is that in Great Britain family-friendly management is not an integrated phenomenon. First, our latent trait analysis shows evidence of a systematic (unidimensional) pattern among only one type of family-friendly practice, that connected with flexible working arrangements. This is indicative of what we have termed a *family-oriented flexible management*. Second, this form of management is not manifested in—and hence is distinct from—the provision of child care help. Third, it is not part of a broader management that incorporates high-commitment management and equal opportunities. Finally, the presence of

TABLE 8
PREDICTORS OF CHILD CARE PROVISION (WEIGHTED ORDERED PROBIT MODEL)

	β	<i>t</i>
Institutional perspective		
Employment level	5*10 ⁻⁴	*1.9
Size of larger organization < 100 employees	0.25	0.3
Size of larger organization 100 to 999 employees	0.44	0.8
Size of larger organization 1000 to 4999 employees	0.07	0.2
Size of larger organization 5000 to 49,999 employees (ref. cat.)		
Size of larger organization > 50,000 employees	0.19	0.4
Public sector	0.71	1.1
Industry		
Manufacturing	1.8	1.6
Electricity, gas and water	5.4***	4.7
Construction	2.7*	1.9
Wholesale and retailing (reference category)		
Hotels and restaurants	2.1**	2.0
Transport and communication	1.7	1.2
Financial Services	2.5**	2.3
Other business services	3.0***	2.8
Public Administration	2.7**	2.2
Education	3.9***	3.4
Health	3.5***	3.2
Other community services	3.2***	2.8
Organizational adaptation perspective		
Concern for family-work balance	1.81**	2.5
Concern for family-work balance × employment level	-0.01	1.1
Consultative approach	0.09	0.4
Personnel department	1.1***	2.8
Recognized union	0.54	1.3
Educated workforce	-0.68	1.2
Percentage of female employees	3.03***	3.6
Proportion of technical and professional employees	0.01	0.8
Proportion of managerial employees	-0.02	1.0
Quality strategy (total quality management)	0.85***	3.2
High-commitment perspective		
Importance given to commitment	0.02	0.1
Importance given to human resources	0.02	0.1
Minimal high-commitment management	-0.27	0.6
Partial high-commitment management (reference category)		
Full high-commitment management	-1.21***	2.9
Enriched jobs	0.01	0.1
Equal-opportunity perspective		
Equal-opportunity practice	0.21	0.9
Situational perspective		
High proportion of parents with children at preschool age	0.14	0.3
High proportion of parents with children under 18	-1.05**	2.1
Difficulties in filling vacancies	-0.70**	2.2
<i>F</i> (44, 1209)		3.87***
<i>n</i>		1322

NOTE: Controlling for being part of a larger organization, employment change, proportion of part-timers, and additional occupational composition measures.

*, **Significant at, respectively, 5 and 1 percent level in a one-tailed test.

family-oriented flexible management reveals nothing about management's valuing employees' striking a good work-family balance, suggesting that the development of family-friendly management is not underpinned by strong normative assumptions about the family.

Management in the average British workplace is not practicing family-friendly flexible management. Those managements that do are likely to be in large organizations that have personnel departments, an equal-opportunity approach, or a high proportion of female, well-educated employee managers among their workforces. Such managements are also more likely to provide child care assistance, although child care is more likely to be found in large workplaces (not necessarily organizations) and where management does value a healthy family-work balance and have a quality strategy (as proxied by TQM).

The extreme versions of all theories are clearly rejected by the data. The multidimensional nature of the response of employers to an assumed societal pressure and the lack of fit between family-friendly, high-commitment, and equal-opportunity practices refute the institutional, high-commitment, and equal-opportunity perspectives. The systematic pattern in the provision of the family-oriented flexible practices questions the situational perspective. Moreover, situational factors other than the female share of the workforce are not important predictors of either family-friendly flexible management or child care provision.

The organizational adaptation perspective is in many ways an umbrella perspective and probably fares best of all the theories. Its value in pointing to the need to empirically test the nature of the association among family-oriented practices certainly has been vindicated. Managements do not appear to be treating the societal pressures deriving from the changing nature of the workforce and the family as a whole. The pressure to create flexible working arrangements is discrete from that to create substitutes for the time and energy of employees. The low provision of child care facilities suggests that the former pressure is more telling than the latter (although it is not necessarily a reason for its distinctiveness). Yet the hypotheses concerning the determinants of family-friendly management of the organizational adaptation perspective are supported no more strongly than the others in the case of the family-oriented flexible management. They perform slightly better in the case of child care provision. The proportion of female employees, significant in both cases, suggests that local factors have some importance.

Strong versions of the five theories analyzed here are clearly competitors, but weaker versions can be seen as complementary. Given the lack of support for any strong version of the theories and the heterogeneous nature of the

determinants of family-friendly flexible management, we may conclude that in Great Britain these theories are complementary. This might suggest that attention should focus on the development of a new theory based on the overlapping elements. Our judgment is that the organizational adaptation perspective copes sufficiently with these overlaps to justify further attention.

The implication of our findings for future research is, however, more fundamental. If we are to remain within an institutional perspective, we need a theory that can explain how societal pressures are placed into specific compartments in the process of interpretation. It may be that in certain of these “compartments,” it becomes more legitimate for employers to evoke economic calculations in determining their response to the pressure. Paradoxically, it may then be in these areas that employers’ values become more salient because the economic benefits are not apparent or less easily assessed.

If we apply the preceding conjecture to this study, we might hypothesize that employers apply a cost-benefit evaluation to child care provision and that there being no tangible net gains, a value commitment has to override any economic assessment. In contrast, flexibility in employees’ working time and space becomes more symbolic of a meaningful response to the societal pressure to balance family and work. The WERS98 data set lacks data on whether employers’ approach the work-family nexus in cost-benefit terms and their perceptions of the costs and benefits of particular practices. We are thus not able to test this conjecture.

In contrast to our results for Great Britain, analysis of U.S. data, albeit for private-sector organizations only, suggests that family-friendly management is more developed across the Atlantic (Wood 1999a). A latent trait model could be fitted to a range of family-friendly practices that extended beyond child care. While family-friendly management was associated with similar variables to those in this study, it was also linked positively to management’s having a commitment to helping employees’ work-family balance, management’s adopting a consultative approach, union representation, and the education level of the workforce. Both company-level and workplace measures of employment were related to family-friendly management. The perceived positive impact of family-friendly practices was measured in the U.S. study, and it also was significantly related to it. The proportion of females in the workforce was not significantly related to family-friendly management, although it was when non-child care practices were excluded from the measure, which is the more direct comparison with the present study. Finally, the interaction between size and management’s having a commitment to helping employees’ work-family balance was significant, suggesting that the employees’ values moderate the effects of institutional pressures.

In short, there is much stronger support for the organizational adaptation perspective in the comparable U.S. study. Family-friendly management seems to be an altogether more integrated affair than it is in Great Britain. It would appear that the majority of organizations in Great Britain are either prior to or at what Friedman and Johnson (1996) call the stage 1 of the work-family agenda, namely, where the issues are largely defined in terms of mothers and child care.

The evidence from the U.S. study, however, is that family-friendly management was still discrete from high-commitment management. This we might expect if there were a move toward Friedman and Johnson's stages 3 and 4. The U.S. study did not include data on equal-opportunity practices. The present study, by incorporating equal-opportunity practices into the analysis of family-friendly practices, has revealed that a relationship between these exists in Great Britain, although they remain discrete.

This research has gone some way toward dispelling the view that values are vital for the development of family-friendly practices, since other factors have been found to be important. That the proportion of females is important for the development of both a family-oriented flexible management orientation and the provision of child care support suggests that employers may be partly responding to pressures and that their values are not all-important. The research certainly implies that the equal-opportunity agenda can increase the extent of family-friendly management.

The lack of a significant link between high-commitment management and family-friendly practice need not imply, given the current level of institutionalization of the latter, that intensive employee involvement will have no long-term effect on management's approach to the family. This is particularly likely to be so if emphasising involvement were part of a more integrated societal-wide initiative. A number of bodies in Great Britain now recognize the importance of high involvement (e.g., in Great Britain through the government's Investors in People initiative or the policies of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, as well as statutes). Coordinating the various government programs aimed at reform in this area and focusing them more on work-family and equality issues may yet have an added payoff.

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