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Family-Friendly Backlash - Fact or Fiction?:

The Case of Organizations' On-Site Child Care Centers

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Abstract

Employer offerings of on-site child care benefits have grown tremendously in the past few decades; both beneficial and detrimental effects on worker attitudes and behaviors have been noted. Some research suggests that offering on-site child care benefits can cause resentment among childless workers and / or workers with children who do not use the center. In a field sample of 271 employees, current and past use of the on-site child care center as well as anticipated future use of the on-site child care center were related to more positive proximal reactions such as attitudes closely related to the on-site child care center, but not to more general attitudes or behaviors. Results indicate that any "family-friendly backlash" may be limited to proximal reactions. These findings are discussed in light of organizational justice theories.

During the last few decades, employer-supported family-friendly policies and benefits have grown tremendously (Friedman, 1990; Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990). Employers are judged in the popular and business presses for their degree of "family-friendliness" based partially on the extent to which they offer child-care-related services to employees, and many business publications have advocated such policies as both humanistic and good business responses to employees' changing needs (e.g., Faught, 1995). However, dissenting views questioning the value of family-friendly policies and benefits have emerged in the business presses (e.g., Harris, 1997; Jenner, 1994; Williams, 1994). According to some, a "family-friendly backlash" is occurring; childless workers may be resentful about family benefits. One manifestation of this resentment and backlash is the formation of the organization The Childfree Network, which is an advocacy group that serves as a voice for childless workers; although it is a small organization compared to the total numbers of childless workers in the labor force, its membership has grown from 2,000 in 1994 to 5,000 in 1997 (Harris, 1997; Jenner, 1994). In addition, workers with children who do not get to use family-friendly benefits may also be resentful; Kossek & Nichol (1992) document a "frustration effect" occurring with workers on a waiting list for their employers' on-site child care center.

Justice theories (for a review, see Greenberg (1987)) may help explain this potential resentment; these theories state that individuals have certain values or norms regarding how employee rewards should be allocated. Work by Leventhal (1976) and Lerner (1977) suggests that when the goal of reward allocation is productivity, equity-based allocation principles are used (reward allocation based on inputs such as effort or performance; Adams, 1963; Leventhal, 1976); when team-building and good social relationships are the goal, equality-based allocation principles are used (all receive rewards of equal value; Deutsch, 1975; Lerner, 1977); and when there is a sense of social responsibility, need-based allocation

is viewed as just (rewards allocated according to need; Deutsch, 1975; Greenberg, 1987; Schwinger, 1986). Productivity is the stated goal in for-profit organizations, and team-building is often seen as a means to the end of productivity; social responsibility, however, is not a primary goal of for-profit organizations. Thus, violations from equity- and equality-based allocation values are often viewed as unjust in business and economic exchange situations. Some results of perceived violations of justice in organizations are dissatisfaction, lower commitment, and withdrawal for workers who do not receive the rewards, according to both theory and empirical research on organizational justice (Adams, 1963; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Lerner, 1977; Leventhal, 1976). Thus resentment is caused by the perceived injustice as well as by self-interest; individuals are more likely to view policies they benefit from as fair, and less resentment is likely, whereas those who do not benefit from the policy are more likely to view it as unfair and may demonstrate resentment (Grover, 1991; Grover & Crooker, 1995).

Benefits offered only to workers with children, or only to some workers with children, violate both equity- and equality-based reward allocation values; therefore, workers who do not receive these benefits (or benefits of equal value) may experience resentment which is manifested in less positive attitudes about the benefits and the organization. In this study, we examine the attitudes and behaviors of groups of workers with different types of self-interest in on-site child care. On-site child care is one of the most visible benefits offered only to workers with children. One member of The Childfree Network stated, "An on-site child care center (is an icon) of all the money that companies spend on employees with children. (It is) a constant reminder of all the benefit dollars that aren't spent on us." (Harris, 1997, p. 30).

Previous research of on-site child care suggests that workers who do not receive this benefit may have less positive attitudes toward the centers (Goff,

et al., 1990; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). This research includes measures of attitudes directly related to the center (e.g., perceived recruiting and retention effects of the center in Kossek & Nichol, 1992), and, in some cases, employee behaviors (e.g., absenteeism in Goff, et al., 1990). However, research has not included measures of general employee attitudes such as job satisfaction. We measure employee attitudes directly related to the center and employee behaviors, as in prior research, but we also measure several more general work attitudes. These attitudes and behaviors can be placed on a continuum from proximal reactions to the center (e.g., perceived recruiting and retention effect, satisfaction with organizational support for the care of loved ones), to more general reactions (e.g., satisfaction with benefits, overall job satisfaction) and behavioral reactions (e.g., intention to quit, turnover). This is important because in order to understand the overall effect of on-site child care on employee attitudes and behaviors, it is not safe to assume that any resentment evident in attitudes specific to the child care center (proximal reactions) such as those found in previous research (e.g., Kossek & Nichol, 1992), generalizes to other attitudes and behaviors.

Existing research also generally measures only two groups of employees (users and non-users in Goff, et al., 1990; on-site center users and those on the waiting list for the on-site center in Kossek and Nichol, 1992). We examine the reactions of non-users who anticipate future use of the center separately from non-users who have used the center in the past, non-users who don't plan to ever use the center, and users of the center. This is important because in order to understand the effect of on-site child care on the organization, it is important to look at all employees in the organization. In addition, it may be important to be aware that non-users may also have a self-interest (past or future) in the center.

Research Framework

The effect of having benefited from one's employer's on-site child care center in the past (past use) or expecting to benefit from it in the future (future use) may be different from each other and from the effect of current use. In general, individuals who are currently using the center, who have used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future may have more positive attitudes toward it than individuals with no potential to benefit from it. Based on past research and organizational justice theories, we hypothesize that workers with current, future, or past use of the on-site child care center will have more positive proximal reactions to the center than workers who never have used it and don't anticipate using it (those with "no use"). Perceived recruiting and retention effect and satisfaction with organizational support for the care of loved ones are both directly related to on-site child care.

Hypothesis 1a. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have higher perceived recruiting and retention effect of the on-site child care center than workers with no use of the center.

Hypothesis 1b. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have higher levels of satisfaction with organizational support for care of loved ones than workers with no use of the center.

In addition, based on Kossek & Nichol's (1992) finding that a group of on-site child care users had more positive perceived recruiting and retention effect than a group on the waiting list for the center (they labeled this a "frustration effect" which may be a form of resentment or backlash), it may be that current users will have more positive proximal reactions than future and past users. However, no studies have examined future users not on a waiting list in conjunction with those on the waiting list, nor have other studies examined past users. Thus, no hypotheses

were advanced regarding the different types of use.

As stated above, previous research of on-site child care has not measured more general reactions such as work attitudes. Related research exhibits mixed results with respect to the relationship between other family benefits and general work attitudes (Grover, 1991; Grover & Crooker, 1995). Although not specific to on-site child care, Grover and Crooker (1995) found that the availability of child care assistance did not relate to organizational commitment more for those workers with children than for those without children. Other general attitudes have not been measured in prior research. However, justice theories explicitly state that violations of justice will result in more negative attitudes for those who do not benefit from the perceived violation (Lerner, 1977; Leventhal, 1976), thus we may expect lower general attitudes from those who do not benefit from an on-site child care center. However, many other factors contribute to general attitudes as well. Satisfaction with benefits may be affected not just by satisfaction with the on-site center, but also by satisfaction with medical benefits, life insurance benefits, flexibility, and other benefits. Similarly, overall job satisfaction is affected by many aspects or facets of the job (Locke, 1976; Rothausen, 1994a). Thus, justice and self-interest concepts suggest that we might expect that having current use, past use, or future use interests in the on-site child care center will be related to having higher levels of general reactions such as satisfaction with benefits and overall global job satisfaction, however other factors affect these general attitudes so that we would expect the effect to be less strong than for more proximal attitudes.

Hypothesis 2a. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have higher levels of satisfaction with the benefits facet of the job than workers with no use of the center.

Hypothesis 2b. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have higher levels of overall global job satisfaction than workers with no use of the center.

Hypothesis 2c. The relationships between use of the on-site child care center and satisfaction with benefits and overall global job satisfaction (general reactions) will not be as strong as the relationship between use and perceived recruiting and retention effects and satisfaction with care support (proximal reactions).

In contrast to the complete lack of empirical research on the relationship between use of on-site child care and general employee attitudes, a few studies have examined the relationship between use and employee behaviors. In his review of this topic, Miller (1984) found only two studies, and those exhibited mixed results for the relationship between use of on-site child care and absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, and performance. He concluded that the mixed results were at least partially due to the researchers' not controlling for the potential effects of age, responsibility for children, and marital status. Since Miller (1984), two studies have controlled for these variables more consistently and found no relationship between use of on-site child care and absenteeism or performance (Goff, et al., 1990; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). However, Kossek and Nichol (1992) did find a relationship between on-site child care use and tenure, and concluded that interest in on-site child care may affect membership behaviors in an organization with on-site child care. This finding has alternative explanations, however, including the reverse causal order (i.e., the waiting list procedure includes a tenure consideration or new employees with children are last on the waiting list, and also have the lowest tenure). Thus, empirical results are inconclusive.

Justice theories, however, suggest that one result of violations of justice

may be withdrawal from the situation for those who do not benefit from the violation (Adams, 1963). As with general attitudes, however, many other factors contribute to intention to quit and turnover; turnover intention is caused, in part, by overall job satisfaction (Farkas & Tetrick, 1989; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979), and theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that turnover intentions lead to actual turnover (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Mobley, et al., 1979; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). However, people who are more attached to an organization may be less likely to leave it; employees may be attached through a benefit they are receiving or expect to receive, or through loyalty due to a benefit received in the past (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994). Thus, we expect that use of the on-site child care center will be related to withdrawal intentions and behavior, beyond the relationship explained by levels of satisfaction and behavioral intentions; however the relationships will not be as strong as the relationships between use and more proximal reactions.

Hypothesis 3a. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have lower levels of intention to quit than workers with no use of the center.

Hypothesis 3b. Workers who currently use the on-site child care center, who used it in the past, or who anticipate using it in the future will have lower levels of turnover than workers with no use of the center.

Hypothesis 3c. The relationships between use of the on-site child care center and intention to quit and turnover (behavioral reactions) will not be as strong as the relationship between use and perceived recruiting and retention effects and satisfaction with care support (proximal reactions).

Other factors may also affect employee reactions to the on-site child care center. On-site child care is a family benefit, and the effects of family on work

may be influenced by sex (Blegen, Mueller, & Price, 1988; Waite, Haggstrom, & Kanouse, 1985), marital status and the level of family responsibility (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Miller, 1984). In addition, age, education, and race often affect individuals in social situations and in the work-family area (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Miller, 1984). Because the main focus of this study is on the effect of use of the center on reactions, we will control for these potential effects.

Method

Design, Sample, and Procedures

Data were collected from two companies with on-site child care centers. The companies were chosen because of the presence of on-site child care as a benefit available to all employees at the company and willingness to participate in the study. One company is an insurance company with approximately 2,600 total employees in a large city, the other is a custom fabric manufacturing company with approximately 300 employees in a small town. In both companies, the on-site child care benefit was offered in addition to the standard benefits all workers received.

Employees were selected based on their membership in the following groups: those currently using the on-site child care center (all were selected; $n=147$), those on the waiting list for the on-site child care center (all were selected, $n=28$), and those not using and not on the waiting list for the on-site child care center (this latter group includes individuals who have used the center in the past, those who anticipate using the center in the future although they are not currently on the waiting list, and those who never used the center and do not plan to; all other employees in the custom fabric manufacturing company and a random sample of remaining employees in the insurance company were selected; $n=440$). Thus 615 individuals received surveys. A cover letter explaining the project was included with the survey, as well as a postage-paid return envelope. Participants

were assured, in writing, that their responses were confidential.

Three hundred twenty eight people (53%) returned surveys. Complete data were available for 271 people. The average age of these respondents was 34.5 (SD=5.7) years, and most were white (93%), married (79%), and female (69%). The majority (98.7%) had a high school diploma, and approximately half (54.9%) had at least a college degree.

In addition, turnover data were collected from the companies' Human Resource Department representatives one year after the surveys were completed.

Survey Measures

For all attitude and intention variables measured, a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from very dissatisfied or strongly disagree (1) to very satisfied or strongly agree (5) was used for all items. For each scale, responses were averaged across items. In addition to attitude and intention variables, items asking about demographics and family and child care status were asked in order to determine current, past, future, and no use of the on site child care center. See Appendix for non-published included items.

Dependent variables

Proximal reactions. The perceived recruiting and retention effect of the center was measured with two items based on Kossek and Nichol (1992). Satisfaction with care support measures the extent to which the worker is satisfied with the amount of company support for day care programs for loved ones; it was measured with three items designed to be worded similarly to Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire items (MSQ; Weiss, et al., 1967; see Rothausen, 1994b).

General reactions. Satisfaction with benefits measures the worker's satisfaction with the benefits plan and its fairness; it was measured with three items designed to be worded similarly to Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire items (MSQ; Weiss, et al., 1967; see Rothausen, 1994b). Overall job satisfaction was

measured using five items adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1976).

Behavioral reactions. Intention to quit was measured using four items which were adapted from a scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979). Turnover data were collected from the companies' Human Resource Departments one year after the survey data were collected and were coded turnover=1 if the individual was no longer employed by the company and turnover=0 if the individual was still employed by the company.

Independent variables

Use of the on-site center is a categorical variable and was measured by asking questions about the individual's family and child care situation (see Appendix). Four categories of employees were formed. Employees had either: 1) "current" interest in the center (those currently using the center, $n=80$), 2) "future" interest in the center (those with no children, but who anticipate having children and using the center, and those with day care age children who are on the waiting list for the center, $n=28$), 3) "past" interest in the center (those with children who used the center in the past, $n=25$), or 4) "none" or no interest in the center (those with children not in a previous category, and those with no children who do not anticipate using the center, $n=138$). Each survey respondent is a member of one of the four groups.

The level of responsibility for dependents (RFD) was measured using items adapted from Rothausen's (in press) RFD scale; RFD measures the responsibility an individual (and her/his spouse or partner, if applicable) have for dependents by weighting the numbers of dependents of different ages and with different living arrangements. Sex was measured with one item and coded 1=female and 0=male. Age was measured with one item, reported in years. Education was measured with one item with six categories (2=high school degree, 4= college degree, 6=graduate degree). Race was measured with one item with six categories; however, due to the

lack of diversity on race in this sample, race was coded 1=white, 0=other. Marital status was measured with one item and coded 1=married and 0=not married.

Analysis

All hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analyses to determine whether having current, future, past, and no use of the on-site center explained incremental variance beyond potential confounding and potential causal variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). As stated above, the effects of family on work may be influenced by sex (Blegen, et al., 1988; Waite, et al., 1985), marital status, and the level of family responsibility (Frone, et al., 1992; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Miller, 1984); in addition age, education, and race often affect individuals in social situations and in the work-family area (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Miller, 1984). Company affiliation may also be pertinent. Therefore, these seven variables were entered in a block as Step 1 of the hierarchical regression to control for their influence. In addition, if the focal independent variable had causal variables as discussed above, these variables were entered in Step 2, thereby also controlling for their effects. The focal independent variable, type of use of the on-site center, was entered in the final step of the hierarchical regression analyses.

Although structural equations modeling poses an alternative estimation technique for interrelated simultaneous equations (Browne, 1984), it was inapplicable here because of the categorical nature of most of the variables (Babakus, Ferguson & Joreskog, 1987; Bernstein & Teng, 1989; Boomsma, 1987; Rigdon & Ferguson, 1991). The use of hierarchical regression methods provides at least exploratory tests, and possibly weak confirmatory tests, of our hypotheses. These data were checked for appropriateness for regression analysis, and we found that the data are consistent with linear regression assumptions.

Results

Reliabilities, means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all the variables are presented in Table 1. Examination of this table indicates that the reliabilities for the measures are acceptable and that the attitude variables are moderately intercorrelated as expected a priori with attitude measures (Weiss, et al., 1967), and correlated with some demographic variables (e.g., education). The correlations among the included "use of the on-site child care" variables are small, indicating that each variable may represent a different dimension of use with unique information, and that collinearity would not be a problem in the regression equations with respect to these variables.

Hypotheses 1a-3c stated that workers with current, past, or future use of the on-site child care center would have more positive proximal, general, and behavioral reactions than workers with no use interests in the center, and that the relationships would be stronger for proximal reactions. In order to test these hypotheses, six hierarchical regression analyses were run entering the type of use of the on-site center in the final step. The significance of the change in R^2 on the final step will indicate whether or not use of the on-site child care center contributes any additional independent explanation of the variance in the dependent variables beyond that explained by the demographic and other related variables. The "use of the center" variable is represented by four categories (current, future, past, none); thus three categories must be entered into the equation, with the fourth functioning as the reference group (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The fourth group here, or the reference category, is employees with no use of the on-site child care center. Thus β s for the three categorical variables entered in the final step will be results for the three groups when compared to this reference group. For all regression equations, the variance inflation factors for all variables were close to 1, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem in these equations. In addition, the leverage and Cook's distance values (Cook, 1977;

cited in Norusis, 1993) obtained for each regression equation revealed that there are no outlying or influential data points that could undermine the analysis. The histograms of the standardized residuals follow normal distributions, suggesting constant error variance. The data was also checked for homoscedasticity through plots of residuals against predicted values and partial-residual plots for each independent variable. The results indicate homoscedasticity. These diagnostics suggest that the data are consistent with regression assumptions, and that regression analysis is appropriate to these data.

To test hypotheses 1a and 1b, hierarchical regressions were run on the perceived recruiting and retention effects of the center and satisfaction with care support. Results are presented in the first two columns of Table 2. When the demographic variables are controlled, interest in the on-site child care center explained additional variance in both proximal reactions and the β s were all positive; these results generally support both hypotheses 1a and 1b. In the equation for perceived recruiting and retention effect, the β s for current and future use were statistically significant and positive indicating that these groups were significantly different from the group with no use of the center, and in the equation for satisfaction with care support the β s for current and past use were statistically significant and positive indicating that these groups were significantly different from the group with no use of the center. Differences in these proximal attitudes among the four groups of users are depicted in Figure 1.

To test hypotheses 2a and 2b, hierarchical regressions were run on satisfaction with benefits and overall global job satisfaction. Results are presented in the third and fourth columns of Table 2. With the demographic variables controlled, the type of use variables did not explain significant additional variance, thus not supporting hypotheses 2a and 2b. To test hypothesis 2c, the results for hypotheses 1a and 1b were compared to the results for hypotheses 2a

and 2b. The results for hypotheses 1a and 1b were significant and the results for hypotheses 2a and 2b were not; this is supportive of hypothesis 2c.

To test hypotheses 3a and 3b, hierarchical regressions were run on intention to quit and turnover. Results are presented in the last two columns of Table 2. When demographic and potential causal variables are controlled, use of the on-site child care center did not explain additional variance in intention to quit or in turnover, thus not supporting hypotheses 3a and 3b. To test hypothesis 3c, the results for hypotheses 1a and 1b were compared to the results for hypotheses 3a and 3b. The results for hypotheses 1a and 1b were significant and the results for hypotheses 3a and 3b were not; this is supportive of hypothesis 3c.

Additional Exploratory Analysis

Grover (1991) found that workers who were of child-bearing age, who had children, and who held positive attitudes toward women were more likely to view hypothetical parental-leave policies as fair. Similarly, Grover & Crooker (1995) found that the availability of child care information was related to organizational commitment more for workers with children than for those without children. As stated earlier above, previous research has shown that the effects of family on work are influenced by sex, marital status, and the level of family responsibility. Thus, in addition to and within the groups of workers with current, past, future, and no use interests in the on-site child care center, reactions may vary by age, marital status, sex, and responsibility for children. That is, age, marital status, sex, and responsibility for children might moderate the relationships hypothesized above. As an exploratory analysis, 24 additional equations were run with another step added. For each dependent variable, four sets of interactions were entered after the final step. This additional step added interactions between the type of use of the center (current, future, past, none) and marital status, sex, responsibility for children, and age. The significance of the change in R^2 on the

final step will indicate whether or not these interactions contribute any additional independent explanation of the variance in the dependent variables beyond that explained by the demographic, other related variables, and the type of use variables. The results of this analysis did not suggest any type of substantial moderation.

Discussion

The results support the hypotheses which stated that current, future, and past users of the centers would have more positive proximal reactions to the center, and that this response would be stronger for proximal reactions than for general and behavioral reactions. The results do not support the hypotheses which stated that current, future, and past users of the centers would have more positive general and behavioral reactions. In addition, the results indicate that there are differences in the strength of the more positive proximal reactions between current, future, and past users. Several findings emerge from this study that support and add to previous research of on-site child care centers and family benefits. In addition, the results have interesting implications for companies interested in implementing on-site child care or other family-friendly benefits.

First, use of the center does not appear to be related to general work attitudes or behaviors directly, although it was related to more proximal reactions. These results suggest that any resentment or backlash which would be manifested either less positive or negative attitudes does not extend to general and behavioral reactions in this sample. This also suggests that within an organization, the benefit of the on-site child care center does not affect general attitudes and behaviors. Examination of the pattern of results in Tables 1 and 2 in conjunction with results from other research (Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Miller, 1984) suggests that within an organization, on-site child care affects proximal attitudes positively for current, future, and past users, and that these proximal attitudes

are related to more distal attitudes and behaviors. The effect of on-site child care on general worker attitudes and behaviors, then, within an organization, may be weak and indirect at most; positive impacts on current, future, and past users' proximal reactions do not seem to be off-set by any general backlash. However, offering on-site child care (or other "family-friendly" benefits) may have a larger and more positive effect when examined across organizations; Grover and Crooker (1995) found that employees in organizations with access to family-responsive benefits showed greater organizational commitment and expressed lower intention to quit their jobs compared to workers in organizations with no access to these benefits. Thus, although on-site child care may appear to have little impact on the general attitudes and behaviors of employees when looking within an organization, it might have great impact on overall levels of worker attitudes and behaviors when compared with levels of worker attitudes and behaviors in other organizations which do not have on-site child care centers. Organization-level research is needed to explore this possibility.

Second, the results suggest that there are differences between the different groups of users and non-users in proximal reactions to the center. Current and future users had more favorable impressions of perceived recruiting and retention effect than those with no use and current and past users had more satisfaction with care support than those with no use. One explanation for this is that current and future users are themselves staying at their organizations partially to be able to use this benefit and thus they directly see and report the perceived recruiting and retention effect of the center. On the other hand, current and past users have actually used the benefit and thus have higher satisfaction with the care support than both future users and non-users who have not ever used the center. Examination of Figure 1 indicates that current users report the highest satisfaction, followed by past users, then workers who plan to use the center in

the future and finally workers who do not use the center, never used it, and do not plan to use it. This may be due to current users being satisfied with the support because it is currently helping them, whereas past users have received help in the past, a more distant benefit. Future users and those with no use report neutral to low levels of satisfaction with care support overall because neither group has gotten to use the center. Overall, these results suggest that there are difference in proximal reactions to the center between different types of employees in the organization, and that current, past, anticipated future users may all have some more positive proximal reactions to the center, even though both past users and anticipated future users are currently "non-users."

When discussing the "frustration effect" (Kossek & Nichol, 1992) or "family-friendly backlash" (Williams, 1994), it is important to consider absolute levels of attitudes, in addition to comparing between groups. For instance, Kossek and Nichol (1992) found that for "perceived effect on recruitment and retention," employees on a waiting list for the center had an average response of 2.5, which is below the neutral response, and on-site users had a mean response of 4.0, above the neutral response. However, in other differences found by Kossek and Nichol, both groups' mean were above the neutral response (e.g. for perceived value of the center, 4.16 versus 4.40). They labeled both types of differences evidence of a "frustration effect." Thus, Kossek & Nichol (1992) imply that this frustration manifests in any relationship where employees on the waiting list exhibit "significantly less" positive attitudes toward the center. However, this term can be misleading, suggesting a negative relationship rather than a less positive one. In our study, all types of users and non-users reported overall positive satisfaction with care support. On the other hand, current and future users reported positive perceived recruiting and retention effect, whereas the past and not use groups reported below neutral responses (i.e., they believe that the center

does not have a positive perceived recruiting and retention effect).

Overall the results of this study are congruent with Kossek & Nichol (1992) in that the "frustration effect" or "backlash" may exist in worker attitudes about the center itself and select other closely related specific attitudes, but not in overall attitudes and behaviors. We suggest three possible explanations. First, it may be that the issue of on-site child care is too insignificant to impact things like overall worker attitudes and behaviors. Perhaps it is the totality of the family-friendly benefit package which may cause backlash, not just one benefit; however, on-site child care is one of the most visible family-friendly benefits. Although issues like this have led to the formation of employee interest groups such as The Childfree Network for promoting the interests of childless workers, and thus may be an important enough issue to potentially affect general attitudes and behaviors, it is interesting to note that of the entire population of childfree U.S. workers, only 5,000 workers belong to the Childfree Network despite its being in existence for at least four years (Harris, 1997). Thus, this group may be a vocal but small minority of all workers. Overall, the results of our study, should they generalize, suggest that family-friendly backlash may be more of a media-sensationalized issue than a real one.

A second alternative, but not inconsistent, explanation is that although equity- and equality- based allocation rules may dominate in general in business settings, some issues, such as employees' family issues, may elicit a more needs-based allocation value. Our hypotheses were based partially on the assumption, based on prior research, that equity- and equality- based norms exist in the workplace. Our failure to support our hypotheses here may suggest that needs-based allocation values may exist in organizations with respect to on-site child care. This would also explain why the Childfree Network is a relatively small organization. Some empirical evidence suggests that even in business settings,

social responsibility or need-based allocation values may exist (Lamm & Schwinger, 1983). The welfare of families and of the next generation of citizens and workers may be affected by organizational work-family policies, therefore, strong family-supportive policies in organizations may affect future outcomes for society as a whole (e.g. crime, poverty). Thus, it may be that workers generally view family needs as legitimate reasons to use need-based allocation in the workplace.

A third explanation is that on-site child care may be congruent with an equity based allocation value; childless workers may see the center as benefiting them because without it coworkers with children would likely be absent more or work less overtime, thereby possibly increasing childless workers' workload. This effect may overshadow any possible resentment of the benefit dollars that are being spent on workers with children. Future research which directly measures equity perceptions is needed to clarify this.

In summary, this study expands our understanding of the potential impact of on-site child care in three primary ways. First, we measure multiple types of employee attitudes from more proximal to more general, as well as measuring a behavioral intention and a behavior; this allows us to see how broad or how specific any type of resentment or backlash might be. Previous research of on-site child care had not included facet satisfactions or general work attitudes. This is important because to understand the overall effect of the benefit on employee attitudes and behaviors, it is not safe to assume that because attitudes specific to the child-care center are affected, that other attitudes will be as well. Second, in this study we examined all employees in the organization with varying types of potential benefit from on-site child care (i.e., current, past, future, none); previous studies generally only had only two groups of employees. However, we would not expect as much backlash from non-users who used the center in the past or who anticipate using the center in the future, and the results here support this notion

for the proximal reactions. Third, we controlled for a greater number of demographic variables than previous research. This is important because these variables have been shown to have potential confounding effects on the relationship between on-site child care use and employee behaviors (Miller, 1984).

Although this study does have strengths, it also has limitations. Only two companies are represented, and the findings may not generalize to other companies, especially those with different policies regarding their on-site centers. Another problem with only using two organizations is that comparison with organizations not offering on-site child care is not possible. As stated above, cross-organizational studies have indicated a stronger potential positive impact for workers with access to family-related benefits (Grover & Crooker, 1995); access may be a more important issue than use or non-use or self-interest. The attitudes and behavioral intention data were collected with a survey and may suffer from common method variance. However, given the findings of different patterns of attitudes among workers with different use of the center, response bias or common method variance does not seem to be a likely explanation for the findings. Finally, although the potential impact of many demographic differences were controlled for in this study, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the individuals was not assessed; it is likely that the SES of individuals affects the quality of child care individuals can afford, and this may be a critical variable affecting attitudes with respect to child care. Future research should measure SES.

All signs indicate that employer responses to employees' family needs will be an area of continued growth. If this occurs, employers will have to consider all employees in designing their programs. The results of this study, in conjunction with the results of cross-organizational studies such as Grover & Crooker (1995) suggest that the benefits of offering family-related benefits may outweigh potential costs of any backlash.

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Appendix - Non-Published Items in Survey, Arranged in Construct Groupings

For the following questions, the scale used was:

- 1 = I am **very dissatisfied** with this aspect of the organization, or strongly disagree.
- 2 = I am **dissatisfied** with this aspect of the organization, or disagree.
- 3 = I am **neither satisfied nor dissatisfied** with this aspect of the organization, or neither agree nor disagree.
- 4 = I am **satisfied** with this aspect of the organization, or agree.
- 5 = I am **very satisfied** with this aspect of the organization, or strongly agree.
- NA= This does not apply to me or my organization.

Satisfaction with benefits:

- The benefits I receive.
- The adequacy of the benefit plan.
- The fairness of benefits.

Satisfaction with care support:

- The amount of support for day care of family members.
- The information provided about day care options.
- The day care programs at this company.

Items used to measure use of child care:

Please indicate which of the following five situations best describes your family/day care situation and check all corresponding options that apply:

- ___1. We/I do not have children. (circle one)
- a. Do you anticipate having children in the future? yes / no
- b. If yes, do you anticipate using the company's on-site day care? yes / no
- ___2. We/I have children that are too old for day care.
- a. Have you ever used the company sponsored on-site day care center? yes / no
- ___3. We/I use the company sponsored on-site center.
- a. We/I use this day care for _____ hours per week.

Appendix (continued) - Non-Published Items in Survey, Arranged in Construct Groupings

___ 4. We/I am on a waiting list for the company sponsored on-site center

a. We/I currently use:

___ another day care center.

___ a home day care provider.

___ an in-home "nanny."

___ a family member for day care now.

___ other, please specify _____

b. We/I use day care for _____ hours per week.

c. How long have you been on the waiting list? _____

d. How much longer do you think you will have to wait? _____

___ 5. We/I am not interested in using the company sponsored on-site center and

a. We/I currently use:

___ another day care center.

___ a home day care provider.

___ an in-home "nanny."

___ a family member for day care now.

___ other, please specify _____

b. We/I use day care for _____ hours per week.

c. Have you ever used the company sponsored on-site day care center? yes / no

d. If yes, do you anticipate using the company's on-site ? yes / no