Buy-In: Targeting Three Levels of Barriers to Change

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Barriers to Change

Research increasingly focuses on identifying barriers to work-life initiatives. The following are often cited by employers or supervisors:
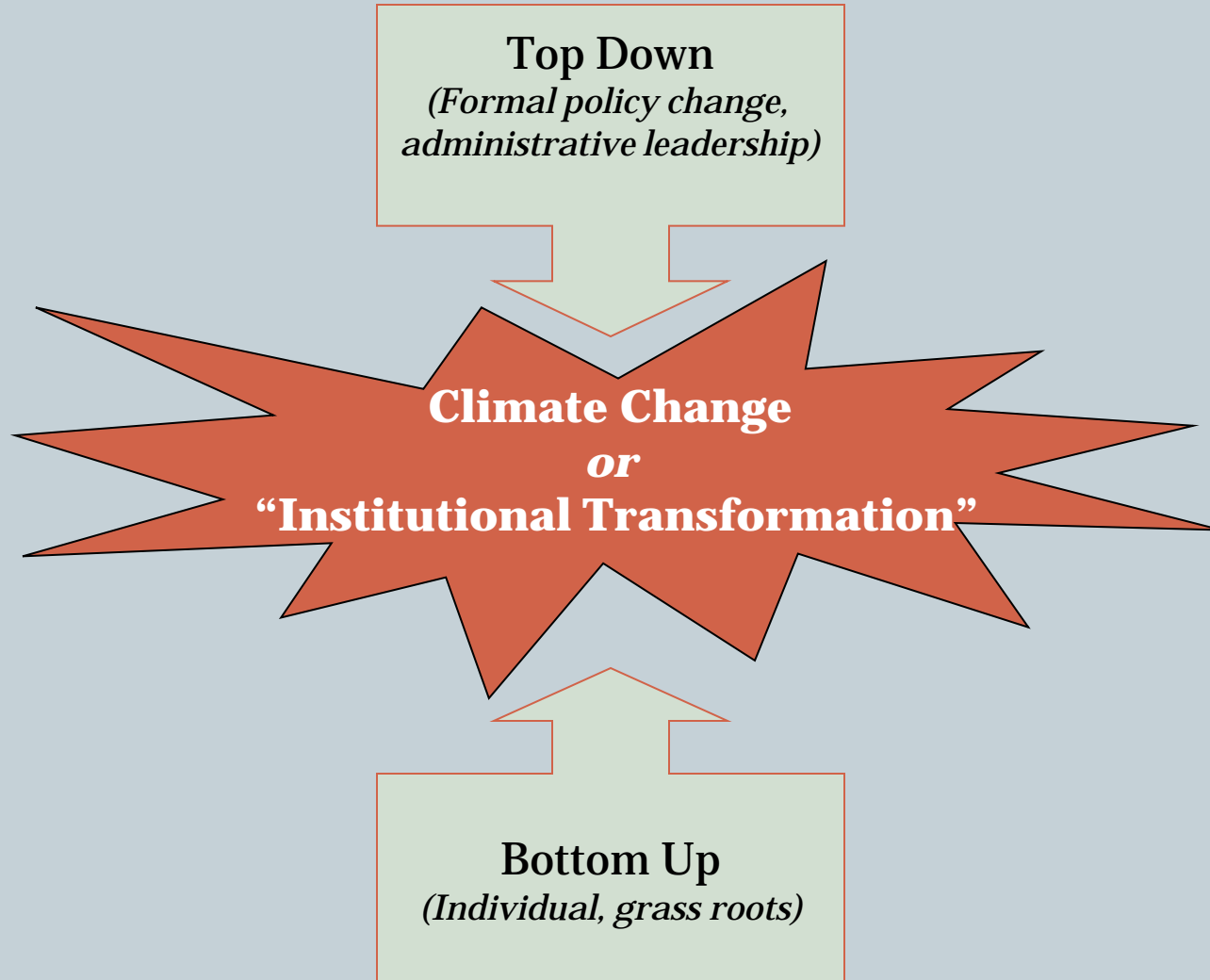
- Cost
- Difficulty supervising employees
- Employee fairness
- Reactions of clients/customers
- Abuse of policies
- Co-worker resentment
- Administrative hassles
- Loss of productivity
- Others: liability, unions, absenteeism, more pressing issues, not cost-effective

Policy → Practice Implementation Gap

- Where do barriers exist?
  - Establishment of policies and initiatives
  - Implementing them: the policy → practice implementation gap

- Usually conceptualized at two levels
  - Policy level ("Institutional")
  - Individual "buy in" ("Individual")

- Third level is key:
  - Promoting *group responsibility* to translate individual attitudes into *collective practices* ("Interactional")

How does change occur? The traditional model:

Top Down
(Formal policy change, administrative leadership)

Climate Change
or
"Institutional Transformation"

Bottom Up
(Individual, grass roots)

Understanding Barriers - A Three-Level Model

- Individual *(Individual)*
  - Employee skepticism and fear → bias avoidance behaviors
  - Embracing traditional societal norms (ideal worker norm, cultural differences)

- Organizational *(Institutional)*
  - Embracing traditional cultural norms (face-time, etc.)
  - Doubt about the business case

- Supervisory gatekeepers *(Interactional)*
  - Passive resistance
  - Managerial "allowance decisions" factors
  - Family friendly supervisor behaviors are key

3-Level Model of Barriers to Change

INSTITUTIONAL

Are administrative offices in support of policy?
Do administrative offices provide resources for implementation?

INTERACTIONAL

Do Chairs, HR, etc., offer information and help proactively?
Does a *culture of coverage* exist among colleagues?

INDIVIDUAL

Are employees using the policy openly and without fear of negative repercussions?
Do non-user colleagues endorse the policy?

Interactional dynamics are interpersonal dynamics, and cross all levels

Supervisory support

- asking about employee's family (+)
- scheduling late-day meetings (-)
- disseminating new WL policy info (+)
- added workload after a leave (-)
- promotion denial because of flexwork (-)

Institutional culture

- slow getting new WL policy on the books (-)
- referencing new WL policy during talks, in meetings, on website (+)
- reminder HR memo about tardiness (-)
- finding funding for dual career hire (+)
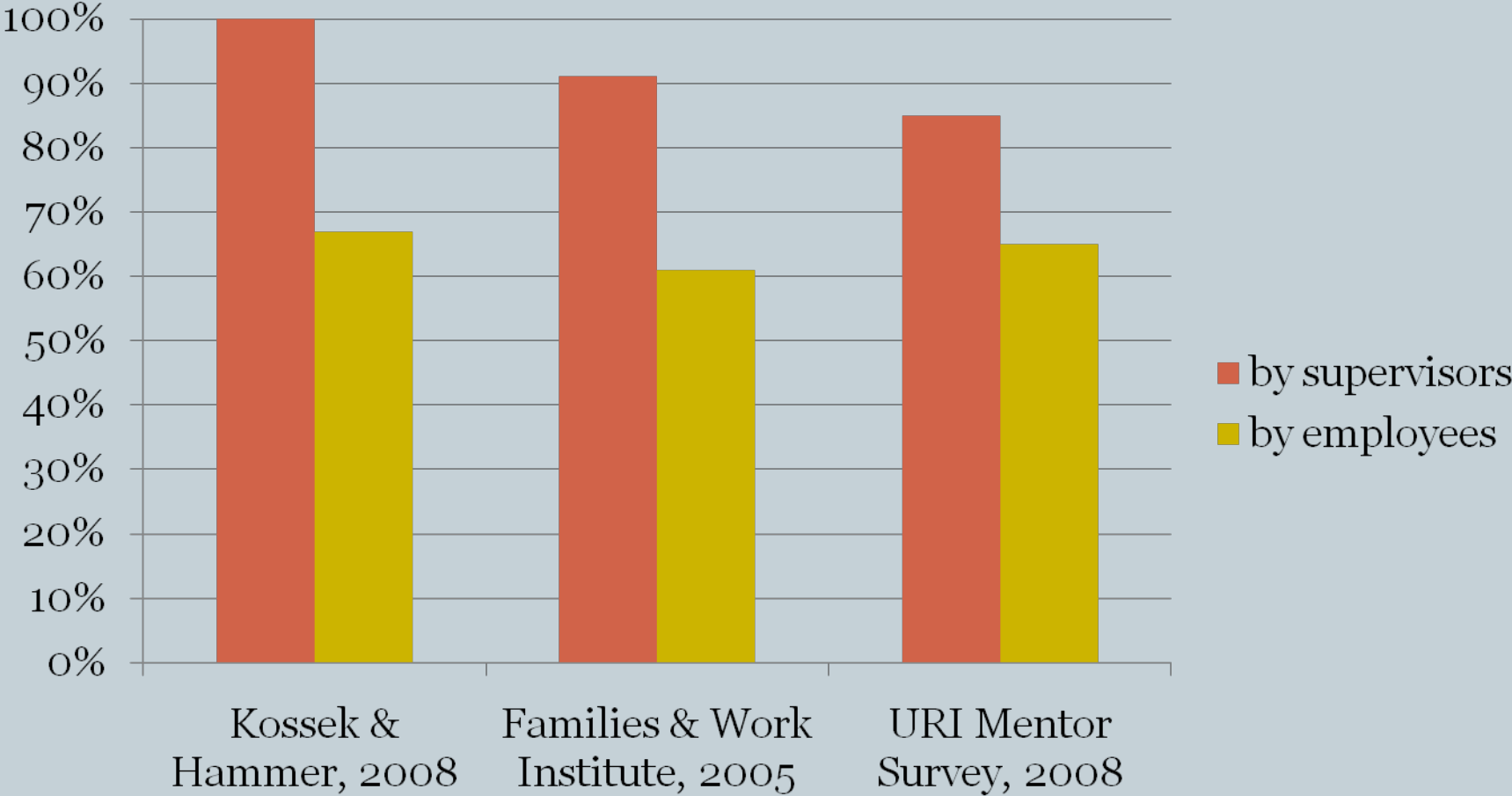
Colleague to colleague

- offering to cover class when child is sick (+)
- offer to team teach to lighten schedule (+)
- comments of suspicion when colleague is absent (-)
- Congratulating dad, ignoring mom (-)

Interactional level dynamics

where the rubber meets the road
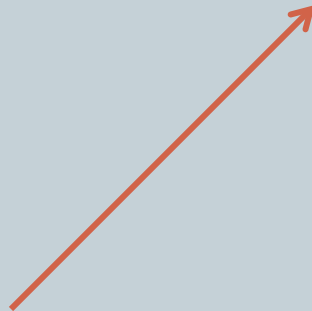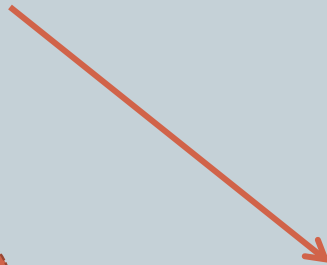
Social Perception Bias: Assessments of Positive Efforts by Supervisors

Individual Attitudes vs. Interactional Behaviors

Actor	Recipient	Interaction	Outcome
		Actor interacts *positively* in 1-1 interactions	+
		Actor interacts *positively* within a group of actors	+
		Actor interacts *negatively* within a group of actors	-
		Actor interacts *negatively* in 1-1 interactions	-
		Actor interacts *negatively* within a group of actors	-

ADVANCE
University *of* Rhode Island

Faculty Recruitment	Faculty Development	Work-Life Balance	Supportive work environment ("climate change")

Major initiatives

Faculty Fellows hiring program	Incentive Fund (mini-grants)	Policy creation and revisions	Department climate workshops
"Best search practices" materials & web tutorial	Faculty Mentor Program	Education & aware-ness —literature and presentations	Speakers & presentations
Search committee presentations	Career workshops	Work-Life website	*Academic Work Environment Survey*
	Monthly topical lunches	Permanent Work-Life Committee	Ad hoc consults and faculty advocacy

URI Initiatives from a 3-I Perspective

Institutional Level

- **Policies**
  - Paid parental leave (not available to all collective bargaining units)
  - Dual career hiring (strong resistance on all 3 levels)
  - Lactation
- **Work-Life Standing Committee**
  - Philosophical Statement framing all initiatives
- **Work-Life Website**
  - A website makes it official
- **Part-time Work-Life Position Approved**

URI Initiatives from a 3-I Perspective

Individual Level

- Education & Awareness
  - Brown bag lunch series
  - Child care fair
  - Administrators' Breakfast Summit
  - RI State Senate Resolution
  - Work-life website, literature, fliers, etc.
  - High profile speakers and work-life events
  - Connect wellness and work-life

URI Initiatives from a 3-I Perspective

Interactional Level

- **Supervisor Training**
  - Individual support versus group practice
  - Cheerleader versus facilitator
  - Individual friendship versus group inclusion
  - "Othering" versus emphasizing similarities
- **Department/Division Training**
  - Appreciative Inquiry
  - Building social capital

Addressing Resistance:
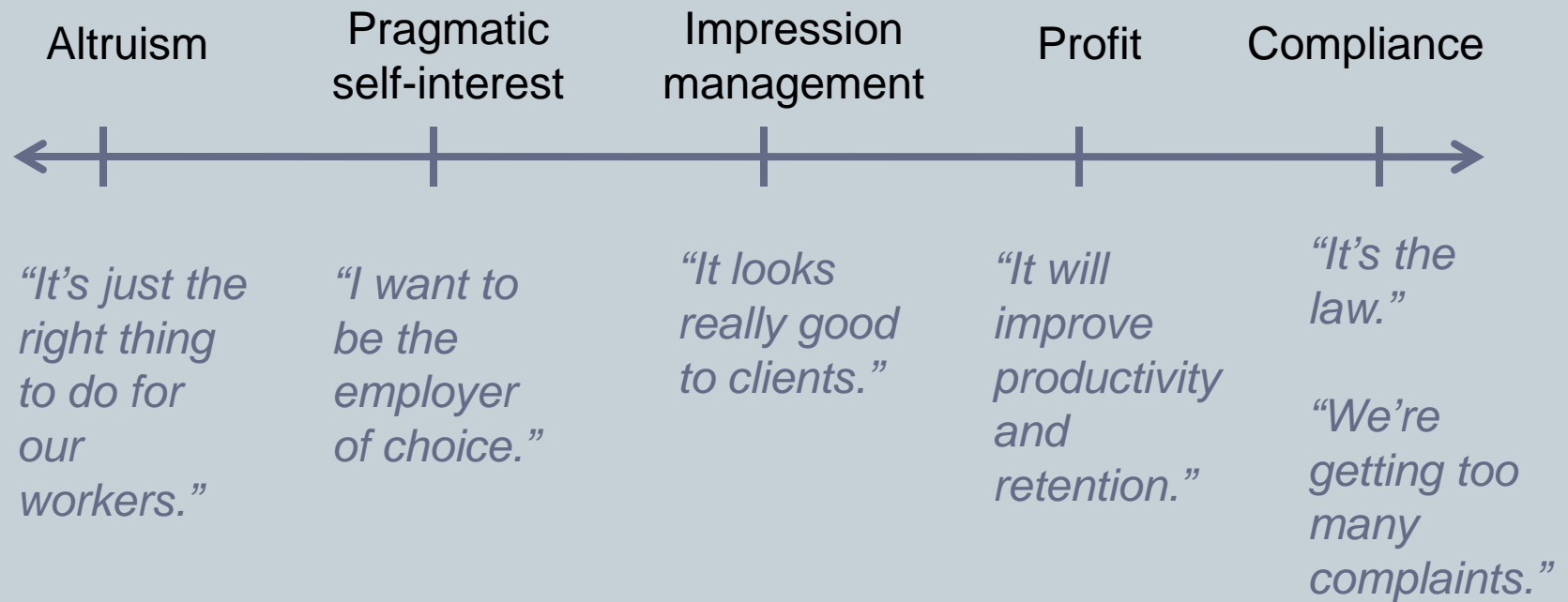# A Faculty-Led vs. HR-Led Initiative

- Advantages
  - Peer-to-peer influence
  - Social science grounding
  - Broad networks
- Disadvantages
  - Unfunded
  - Not institutionally endorsed
  - Slow pace
  - Elitism
- 3-I Perspectives--?

Organizational Motives for Flexibility Scale

Continuum of motives cited for implementing flexibility options

Altruism	Pragmatic self-interest	Impression management	Profit	Compliance

"It's just the right thing to do for our workers."

"I want to be the employer of choice."

"It looks really good to clients."

"It will improve productivity and retention."

"It's the law."

"We're getting too many complaints."

How are motives linked to outcomes?

- Possible research questions:
  - What is the effectiveness of each type of motive? Does the work culture and level of support differ depending on motives?
  - Which types of organizations most likely to adopt the business case model?
  - Are motives consistent across the organization? Do institutional motives match supervisory motives?
  - Are supervisors who endorse the business case but who actually fit a "compliance" profile the most insidious gatekeepers of flexible work options?
  - At the employee level, do employees' perceptions of supervisory motives impact job-related outcomes, such as satisfaction, morale, productivity, retention, organizational citizenship behaviors, etc.
- Build on and use in conjunction with Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviors Scale (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, 2007)
- Future research to include a complementary Barriers to Flexibility Scale

Thank you!
Questions?

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