

The Causes and Consequences of Work-Family Synergy: An Empirical Study in the United States

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This paper examines the causes and satisfaction consequences of work-to-family and family-to-work synergy for a sample of organizationally-employed parents while controlling two types of work-family conflict: work interfering with family and family interfering with work. Participants included 1193 respondents from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce who had a child under the age of 18 years at home. Work-family synergy is the frequency of experiencing positive energy and mood states from participating in both work and family. Synergy was significantly related to attitude toward employer, learning opportunities, autonomy, job pressure, supervisor support, dependent care, family income, mental health, self-rated health, and satisfaction outcomes. Gender similarities and differences in work-family synergy were identified. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.

The mutually beneficial effects of participating in work and family (Beutell, 2006; Beutell, 2007; Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Bryron, 2005; Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Halpern & Murphy, 2005; Rothbard, 2001; Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat, & Lang, 1990; Van Steenbergen, Ellemers, and Mooijaart, 2007) represent a growing area of study and in Sweden it is part of the Equal Opportunity Act: “an employer shall facilitate the combination of gainful employment and parenthood with respect to both female and male employees” (Shahmerti, 2001). This concept has been referred to as work-family facilitation (Hill, 2005), positive spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), positive balance, enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), and synergy (Beutell, 2005; Beutell, 2007; Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008). In contrast to the conflict perspective that views work and family on a collision course resulting from time, strain, and behavior sources (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), the synergy approach argues that multiple role participation has beneficial effects for the individual and the family enhancing the quality of life. Grzywacz and Butler (2005) tested some propositions relating to work-family facilitation finding that resource-rich jobs enable work-to-family facilitation. Tiedje et al. (1990) used the term role-compatibility suggesting that role-enhancement and work-family conflict are conceptually and empirically distinct. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) discussed some conditions that contribute to work-family integration (i.e., allies) while Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have proposed a theory of work-family enrichment along with a suggested research agenda. Wayne et al. (2006) tested some of the proposed linkages and Carlson et al. (2006) worked on operationalizing the concept of enrichment.

Synergy is the term used in the present study to describe how work and family, acting in concert, can create beneficial feelings and outcomes that are greater than the effects each

is able to create independently. Vodanoff (2004) used the term synergy to characterize work-family facilitation: "A form of synergy in which resources associated with one role enhance or make easier participation in the other role" (Voydanoff, 2004, p. 399). Work-family synergy is distinct from, and not a substitute for, work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW). Stated differently, low levels of WIF and FIW is not equivalent to W-FS.

Unlike work-family enrichment (a specific form of work-family facilitation) that requires that resources be applied in the other domain (Carlson, et al. 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), synergy is intended to reflect energy and mood states that transcend each role. Although various labels depicting the positive side of work and family have been used interchangeably (Frone, 2003), work-family synergy refers specifically to positive energy and mood states that emerge from participating in work and family roles. And, distinct from related concepts, work-family synergy is conceptualized and measured as the frequency of experiencing positive energy and mood states as opposed to a discrete transfer of resources between domains. As such, work-family synergy incorporates the temporal aspects of interaction between work and family roles.

Synergy, like conflict, is believed to be bidirectional (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Thus, we can examine work-to-family synergy (W2F-S) and family-to-work synergy (F2W-S). Recent work has provided empirical support for the concept of work-family synergy based on a factor analysis of responses to the Families and Work Institute 2002 national probability sample entitled *National Study of the Changing Workforce* (Beutell, 2007; Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008). Work-family synergy emerged from principal components analysis with varimax rotation yielding three 'clean' factors, work interfering with family (WIF), family interfering with work (FIW), and work-family synergy (W-FS). Further, we propose to investigate the directional effect of W2F-S and F2W-S.

Gender and Work-family Synergy

The question of gender in relation to work-family synergy has received much speculation and theoretical debate. Interestingly, it appears that few work-family studies have focused on gender which has been identified as a gap in the literature (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Hill, 2005). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggested that gender differences should be investigated based on the idea that men and women have historically experienced work and family roles differently. These investigators also noted the inconsistent research results from the limited number of studies that have examined gender differences in relation to work-to-family and family-to-work synergy. For example, Rothbard (2001) reported enrichment from work to family for men while women experienced enrichment from family to work. Wayne et al. (2006) found that gender was significantly related to work-to-family enrichment suggesting that men experienced higher levels of enrichment. Van Steenbergen, et al. (2007) reported that women experience higher levels of facilitation between work and family roles. Based on the accumulated evidence of strong gender differences in the manner that women and men experience the work-family interface (Rothbard, 2001) along with the empirical results on gender differences we will test the following:

Hypothesis 1: Mothers and fathers will report significantly different levels of work-to-family and family-to-work synergy. We will use a two-tailed statistical test since the foregoing suggests the likelihood of differences but insufficient evidence to make a directional prediction.

The theoretical connection between WIF conflict and FIW synergy has been noted. Although, once again, the reported relationships between conflict and synergy have been generally weak and inconsistent, we have included WIF and FIW in all of our regressions so that predictors and outcomes predicting synergy indicated relationships over and above the work-family conflict.

Work Factors Predicting W-FS

The work variables included attitude toward the employer, learning opportunities, work pressure, and autonomy. Attitude toward the employer represents the extent of positive feelings toward the employer. Learning opportunities focus on continuous learning, skill development, and creativity. Work pressure is the sense of not having enough time to complete assigned work, working hard, and work at a rapid pace. Autonomy refers to the degree of freedom available on the job and autonomy is believed to increase perceived control over situations. We reason that attitude toward the employer, autonomy, and with learning opportunities, would increase the affective and instrumental resources (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) that would enhance work-family synergy. On the other hand, job pressure would have the opposite effect. Hence,

Hypothesis 2: positive attitudes toward the employer, autonomy, and learning opportunities will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S while work pressure will be negatively related to both types of synergy for women and men.

Dependent Care and Family Income

Resources that might contribute to W-FS include the availability of dependent care resources along with overall family income. This study was guided by the notion that availability of family-friendly benefits would suggest a more family-friendly workplace (Wayne, et al., 2006). Wayne et al. (2006) did examine benefit usage in related to work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment but their results, showing positive relationships for both types of enrichment, failed to attain statistical significance. This does provide support for additional research since the case for benefit availability and work-family synergy has been clearly identified (Wayne, et al., 2006).

Family income, in addition to providing a greater level of family resources, is related to higher satisfaction with childcare and with healthier children (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Further, marriage and children are associated with higher income for men while the presence of children is related to lower income for women (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Income is an example of a work-related variable that can have a direct, and beneficial effect on the family system (see Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Hypothesis 3: Dependent care availability and family income will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S for organizationally-employed women and men.

Mental and Self-rated Health

There is a growing literature on employee physical and mental health and work-family conflict (e.g., Frone, 2000; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Tiedje et al. 1990) and work-family synergy (Beutell, 2006; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Engagement in multiples roles appears to have a positive influence on mental and physical health (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Grzywacz & Bass (2003) concluded that “adult mental health is optimized when family to work facilitation is high and family to work and work to family conflict is low” (p. 248). Tiedje et al. reported similar findings for women. Allen et al. (2000) also presented some of the inconsistent evidence on health effects relating to work and family. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) included physical health as a factor influencing work-family enrichment. Beutell (2005) reported significant relationships between physical and mental health and an overall measure of work-family synergy but did not report results by gender. The design of the present study included directional synergy measures and gender. Based on the foregoing research, it would be expected that higher levels of physical and mental health would be related to increased synergy, thus:

Hypothesis 4: Mental health and self-rated health will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S for organizationally-employed women and men.

Supervisory Support for Work and for Family/Personal Issues

Support from supervisor has been identified as an aspect of an organization’s work-family culture (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lynnes, 1999). The role of supervisory support in relation to work-family conflict and outcome variables has been documented in numerous studies (e.g., Allen, 2001; Behson, 2005; Thompson et al., 1999). The present study examined two types of supervisory support: support focused on the job itself and support for family and personal life. Voydanoff (2004) argued that supervisory willingness to discuss and accommodate employees’ work and family needs may encourage employees to take advantage of available organizational policies. It could be argued that supervisory support for the job might increase synergy by making work demands more manageable while support for family and personal life might increase synergy by providing more flexibility integrating work with family life. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 5: Supervisory job support and supervisory support for family/personal life will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S.

Outcomes of Work-Family Synergy: Satisfaction Indicators

In the present study we examined four types of satisfaction indicators: job satisfaction, family satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Beutell (2006) suggested that a positive relationship between work-family synergy and life satisfaction. Hill (2005) reported that work-to-family facilitation was positively related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction, while family-to-work facilitation was positively related to marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Theory, along with reported research, suggests that work-family synergy would be expected to increase satisfaction with job,

family, marriage, and life. The following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 6: W2F-S and F2W-S will be positively related to job, family, marital, and life satisfaction for working women and men.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 690 mothers and 503 fathers who participated in the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce conducted by Harris Interactive using a questionnaire designed by the Families and Work Institute. A total of 3,504 interviews were completed with a nationwide cross-section of employed adults between October 2002 and June 2003. Phone interviews were completed with a nationwide cross-section of employed adults. Sample eligibility was limited to people who were 18 years or older, employed or operated a business in the civilian workforce, resided in the contiguous 48 states, and lived in a non-institutional residence. Multiple calls were made per telephone number to complete interviews if the household was eligible. In households with more than one eligible person, one was randomly selected for the interview. An incentive of US\$25 was offered for participation. Of the telephone numbers called, 3578 were determined to represent eligible households, and interviews were completed for 3504 (representing a 98% completion rate).

The present sample included 1193 organizationally-employed mothers and fathers with at least one child under the age of 18 years based on Hill's (2005) study. We excluded those who were self-employed because of the presumed variability in working conditions (Hill, 2005). The average length of time with current employer or in current line of work was 7.35 years ($SD=7.26$). The largest proportion of respondents worked for a private for-profit business (63%), 24% for government, and 12% worked for a non-profit organization (accounting for 99% of the sample). The mean age of the participants was 38.96 ($SD=8.75$).

Measures

Each of the measures used in this study were developed by the Families and Work Institute for their 2002 study. Many of the measures have been used in previous studies dating to the Quality of Employment Survey (Quinn & Staines, 1979) and the Families and Work Institute 1992 and 1997 (Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998) studies. Recent studies using this data set include Beutell (2007), Beutell and Wittig-Berman (2008), and Voydanoff (2005).

Work interfering with family (WIF), family interfering with work (FIW), and work-family synergy (W-FS)

Beutell and Wittig-Berman (2008) factor analyzed the work and family items from the National Study of the Changing Workforce (2002) for all wage and salary participants ($n=2796$) using a principal components analysis with a varimax rotation. All items correlated with the identified factors (WIF, FIW, W-FS) at .62 or above while not loading

on another factor. Three factors corresponding to WIF, FIW, and W-FS emerged. WIF, or factor I, was comprised of five items (e.g., frequency that work keeps me from doing a good job at home). FIW, or factor II, had five items including the “frequency of not having enough time for job because of family.” Finally, W-FS, or factor III, consisted of four items (e.g., frequency of having more energy to do things with family because of my job). The synergy factor (W-FS) is significant since it was identified as one of the research gaps by Bryron (2005).

A factor analysis of the four W-FS items indicated that, contrary to theory, these items are unidimensional even though the items appear to measure W2F-S and F2W-S. The theoretical significance of this finding is substantial and suggests, at a minimum, that recent efforts at WF-S scale development (e.g., facilitation, positive spillover, enrichment) should make certain that the postulated dimensions of synergy are verified by a factor analysis of the items as well as convergent and divergent validation (see Carlson, et al., 2006). We decided to proceed by considering W2F-S and F2W-S to be consistent with the extant theory on this issue. Thus, we summed the two items measuring W2F-S and the two items focusing on F2W-S. As a practical matter, the analyses reported below were quite similar using the ‘whole’ versus ‘part’ approaches (i.e., overall synergy versus directional measures). Subsequent theory development, though, will need to disentangle the unitary concept notion that might suggest support for synergies that can not be deconstructed into so-called directional effects where one role has a ‘main effect’ on the other.

Work Role Factors

Attitude toward employer. This was measured by one standardized item to capture the respondent’s overall attitude toward his/her employer with high scores indicating a more positive attitude.

Learning opportunities on the job. This scale consisted of three items (e.g., My job requires that I keep learning new things) that were averaged with higher scores indicating more learning opportunities.

Autonomy. Autonomy was measured by three items (e.g., I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job) with higher scores indicating more autonomy. A similar autonomy measure has been used as an antecedent of work-family conflict (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989).

Work pressure. Work pressure was measured using three items (e.g., I never have enough time to get everything done on the job) that were averaged with higher scores indicating more work pressure.

Dependent Care

Five items assessed dependent care (e.g., Does your organization operate or sponsor a child care center for the children of employees at or near your location?) options provided by or supported by the employer with higher scores indicating more dependent care benefits.

Family Income

The item was measured by asking respondents the following question: What was (your/your and your partner's) total income from ALL sources before taxes in 2002? The actual number was recorded and used for this item.

Index of Mental Health

The index of mental health was derived through a principal components analysis of items measuring depression and stress (e.g., how often did you feel depressed or hopeless in the last month?). Respondents indicated how frequently they experienced minor health problems, sleep problems affecting job performance, feeling nervous or stressed, unable to control important things in life, feeling unable to overcome difficulties, and depression. A note accompanying the construction of the index indicated that one third of the national sample exhibited signs of depression predictive of clinical depression according to psychiatric screening criteria. The scale is standardized with a mean approximating zero and a standard deviation of one. High scores on this index indicate poorer mental health. Coefficient alpha for the entire sample was .78.

Self-rated Health

Self-rated health was measured by a one-item scale "how would you rate your current state of health" on a four-point scale (poor, fair, good, excellent). High scores indicate better physical health.

Supervisory Support for Job

The supervisor's job-related support was measured using a 4-item scale (My supervisor or manager is supportive when I have a work problem) with a four-point response scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The items were summed with a higher score indicating more support.

Supervisory Family/Personal Support

Supervisor's level of support for family/personal issues was measured using a 5-item scale (e.g., My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work) with responses ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The items were summed with a high score indicating more support.

Job Satisfaction, Marital Satisfaction, Family Satisfaction, and Life Satisfaction

Three types of satisfaction were used as outcomes of work-family synergy. Job satisfaction was measured using two items: how satisfied are you with your job and would you take the same job again. Marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction were measured using single-item measures of overall satisfaction with higher scores indicating higher levels of satisfaction.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics comparing organizationally-employed mothers and fathers on the major variables included in the study. Based on *t*-tests for independent samples, fathers scored significantly higher family-to-work synergy, job pressure,

autonomy, mental health (lower scores indicate higher mental health), physical health, life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and family satisfaction. Women scored significantly higher on supervisor support for family/personal issues and job satisfaction.

Recall that Hypothesis 1 predicted gender differences in work-family synergy. This hypothesis was tested using a two-tailed *t*-test to examine differences in average levels of synergy. Men scored higher on both types of work-family synergy but F2W-S was statistically significant ($t = 2.71, p < .01$). Since this study investigated predictors and outcomes of work-family synergy while controlling for work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts note that there was no significant difference in work-family conflict (WIF or FIW) for working mothers and fathers.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Comparing Organizationally-Employed Mothers and Fathers on Study Variables

	<i>Total (N=1193)</i>		<i>Working Mothers (n=690)</i>		<i>Working Fathers (n=503)</i>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
W2F-Syn (.60)	2.68	.92	2.67	.94	2.69	.89
F2W-Syn (.58) **	3.29	.90	3.23	.91	3.37	.87
WIF (.87)	2.61	.89	2.58	.89	2.66	.89
FIW (.82)	2.18	.70	2.21	.71	2.14	.68
Attitude toward Employer	.01	.78	.05	.78	-.03	.78
Learning Opportunities (.62)	3.27	.66	3.24	.68	3.31	.63
Job Pressure (.52) *	2.97	.70	2.94	.77	3.02	.66
Autonomy (.70) **	2.99	.75	2.95	.76	3.07	.73
Dependent Care (.66)	1.22	.27	1.22	.27	1.21	.27
Mental Health (.78) ***	.09	1.01	.24	1.02	-.10	.98
Self-rated Health**	3.18	.71	3.13	.72	3.24	.68
Supervisor Support (Job) (.80)	3.46	.61	3.49	.62	3.43	.62
Super. Support (Fam/Personal) (.87) *	3.28	.73	3.31	.73	3.24	.73
Job Satisfaction (.68) **	-.01	.86	.04	.86	-.07	.85
Life Satisfaction**	3.24	.69	3.19	.71	3.31	.65
Marital Satisfaction**	3.22	.82	3.15	.84	3.30	.80
Family Satisfaction**	2.96	.84	2.90	.83	3.04	.84
Family Income, \$000's ****	78.0	98.0	74.0	97.0	83.2	98.0

Note. W2F-Syn=Work-to-family synergy; F2W-Syn=Family-to-work synergy; WIF=Work interfering with Family; FIW=Family Interfering with Work. Items in parentheses are coefficient alphas for multi-item scales. Attitude toward employer, mental health, and job satisfaction are standardized scores. High scores for mental health indicate poorer mental health. Significance levels indicate differences between mothers and fathers for that variable.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

**** The median income for the sample was \$69,559 and the mode was \$59,000.

Table 2 reports the standardized regression coefficients for each of the hypothesized relationships controlling for WIF and FIW. Hypothesis 2 predicted that positive attitudes toward the employer, autonomy, and learning opportunities will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S while work pressure will be negatively related to both types of synergy for women and men. Examination of Table 2 reveals some support for each of the variables for men and women but learning opportunities and attitude toward employer were the strongest predictors for both men and women. It can also be said that the work variables predicted both types of W-FS more strongly for women than for men. Autonomy was negatively related to F2W-S ($\beta = -.12, p < .01$) for women which was contrary to prediction. Overall there was moderate support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that dependent care availability and family income will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S for organizationally-employed women and men. Dependent care was related to W2F-S for women ($\beta = .08, p < .05$). Family income was related to F2W-S for both men ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) and women ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). As such Hypothesis 3 received some support.

With respect to health, Hypothesis 4 predicted that mental health and self-rated health will be positively related to W2F-S and F2W-S for organizationally-employed women and men. Interestingly, mental health was predictive of synergy for men while physical

Table 2. Multivariate Analyses by Gender Controlling for Work Interfering with Family and Family Interfering with Work

	Working Fathers		Working Mothers	
	W2F-S	F2W-S	W2F-S	F2W-S
Attitude toward Employer	.14**	.11*	.15**	.09*
Learning Opportunities	.07	.17**	.24**	.15**
Job Pressure	-.08	.03	-.14**	.00
Autonomy	.05	-.10	.01	-.12**
Dependent Care	.06	.07	.08*	.04
Family Income	-.06	.11**	.04	.14**
Mental Health	-.18**	-.14*	-.05	-.07
Self-rated Health	.02	.06	.11**	.09*
Supervisor Support (Job)	.09	.01	.08	-.04
Supervisor Support (Family/ Personal)	.19**	.10	.16**	.05
Job Satisfaction	.19***	-.03	.34***	.05
Life Satisfaction	.15**	.12*	.06	.13*
Marital Satisfaction	-.07	.10	-.10	.05
Family Satisfaction	.10	.17**	.15**	.12 (p=.05)

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) are presented. W2F-S=work-to-family synergy; F2W-S=family-to-work synergy. High scores for mental health indicate poorer mental health. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

health was predictive for women. Specifically, mental health was related to W2F-S ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$) and F2W-S ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) for men and self-rated health was related to W2F-S ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) and F2W-S ($\beta = .09, p < .05$) for women. (Recall that higher scores indicate poorer mental health so the negative sign in this case is in the predicted direction.) Thus, there was some support for Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 focused on supervisory job support and supervisory support for family/personal life. Specifically, it was hypothesized that supervisory support for the job and supervisory support for family/personal life will be positively related to W-FS. Nevertheless, the hypothesized relationships between supervisory job support ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) and supervisory family/personal life support ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and W-FS were supported.

The final hypothesis (Hypothesis 6) focused on the outcomes of W-FS. Specifically, W2F-S and F2W-S will be positively related to job, family, marital, and life satisfaction for working women and men. W2F-S was significantly related to job satisfaction for both men ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) and women ($\beta = .34, p < .001$) while F2W-S was not significantly related to job satisfaction. F2W-S was related to life satisfaction for men ($\beta = .12, p < .05$) and women ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) and to W2F-S for men ($\beta = .15, p < .01$). F2W-S was related to family satisfaction for men ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and women ($\beta = .12, p < .05$) while W2F-S was related to family satisfaction ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) for women. Neither type of synergy was related to marital satisfaction for men or women. Overall, this hypothesis received moderate support.

Discussion

The present results using a large, nationally-representative sample add to the findings on the predictors and outcomes of W2F-S and F2W-S for organizationally-employed mothers and fathers while controlling for the effects of WIF and FIW. The intent was to assess synergy predictors and outcomes over and above work-family conflict although there are many different models that could be tested such as the interaction between synergy and conflict (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Examining these variables using a life course fit model would help to explain relationships over time although recently-reported findings suggest that job and home ecologies predict fit dimensions in an additive rather than interactive fashion (Moen, Kelly, & Huang, 2008).

Considering gender differences in levels of synergy, men were higher on both W2F-S and F2W-S with the latter reaching statistical significance and providing some support for the hypothesis. This finding adds to the results reported by Wayne et al. (2006) but, in that study and in Rothbard (2001), men were higher on work-to-family enrichment. The present results seem at odds with the asymmetrical boundaries discussed by Rothbard (2001, p. 677): “[t]he boundary between family and work is not as open and permeable for men as it is for women, because for men it is less culturally acceptable for family experiences to affect work (Pleck, 1977)”. It is possible that the fathers in the study the beneficiaries of the family ‘bonus’ that appears to help men in their careers (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Clearly this topic warrants additional research study although, more

than differences in synergy levels by gender, the predictors and outcomes may prove more important to quality of life.

Work-related Predictors

Work variables were more predictive of both types of synergy for women than for men. This does add some support to the idea that women have more between-role linkages than men (Rothbard, 2001) and, perhaps, more opportunities for synergies to emerge. Stated differently, men appear to be more segmented than women in their role participation which could serve to limit potential synergistic effects. It is interesting that a positive attitude toward one's employer was related to both types of synergy for men and women. Organizations may want to strengthen perceptions as an 'employer of choice' particularly regarding family-friendliness as entrants to the workforce have higher expectations of support that may be related to generational cohort (e.g., Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008).

Learning opportunities is another area that predicted both types of synergy for women and F2W-S for men. Continuing growth through job-related learning opportunities may promote feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy that serve to increase synergy. It is possible to speculate that work that is more expressive and growth-oriented contributes to synergy where more repetitive, instrumental work, with limited opportunity for new learning might not contribute to, or indeed, might reduce feelings of synergy. However, note that job autonomy, which might suggest more discretion and control of work was inversely related to F2W-S for women (the beta for men was in the same direction but just missed statistical significance). Future studies should examine autonomy, which might be considered a form of work flexibility, for interactions with other work-related variable.

Dependent Care, Income, and Health

Dependent care, a seemingly important family support variable for parents, had little impact in the present study. This finding may be partially explained by the low means for availability of dependent care services and, consequently, low usage by the mothers and fathers in this study. Wayne et al. (2006) reported a similar finding that benefit usage was not significantly related to work-family enrichment. Part of the issue may be, in addition to availability and usage, the effectiveness of the policies along with employee perceptions relating to the use of such benefits. An organization may espouse family-friendly benefit policies but then make it difficult or undesirable for employees to take advantage of the benefits. Eaton (2003) has labeled this 'perceived usability', the notion that certain work-family policies are not usable by employees even though they are theoretically available. More research on employees' perception of and use of dependent care benefits and synergy would help to clarify the weak findings.

Family income, on the other hand, is positively related to F2W-S for women and men but not significantly related to W2F-S. Income is a major resource from work that can have significant consequences on the quality of family life. In fact, Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) suggested that the extent to which work and family are enemies or allies depends

on the resources available from work. Further, as Friedman and Greenhaus state:

“...money and power cannot buy happiness or guarantee that we perform well as parents, they do seem to enable people to acquire high-quality services for their children, and perhaps even provide a home environment that contributes to kids’ academic accomplishments” (p. 131).

The findings for health are very interesting since mental health predicts both types of synergy for men and self-rated health predicts both types of synergy for women. The mental health findings for men might reflect the benefits of multiple role participation and the bonus of having a family (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Another possible explanation is the skill transfer between domains (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006). It is also possible that mental health can serve as a buffer against negative events by strengthening social relationships (Hanson, et al., 2006). For women, it has been reported that the work role in addition to the family role is associated with better health for women who have positive attitudes toward employment (Repetti, Matthews, and Waldron, 1989). It is not clear, however, why these explanations would not apply for mothers and fathers equally. The fact that one third of the total sample (the present sample comprised a sub-set of the total) reported symptoms associated with clinical depression (Public Use Files: <http://www.familyandwork.org>) is a concern since the individual, family, organizational, and societal costs associated with such symptoms is likely to be high. Clearly more research on mental and self-rated health in relation to work and family is warranted.

Supervisory Support

Supervisory family/personal support predicted W2F-S for men and women. It appears that supervisor support is an important element of work-family synergy (Wayne et al., 2006) and managing the work-family interface in general. Wayne et al. also reported that such perceptions were related to lower turnover intentions. An examination of formal as well as informal support mechanisms (Behson, 2005) might assist in understanding how synergy is increased. Interestingly, supervisory work support was not significantly related to synergy. This suggests the need to investigate the conditions under which various types of support can reduce conflict and enhance synergy.

Work-Family Synergy and Satisfaction Outcomes

Satisfaction indices represented the outcome variables and the results indicated that job, life, and family satisfaction were significantly related to work-family synergy but marital satisfaction was not. All of the significant relationships were in the predicted direction. The findings also suggest more gender similarities than differences in satisfaction outcomes of synergy. Job satisfaction relates to W2F-S while family satisfaction relates to F2W-S. The gender differences center on life satisfaction predicting W2F-S for men while family satisfaction predicts W2F-S for women. The issue of satisfaction relating within role, between roles, and at a level that transcends specific roles raises some interesting possibilities for future theory and research efforts. The relationship between domain (role) satisfaction (e.g., job, family, marriage) and life satisfaction

has also received attention (e.g., Beutell, 2006). Clearly, satisfaction is an important outcome variable in synergy research but other outcomes such as performance, turnover intentions, and self-actualization.

Study Limitations and Closing Comments

Some limitations of the present research should be noted. Although the data came from a well-conducted national probability sample all of the measures were self-reports collected during one interview. Such a design may suffer from common method variance and does not permit causal inferences. The magnitude of the significant relationships was low because of the statistical power of the relatively large sample size. The work-to family and family-to-work measures consisted of two-items each that were not supported by a factor analysis but by theoretical considerations. Also, the reliability of the synergy measures was adequate by on the low side. Additional items measuring work-family synergy would be useful in subsequent questionnaires using national probability samples.

Nevertheless, the findings of the present study add to the accumulating work-family literature and identified important gender differences and similarities in the predictors and outcomes of work-family synergy. Clearly, more research is needed on self-rated and mental health, and, by extension, other individual difference factors such as personality, as well as the organizational antecedents and consequences of synergy.

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