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## **Work-family facilitation : a positive psychological perspective on rol combination**

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# **Work-Family Facilitation:**

A Positive Psychological Perspective on Role Combination

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- To Armin, Herman, Paula & Frank -

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## Introduction

Work plays an important role in the lives of many people. However, most people have other roles that are central to their lives as well, such as the role of being a parent, child, sibling or grandparent. In this dissertation I will examine how work and other roles in life can influence each other. Research addressing the interface between work and home life roles – generally referred to as the *work-family literature* - has predominantly focused on the *negative side* of role combination (Voydanoff, 2004). Over the past 40 years, scholars have examined how different roles can negatively affect each other and have specified the difficulties and stresses that can be experienced in role combination. The central construct in the work-family literature therefore is *work-family conflict*, which is the individual's experience that joint role pressures from the work and family domains are incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of another role (Greenhaus, 1985). This construct of work-family conflict has received much research attention over the years as a result of which scientific knowledge on the negative side of the work-family interface is extensive. For instance, we know that conflict is bi-directional in nature. Work can negatively interfere with family roles (work-to-family conflict), but family roles can also negatively interfere with fulfilling the work role (family-to-work conflict, Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Moreover, different *types* of conflict can be experienced. Individuals can, for example, experience that the *time* they devote to one role prevents them from adequately fulfilling the other (time-based conflict). It can also occur that they feel exhausted and *strained* from participation in one role as a result of which they can not satisfactorily participate in another role (strain-based conflict; Greenhaus, 1985). Moreover, it is known that experiencing conflict between the work and family domains can have serious *negative consequences* for well-being, such as burnout and depression (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). However, is *conflict* all there is to role combination? And is experiencing “no conflict” the best possible outcome? I argue that this is not the case. Indeed, recently, work-family researchers have started to pay attention to the positive side of role combination and found that individuals can also enjoy role combination and can experience a *positive exchange* between their work and family roles (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001;

Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). To address this, scholars have developed the construct of *work-family facilitation*, which refers to the individual's experience that participation in one role is made *better* or *easier* by virtue of participation in another role (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). To date, much less is known about this positive side of role combination: the possibility that work and family roles benefit each other. In this dissertation, I take a *positive psychological perspective* on role combination. The central objective of the work presented here is to increase the understanding of the *positive side* of the work-family interface. I will focus on the construct of work-family facilitation and will address several questions that have remained unanswered in the work-family literature to date. For instance, what does the experience of facilitation between work and family roles actually consist of? Is it possible to distinguish between different *types* of facilitation experiences, as is the case with the different types of conflict that have been identified in the literature? Is there *added value* in examining facilitation - in addition to conflict - for instance when trying to understand and predict how role combination affects outcomes in the work domain (e.g., job performance)? What are relevant *antecedents* of experiencing facilitation between work and family, and is it possible to *influence* these experiences? These and other questions will be addressed in the present dissertation<sup>a</sup>. The very first study I conducted to increase my understanding of the positive side of the work-family interface and the ways in which people experience that their work and family roles influence each other was a qualitative interview study on role combination (this study is presented in detail in Chapter 2). I interviewed 25 employees on role combination and addressed the negative as well as the positive side of the work-family interface. During these interviews, it happened many times that employees expressed their appreciation of me attending to the positive *as well as* the negative side of combining roles instead of merely focusing on negative aspects. They indicated that in their work and daily lives people often only asked about the problems and difficulties that one is faced with in role combination "It must be difficult to pursue a career and have children", "How do you deal with the stress?". The lively stories of these employees I have interviewed have been

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<sup>a</sup> It should be noted that the work-family literature is also referred to as the "work-home" or "work-nonwork" literature because scholars often examine how individuals experience the interface between their work role on the one hand and the variety of other roles in their life (e.g., parent, husband/wife, family member, friend) on the other (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Witt & Carlson, 2006; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). In this dissertation, consistent with this approach, my use of the term *family* is intended to denote individuals' "non-work" roles in a broad sense.

very instructive and useful to increase my understanding of the different ways in which work and family roles can facilitate each other and have inspired me to further pursue this issue. Moreover, this study confirmed the idea that there indeed is more to role combination than experiencing role conflict alone. As one female employee put it:

*“What I dislike about the combination is the constant pressure of time. Moreover, sometimes I take the stress from work home with me. What I really dislike is the fact that that I have to miss certain activities from school, such as my children’s school outing (....). However, I do have the feeling that I have best of both worlds. For instance, I have the feeling that I am a nicer and more interesting wife at home, because I can tell about and discuss matters from work. And I also learn certain things at work, for instance about insurances or legal issues, but certain social skills as well, which come in handy at home. The combination enriches your life I think. I also have the feeling that I am a nicer mother because of my work. I often come home from work in a cheerful mood, causing the children to have a more cheerful mom at home. And, of course, the use of time. Because of my work, I do the things at home more efficiently, groceries etc. (....). In the same vein, because I have tasks at home to do, I carry out my work more efficiently; I have a deadline to be at day-care at 5 pm you see. Another good thing: I have (emphasis) a life at home. Because I have this life at home - a life besides work – I know the world is larger than this organization alone (....). Having your work only and a very limited life at home makes one short-sighted in the end (...). I think that people who have a life besides their work are more stable employees”.*

This initial qualitative study further enhanced my interest to examine the positive side of the work-family interface more closely. The purpose of the present introductory chapter is to give an overview of the dominant theories that have been central to the work-family literature over the years and provide the theoretical backdrop for the work carried out in the context of this dissertation. First, I will provide a theoretical and empirical overview of current knowledge on the negative side of role combination. Second, I will give an overview of theory development and recent empirical findings on the positive side of the work-family interface to introduce the main question I aim to address in the present research. In doing this, I will discuss methodological and measurement issues that have hindered the work-family literature to date, which I have aimed to take into account in my own research. Additionally, I will elaborate on the organization in which all of the studies that are presented in this dissertation were carried out. Finally, I will give an overview of the studies that are presented

in the different chapters of this dissertation and indicate how these relate to the central topic of my investigation.

### 1.1 Scarcity Theory and Work-Family Conflict

In the literature, different models have been used to characterize the relationship between the work and family domains (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). Two early models are commonly referred to as the “segmentation model” and the “compensation model” of work and family. The segmentation model posited that the work and family domains are inherently different and separate domains that do not influence each other in any way (Dulin, 1956; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). In addition, the so-called compensation model hypothesized that people attempt to make up for deprivations in one domain through greater involvement in the other. As such, it was thought that the work domain could compensate for deprivations in the family domain and vice versa (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006; Wilensky, 1960). Both models have received little support in the empirical literature (Peeters & Heiligers, 2003).

In contrast to these early models, the dominant view in the current literature, which has received substantial empirical support, is referred to as the “spillover model”. The spillover model acknowledges that the work and family domains are *interconnected* domains of human life that *influence* each other. This model postulates that the work and family domain are interconnected because people’s attitudes, moods, values, habits, and behaviors can spill over from one domain to the other, thus generating similarities between the two domains (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). Within this view of work and family as interconnected domains of human life, the primary focus in the literature has been on the *role conflicts* that individuals can experience in fulfilling work and family roles (Frone, 2003; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). Although *role theory* (Goode, 1960; Kahn, Woelfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964) is quite generally applicable to all situations in which people fulfill multiple roles, this theory is often referred to as the founding theory of the work-family literature (Frone, 2003). According to this theory, a *role* is a set of activities or behaviors that others expect an individual to perform. This theory asserts that, in the case of fulfilling multiple roles, the individual will be confronted with incompatible role pressures because the (behavioral) requirements and expectations associated with these different roles will unavoidably conflict in some way. This type of role-conflict has been labeled

*interrole conflict*. Role theory predicts that fulfilling multiple roles will inevitably lead to experiencing role conflict, which relates to higher levels of stress and decreased satisfaction and motivation at work. Based on these premises, many scholars have theorized about the alleged difficulty of managing multiple roles and stressed the overdemanding nature of role combination. Edgell (1970) describes role combination as an inevitable dilemma between being “married” to your work *or* to your family life and denotes that someone who attempts to subscribe to both domains will be the victim of role conflict “since any degree of commitment to one role will detract from commitment, and chances of success, in the other, simply in terms of the availability of time and energy” (Edgell, 1970, p. 320). In the literature, it was generally assumed that individuals’ personal resources of time, energy, and attention are limited and fixed and that spending energy or devoting attention to one role necessarily implies that fewer resources are available for another role. As such, the central assumption has been that participating in one role tends to have a *negative effect* on other role performances (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Marks, 1977). Marks (1977) has labeled this negative perspective on role combination in the literature the *scarcity theory on human energy*.

On the basis of this scarcity theory and based on Kahn’s et al. (1964) concept of interrole conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) developed their construct of *work-family conflict* (Frone, 2003). As described earlier, they defined work-family conflict as “a type of role conflict that arises when joint role pressures from work and family domains are experienced as incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). They also distinguished between different *types* of conflict experiences (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). *Strain-based* conflict exists “when strain produced in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role.” For instance, someone is stressed and tired after a working day, which makes it difficult for him or her to attend to what is needed at home. *Time-based* conflict occurs “when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role”, for example, missing your son’s important soccer match because of work obligations. In addition, *behavioral* conflict emerges “when behavior required in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role.” This type of conflict refers to the experience that it can be difficult to switch from one type of behavior in one role to another type of behavior in another role, for instance, switching from pragmatic business behavior to patient caring behavior at home. These types of conflict can be

experienced in the work-to-family (WF) as well as the family-to-work (FW) direction and are statistically distinct (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Carlson, Brooklyn Derr, & Wadsworth, 2003; Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002). Greenhaus (1988) also distinguished yet another type of conflict, namely *psychological conflict*. This conflict experience refers to being mentally distracted by or preoccupied with one role, while physically present in another role (Cardenas, Major, & Bernas, 2004; Carlson & Frone, 2003). For instance, someone keeps thinking, worrying or ruminating about home-life matters while at work, rendering him/her unable to concentrate on what needs to be done at work (or vice versa). Psychological conflict is defined as “the psychological preoccupation with one role, while performing another role that interferes with one’s ability to become engaged in that last role” (Carlson & Frone, 2003, p. 518).

The construct of work-family conflict has guided most of the research on work-family role combination, a field which has grown dramatically over the past decades. The increased interest in this field has been stimulated by the trend in the United States as well as in Europe of increased female labor force participation, together with the increased prevalence of dual earner families (Emancipation Monitor, 2006; United Nations Statistics, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). In the Netherlands, for instance, in 1970, only 29% of females aged between 16 and 65 years participated in the labor force. Nowadays, 66% of the females in this age category are employed in paid work (Emancipation Monitor, 2006). Together with this increase in female labor force participation, nowadays in 60% of the families with a child under age, both partners participate in the labor force (Emancipation Monitor, 2006). Other developments as well have stimulated research interest into the work-family interface, such as the trend towards more global competition, which pressures employees to react flexibly to change within their organizations and also is associated with working irregular hours and more traveling for work. Moreover, technological advancements (e.g., cell phones, e-mail, laptops) have fuelled scholars’ interest into the work-family interface. These new technologies have changed our way of working and have made it more likely for work to intrude in the family domain or vice versa (Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006; Peeters & Heiligers, 2003). However, almost all of this research over the past decades has been based on the scarcity theory of human energy. Thus, the basic assumption underlying most past work-family research has been that role combination is inherently difficult and inevitably leads to experiencing role conflict and stress (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003, Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Voydanoff, 2004). Scholars who have paid special attention to the experiences of *women* in combining work and family roles have also often

approached this issue from a negative perspective. Focusing on the negative side of role combination, it is often expected in the literature that women experience higher levels of conflict because they bear the largest part of the care-taking and household activities alongside their work or because of the difficulties associated with performing the work role with the latter being seen as “unnatural” for women according to traditional gender role expectations (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). As such, to date, research into the experiences of women at work has primarily adopted a negative perspective.

#### *Scarcity Perspective in Organizations*

In organizations, the issue of work-family role combination is often approached from a scarcity perspective as well. Several work-family scholars have pointed out that within organizations the basic principle seems to be fear that employees’ commitment to other roles than the work role will go at the expense of employees’ availability or performance at work. Moreover, it is often assumed that – to be fully committed to work – employees should not be “distracted” by other commitments (Acker, 1999; Ferree, 1990; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007; Kofodimos, 1990). In the literature, several components of organizational cultures have been identified that are based on this assumption. One such a component, labeled “organizational time demands”, refers to the requirement of having to work long hours in order to demonstrate one’s motivation and commitment to work (Allen, 2001; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999). Another important concern is referred to as “perceived negative career consequences” associated with devoting more time to family issues. This indicates employees’ reluctance to use work-family benefits (e.g., parental leave) or otherwise devote time to their family responsibilities out of fear that being less visible at work will be interpreted as a lack of commitment, which will in turn jeopardize their career (Allen, 2001; Poelmans, 2003; Thompson et al., 1999; Voydanoff, 2004). These aspects of organizational culture have been found to relate to increased levels of conflict experiences among employees. In the same vein, employees who receive little support and understanding for family responsibilities from their manager and co-workers indicate that they experience higher levels of conflict (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999).

In the literature, organizations are advised to try to question these aspects of their organizational culture and enhance managerial and co-worker support for family issues within their organization in order to prevent the *detrimental consequences* of conflict from occurring (Kofodimos, 1990; Thompson et al., 1999; Allen, 2001). In a meta-analysis, Allen et al. (2000) revealed that employees’



conflict experiences relate to detrimental outcomes in the work domain (e.g., decreased work satisfaction and decreased organizational commitment), as well as the non-work domain (e.g., decreased life satisfaction). Moreover, this meta-analysis revealed strong relationships between employees' conflict experiences and stress-related outcomes, such as increased levels of emotional exhaustion (burnout), increased levels of depression, and a higher level of somatic complaints. By highlighting these negative consequences of conflict, work-family scholars have attempted to stimulate other researchers and organizational practitioners alike to think of ways to *reduce* employees' experiences of conflict between the work and family domain and its negative consequences for individual workers as well as the organizations they work in (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 1999). Thus, again, the topic of role combination is basically approached from a negative perspective, by merely paying attention to the negative side of role combination (conflict) and its adverse consequences.

However, relatively recently, work-family scholars report empirical results that challenge this negative view on role combination and indeed some have started to criticize the work-family literature for its one-sided focus on the negative side of role combination (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004).

## 1.2 Expansion Theory and Work-Family Facilitation

A theoretical alternative for the scarcity perspective was proposed by Marks already in 1977. In contrast to scarcity theory's assumption that role enactment inevitably and unavoidably depletes a person's finite resources, in his *Role Expansion Theory*, Marks considered human energy and attention to be *abundant* and *expandable*. He proposed that participation in one role not necessarily takes away from the energy available for another role. In fact, he posited that fulfilling one role can even *create* energy for the use in that or other roles. As such, he argued that participation in one role can also have *positive* effects on other role performances. Moreover, he argued to view time not as some sort of "prefabricated scarcity" which inevitably makes us fall victim to the experience of role conflict. By contrast, he posited that people are active agents who, by their own role bargaining, can allocate and use their time flexibly as a result of which there is no need to presuppose conflict in role combination. In sum, Mark's (1977) role expansion theory posits that people can also *benefit* from multiple role

participation and highlights the possibility that different roles *positively* impact upon each other.

This positive perspective on role combination has long been neglected in the literature. However, relatively recently, there is increasing attention for this positive perspective among researchers in the work-family field. This growing interest in the positive side of role combination in the work-family literature seems to correspond with the more general trend in psychology referred to as “positive psychology” (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), which argues that psychologists have been too preoccupied with examining the problematic developments and downside of human life. Rather than merely focusing on negative phenomena, such as people’s diseases, disorders, and distresses, “positive psychologists” call for more examination of positive phenomena to identify the factors that enhance human well-being, excellence, engagement, and resilience. A similar development among work-family scholars has caused them to aim for a better understanding of the upside of role combination.

Work-family studies that have addressed the positive side of role combination indeed suggest that role combination does not necessarily elicit conflict nor will it always be associated with detrimental outcomes. In fact, these studies have revealed that participation in multiple roles can be associated with *enhanced* well-being for individuals. Additionally, these studies suggest that employers do not need to fear that employees’ involvement in and commitment to other life roles goes at the expense of work. On the contrary, they indicate that the work domain can actually benefit from employees’ participation in other roles. That is, challenging the scarcity perspective on human energy, individuals who were involved in a greater number of roles in their lives have been found to have better mental health and better physical health over time (Barnett, Marshall, & Singer, 1992; Moen, Dempster-McClain, & Williams, 1992). Moreover, Kirchmeyer (1992) has established that when employees, besides their work role, spent more hours on home life roles (e.g., parenting roles, community roles) they actually reported higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In a similar vein, Steptoe, Lundwall, and Cropley (2000) assessed the influence of participation in family roles on physiological recovery after work. They divided their sample into three groups: a) married/cohabiting parents, b) married/cohabiting non-parents, and c) singles, and assessed their stress levels during and after a working day. There were no differences across these groups in the overall stress levels experienced at work. However, after a working day, when at home, the greatest reduction of stress was found among

parents, subsequently among married/cohabiting individuals, and finally singles displayed the lowest recovery rates. Thus, rather than that family roles depleted these employees, participation in family roles seems to have helped these individuals to relax. These findings again indicate that there may be a positive side to participation in multiple roles as well. Also important in this regard is the research by Ruderman et al. (2002), which examined, in a quantitative as well as quantitative fashion, whether women in management experienced that their work role benefited from their participation in and commitment to the *other roles* they fulfilled in their lives. The qualitative data obtained in this research illustrate that these women felt that their involvement in other life roles helped them to be more effective in their managerial role. These female managers, for example indicated that the role of being a parent taught them how to understand, motivate, develop, and direct their subordinates. Additionally, they reported that active participation in family settings and community or volunteer work had provided them with opportunities to gain experience in leadership positions and had enabled them to refine their listening and communication skills. Furthermore, the quantitative data obtained in this research revealed that managers who reported higher levels of commitment to other roles besides the work role indicated that they had higher levels of general well-being and were rated to have better task related as well as interpersonal skills in a 360-assessment by their peers, subordinates, and supervisors. Along similar lines, a recent study among male and female managers indicated that managers who felt more committed to their parental and marital roles did not indicate that they experienced more role conflict – which would have been expected from a scarcity perspective. On the contrary, those in dual roles reported higher levels of well-being and received better work performance ratings as assessed in a 360-assessment (Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007).

Thus, these findings clearly call for a more positive perspective on role combination in work-family research and warrant additional research to increase our understanding of the mechanisms that can produce these beneficial effects. It should be noted that scholars who advocate examining the positive side of role combination (e.g., Graves et al., 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Ruderman et al., 2002) acknowledge that role conflict and overload can be experienced in role combination. Moreover, they do not propose that fulfilling more roles is necessarily better since, conceivably, there are certain limits beyond which multiple roles can become burdensome or stressful (Ruderman et al., 2002). What they argue against however is adopting a standard scarcity assumption of

human energy, which results in under representation of research on the positive side of role combination in the literature.

#### *Work-Family Facilitation*

How then can participation in multiple roles produce beneficial outcomes? Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have identified three relevant *psychological mechanisms* that can account for the positive outcomes associated with participation in multiple roles. These include the possibility that 1) participation in different roles can have additive effects for well-being, 2) participation in one role can have buffering effects from distress in another role, and 3) participation in one role can *produce* positive experiences and outcomes in another role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This third mechanism refers to the concepts of work-family facilitation, enhancement, positive spillover, and enrichment.

In the present dissertation, I will focus on this third mechanism, and more specifically on employees' experiences of *facilitation* between their work and family roles. Several definitions have been advanced to specify the construct of facilitation. For instance, "the extent to which participation in one role is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed in another role" (Frone, 2003, p. 145), and "the extent to which participation in one role is made better or easier by virtue of participation in another role" (Wayne et al., 2004, p. 109). A central element in these definitions is that role functioning is *made easier* by virtue of participation in another role. In the present research, facilitation is accordingly defined as the extent to which participation in one role *makes it easier* to fulfill the requirements of another role. As such, facilitation can be regarded as the *conceptual counterpart* of conflict, which refers to the extent to which participation in one role makes it *more difficult* to fulfill the requirements of another role. It is important to note here that conflict and facilitation, rather than bipolar ends of a single continuum, represent separate constructs which can be experienced by an individual at the same time (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Kinnunen, Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006; Wayne et al., 2004). Second, it should be noted that scholars have used the term facilitation interchangeably with the terms positive spillover, enhancement, and enrichment (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). However, in the present research, I concur with other work-family scholars (e.g., Carlson et al., 2006; Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006) that these concepts address (slightly) different aspects of the positive side of combining multiple roles (see Carlson et al., 2006 for a detailed overview). Positive spillover indicates moods, values, habits or skills being transferred from one domain to another

domain in ways that make the two domains *more similar* (Hanson et al, 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Enhancement encompasses the acquisition of resources and experiences that are beneficial for individuals in coping with *general life challenges* (Sieber, 1974). However, neither of these concepts directly captures the experience that one role makes it *easier* to fulfill the requirements of the other, which is the essence of facilitation. Finally, enrichment refers to the individual's judgment that participation in one role improves the quality of life - in terms of performance and affect - in the other role. Enrichment measures then assess the individual's self-judgment that, for example, their work performance benefits from their participation in family roles (Carlson et al., 2006). This differs from the more proximal and narrow construct of facilitation, which captures the individual's judgment that participation in one role makes it *easier* to fulfill the requirements of another role (just as conflict measures capture the individual's judgment that participation in one role makes it more difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role). To examine how facilitation and conflict experiences affect outcomes such as work performance, I will empirically relate facilitation and conflict measures to outcome variables such as objective measures of work performance. Thus, in the present dissertation, I will address the positive as well as the negative side of the work-family interface by examining individual's experiences of role facilitation as well as their experiences of role conflict.

#### *Aims of the Present Dissertation*

The central objective of this dissertation thus is to increase understanding of the positive side of role combination. I will examine in detail how work and family roles can *facilitate* each other. As a result of the predominant focus on conflict in previous research, much is still unknown about employees' experience of work-family facilitation or about the positive outcomes that might result from this experience (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004). For instance, is it possible to distinguish between different *types* of facilitation experiences, in parallel to the different types of conflict that have been identified in the literature? And is there *added value* in examining facilitation - in addition to conflict - for instance when examining the effects of role combination on outcomes in the work domain (e.g., job performance)? Might there be *gender differences* in experiences of facilitation between roles? Moreover, when facilitation proves to be a relevant construct, is there evidence to suggest that employees' facilitation experiences in role combination relate to *actual* organizational outcomes, such as *objective* indicators of employees' job performance and absenteeism levels, or is facilitation only

related to employees' subjective well-being? Finally, I aim to identify relevant *antecedents* of experiencing facilitation between work and family and will assess whether it is possible to *influence* these experiences. Below, I provide an overview of the questions that will be addressed in the different chapters of this dissertation. However, first, I will discuss the methodological and measurement issues that have hindered previous work-family literature and provide information on the organization in which the research presented in this dissertation took place.

### 1.3 Measurement and Methodological Issues

In the present dissertation, I aim to address several persistent shortcomings that have hindered the work-family literature to date. Recently, Casper and colleagues (2007) have conducted an extensive review of the research methods used in the work-family literature over the past 24 years. Based on these observations, they have criticized the field for the fact that very few scholars have attempted to examine the work-family interface through frameworks other than scarcity theory as a result of which little is known about the possibility of work-family facilitation (see also Voydanoff, 2004). As I have described above, the central objective of the work presented here is to address the positive side of the work-family interface and gain more insight into individuals' experiences of facilitation between work and family roles. Another shortcoming of the field, identified by Casper et al. (2007) pertains to the finding that scholars have often only assessed one direction of conflict (and facilitation) or relied on generalized measures instead of examining specific experiences that represent the work-to-family (WF) as well as the family-to-work (FW) direction. These directions, which have proven to be statistically distinct (Frone et al, 1992; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000), capture fundamentally different subjective employee experiences, namely that the work domain has a negative (or positive) influence on the home domain or vice versa and thus should both be taken into account (see also Allen & Armstrong, 2006; Frone, 2003). The distinction between directions is also relevant for practitioners, for instance to design work-family intervention programs. Therefore, in all studies I present in the empirical chapters of this dissertation, I will provide a more balanced perspective on the work-family interface by addressing the negative (conflict) as well as the positive side (facilitation) in the WF and FW direction.

Furthermore, in the present research, I aim to move beyond the mere use of cross-sectional single-source survey research designs. The use of this kind of

designs raises concerns about mono-method bias and renders firm conclusions about causal relationships inappropriate. Moreover, when one relies on employees' *self-reports* only - for instance to examine the relationship between facilitation and work performance - one can only confidently say whether or not employees' facilitation experiences relate to their own *subjective assessment* of their performance at work. One can, however, never be certain that their facilitation experiences relate to their *actual* performance at work, in objective terms. In fact, this predominant reliance on cross-sectional single-source survey data has been identified as major shortcoming of work-family research to date (Casper et al., 2007). Casper and colleagues (2007) strongly recommended to advance the field by using multi-source data, including hard (objective) outcome measures, and by making use of longitudinal and experimental research designs to adequately examine causal relationships (see also Allen et al., 2000; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). In this dissertation, I therefore combine several different methodological research designs, in line with these recommendations. That is, in addition to the use of cross-sectional survey data (Chapter 2 and 3), I present *qualitative* data (in Chapter 2), which greatly enhanced my understanding of the construct of work-family facilitation. Moreover, I report two studies in which I use multi-source data, including *objective* data, such as objective indicators of physical health, job performance, and actual absenteeism rates (Chapter 4). This allowed me to examine whether employees' subjective experiences of facilitation and conflict relate to objective outcome measures. Furthermore, to examine whether experiences in role combination actually predict objective outcomes (e.g., objective job performance) over time, I deployed a *longitudinal* research design (Chapter 4). Finally, to examine whether it is possible to influence employees' cognitive appraisals of the work-family interface, I present a *field experiment* (Chapter 5) in which I *manipulate* the (alleged) views of others on role combination to examine how this causally affects how individuals themselves view the combination of their work and family roles.

#### **1.4 The Organization in which this Research took Place**

All of the studies I report in this dissertation are the result of a successful collaboration project over the past four years between Leiden University and ING. This multinational financial services organization is headquartered in the Netherlands and employs over 30,000 people in the Netherlands alone. Its professional Human Resources (HR) department in the Netherlands wanted to increase their understanding of work-family issues within their organization.

This interest was motivated by the reality that many of their current (and future) employees are part of dual earner families and the fact that there is much more diversity than there used to be in the manner in which employees combine their work role with other roles in life and employees' preferences in this regard. Moreover, the HR department was aware that contemporary employees tend to attach great importance to being able to satisfactorily combine their work with other life roles (see also Peeters & Heiligers, 2003). Stimulated by these developments within the organization and society at large, the aim of HR department was to become more knowledgeable on work-family issues to find effective ways to manage these issues. The HR department for instance wanted to know what it means for employees - in terms of implications for their well-being, work satisfaction, and work performance - to experience either a problematic or a successful combination of roles. Moreover, the HR department aimed to gain more insight in the factors that can contribute to experiencing a successful combination of roles in order to be able to address possible organizational factors that are relevant in this regard.

Because the HR department also wanted to know how their current employees experienced the combination of work with other roles in their lives, they decided to pay attention to this topic in their *employee survey* that is sent bi-annually to all employees of the organization. This gave the HR department information on how employees, on average, experienced role combination and enabled individual managers to gain information about the scores of their department on this topic. Moreover, this survey among all employees of the organization was very valuable material for the present research since I was allowed to include some measures for the present research. This enabled me to test whether some of the findings obtained among a sub sample of the organization's population (presented in Chapter 2) also hold for the organization at large. The response rate of this organizational survey was 66% with 18,355 participating employees. I summarize the results of this survey concerning role combination in the Appendix of Chapter 2. Additional details about the survey and its participants are also provided in this Appendix.

## 1.5 Overview of the Present Dissertation

As detailed earlier in this chapter, the present dissertation examines the positive side of the work-family interface. First, in Chapter 2, I examine in more detail *how* work and family roles can facilitate each other and whether there is *added value* in addressing the negative (conflict) as well as the positive (facilitation) side



of the work-family interface for the prediction of various work and non-work related outcome variables. I also examine whether there are *gender differences* in experiencing facilitation in role combination. Then, in Chapter 3, I aim to identify relevant *antecedents*, in the organizational as well as the home environment, of the experience of facilitation. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, I examine whether employees' experiences in role combination relate to *concrete* organizational outcomes (e.g., objective job performance). In Chapter 5, in a field experiment, I examine whether individual's cognitive appraisals regarding work-family role combination can be *influenced* by providing informational support. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a general discussion of the results of this dissertation.

*Chapter 2: How work and family can facilitate each other: Distinct types of work-family facilitation and outcomes for women and men*

The objective of Chapter 2 is to gain more insight into the different ways in which work and family roles can facilitate each other. On the basis of previous studies on work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus, 1988; Carlson et al., 2000), as well as the premises of role expansion theory (Marks, 1977), and empirical findings on the positive side of the work-family interface, I posit that *four experiential domains* need to be examined to understand the different conflicting *as well as* facilitating experiences that individuals can have in role combination, namely 1) energy (strain), 2) time, 3) behavior, and 4) psychological state. First, I present a *qualitative* study ( $N = 25$ ). In semi-structured interviews I address individuals' conflict experiences as well as their facilitation experiences in role combination. I examine whether our distinction between the four domains indeed captures the conflict and facilitation experiences that individuals spontaneously report. Then, in a *quantitative* survey study ( $N = 352$ ), I examine whether the distinction between *energy-based*, *time-based*, *behavioral*, and *psychological conflict* and *facilitation* experiences indeed is statistically valid. Furthermore, I aim to demonstrate the *added value* of addressing employees' facilitation experiences in role combination by assessing whether the examination of facilitation contributes to the prediction of work and non-work outcomes (e.g., job performance, life satisfaction) above and beyond the effects of conflict. Moreover in this quantitative study, I address *gender differences*. Focusing on the negative side of the work-family interface in previous literature, it has been often assumed that women experience most difficulties in role combining (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). By contrast, I take a *positive psychological perspective* on women at work and posit that for women the work role can be

regarded more as a self-chosen role than for men (see also Thoits, 2003). Based on this reasoning and organizational statistics in this regard, I hypothesize that women tend to experience the beneficial side or role combination to a higher degree than men and thus should generally report higher levels of facilitation between work and family than their male colleagues. Also stemming from this reasoning, I hypothesize that, for women, the experience of facilitation has more impact on outcome variables in the work and home domain than it has for men. I present data to examine these predictions and discuss their implications for theory and practice related to men and women at work.

*Chapter 3: Combining work and family: How family supportive work environments and work supportive home environments can reduce work-family conflict and enhance facilitation*

Chapter 3 aims to identify relevant *antecedents* of the different types of conflict and facilitation that employees can experience in role combination. In an attempt to help employees manage their work and family responsibilities, many contemporary organizations provide work-family benefits or programs to their employees, such as formal arrangements for flextime or childcare facilities. However, a substantial body of research suggests that, more than having work-family benefits or arrangements available to them, it is important for employees to receive *informal support* in their work environments (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2005; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). That is, employees in *family supportive work environments* (e.g., managerial and co-worker support for family issues, cultural norms that are family supportive) experience *lower levels of conflict* between their work and family roles. In this chapter, I aim to extend this line of research in two ways. First, I aim to answer the question whether creating a family supportive work environment can indeed only reduce employees' conflict experiences or whether such supportive environments might also have the capacity to induce a *positive exchange* between work and family (facilitation). Thus, I not only examine whether employees in supportive environments experience less conflict in role combination, but also whether supportive environments relate to higher levels of experienced *facilitation* between work and family roles. Second, I aim to extend previous research by examining the effects of informal support in the home environment as well. Whereas previous research has addressed "cross-domain support" in the work environment – that is support for family issues at work – , I also aim to shed light on the effects of receiving support for *work issues* in one's *home* environment (e.g., support of

partner and family/friends for work issues; cultural norms that are work supportive). Thus, the present chapter examines how the *family supportiveness of the work environment* as well as the *work supportiveness of the home environment* relate to employees' conflict and facilitation experiences in role combination.

In this chapter, I use the same dataset as in chapter 2. As detailed earlier, the aim of the previous chapter was, amongst others, to examine how the different types of conflict and facilitation relate to different categories of outcome variables. The objective of Chapter 3 is to examine how supportive work and home environments relate to employees' conflict and facilitation experiences in role combination. In accordance with our objective to study the supportiveness of the home environment - in which I address receiving support from one's partner - I have limited the sample of this study to employees who were married or cohabiting ( $N = 301$ ).

*Chapter 4: Are successful role-combiners healthier and better performing employees?  
Relating work-family facilitation and conflict to objective health and performance indicators*

Chapter 2 and previous work-family research have shown that employees' conflict experiences relate to adverse *self-reported* health and performance outcomes, whereas facilitation experiences relate positively to these self-reports (Allen et al., 2000; Allen & Armstrong, 2006; van Steenbergen, Ellemers, Mooijaart, 2007). Chapter 4 extends these findings by relating employees' experiences in the work-family interface to *objective* health and performance indicators. Evidence for a link between employees' subjective experiences in role combination and objective outcomes that are relevant for the organization would greatly advance the work-family literature and would provide practitioners with a stronger case to convince organizations to support employees in successful role combination (Casper et al., 2007). In this chapter, I present two studies. The first study is a large scale *cross-sectional study* ( $N = 1134$ ), in which I examine whether employees' facilitation and conflict experiences relate to *objective indicators of their physical health* (cholesterol, body mass index, and physical stamina). I hypothesize that facilitation experiences relate negatively to indicators of poor health (in terms of cholesterol, BMI, and physical stamina), whereas conflict experiences relate positively to these health indicators. Then, to examine whether employees' experiences in role combination *longitudinally predict* objective outcomes over time (one year later), I present a second study ( $N = 58$ ). In addition to examining objective physical health indicators (cholesterol level,

body mass index), I also longitudinally examine employees' *actual absenteeism* and objective indicators of their *job performance*. I hypothesize that facilitation experiences at Time 1 negatively predict indicators of a poor health at Time 2 (cholesterol and BMI) and negatively predict absenteeism at Time 2. Additionally, I predict that facilitation experiences at Time 1 positively predict job performance at Time 2. As such, the results of chapter 4 reveal whether or not successful role-combiners indeed are healthier and better performing employees.

*Chapter 5: There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so: Social influence and cognitive appraisal of the work–family interface*

In the final empirical chapter of this thesis (Chapter 5), I present a different kind of study than in the previous chapters, namely a *field experiment*. According to the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) no situation or event is stressful in and of itself – it is how we *cognitively construe* a particular situation that matters. I apply these and other insights from the stress literature to study the way in which individuals appraise and experience work-family role combination. By means of a field experiment ( $N = 143$ ), I examined whether employees' cognitive appraisals regarding their situation of role combination are fixed, or in fact can be *influenced* by information provided by others (appraisal support). The experiment was designed in such a way that participants first received information that supported either a *scarcity perspective* or an *expansion perspective* on human energy. Then, they completed a survey about how they themselves cognitively construed and experienced combining work and family roles. Via an open-ended question, participants were also asked to indicate their thoughts about role combination and were told that these could take any form (free listing, *qualitative data*). In this experiment, chance determined who received the scarcity message and who received the expansion message. I hypothesized that, compared to participants who received a *scarcity message*, those who received an *expansion message* appraise role combination as a) less stressful, b) less as a (negative) threat and more as a (positive) challenge, c) report less conflict and more facilitation, and d) spontaneously report a more positive train of thought about role-combination. In this study, I also explored the role that the *source* of the information plays in the appraisal process. In one set of conditions, this information was said to originate from a highly self-relevant source (i.e. employees within the participant's own organization), whereas in the second set of conditions it was said to originate from a less self-relevant source (i.e. employees within another sector of employment). I examined whether the

impact of the message (i.e., scarcity vs. expansion) was moderated by the identity of the source providing this message. This chapter offers new theoretical insights on the role of cognitive appraisal in work-family research and reveals ways in which the organization can influence employees' appraisals of and experiences in role combination. As such, it offers scope for designing a new kind of work-family intervention program that helps employees to view role combining from a more positive perspective.

*Chapter 6: Summary and general Discussion*

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the results found in this dissertation and discusses the contributions to theory and practice of this dissertation. Additionally, in chapter 6 I will discuss the limitations of the present research and outline a number of directions for future research.

It should be noted that all empirical chapters (chapter 2 to 5) can be read independently of each other as they have been prepared as separate journal articles. As a result there is some overlap between these chapters in terms of their literature review and introduction of ideas.

## Chapter 2

### **How Work and Family can Facilitate Each Other: Distinct Types of Work-Family Facilitation and Outcomes for Women and Men<sup>b</sup>**

Research on the work-family interface has predominantly focused on the negative side of combining multiple roles. From a scarcity perspective, most research has focused on the construct of *work-family conflict*, examining its occurrence, its antecedents, and its consequences. From this line of research, knowledge about work-family conflict is extensive. Empirical research has demonstrated that work-family conflict is bi-directional in nature (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Furthermore, different types of conflict have been distinguished, which can be experienced in both directions (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Research has also shown that the negative consequences of work-family conflict, such as burnout or depression, are serious and widespread (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000).

The focus on conflict has resulted in a one-sided and negative view of the work-family interface (Voydanoff, 2004). As a result, we know much less about the possibility that different roles *benefit* one another. In the present research, we explicitly focus on this positive side and examine *work-family facilitation*: The experience that participation in one role is made better or easier by virtue of participation in another role (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). We aim to contribute to work-family research in three ways. First, we assess facilitation at the same level of detail as conflict by identifying *different types of facilitation*. In parallel to the different types of conflict that have been identified in the literature, we examine four different types of facilitation, namely energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation. Second, we aim to demonstrate that facilitation contributes to the prediction of work and non-work

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<sup>b</sup> This chapter is a modified version of a previously published work. The citation of the original content is [Van Steenbergen, E.F., Ellemers, N., & Mooijjaart, A. (2007). *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12, 279-300]. Copyright © 2007 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission. No further reproduction or distribution is permitted without the written permission of the American Psychological Association. We wish to thank Peter de Heus, Etty Jehn, Lindred Greer, Kees van Putten, Lois Tetrick, and four anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments on previous versions of this manuscript. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meetings, Hawaii, 2005.

outcomes (e.g., job performance, life satisfaction) above and beyond conflict. Third, we assess gender differences in the experience as well as the consequences of facilitation, because we expect that facilitation generally plays a more important role for women than for men.

## 2.1 Theoretical and Empirical Background

### *Scarcity Theory and Work-Family Conflict*

The scarcity theory on human energy assumes that personal resources of time, energy, and attention are finite. As a result, devotion of attention to one role necessarily implies that fewer resources can be spent on another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Marks, 1977). A central assumption in this theory is that participating in one role tends to have a negative effect on the other role. Most work-family research has been based on this theoretical perspective and focused on the occurrence of work-family conflict, defined as: "A type of role conflict that arises when joint role pressures from work and family domains are experienced as incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003).

A distinction has been made between different *directions* of work-family conflict (WF and FW conflict, Frone, et al., 1992) as well as different *types* of conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 76). *Strain-based* conflict exists "when strain produced in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role." *Time-based* conflict occurs "when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role." *Behavioral* conflict emerges "when behavior required in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role." These types of conflict are statistically distinct and demonstrate specific relations with antecedents and outcomes (Carlson, Brooklyn Derr, & Wadsworth, 2003; Stephens & Sommer, 1996; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). The validated instrument developed by Carlson et al. (2000), assessing these types of conflict in both directions, systematically reveals differential relationships with antecedents and outcomes (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002).

We complement this measure with a fourth type of conflict, namely *psychological conflict* (Greenhaus, 1988). This conflict experience refers to being mentally distracted by or preoccupied with one role, while physically present in another role (Cardenas, Major, & Bernas, 2004; Carlson & Frone, 2003). For instance, someone keeps thinking, worrying or ruminating about home-life

(work) matters while at work (home), rendering him/her unable to concentrate on what needs to be done at work (home). Psychological conflict is defined as “the psychological preoccupation with one role, while performing another role that interferes with one’s ability to become engaged in that last role” (Carlson & Frone, 2003, p. 518)

Thus, we examine the operation of *strain-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW conflict*, rather than using global measures of conflict (cf. Allen et al., 2000).

#### *Role Expansion Theory and Work-Family Facilitation*

Work-family researchers have largely disregarded the possibility that different roles benefit one another as well as the outcomes that might result from this experience (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004). A theoretical alternative for the scarcity perspective was proposed by Marks (1977). In his *role expansion theory*, Marks (1977) considered human energy to be abundant and expandable and posited that participation in one role could also have a *positive* effect on other role performances. This positive perspective only fairly recently started to receive substantial attention in the empirical literature. Recent studies suggest that combining multiple roles does not necessarily elicit conflict nor will it always have detrimental outcomes. In fact, those who combined multiple roles were found to report stronger organizational commitment, higher job satisfaction, personal growth (Kirchmeyer, 1992), and better health over time (Moen, Dempster-McClain, & Williams, 1992). Relevant *psychological mechanisms* that can account for these positive outcomes include the possibility that 1) participation in different roles can have additive effects for well-being, 2) participation in one role can have buffering effects from distress in another role, and 3) participation in one role can produce positive experiences and outcomes in another role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). We focus on the third mechanism, which refers to concepts such as work-family facilitation, enhancement, positive spillover, and enrichment.

In the present research, we explicitly address *work-family-facilitation*. Different definitions have been advanced to specify facilitation. For instance, “A form of synergy in which resources associated with one role enhance or make easier participation in the other role” (Voydanoff, 2004, p. 399); “the extent to which participation in one role is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed in another role” (Frone, 2003, p. 145), and “the extent to which participation in one role is made better or easier by virtue of participation in another role” (Wayne et al., 2004, p. 109). A central element in



these definitions is that role functioning is *made easier* by virtue of participation in another role. In the present research, we accordingly define facilitation as the extent to which participation in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role. As such, we regard facilitation as the *conceptual counterpart* of conflict, which refers to the extent in which participation in one role makes it *more difficult* to fulfill the requirements of another role. Two things are important to note here. First, although we regard facilitation as the conceptual counterpart of conflict, we do not imply that they represent bipolar ends of a single continuum. Rather, we view facilitation and conflict as distinct constructs, which can be experienced by an individual at the same time and are likely to have different antecedents and consequences (cf. Carlson et al., 2006; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Wayne et al., 2004). Second, we concur with other work-family scholars (e.g., Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006) that the concepts facilitation, enhancement, positive spillover, and enrichment address to different aspects of the positive side of combining multiple roles (see Carlson et al., 2006 for a more detailed overview). Enhancement encompasses to the acquisition of resources and experiences that are beneficial for individuals in facing life challenges (Sieber, 1974). Furthermore, positive spillover indicates moods, values or skills that transfer from one domain to another domain in ways that make the two domains more similar (Hanson et al., 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Enrichment refers to the individual's judgment that participation in one role elicits positive consequences (performance and affect) for the other role (Carlson et al., 2006). However, none of these constructs directly refers to the experience that one role makes is *easier* to fulfill the requirements of the other, which is the essence of facilitation. Thus, we address facilitation as the more proximal and narrow construct, referring to the individual's judgment that participation in one role makes participation in another role easier. We then empirically examine the extent to which this is associated with beneficial outcomes (e.g., higher job performance or higher life satisfaction).

As a result of the dominance of the scarcity perspective in the literature, current knowledge on facilitation is not nearly as comprehensive as scholars' insight into conflict and many questions remain unanswered. For instance, is it possible to distinguish between different *types of facilitation*? If so, which types are important and what are the consequences of those types of facilitation? And is the experience of facilitation equally important for all who perform in different roles? These are the questions we address in the present research.

### *Domains of Facilitation and Conflict Experiences*

We address the possibility that both conflict and facilitation experiences of individuals can be understood by examining similar experiential domains and argue that four domains need to be examined to understand different ways in which role-combining is experienced as conflicting or as facilitating. These are: (1) *energy (strain)*, (2) *time*, (3) *behavior*, and (4) *psychological state*. Moreover, we posit that within each of these four domains, four dimensions can be distinguished, namely conflict and facilitation in the WF and FW direction.

We will first address the *energy (strain)* domain. From studies adopting the scarcity-perspective, we know that strain produced in one role can make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role (strain-based conflict, Carlson et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Theoretically, however, Marks (1977) posited that participation in one role can also *create energy* for the use in that role or in other role performances. Thus, it seems that energy or relaxation obtained in one role can also benefit another role. Indeed, current operationalizations of generalized facilitation already include items that refer to energy-based facilitation, e.g., “I feel energized after a working day, making me feel more like participating in activities at home” (Wagena & Geurts, 2000) or “Your home life helps you relax and feel ready for the next day’s work” (Wayne et al., 2004). We define *energy-based facilitation* as a specific form of facilitation, occurring when energy obtained in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role.

Second, although we acknowledge that *time* devoted to one role can make it more difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role (time-based conflict, Carlson et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985), we propose that time spent on one role can also positively affect the time in another role. Marks (1977) posited that time is not a “prefabricated scarcity,” but rather that humans are active agents who by their own role bargaining can allocate and structure time in different manners. In our view, the fact that one has to spend time on one role can stimulate one to define priorities, and allocate, use, or plan time in that and other roles more effectively. For instance, the time individuals spend on parenting tasks (picking up the children on time, etc.) can make it easier for them to set boundaries on and define priorities in the tasks they take on at work and could stimulate them to use their time at work more effectively (e.g., Ruderman et al., 2002, Geurts et al., 2005). Likewise, the time one spends at work can stimulate a person to define priorities in the tasks at home and to use the time with partner, children or friends in a better or more effective way (e.g., by having “quality time”). Thus, people can become “time architects” who perform their roles with an increased sense of urgency and focus (Hochschild, 1997). We define

*time-based facilitation* as occurring when the time devoted to one role stimulates or makes it easier to effectively manage and use the time in another role.

Third, both theoretical research (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and empirical studies (e.g., Crouter, 1984; Hanson et al., 2006; Kirchmeyer, 1992; Ruderman et al., 2002) point out that individuals can learn new *behaviors and skills* in one role which can have positive effects on other roles. For instance, female managers felt that raising children or participating in other relationships taught them how to understand, motivate, develop, and direct employees (Ruderman et al., 2002). Thus, besides the possibility of experiencing behavioral conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), behaviors and skills learned in one role can also benefit another role. We define *behavioral facilitation* as occurring when behavior required or learned in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role.

Finally, in addition to psychological conflict (psychological preoccupation with one role that prevents one from becoming engaged in another role, Carlson & Frone, 2003; Greenhaus, 1988), we propose that *psychological facilitation* can occur. Participation in multiple roles can broaden an individual's frame of reference and provide the individual with new perspectives. As such, participation in multiple roles can help the individual put problems associated with one role into perspective or evaluate them as less serious in the frame of reference provided by other roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Thus, compared to someone who focuses on the work role only, an individual who occupies multiple roles has more opportunities to put work matters into perspective, which could benefit that person's functioning at work. We propose that *psychological facilitation* occurs when an individual is able to put matters associated with one role into perspective by virtue of another role, which makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of the first role.

In sum, we aim to study energy (strain)-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation and conflict in both directions. Existing compound facilitation measures already include items referring to energy-based (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 1992; Wagena & Geurts, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004; Wayne, 2004), time-based (Tiedje et al, 1996; Wagena & Geurts, 2000; Geurts et al., 2005), behavioral (Grzywacz & Bass, 2000; Tiedje, 1996; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Wagena & Geurts, 2000), and psychological facilitation (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1992). We believe that, instead of studying generalized facilitation, the examination of different types of facilitation, conjointly with different types of conflict, furthers our understanding of the conditions under which the combination of multiple roles can be experienced as positive (facilitating) or as negative (conflicting). Moreover, this approach will enable us to better predict

(differential) outcomes, and thus could assist in designing specific and more effective interventions.

## **2.2 The Current Research**

We examine the added value of measuring the proposed types of facilitation, in addition to conflict, for the prediction of different categories of outcome variables. In their meta-analysis, Allen et al. (2000) examined the strength of the relationships between conflict and three categories of outcomes: Stress-related outcomes (e.g., emotional exhaustion, depression, somatic complaints), work outcomes (e.g., job performance, work satisfaction), and non-work outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction). They concluded that conflict was most strongly related to stress outcomes: "The relationship between conflict and stress-related outcomes is the strongest and most consistent finding in work-family research" (p. 301). This close relationship between conflict and stress outcomes maps on to the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which describes how people appraise their ongoing relationship with the environment. According to this model, a person experiences *stress-related* emotions when appraising demands or constraints in the environment as taxing or as exceeding one's coping resources. Since work-family conflict reflects a person's appraisal that role demands in the work and home environment are incompatible and that it is difficult to meet these joint demands, it follows from this model that the occurrence of conflict should be predictive of the degree to which people experience stress-related outcomes.

However, in previous research, relations between conflict and work or non-work outcomes (e.g., job performance, work satisfaction, life satisfaction) were observed to be less strong. We propose that this is due to the disregard of the positive side of the work-family interface in previous research. We argue that, although experiencing conflict is a close predictor of the stress levels that people experience in their lives, the absence of something negative (conflict) in itself does not imply that people will feel motivated or satisfied with their work or home life. Analogous to the central proposition of the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959), we posit that whereas the absence of conflict should prevent the occurrence of stress (low conflict as a hygiene factor), the *presence* of facilitation experiences needs to be taken into account (as a motivating factor), to be able to predict whether people feel stimulated by the fact that they combine different roles. In other words, when examining the broader range of attitudes about aspects of people's work and non-work lives it is necessary to assess the different (facilitating and conflicting)

implications of combining different roles. Thus, it is important to assess the positive side of role-combining (facilitation) in addition to the experience of conflict, as we predict that including people's experiences of facilitation improves the prediction of work and non-work outcomes.

*Hypothesis 1:* When added to measures that assess the experience of conflict, the inclusion of facilitation measures increases the amount of variance explained in work outcomes (job performance, affective commitment, job satisfaction, job search behavior) and non-work outcomes (home performance, home commitment, home satisfaction, global life satisfaction).

In line with previous research, we expect that the stress outcomes we examine in this research (depression and emotional exhaustion) are well explained by conflict. We will explore whether inclusion of facilitation further enhances this prediction.

#### *Gender Differences in Conflict and Facilitation*

We comply with the call to examine whether men and women differ in the level to which they experience facilitation (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Moreover, we examine gender differences in the consequences of facilitation. Focusing on the negative side of combining multiple roles, it is often expected in work-family research that women experience higher levels of *conflict* because of difficulties associated with performing the work role that is "unnatural" according to traditional gender role expectations (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999) or because they bear the largest part of care-taking and household tasks alongside their work (e.g., Behson, 2002). Empirical findings in this regard are inconsistent. Some studies report higher conflict for men, others for women, and still other studies report no or only small differences or report gender differences with respect to specific types of conflict (for overviews see Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005).

As opposed to this focus on the negative side of combining multiple roles, we propose to take a positive psychological perspective. Since working women in general tend to score higher on well-being and health indicators than women who are not engaged in paid work (Bekker, 1999; Moen et al., 1992), one could also argue that women experience and evaluate combining work with other roles in their lives as positive and beneficial (see also Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The work of Thoits (2003) is consistent with this reasoning. When considering the effects of having multiple roles, she differentiates between "*self-chosen*" (voluntary) and "*obligatory*" roles that individuals fulfill in their lives, and demonstrates that self-chosen roles in particular produce beneficial effects for well-being. Self-chosen

roles are emotionally and instrumentally easier to exit than obligatory roles. Thoits (2003) generally considers work an obligatory role. We, however, propose that *for women*, the element of choice for the work-role is more psychologically salient than for men, due to gendered role expectations and practice. That is, the role of care-taker is culturally still assigned primarily to women, whereas for men the provider-role is still regarded as the more primary one (Ridgeway & Corell, 2004). In addition, although great changes have taken place in the U.S. as well as in Europe, on average it is still more common for women to take on the largest part of household and care-taking activities regardless of whether or not they work, whereas it is still more common for men to focus on the work-role, to fulfill the work role fulltime, and to provide for the main part of the family income (United Nations Statistics, 2003; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Pottrass, 2002; Emancipatie Monitor, 2006). Thus, although we acknowledge that for many women fulfilling the work-role is financially necessary, based on traditional gender role expectations and gender differences in role fulfillment that still exist in present-day society, we argue that combining work with other roles in life has a different psychological meaning for women than for men (see also Rothbard, 2001). We propose that, while fulfilling the work-role is fairly self-evident for men, the work role on average is emotionally and/or instrumentally easier to exit for women (Thoits, 2003; van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2006). Assuming that women psychologically experience more of a choice, we propose that women who are engaged in paid work are on average more likely to have deliberately acquired the work role because of the anticipated benefits that are attached to this role or to combining this role with other roles in their lives (Thoits, 2003; van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2006) and more often than men (consciously) evaluate and weigh their experiences to decide whether or not to (continue to) combine different roles.

If our reasoning is valid, the specific relevance of facilitation for women with paid work should emerge in two ways. First, women *who are engaged in paid work* on average should experience the beneficial effects of combining work with other roles in their lives to a greater degree, and thus experience higher levels of facilitation than men do. Second, on average the experience of facilitation should be more influential for women than for men, in that the examination of facilitation experiences alongside conflict is especially important to predict outcome variables for women. Although previous research has not explicitly addressed gender differences in facilitation experiences (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), correlations revealed no gender difference (Kirchmeyer, 1993) or showed that women experience higher facilitation than men do (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan,

2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Wagena & Geurts, 2000). We are not aware of previous research examining gender differences in the predictive power of conflict and/or facilitation on outcomes.

*Hypothesis 2:* On average, women who perform the work role experience higher levels of facilitation than their male colleagues.

*Hypothesis 3:* When using both conflict and facilitation as predictors, the variance that is explained in the work and non-work outcomes is larger for women than for men.

To examine our predictions, we first present a small-scale *qualitative* pilot study looking at how employees experience their work roles as facilitating their home lives and vice versa. This study enabled us to develop a further understanding of the ways in which roles can facilitate one another and enabled us to validate our distinction between the different types of facilitation. In a second *quantitative* study we test whether the different types of facilitation and conflict can be statistically distinguished. We assess their relationships with outcomes in the stress, work, and home domains and examine gender differences in this regard.

### 2.3 Method Qualitative Pilot Study

#### *Sample and Procedure*

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the experiences that individuals report can be classified as energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW facilitation. We also asked about conflict to check whether these conflict experiences map on to the types of conflict distinguished in previous literature.

We conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews within a world-wide operating financial service organization in the Netherlands. Thirty employees were randomly selected from the personnel database, of which 15 females and 10 males agreed to participate. On average, participants were 42.8 years of age and contracted to work for 31.8 hours per week. Of the participants, 56% had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 44% had completed lower education (lower vocational education or high school). The average organizational tenure was 12.8 years. Most of the participants were either married or cohabiting (87.5%) and had at least one child (88%).

The interviews started with an explanation of different roles one can fulfill in one's home life. We addressed facilitation (conflict) by asking: "Are there any ways in which you experience that your involvement in your work makes it

easier (more difficult) to fulfill the roles you have in your home life, or that your involvement in your home life makes it easier (more difficult) to fulfill your work? Notes were taken close to verbatim and transcribed directly after each interview. The duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour.

Two independent raters coded the facilitation experiences (101 items). The raters first read our definitions of the facilitation construct and the different types of facilitation (see *introduction*). They were instructed to categorize an item in one of the eight facilitation categories when it was clearly an example of that type or else categorize the item as “other.” When an item did not refer to the construct of facilitation, it could be rated as a “non-facilitation response”. After the raters had practiced with five items, they individually coded every item. *Conflict* (78 items) was coded in the same vein. Both raters identified 17 items as “non-facilitation response” and five items as “non-conflict response.” These items did not refer to facilitation or conflict, but mentioned general work benefits or general feelings of (lowered) well-being (e.g., “My work gives me a feeling of self-esteem”). In total, 84 facilitation items and 73 conflict items were classified in one of the categories. Cohen’s kappa for inter-rater agreement was .96 for the facilitation items and .97 for the conflict items.

## 2.4 Results Qualitative Pilot Study

Table 2.1 shows that 97.6% of the facilitation experiences and 97.4% of the conflict experiences spontaneously mentioned by the participants fell within the types of conflict and facilitation we distinguished. A large part of the participants reported *energy-based WF* (44%) and *FW facilitation* (36%), e.g., “My job is interesting and inspiring, I get a lot of energy out of it, and that is something you take home with you” and “It is fun being a dad. It gives you a lot of pleasure and positive energy, which makes itself felt at work.” In addition, participants often reported that the time they spend on one role makes them use their time in the other role more effectively, e.g., “When you have all day to do something, it will take all day. Because I spend a lot of my time at work, I do things at home more efficiently and faster: Groceries, buying presents, the laundry etc.”. Another example: “A lot has changed since I am a dad. I started to work four days a week (4 times 9 hours), and I have got the feeling that this has made me somewhat more productive. I simply manage to get everything done in four days. These days, I use my time at work better” (*time-based WF and FW facilitation*). In addition, participants reported *behavioral WF and FW facilitation*, e.g., “At work I function in a dynamic field where a lot of power and strategic



games go on. So, I do not lose my head quickly when problems arise at home. I have learned to deal with problems, I have those skills” and “Having kids teaches you how to be creative and tactical, to approach things differently. With my kids, I learned that it works back to front when I enforce or impose something and that also applies at work.” Furthermore, *psychological WF facilitation* was often reported, e.g., “When I compare myself with my mom and sister who do not work, I see that little matters in their family lives tend to have a lot of negative impact. It works differently for me. I have a “bigger world” because of my work, which means I can better put into perspective the things that happen at home.” Finally, almost half of the sample reported *psychological FW facilitation*, e.g., “Because I also have a life at home – I mean a life besides work – I am better able to put my work into perspective. You simply realize that there is more in life than work, so you do not keep ruminating about work. I think this makes you a more stable person, which positively affects your work.” Regarding conflict, participants did not spontaneously mention examples of behavioral WF conflict and sporadically mentioned behavioral FW conflict. Strain-based and time-based WF conflict were reported most frequently. This initial study indicates that both the facilitation and conflict experiences of individuals are well captured by studying the proposed types of facilitation and conflict.

Table 2.1. Results of Qualitative Pilot Study

Type of facilitation or conflict	Frequency of Type out of Total (%)	% of Sample Reporting Type
<i>Facilitation</i>		
Energy-based WF	15.5	44.0
Energy-based FW	14.3	36.0
Time-based WF	11.9	36.0
Time-based FW	6.5	24.0
Behavioral WF	16.7	24.0
Behavioral FW	6.0	25.0
Psychological WF	13.1	32.0
Psychological FW	13.1	48.0
Other	2.4	8.0
<i>Conflict</i>		
Strain-based WF	21.9	60.0
Strain-based FW	15.1	32.0
Time-based WF	23.3	48.0
Time-based FW	13.7	32.0
Behavioral WF	-	-
Behavioral FW	1.4	4.0
Psychological WF	16.4	32.0
Psychological FW	5.5	16.0
Other	2.6	8.0

## 2.5 Method Quantitative Study

### *Procedure and Sample*

The same financial service organization that participated in the pilot permitted us to conduct a larger survey study and provided the work addresses of a random sample of 750 of their Dutch employees (employees who participated in the interviews did not participate here). We distributed the questionnaire enclosed with a letter explaining the anonymous nature of the study. Included was a lottery ticket which could win participants one of three coupons worth 100 Euros (US \$ 129.3). In line with prior studies (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000) and recommendations (Frone, 2003), we did not limit our sample to married persons or parents (we did control for these statuses in the analyses), because this would reflect too narrow a conceptualization of family, as even single childless adults often carry family commitments to parents, siblings, and other kin. The response rate was 48.4%, with 363 surveys returned. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Frone et al., 1992), we excluded 11 respondents who worked less than 20 hours a week.

The 352 participants (216 males, 136 females) were contracted to work for an average of 34.5 hours per week (range 20 – 40;  $SD = 4.92$ ). Men were on average contracted for more hours than women (36.5 versus 31.5 hours per week;  $t = 10.68$  (348)  $p < .01$ ). Of the participants, 9.7% indicated being in the age category “29 years or less”, 36.4 % were “between 30 and 39”, 33.0% were “between 40 and 49”, and 21.0% were “50 years or older.” About half of the participants (45.7%) had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 54.3% had only completed lower education (lower vocational education or high school). The average organizational tenure was 14.4 years (range 0-41,  $SD = 10.42$ ) and the average salary category was 8.7 (range 2 – 15;  $SD = 2.46$ ). A large part of the participants (82.7%) were either married or cohabiting. Over half of the participants (66.5%) had at least one child. Of the participants with children, 31.2% had a youngest child of pre-school age (0 - 3 years old), 31.2% had a youngest child in the elementary school age (4 - 12 years old), 18.8% had a youngest child of high school / college age (13 - 21 years old), and 18.8% had a youngest child aged 22 years or older.

We compared our sample with the total employee database on these control variables, using  $\chi^2$  tests and  $t$  tests ( $p < .01$ ). Participants in our sample had a higher salary category ( $t$  (351) = - 8.07,  $p < .01$ ), and more often had a youngest child in the two youngest age categories ( $\chi^2$  (3) = 22.04,  $p < .01$ ). We found no differences for gender, contracted working hours (men’s, women’s, and

overall), age, marital status, education, and having children. Thus, generally, this sample can be regarded as representative for the organization as a whole.

### Measures

Items were measured using 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The items we used were back-translated from existing English language measures or were items that have been empirically validated in the Dutch language (Wagena & Geurts, 2000).

*Work-family conflict.* We used the three-item scales developed by Carlson et al. (2000) to measure *time-based*, *strain-based*, and *behavioral WF and FW conflict*. In line with prior research, we used referents to “home / home life” instead of “family / family life” to make items applicable for all participants (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). *Psychological WF and FW conflict* were measured with two three-item scales developed by Carlson and Frone (2003). The reliability coefficients are depicted in Table 2.3<sup>c</sup>; please refer to the end of this chapter for a full list of items.

*Work-family facilitation.* We employed two strategies to develop measures for the different types of facilitation. First, we examined existing measures of generalized facilitation and selected items developed by Wagena and Geurts (2000) and Grzywacz and Marks (2000), which in our opinion specifically referred to energy-based and behavioral facilitation. Second, we used our qualitative study to develop meaningful items capturing experiences that were frequently mentioned in the interviews. In this way, we developed a pool of 38 items. From this pool, we selected three items per scale (24 items, please refer to the end of this chapter for the items) that in our opinion best represented the different constructs. The scales had good reliability coefficients (see Table 2.3).

*Work outcomes.* *Work satisfaction* was measured with one item (see Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997; Nagy, 2002): “Taking everything into account, I am satisfied as an employee of this organization.” We measured *affective organizational commitment* with three items developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993), e.g., “I feel emotionally attached to the organization I work for” (van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2007). Self-rated *job performance* was examined with five items (Williams & Anderson, 1991), e.g., “On average, I feel I complete assigned duties adequately.” *Job search behavior* was measured with the item: “I am seriously searching for another job, outside this organization,” with four answer

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<sup>c</sup> The reliability coefficient for behavioral WF conflict was somewhat low. However, we corrected for measurement error in our further analyses.

categories indicating levels of job search activity (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Van den Heuvel, 1998).

*Non-work outcomes.* *Home satisfaction* was measured with one item: "Taking everything into account, I am satisfied with my home life (Quinn & Staines, 1979)." For *home commitment*, we modified three items that measure relationship commitment (Rusbult, 1980), e.g., "I feel very attached to my home life." To measure *home performance*, we adapted the five-item job performance scale (Williams & Anderson, 1991), e.g., "On average, I feel I adequately fulfill the tasks that I have in my home life." We measured *global life satisfaction* with a composite scale that incorporates life ratings, satisfaction, and happiness. Participants for instance indicated on semantic differential ratings how they felt about their present life, e.g., "boring-interesting", see Quinn and Staines (1979) for a detailed description of this scale.

*Stress outcomes.* We measured *emotional exhaustion* with the five-item emotional exhaustion scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000), e.g., "I feel burned out from my work" (0 = *never* to 6 = *always*). *Depressive complaints* were measured with nine items (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression, CES-D, Kohout, Berkman, Evans, & Cornoni-Huntley, 1993). Participants were offered brief statements of feelings or behaviors and were asked how often they had felt that way during the last two weeks (1 = *seldom*, to 5 = *mostly*), e.g., "I felt depressed" and "I enjoyed life" (reversed).

*Controls.* In line with previous work-family research (e.g., Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Wayne et al., 2004), we measured: *Working hours* (contractual hours per week), *age* (1 = "29 years or less"; 2 = "between 30 and 39"; 3 = "between 40 and 49"; and 4 = "50 years or older"), *education* (1 = lower vocational education or high school; 2 = university or higher vocational education), *organizational tenure* (in years), *salary category* (1 = lowest; 15 = highest), *marital status* (1 = single; 2 = married / cohabiting), and *age of youngest child* (1 = "0-3 years old", 2 = "4-12 years old", 3 = "13-21 years old", and 4 = "22 years or older."

## 2.6 Results

We proposed that (strain) energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW conflict and facilitation can be empirically distinguished. We examined the dimensionality of the scales by conducting confirmatory factor analyses (EQS 6.1), examining model fit with the Goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative index (CFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), and

the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). In general, models with fit indices greater than .90, and a RMSEA smaller than or equal to .08 indicate a good fit between the model and the data (Browne & Cudeck, 1989; Hoyle, 1995). First, we examined whether energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW *facilitation* were statistically distinct. As seen in Table 2.2, the proposed eight-factor model for the facilitation items demonstrated a highly satisfactory fit, whereas alternative models indicated a poor fit. Then, we examined whether the eight facilitation scales and the eight conflict scales represented 16 distinct factors. The proposed 16-factor model indeed indicated a good fit, while alternative models in which conflict and facilitation were collapsed, and/or the four types and two directions of conflict and facilitation were collapsed, all poorly fit the data (see Table 2.2). Moreover, Table 2.3 shows only modest (inter)correlations between the conflict and facilitation scales. Thus, both factor analytic results and correlations indicate that conflict and facilitation should be seen to represent different constructs rather than single ends of a continuum (Carlson et al., 2000; Wayne et al., 2004) and support the distinction between the proposed types of conflict and facilitation.

Table 2.2. Fit Indices for Proposed and Alternative Models of Facilitation and Conflict Items

	$\chi^2$ (df)	<i>P</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>IFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Model						
<i>Facilitation items</i>						
M1: Proposed 8-factor model	445.28 (224)	.001	.90	.94	.94	.05
M2: Alternative 1-factor model	2461.46 (225)	.001	.60	.44	.44	.16
M3: Alternative 2-factor model	2338.53 (251)	.001	.61	.47	.47	.16
M4: Alternative 4-factor model	1550.10 (246)	.001	.68	.67	.67	.13
<i>Facilitation and conflict items</i>						
M5: Proposed 16-factor model	1702.95 (960)	.001	.90	.91	.91	.05
M6: Alternative 1-factor model	7393.52 (1080)	.001	.44	.22	.22	.13
M7: Alternative 2-factor model	6257.97 (1079)	.001	.50	.36	.36	.12
M8: Alternative 2-factor model	7208.99 (1079)	.001	.45	.24	.25	.13
M9: Alternative 4-factor model	6666.46 (1074)	.001	.47	.31	.31	.13
M10: Alternative 8-factor model	4406.09 (1051)	.001	.58	.57	.58	.10

*Note.* GFI = Goodness of fit index; CFI = Comparative fit index; IFI = Incremental fit index; RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation; M3: 2-factor model, representing the WF and FW direction; M4: 4-factor model, representing the four dimensions energy (strain), time, behavior, and psychological state; M7: 2-factor model, representing conflict and facilitation; M8: 2-factor model, representing the WF and FW direction; M9: 4-factor model, representing the four dimensions energy (strain), time, behavior, and psychological state; M10: 8-factor model, representing the four dimensions energy (strain), time, behavior, and psychological state on both the conflict and facilitation side. We have also examined several alternative 12 and 14 factor models, in which specific types of conflict and facilitation were collapsed (not depicted). None of these alternative models fit the data.

Table 2.3. (Inter)correlations for all Variables Used in this Study

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Sex			(-)																	
2. Age			-.26**	(-)																
3. Education			-.05	-.05	(-)															
4. Org. tenure	14.38	10.42	-.29**	.71**	-.24**	(-)														
5. Salary	8.69	2.46	-.30**	.13*	.58**	-.02	(-)													
6. Marital status			-.08	.10	.12*	.08	.25**	(-)												
7. Ctr. work hours	34.53	4.92	-.50**	.07	.13**	-.05	.36**	.04	(-)											
8. Child 0-3 (D)			.13*	-.27**	.16**	-.27**	.08	.13*	-.12*	(-)										
9. Child 4-12 (D)			-.07	.10	-.17**	.12*	-.09	.09	-.23**	-.27**	(-)									
10. Child 13-21 (D)			-.09	.27**	-.02	.25**	.11*	.06	.10	-.20**	-.20**	(-)								
11. Child 22+ (D)			-.18**	.51**	.07	.39**	.11*	.15*	.14*	-.20**	-.20**	-.15**	(-)							
12. Time cfl. WF	2.46	0.89	-.01	.03	.15**	.03	.24**	.03	.12*	-.04	-.02	.06	-.01	(.77)						
13. Time cfl. FW	1.94	0.77	.09	-.10*	.05	-.08	-.01	.02	-.17**	.17**	.12*	-.04	-.14**	.25**	(.74)					
14. Time fac. WF	3.41	0.82	.16**	-.08	.04	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.09	.04	-.02	-.04	-.04	-.15*	-.10	(.79)				
15. Time fac. FW	3.22	0.81	.15**	-.09	.10	-.06	-.01	.08	-.13*	.19**	.03	.03	-.11*	-.10	.20**	.41**	(.83)			
16. Strain cfl. WF	2.52	0.97	.09	.05	.01	.05	.01	.03	.08	-.17**	.01	.04	.06	.50**	.15**	-.25**	-.13*	(.88)		
17. Strain cfl. FW	1.87	0.87	.12*	-.12**	-.07	-.05	-.16**	-.10	-.12*	.02	.03	-.04	-.10*	.11*	.42**	-.03	-.01	.22**	(.92)	
18. Energy fac. WF	2.69	0.70	.09	-.07	.01	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.07	.19**	-.02	.03	-.01	-.19*	-.01	.47**	.38**	-.44**	-.02	(.72)
19. Energy fac. FW	3.90	0.68	.06	-.16**	.03	-.14*	-.01	-.07	.02	.04	-.10*	-.02	-.05	.04	-.05	.27**	.28**	-.01	-.12*	.23**
20. Beh. cfl. WF	2.88	0.82	.02	.01	-.01	.08	-.01	.03	-.01	.04	-.05	-.10	.05	.07	.08	.08	-.03	.10	.02	-.07
21. Beh. cfl. FW	2.78	0.81	.02	.07	-.14*	.12*	-.07	-.01	-.03	.04	.05	-.05	.03	.07	.05	-.01	.05	.11*	.05	.03
22. Beh. fac. WF	3.24	0.81	.03	-.02	.15**	-.05	.14**	-.02	.14*	-.06	.02	.05	-.01	-.02	-.02	.36**	.34**	-.16**	-.05	.35**
23. Beh. fac. FW	3.37	0.73	.14*	-.07	.05	-.03	-.06	-.02	.03	.01	-.03	.02	-.02	-.07	.06	.22**	.32**	-.06	-.02	.28**
24. Psych. cfl. WF	2.90	0.99	.03	-.02	.23**	-.10	.33**	.16**	.16**	-.02	-.05	-.03	.04	.25*	.01	-.03	.02	.35**	-.01	-.13*
25. Psych. cfl. FW	2.41	0.82	.01	-.05	-.08	.02	-.18**	-.10	-.10	-.01	.12*	-.05	-.08	.08	.40**	-.05	-.01	.15**	.53**	-.02
26. Psych. fac. WF	3.07	0.83	.16**	-.04	.05	-.02	-.02	.05	-.10	.10	.04	.12*	-.11*	-.04	.06	.29**	.43**	-.10*	.03	.34**
27. Psych. fac. FW	3.65	0.77	.04	-.12*	.07	-.05	-.03	.01	-.08	.10	-.01	-.04	-.18**	-.03	.09	.25**	.27**	-.14**	-.04	.20**
28. Emotional exh.	1.93	1.28	-.06	.02	-.01	.01	.01	.04	.08	-.17**	.03	-.03	.05	.44**	.12	-.28**	-.19**	.70**	.23**	-.47**

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Ctr. work hours refers to the amount of contracted working hours per week; Age of youngest child is measured with 4 dummy (D) variables, using employees without children as reference category; Scale reliabilities (alpha coefficients) are presented in parentheses.



Table 2.3. (Inter)correlations (continued, lower part)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
29. Depr. compl.	1.86	0.63	.08	.01	-.08	-.03	-.06	-.22**	.01	-.18**	-.04	.01	-.04	.23**	.15**	-.20**	-.19**	.47**	.39**	-.30**
30. Work satisfac.	3.83	0.84	.08	-.10	.01	-.08	-.01	.02	-.08	.18**	-.07	-.03	-.05	-.23**	-.08	.32**	.25**	-.34**	-.12*	.42**
31. Aff. commit.	3.75	0.81	-.05	.01	.07	.04	.12*	.08	.13*	.07	-.10	.03	.09	.01	-.10	.20**	.16**	-.17**	-.18**	.21**
32. Job perform.	4.22	0.56	.06	-.05	.11*	-.10	.01	.03	.01	.12**	-.05	-.10	.05	-.06	-.08	.17**	.15**	-.11*	-.30**	.16**
33. Job search	1.17	0.59	-.07	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.05	.04	-.01	.09	.12**	-.05	-.01	.01	-.03	-.05	-.01	.05	-.01	-.06
34. Home satisfac.	4.27	0.77	.01	.01	-.03	.05	-.02	.14**	-.11*	.06	-.04	-.04	.10	-.24**	-.23**	.22**	.12*	-.32**	-.31**	.26**
35. Home commit.	4.52	0.55	.03	.09	-.07	.09	-.09	.16**	-.15*	.13*	-.02	-.02	.05	-.17**	-.08	.14**	.14*	-.11*	-.19**	.05
36. Home perform.	4.14	0.61	.03	.04	-.01	-.01	-.09	.10	-.11*	.06	-.02	-.02	.06	-.30**	-.18**	.21**	.17**	-.25**	-.25**	.14**
37. Gl. life satisfac.	0.00	0.91	.04	-.01	.05	.03	-.04	.19**	-.09	.11*	-.02	-.02	.05	-.27**	-.16**	.32**	.23**	-.38**	-.30**	.39**

Table 2.3. (Inter)correlations (continued, right part)

Variables	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
19. Energy FW	(.76)																	
20. Beh. cfl. WF	-.04	(.59)																
21. Beh. cfl. FW	-.06	.47**	(.72)															
22. Beh. fac. WF	.35**	-.06	.02	(.82)														
23. Beh. fac. FW	.37**	-.03	.01	.64**	(.82)													
24. Psych. cfl. WF	.07	.10*	.03	.11*	-.01	(.88)												
25. Psych. cfl. FW	-.15**	.10	.09	-.03	-.02	-.08	(.82)											
26. Psych. fac. WF	.23**	.01	.01	.38**	.27**	.06	-.04	(.83)										
27. Psych. fac. FW	.29**	.02	-.02	.22**	.23**	-.20**	.10	.25**	(.86)									
28. Emotional exh.	-.04	.07	.09	-.19**	-.12*	.23**	.14*	-.18**	-.14**	(.92)								
29. Depr. compl.	-.21**	.06	.09	-.21**	-.23**	.15**	.25**	-.08	-.24**	.52**	(.87)							
30. Work satisfac.	.19**	-.05	-.06	.29**	-.20**	-.04	-.10	.25**	.16**	-.46**	-.40**	(-)						
31. Aff. commit.	.21**	-.02	-.01	.21**	.14*	.18**	-.24**	.19**	.06	-.23**	-.29**	.42**	(.90)					
32. Job perform.	.28**	.03	-.02	.25**	.22**	.08	-.13*	.20**	.16**	-.17**	-.28**	.27**	.28**	(.94)				
33. Job search	.03	.01	-.03	-.02	.02	.04	-.01	-.10	.06	.15**	.12*	-.23**	-.12*	.01	(-)			
34. Home satisfac.	.24**	-.01	-.03	.12*	.15**	-.11*	-.15**	.05	.25**	-.29**	-.42**	.30**	.14**	.20**	.04	(-)		
35. Home commit.	.19*	-.01	-.01	.07	.17**	-.09	-.01	.05	.31**	-.11*	-.38**	.13*	.11*	.29**	.08	.56**	(.89)	
36. Home perform.	.21**	-.11*	-.12*	.14*	.25**	-.05	-.15**	.16**	.26**	-.28**	-.35**	.22**	.14**	.40**	.07	.52**	.49**	(.94)
37. Gl. life satisfac.	.28**	-.07	-.09	.30**	.30**	-.10	-.19**	.15**	.29**	-.49**	-.72**	.51**	.27**	.29**	-.09	.58**	.42**	.44** (-)

*Predicting Work Outcomes, Non-Work Outcomes, and Stress-related Outcomes*

We predicted that inclusion of the facilitation measures, in addition to the conflict measures, would significantly increase the variance explained in the work and non-work outcomes (hypothesis 1). To test this hypothesis for the work outcomes, we compared a path model in which the conflict scales predicted the work outcomes (job performance, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and job search behavior) with a model in which the conflict *and* the facilitation scales jointly predicted these outcomes (conflict vs. conflict-facilitation model). Path analysis enables one to predict several related outcomes simultaneously, while taking the relationships between these outcomes into account, and allows for correction of random measurement error (Williams & Hazer, 1986). We corrected for random measurement error by fixing the loadings from indicator to construct to the square root of the coefficient alpha internal consistency estimate for each construct, and fixing their respective error terms to 1 minus alpha (McDonald, Behson, & Seifert, 2005). Predictors were allowed to correlate, as were the outcome variables. Regarding the *work outcomes* (Table 2.4), inclusion of facilitation significantly increased the prediction of job performance, affective commitment, and work satisfaction. The increase in explained variance in job search behavior was not significant. Inclusion of facilitation in the model significantly increased the prediction of all *non-work outcomes* (home performance, home commitment, home satisfaction, and global life satisfaction). Thus, the facilitation scales significantly increased the amount of variance that was explained in 7 out of the 8 work and non-work outcomes, supporting hypothesis 1. We also explored whether inclusion of facilitation increased the variance explained in the *stress outcomes* (Table 2.4). The conflict model already explained 62% of the variance in emotional exhaustion and 40% in depression. Nevertheless, even in this case inclusion of facilitation significantly improved these predictions.

*Gender Differences in Level of Facilitation Experienced*

We predicted that women would experience higher levels of facilitation than men. We conducted a Mancova on the conflict scales and on the facilitation scales (including the controls as covariates<sup>d</sup>). Women reported higher levels of conflict: ( $F(8) = 2.40, p < .05$ ), specifically for *strain-based WF conflict* ( $F(1) = 10.12, p < .01, M = 2.79, SD = .10$  vs.  $M = 2.33, SD = .08$ ) and *psychological WF conflict* ( $F(1) = 11.28, p$

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<sup>d</sup> Age of youngest child was included with four dummy variables, representing the four age categories of the youngest child, using individuals without children as the reference category.

< .01,  $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .10$  vs.  $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = .07$ ). However, women also experienced greater facilitation ( $F(8) = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ). That is, compared to men, women reported more *time-based WF facilitation* ( $F(1) = 3.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .09$  vs.  $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .07$ ), *time-based FW facilitation*, ( $F(1) = 4.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = .08$  vs.  $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .06$ ), *behavioral WF facilitation* ( $F(1) = 5.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .08$  vs.  $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .06$ ), *behavioral FW facilitation*, ( $F(1) = 6.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = .08$  vs.  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .06$ ) and *psychological WF facilitation*, ( $F(1) = 4.28$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .09$  vs.  $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .07$ ). This is in line with our second hypothesis that women should experience more facilitation than men.

#### *Gender Differences in Explained Variance*

Finally, we estimated the conflict-models and conflict-facilitation models for men and women separately. Consistent with hypothesis 1, Table 2.5 indicates that for both men and women inclusion of facilitation significantly increased the variance explained in all work and non-work outcomes. However, we predicted that the examination of facilitation conjointly with conflict would explain *more variance* in the work and non-work outcomes *for women than for men* (hypothesis 3). We tested the significance of the gender difference in variance explained by the conflict-facilitation models, by calculating the 95% (and 90%) confidence intervals for differences between two independent  $R^2$ s (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2005, p. 88). As indicated in the left half of Table 2.5, the gender difference in explained variance for affective commitment resulted from the conflict scales. Furthermore, gender differences for job search behavior and global life satisfaction were not significant. However, the results for all other outcomes were consistent with hypothesis 3. That is, the conflict-facilitation models explained significantly higher levels of variance in women's *job performance*, *home performance*, and *home commitment* than for men (95% confidence interval). Additionally, the levels of variance explained in women's *job satisfaction* and *home satisfaction* were higher than those of men (90% confidence interval<sup>e</sup>).

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<sup>e</sup> Although we only included participants in our sample who worked at least 20 hours per week, men and women in this natural sample still differed in working hours. Therefore, we also ran our models on men and women who worked fulltime (> 36 contracted working hours a week: 202 men, 71 women). Results were highly similar to the results presented above, indicating that, irrespective of the amount of working hours, the conflict-facilitation models have more predictive power for women than for men.

Table 2.4. Variance Explained by Conflict-Facilitation versus Conflict Model

	R <sup>2</sup> C-model	R <sup>2</sup> CF-model	F <sub>change</sub> (8,335)
<i>Outcome variables</i>			
<i>Work outcomes</i>			
Job performance	.13	.25	6.45*
Affective commitment	.21	.26	2.60*
Work satisfaction	.16	.29	8.18*
Job search behavior	.03	.07	1.90
<i>Non-work outcomes</i>			
Home performance	.20	.36	10.72*
Home commitment	.11	.27	9.02*
Home satisfaction	.20	.31	6.63*
Global life satisfaction	.23	.41	12.28*
<i>Stress Outcomes</i>			
Emotional exhaustion	.62	.66	3.89*
Depressive complaints	.40	.49	8.01*

Note. C-model = Conflict model; CF-model = Conflict- Facilitation model, \*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2.5. Variance Explained by Conflict-Facilitation versus Conflict Models and Confidence Intervals for Differences between Men and Women in Variance Explained by these Models

Outcome variables	Men			Women			C-models	C-models	CF-models	CF-models
	R <sup>2</sup> C-model	R <sup>2</sup> CF-model	F <sub>change</sub> (8,199)	R <sup>2</sup> C-model	R <sup>2</sup> CF-model	F <sub>change</sub> (8,119)	SE R <sup>2</sup> M - R <sup>2</sup> W	Confidence Interval	SE R <sup>2</sup> M - R <sup>2</sup> W	Confidence Interval
<i>Work outcomes</i>										
Job performance	.15	.25	3.31*	.18	.40	5.52*	.07	-.09 - .15	.07	.01 - .30 <sup>a</sup>
Affective commitment	.17	.30	4.41*	.36	.50	4.00*	.08	.04 - .34 <sup>a</sup>	.07	.06 - .34 <sup>a</sup>
Work satisfaction	.21	.37	6.57*	.29	.49	5.75*	.06	-.02 - .18	.07	.03 - .26 <sup>b</sup>
Job search behavior	.05	.18	4.11*	.09	.21	2.26*	.08	-.09 - .17	.07	-.09 - .14
<i>Non-work outcomes</i>										
Home performance	.25	.34	3.42*	.21	.69	23.08*	.07	-.08 - .16	.06	.23 - .47 <sup>a</sup>
Home commitment	.15	.34	7.15*	.19	.50	9.47*	.07	-.08 - .16	.07	.02 - .30 <sup>a</sup>
Home satisfaction	.24	.36	4.59*	.25	.48	6.45*	.08	-.01 - .25	.07	.01 - .24 <sup>b</sup>
Global life satisfaction	.30	.43	5.44*	.28	.54	8.25*	.08	-.11 - .15	.07	-.01 - .22
<i>Stress outcomes</i>										
Emotional exhaustion	.67	.70	2.14	.61	.65	1.68	.06	-.04 - .16	.05	-.04 - .13
Depressive complaints	.47	.55	4.65*	.37	.56	6.54*	.08	-.03 - .23	.06	-.09 - .11

Note. C-model = Conflict model; CF-model = Conflict-facilitation model, \*  $p < .01$ . We calculated the 95% ( $\alpha = .05$ ) and the 90% ( $\alpha = .10$ ) confidence intervals for the differences in explained variance between men and women: <sup>a</sup> Denotes a significant difference (the 95% confidence interval); <sup>b</sup> Denotes the 90% confidence interval; No mark means that men and women did not differ when calculating the 90% confidence interval.

*Do different types of conflict and facilitation predict different outcomes for men and women?*

We have established so far that men and women differ in the level of facilitation experienced and found that there are gender differences in the amount of variance that is explained in outcomes when using the full range of conflict and facilitation measures as predictors. To further examine how specific types of conflict and facilitation relate to different outcomes and to explore whether these relations also differ depending on gender, we present the significant predictors that emerged for men and women for the stress, work, and non-work outcomes in Tables 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8 respectively. These tables represent the standardized solutions and only depict the significant predictors (we used the Wald test to determine which paths could be dropped without significant loss of model fit).

With respect to the stress outcomes, all the relevant predictors were contained within the strain/energy domain, with strain-based conflict emerging as the primary predictor of stress. The results were highly similar for men and women. The specific predictors of the various work and non-work outcomes were clearly different for men and women. As for the *work outcomes*, only the relations between strain-based FW conflict and job performance and between energy-based WF facilitation and work satisfaction were observed for men as well as women. All other paths were gender specific. For instance, the experience of psychological WF facilitation related to lower job search behavior for men, while it predicted higher levels of work satisfaction for women. Furthermore, psychological *work-to-family* facilitation related to higher job performance for men, whereas psychological *family-to-work* facilitation predicted job performance for women. Likewise, energy-based *work-to-family* facilitation related to higher affective commitment for men, while energy-based *family-to-work* facilitation related to higher affective commitment for women. In *non-work outcomes*, for both men and women, strain-based FW conflict related to lower life satisfaction, and energy-based WF facilitation related to higher levels of life satisfaction. Again the other paths were gender specific. For instance, when time spent on work conflicts with the time spent at home (time-based WF conflict), men report lower home performance, while women under these conditions indicate lower life satisfaction. In sum, these results suggest that specific types of facilitation and conflict differentially predict the work and non-work outcomes of men and women.

Table 2.6. Significant Path Coefficients for Men and Women in the Conflict-Facilitation Model for Stress Outcomes

	Men	Women
<hr/>		
Predictors		
<hr/>		
<i>Emotional exhaustion</i>		
Strain WF conflict	.83	.75
 <i>Depressive complaints</i>		
Strain WF conflict	.50	.43
Strain FW conflict	.27	.25
Energy WF facilitation	-.23	-.23

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*Note.* Model fit men:  $\chi^2 (28) = 23.68, p = .70, GFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01$ ; Model fit women:  $\chi^2 (28) = 33.21, p = .23, GFI = .98, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .04$ .

Table 2.7. Significant Path Coefficients for Men and Women  
in the Conflict-Facilitation Model for Work Outcomes

	Men	Women
<b>Predictors</b>		
<i>Job performance</i>		
Strain FW conflict	-.28	-.40
Energy FW facilitation	.15	
Behav. FW facilitation		.30
Psych. WF facilitation	.17	
Psych. FW facilitation		.28
<i>Affective commitment</i>		
Strain WF conflict		-.40
Psych. WF conflict		.47
Psych. FW conflict	-.30	
Energy WF facilitation	.18	
Energy FW facilitation		.23
Psych. WF facilitation	.20	
<i>Work satisfaction</i>		
Time WF conflict		-.22
Time FW conflict	-.19	
Energy WF facilitation	.35	.45
Behav. WF facilitation	.47	
Behav. FW facilitation	-.37	
Psych. WF facilitation		.15
<i>Job search behavior</i>		
Psych. WF facilitation	-.21	

Note. Model fit men:  $\chi^2(52) = 44.22, p = .77, GFI = .98, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01$ ; Model fit women:  $\chi^2(54) = 44.07, p = .83, GFI = .97, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01$ .



Table 2.8. Significant Path Coefficients for Men and Women in the Conflict-Facilitation Model for Non-work Outcomes

	Men	Women
<b>Predictors</b>		
<i>Home performance</i>		
Time WF conflict	-.21	
Time FW conflict		-.29
Strain FW conflict	-.34	
Behav. WF facilitation		-.39
Behav. FW facilitation		.45
Psych. WF facilitation		.27
Psych. FW facilitation	.25	
<i>Home commitment</i>		
Strain FW conflict	-.20	
Psych. WF facilitation	-.22	.18
Psych. FW facilitation	.39	
<i>Home satisfaction</i>		
Strain WF conflict		-.31
Strain FW conflict	-.34	
Energy WF facilitation	.28	
Psych. WF facilitation	-.20	
Psych. FW facilitation	.23	
<i>Global life satisfaction</i>		
Time WF conflict		-.23
Strain WF conflict	-.18	
Strain FW conflict	-.30	-.12
Energy WF facilitation	.28	.40
Psych. FW facilitation	.18	

Note. Model fit men:  $\chi^2$  (50) = 48.45,  $p$  = .54, GFI = .98, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01; Model fit women:  $\chi^2$  (55) = 89.66,  $p$  = .20, GFI = .95, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .07.

## **2.7 Discussion**

The central goal of this research was to gain more insight into the positive side of combining multiple roles. By addressing different ways in which roles can facilitate one another, in addition to examining how they can hinder each other, we aimed to contribute to a more balanced view of the work-family interface (Voydanoff, 2004). With this in-depth study of different domains in which role-facilitation can occur, we complied with numerous calls to expand the conflict paradigm to include facilitation (e.g., Frone, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004). Based on premises of role expansion theory (Marks, 1977) and prior empirical and theoretical work on facilitation and conflict (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Carlson et al., 2000; Ruderman et al., 2001), we posited that four experiential domains are relevant to understanding the different conflicting and facilitating experiences that individuals can encounter in role-combining. A first qualitative study as well as a larger quantitative study indicated that the distinction we made between energy (strain)-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW facilitation and conflict is both meaningful and statistically valid.

In our quantitative study we examined the added value of including these types of facilitation to predict the various consequences that are frequently studied in the work-family literature (Allen et al., 2000). Consistent with our expectation, the inclusion of the facilitation measures significantly and substantially improved the prediction of work outcomes (job performance, affective commitment, and work satisfaction) as well as non-work outcomes (home performance, home commitment, home satisfaction, and global life satisfaction), above and beyond the effects of conflict. In line with previous research (Allen et al., 2000), the experience of conflict was highly predictive of the stress-related outcomes that individuals report (emotional exhaustion and depression). Nevertheless, the inclusion of facilitation further enhanced these predictions. Therefore, these results suggest that the consideration of facilitation experiences, in addition to conflict, is of importance to work-family research and contributes especially to the prediction of work and non-work outcomes. Although the dominant conflict paradigm in previous research might have sufficed to predict stress-related outcomes, if we want to understand people's broader attitudes about their work and non-work lives, we need to examine the positive experiences associated with the combination of multiple roles (facilitation) as well as the negative ones (conflict).

The present study revealed important *gender differences*. Women reported more strain-based and psychological WF conflict than men did. However, in

accordance with our second hypothesis, they also experienced more facilitation between their work and family roles. Women reported higher levels of time-based WF, time-based FW, behavioral WF, behavioral FW, and psychological WF facilitation than men did. Thus, whereas previous studies based on the scarcity perspective have suggested that role-combining is particularly problematic for women (e.g., Behson, 2002), the present results indicate that this conclusion was based on a view that is one-sided and perhaps too negative (cf., Voydanoff, 2004). As our findings reveal that women are more likely than men to feel that work and family roles can benefit or complement each other, it seems that there are ways in which the combination of these multiple roles yields specific benefits for women. This is relevant for future research and has important practical implications, which we will address below.

Moreover, our focus on both conflict and facilitation experiences revealed gender differences that would not have emerged within a conflict-paradigm of the work-family interface. As predicted, the examination of facilitation experiences alongside conflict especially enhanced the prediction of women's work and home life experiences (job performance, work satisfaction, home performance, home commitment, and home satisfaction). The level of benefits experienced by women in combining their work role with other roles in their lives (how much they get out of the work role that benefits the home domain, and vice versa) thus seems to have an important influence on how they evaluate their work and home lives. This offers scope for organizational practice, as it suggests that organizational policies or managerial behaviors that enhance feelings of facilitation (instead of aiming for the reduction of conflict) should help women reap the benefits of combining work and family roles. We argued that combining the work role with other roles in life has a different psychological meaning for women than for men (Rothbard, 2001), in such a way that for women the element of *choice* for the work role is more psychologically salient than for men (Thoits, 2003). Although the causality of this relation requires further examination, this interpretation offers the interesting possibility that interventions that remind people of the reasons why they have chosen to combine work and family roles may increase the likelihood that they experience facilitation, and thus help elicit the benefits associated with this experience.

Finally, the present research indicates that relationships between different types of conflict and facilitation and specific outcomes are different for men and women. For instance, we found that women reported higher job performance to the extent that they experienced that their home life provided them with new skills and psychological benefits at work, while men reported higher job

performance when they experienced that their home life provided them with more energy at work. The present results thus suggest that experiences of conflict and facilitation can have different effects on the work and home life experiences for men and women. We do want to stress however that further research is needed to examine the robustness of these findings and the causality of the relationships in other contexts. This is also relevant in view of some counterintuitive relationships we observed in the present research. For instance, psychological WF conflict related positively to affective organizational commitment for women (but not for men), and psychological WF facilitation related negatively to home commitment and home satisfaction for men (but not for women). This seems to point to the possibility that conflict can also have positive effects, and that facilitation is not necessarily preferable. However, these relations may also stem from a reverse causal relationship. That is, whereas affective organizational commitment is regarded as a consequence of conflict in the literature (Allen et al., 2000), it is also possible that more committed employees experience higher conflict, or that the relation is reciprocal. Future research should further examine these intriguing findings.

#### *Organizational Statistics*

Notably, the HR department of the organization in which this research took place also wanted to pay attention to the topic of work-family role combination in their general *employee survey*, which is sent bi-annually to all employees of the organization. They allowed us to include some work-family measures in the employee survey. Please refer to the Appendix of this chapter for further details about the survey and its participants ( $N = 18,355$ ). This general survey enabled us to examine whether some of the main propositions and findings of the present chapter also hold for the organization at large. We examined employees' generalized experiences of *facilitation* as well as their experiences of *conflict* between their work and family roles (because of restrictions to survey length, we could not distinguish between types of facilitation and conflict). Moreover, we examined the degree to which employees experienced the work role (and their combination of work and family roles) as *self-chosen*. We discuss the results in the Appendix of this chapter. First, these results (Figure 1) reveal that employees indeed not only experience conflict between their work and home lives – as would have been predicted from a scarcity perspective. Rather - in line with the role expansion theory – these results again show that employees also indicate to experience facilitation between their work and family lives. Moreover, we explicitly examined gender differences. In the present chapter, we proposed that

women, on average, would experience the work role (and their combination of work and family roles) to a higher degree as self-chosen than men do, and thus should experience higher levels of facilitation between their work and family roles. The organizational statistics (see Figure 2 and 3) indeed demonstrate that women on average indicate to a higher degree than men to view their work role (and their combination of work and family roles) as self-chosen, and indeed report higher levels of facilitation than their male colleagues. Thus, this examination among a large and broad sample of employees again shows that 1) employees experience facilitation between their work and home lives, 2) female employees experience the work role (and their combination of roles) to a higher degree as self-chosen than their male colleagues, and 3) female employees on average are more likely to experience the positive side of the work-family interface (higher levels of facilitation).

#### *Implications for Practice*

Although this is quite an early stage to make firm recommendations, the present findings provide insights that can be useful for organizational practice. To begin with, these findings can be used for raising awareness within organizations. Whereas the difficulties associated with combining work and family often first come to mind, this research indicates that from an organizational point of view that family roles should not only be considered a hindrance, since they can also benefit the way men and women perform at work. Contemporary managers should attempt to realize these benefits of combining work and family, capitalizing on the possibility that participation in other roles can (re-) energize an employee for work, can make the employee more efficient, provide opportunities to acquire new skills and behaviors that help them perform well at work, and can broaden their frame of reference teaching them to put work related problems into perspective. Importantly, the study presented in this chapter indicates that the experience of facilitation not only enhances well-being but can also have beneficial effects at work, such as improved job performance, increased work satisfaction, or less intent to search for a job outside the organization.

The findings presented in this chapter also indicate that, when organizations aim to reduce stress-related outcomes, such as depressive complaints or emotional exhaustion (burnout), their efforts should mainly focus on reducing the experience of conflict. However, when the aim is to increase job performance or bolster work satisfaction, in addition to the reduction of conflict, actions should be undertaken to stimulate the experience of facilitation. Since we

observed specific relationships between specific types of conflict and facilitation and outcome variables, this study underscores the need for organizations to carefully examine the outcomes they want to address and tailor their interventions accordingly. In this regard, an important challenge for scholars in collaboration with organizations is to further uncover relevant antecedents of (different types of) facilitation to identify concrete actions that can be undertaken to stimulate facilitation.

#### *Limitations*

Despite several strengths, the study in this chapter has its limitations. The most important one is the cross-sectional nature of the data. The data were collected with the aim to examine whether it was possible to statistically distinguish between the different types of facilitation and conflict and to investigate their (differential) relationships with relevant outcome variables from the literature (Allen et al., 2000). However, caution is in order when making inferences about the causal sequence of the observed relations. In addition, the sample sizes in our study were relatively small and we had to rely on self-reports as no actual performance or health data were available. Finally, because of limitations to survey length, we relied on single-item measures for work/home satisfaction and job search behavior that were previously used in the literature. Thus, even though we think the present study offers important and promising insights into the relevance of facilitation for work-family issues, future research on differential effects of conflict and facilitation should aim to address these limitations, by using a larger scale longitudinal research design, preferably including objective outcomes (e.g., objective indicator of job performance, actual health indicators), in addition to multi-item self-report measures.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

Since this study is the first to investigate these distinct types of facilitation, additional research should assess the robustness of the present findings in other organizational contexts. Moreover, future research should uncover relevant *antecedents* of these different facilitation experiences. Recent work suggests that jobs and work environments that are rich in resources (e.g., autonomy, learning opportunities, and managerial support) increase the likelihood that employees experience generalized facilitation (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Voydanoff, 2004). Particular resources could differentially affect the different domains of facilitation distinguished here. For instance, being able to decide how to use the time at work conceivably increases the opportunity to experience time-based

facilitation, whereas having a lot of job learning opportunities could increase chances for experiencing behavioral facilitation.

Moreover, as the present research was carried out in the Netherlands, it would be interesting to conduct comparative studies between countries (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) that differ in attitudes to work or gender differences at work. Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000) proposed that collectivist, feminine, low uncertainly avoidant, and/or low power distance cultures promote more role integration than masculine, high uncertainly avoidant, and/or high power distance cultures. As a result, it may well be that individuals in relatively more feminine and less individualistic countries such as the Netherlands (Hofstede, 2005) actually experience higher levels of facilitation than individuals in countries that are less feminine and more individualistic such as the U.S. (Hofstede, 2005). Furthermore, a recent calculation suggests that the average U.S. employee works 479 hours per year (1.5 hours per day) more than the average Dutch employee (Dekker & Ederveen, 2006). Thus, it would be highly interesting to examine whether, for instance, the experience and impact of time and strain-based conflict are more pronounced in an American sample.

Differences in (national) cultures may also be relevant for the examination of gender differences. We found that women experienced significantly higher levels of facilitation than their male colleagues. We argued that, based on traditional role expectations and gender differences in role fulfillment, for women the element of *choice* for the work role should be more psychologically salient than for men. This was confirmed in the organizational statistics (Appendix). To the extent that such role expectations are held, we expect that female employees should experience higher levels of facilitation than male employees. However, when role expectations are different (e.g., in a different cultural system, or due to different gender beliefs), we do not necessarily expect to find the same pattern of results. Nevertheless, a study by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) does suggest that our findings are robust across national contexts, since women in this representative U.S. sample experienced somewhat higher generalized facilitation than males. Furthermore, an interesting avenue for future research would be to examine gender differences from a “boundaries” point of view. Individuals differ in the extent to which they tend to segment versus integrate their work and family roles (Nippert-Eng, 1996), and prefer to do so (Kreiner, 2006). Moreover, in Kreiner’s study, women had a slightly lower preference for segmentation than men. Future studies could investigate whether conflict and facilitation experiences depend on the degree to which individuals

segment versus integrate their work and home realms, prefer to do so, and examine potential gender differences in this regard.

*Conclusion*

This research contributes to the work-family literature in several ways. First, we think we have made a significant contribution by addressing different ways in which work and family roles can benefit each other, in addition to the ways in which they can hinder one another. The examination of energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation, in coherence with strain-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological conflict, provides a more complete picture of the experiences that men and women can have in combining their work and family lives. Second, this research shows that taking these types of facilitation into account contributes substantially (and differentially) to the prediction of outcome variables that are important to employers, employees, and their families. Finally, this study revealed important gender differences, not only in the level of facilitation experienced, but also regarding their impact and specific consequences. We have argued that this has important implications for theory and practice related to men and women at work.



# Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation Items and their Factor Loadings in the Proposed 16-factor Solution

Items	Factor loadings	
<b>Time-based WF conflict</b>		
My work keeps me from activities at home more than I would like. <sup>a</sup>	F1	.76
The time I must devote on my job keeps me from participating in responsibilities and activities at home. <sup>a</sup>		.74
I have to miss activities at home due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities. <sup>a</sup>		.71
<b>Time-based FW conflict</b>		
The time I spend on responsibilities at home often interferes with my work responsibilities. <sup>a</sup>	F2	.75
The time I spend on activities in my home life often causes me not to spend time in activities at work that would be helpful to my career. <sup>a</sup>		.70
I have to miss work activities due to the amount of time I must spend on responsibilities at home. <sup>a</sup>		.66
<b>Time-based WF facilitation</b>		
Because I work I enjoy my time at home more.	F3	.69
The amount of time I spend on my work, stimulates me to undertake enjoyable activities in the time I spend on my home life.		.55
Because I work I am better able to limit the responsibilities I take on at home.		.83
<b>Time-based FW facilitation</b>		
Because of the time I spend on my home life, I enjoy my work more.	F4	.68
The amount of time I spend on my home life, stimulates me to use my time at work effectively.		.69
Because of my home life, I am better able to limit the responsibilities I take on at work.		.80
<b>Strain-based WF conflict</b>		
When I get home from work I am often too frazzled to participate in activities / responsibilities at home. <sup>a</sup>	F5	.84
I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing at home. <sup>a</sup>		.91
Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I get home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy. <sup>a</sup>		.80
<b>Strain-based FW conflict</b>		
Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with home-related matters at work <sup>a</sup>	F6	.88
Because I am often stressed from responsibilities at home, I have a hard time concentrating on my work. <sup>a</sup>		.92
Tension and anxiety from my home life often weakens my ability to do my job. <sup>a</sup>		.86
<b>Energy-based WF facilitation</b>		
When I get home from work I often feel energized, making me feel more like participating in activities / responsibilities at home <sup>c</sup>	F7	.86
When I get home from work I often feel emotionally recharged, enabling me to make a better contribution at home.		.84
When I get home from work I am often in a good mood, which has a positive effect on the atmosphere at home. <sup>c</sup>		.55
<b>Energy-based FW facilitation</b>		
Because I relax and regain my energy at home, I can better focus on performing my work. <sup>c</sup>	F8	.93
Because I relax and regain my energy at home, I can better concentrate on my work. <sup>d</sup>		.95
After undertaking activities at home, I often arrive at work in a good mood, which has a positive effect on the atmosphere at work. <sup>c</sup>		.52

<b>Behavioral WF conflict</b>		
The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home. <sup>a</sup>	F9	.51
Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at work would be counterproductive at home <sup>a</sup>		.54
The behaviors that make me effective at work do not help me to function better at home. <sup>a</sup>		.85
<b>Behavioral FW conflict</b>		
The problem-solving behaviors that work for me at home do not seem to be as useful at work. <sup>a</sup>	F10	.66
Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work <sup>a</sup>		.67
The behaviors that work for me at home do not seem to be effective at work. <sup>a</sup>		.77
<b>Behavioral WF facilitation</b>		
Because of the way I perform my job, I also use my time at home more effectively. <sup>c</sup>	F11	.61
Because of the things I learn at work I also function better in social contacts at home. <sup>c</sup>		.87
The skills I use at work help me to better handle matters at home. <sup>d</sup>		.88
<b>Behavioral FW facilitation</b>		
Because I have to plan my time at home, I also use my time at work more effectively. <sup>c</sup>	F12	.61
Because of the things I learn at home I also function better in social contacts at work. <sup>c</sup>		.87
The skills I use at home help me to better handle matters at work. <sup>d</sup>		.88
<b>Psychological WF conflict</b>		
When I am at home, I often think about work-related problems. <sup>b</sup>	F13	.88
When I am at home, I often think about things I need to accomplish at work. <sup>b</sup>		.92
When I am at home, I often try to arrange, schedule, or perform job-related activities outside of my normal work hours. <sup>b</sup>		.75
<b>Psychological FW conflict</b>		
When I am at work, I often think about home-related problems. <sup>b</sup>	F14	.77
When I am at work, I often think about things I need to accomplish at home. <sup>b</sup>		.80
When I am at work, I often try to arrange, schedule, or perform home-related activities. <sup>b</sup>		.73
<b>Psychological WF facilitation</b>		
Because of my work, I am more able to put home-related problems aside.	F15	.79
Because of my work, I am more able to put home-related matters into perspective.		.83
Because of my work, I can distance myself from home-related matters in a pleasant way.		.77
<b>Psychological FW facilitation</b>		
Because of my home life, I am more able to put work-related problems aside.	F16	.85
Because of my home life, I am more able to put work-related matters into perspective.		.83
Because of my home life, I can distance myself from work-related matters in a pleasant way.		.80

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Conflict item developed by Carlson et al. (2000); <sup>b</sup> Conflict item developed by Carlson and Frone (2003); <sup>c</sup> Facilitation item developed by Wagena and Geurts (2000); <sup>d</sup> Facilitation item adapted from Grzywacz and Marks (2000).



## Chapter 3

### **Combining Work and Family: How Family Supportive Work Environments and Work Supportive Home Environments can Reduce Work-Family Conflict and Enhance Facilitation<sup>f</sup>**

Both in Europe and in the United States the typical employee is no longer male with a stay-at-home wife. Instead, with the dual-earner family as predominant model in current society, most employees - male and female - combine their work with some sort of family responsibility (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Pottrass, 2002; United Nations statistics, 2006). In response to this new reality, many contemporary organizations offer their employees work-family benefits or programs that aim to support them in their efforts to balance their work and family lives (Thompson & Pottrass, 2005). These benefits or programs include for instance formal arrangements for flextime, parental leave, child-care facilities, or facilities for telecommuting.

However, a growing body of research suggests that the informal work environment, such as the organizational culture or the degree to which a supervisor accommodates and understands family issues, has way more impact on employees' ability to manage work and family roles than the formal benefits or programs organizations offer. That is, more and more studies show that experiences of *work-family conflict* are much more related to family support within the organizational culture and supervisor and co-worker support for the family domain than to the availability or use of concrete work-family benefits (Allen, 2001; Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brckwood, & Colton, 2005; Kluwer, Boers, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Work-family conflict here refers to the feeling that work and family roles are incompatible in some respect as a result of which participation in one role makes it more difficult to fulfill the requirements of the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For instance, in a sample of over 3,000 American

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<sup>f</sup> This chapter is based on: van Steenbergen, E. F., Ellemers, N., & Mooijart, A. (in press). In D. R. Crane & E. J. Hill (Eds.), *Families & Work*. Combining work and family: How family supportive work environments and work supportive home environments can reduce work-family conflict and enhance facilitation. CA: Sage Publications.

employees from the 2002 Study of the Changing Workforce, Thompson and Pottrass (2005) examined whether conflict experiences of employees depend on two types of conditions available to them *family-friendly benefits* (family benefits and alternative work schedules) or the extent to which they received *informal family support* in their work environment (supportive organizational culture, supervisor support, and co-worker support). Family-friendly benefits were not associated with the level of conflict employees experienced, whereas higher levels of informal family support related to significantly lower levels of conflict reported by these employees. In addition, Behson (2005) used the statistical technique of “dominance analysis” to test the relative contribution of formal benefits versus informal support to conflict experiences of employees who participated in the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce. Again strong support was found for the dominance of informal support over formal benefits in explaining variance in conflict experiences, as 95% of the total variance that was explained in the conflict experiences of employees was explained by informal support, whereas less than 5% was attributable to the formal benefits organizations offered.

Thus, more than having work-family benefits formally available to them, it seems important for employees to have supervisors and co-workers who are understanding and accommodating of family issues and empathize with employees’ desire to seek a balance between work and family responsibilities (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Concrete examples might include that a supervisor allows personal calls home, is open to discuss family issues or problems, or that colleagues are understanding when one has to leave early to pick up a child from day-care or care for a dependent parent (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005). Moreover, the degree to which cultural norms within the organization prescribe working long hours, prioritizing work over family, and collective beliefs about whether utilizing work-family benefits will jeopardize one’s career, have an important influence on the level of conflict that employees experience (e.g., Allen, 2001; Poelmans et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 1999). It is these day-to-day interactions employees have with their supervisor and co-workers and the prevalent organizational norms that most strongly affect their experiences of the work-family interface.

This important body of research has however, in our opinion, three central shortcomings as a result of which the picture still remains incomplete. *First*, prior studies remained almost exclusively focused on formal and informal characteristics of the *work* environment, thus only addressing the “organizational contribution” to conflict experiences (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2003; Thompson et al.,

1999; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005; Voydanoff, 2004). But what is the contribution of the *home environment* to conflict experiences? What about receiving support from one's spouse or other family members for the work requirements that have to be met or the norms that characterize one's home environment? In the present study we will examine both the work and the home environment. A *second* shortcoming is the one-sided focus in the literature on the "negative side" of combining work and family roles. Prior studies almost exclusively examined whether the nature of the work environment is associated with higher or lower levels of *conflict*. This approach suggests that the best possible outcome is to have "no conflict", and neglects the possibility that work and family roles can also *benefit* each other. As a result, it remains unknown whether supportive environments might also have the capacity to induce the experience of *work-family facilitation*, which occurs when participation in the work role is *made easier* by virtue of the family role or vice versa (van Steenbergen et al., 2007; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). To address this, we will assess how work and home environments affect the experience of facilitation as well as conflict. *Third*, prior studies addressed conflict in a general sense, thus neglecting that individuals can experience different *types* of conflict (and facilitation). In the present chapter, we comply with the call to provide a finer-grained examination of the work-family interface (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Poelmans et al., 2003) by analyzing whether the different types of conflict and facilitation experiences of employees are differentially affected by the supportiveness of the work and home environment.

### **3.1 Family Supportive Work Environments and Work Supportive Home Environments**

Despite calls in the work-family literature to assess employees' home situation with the same precision as their work situation (e.g., Geurts & Demerouti, 2003), previous research has been predominantly focused on the "organizational contribution" to employees' conflict experiences in role combination (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2003; Thompson et al., 1999; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005; Voydanoff, 2004). In relation, because work characteristics are believed to be the primary antecedents of work-to-family conflict (Frone et al., 1992), most studies addressed this WF direction of conflict, thus only capturing the extent to which work negatively interferes with family life (e.g., Behson, 2005; Dijkers, Geurts, den Dulk, Peper, & Kompier, 2004; Thomspon et al., 1999; Voydanoff, 2004). From this literature it is apparent that "cross-domain support" - support

provided by one domain (the work domain) for the other domain (the family domain) - related to lower WF conflict among employees. That is, as described, a family supportive work environment relates to lower WF conflict. In the present chapter, we also examine the reverse process by examining whether perceived support within the home domain for the work issues can help to lower levels of FW conflict experiences.

With regard to the work environment, we assess *supervisor support* and *co-worker support* for the family domain (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Kluwer et al., 1997), as well as the supportiveness of the organizational culture. Two components of culture are examined. First, the extent to which cultural norms prescribe working long hours, hereafter referred to as *organizational time demands* (Thompson et al., 1999; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005; Poelmans, 2003; Kluwer et al., 1997). The second component consists of the perceived *negative career consequences* when using work-family benefits or devoting time to family responsibilities. This refers to employees' reluctance to use work-family benefits or devote more time to their family responsibilities out of fear that having less "face-time" at work is interpreted as a lack of commitment, which will jeopardize their career (Poelmans, 2003; Thompson et al., 1999; Voydanoff, 2004). Obviously, a supportive work environment is characterized by high levels of supervisor and co-worker support and the perception of limited organizational time demands and few negative career consequences when using work-family benefits.

The supportiveness of the home environment has received surprisingly little scientific attention. To our knowledge, there are only two studies in the literature that relate conflict experiences of employees to the support they receive within the family domain for work issues ("cross-domain support"). In the study by Kossek, Colquitt, and Noe (2001), employees of an American university rated their family climates on the extent to which they could a) share concerns about their work, and b) were expected to sacrifice work performance for the sake of family duties. In the same vein, they rated their work climate on the extent to which they could share family concerns and were expected to sacrifice family performance for the sake of work performance. In this study, especially a work climate that expected employees to make family sacrifices related to higher levels of WF conflict, whereas a family climate that emphasized making work sacrifices related to higher levels of both WF and FW conflict (Kossek et al., 2001). In addition, Lapierre and Allen (2006) found that the extent to which employees felt that their family members were work supportive related to the family being seen as less interfering with work (FW conflict), whereas the extent to which they

rated their supervisor as supportive of family responsibilities was related to lower experiences of work interfering with family (WF conflict). Moreover, studies that did not assess cross-domain support, but focused on the general support received at home in terms of emotional support, recognition, feedback, or appreciation (example item: “how much does your spouse or partner really care about you?”), show that family resources such as spousal support and support from other family members relate to lower reported FW conflict experiences (Adams et al., 1996, Aryee, Srinivas, Tan, 2005; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

In the present chapter, we examine the work supportiveness of the home environment as follows. In parallel to the indicators of support in the work environment, we first examine *support of partner*. Just as conflict experiences are likely to depend on the family supportiveness of one’s supervisor at work (e.g., Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005), we posit that the level of conflict one experiences should also depend on having a partner at home who is supportive and sensitive to work responsibilities and accommodating to finding a balance between work and family. In the same vein, we argue that receiving support from other family members and friends for work issues and for finding a balance between work and family (*support family/friends*) could be an important resource when juggling work and family responsibilities comparable to co-worker support at work. Furthermore, comparable to the components that can make an organization a “greedy institution” (organizational time demands and negative career consequences when using work-family benefits, e.g., Thompson et al., 1999), we examine two components that can make the home environment a “greedy” one. Mirroring organizational time demands, we examine demands in the home environment that require a person to be present to do certain activities at specified times (Poelmans et al., 2003). In the case of the home environment, this might include being expected to “be there” a lot of the time, being responsible for caring tasks at specified times (e.g., taking the children to school, cooking dinner), or being expected to meet dinner at set times. Just as organizational time demands impact upon conflict experiences, one would expect that *time demands from one’s home environment* affect the experience of conflict, thus creating the well-known time-bind between work and family life (Hochschild, 1997). Finally, in a similar vein as employees can be reluctant to use work-family benefits out of fear that having less “face-time” in the office will jeopardize their career (Thompson et al., 1999), individuals could be reluctant to take on a promotion or a more demanding job when they perceive this negatively affects their life at home. Especially when a more demanding job or



more demanding work tasks would require being away from home more (e.g., traveling for work, dinners with clients), one could fear that having less “face-time” at home communicates a lack of commitment which will hurt one’s relationship. We refer to the perception that work-related absence from home would jeopardize one’s relationship as *negative relationship consequences*.

### 3.2 Conflict and Facilitation

The second shortcoming we mentioned concerned the predominant focus on the “negative side” of combining work and family roles. Most studies in the work-family literature implicitly or explicitly adopted a *scarcity perspective on human energy*. They assume that personal resources of time, energy, and attention are finite as a result of which devotion of attention to one role necessarily implies that less resources can be spent on another role (Voydanoff, 2004). Research within this tradition searched for possibilities to reduce or prevent the experience of *work-family conflict*. Theoretically, this scarcity perspective was opposed by *role expansion theory* (Marks, 1977), which posits that human energy is abundant and expandable and that roles can also positively affect one another. However, scholars only recently started to pay empirical attention to the concept of *work-family facilitation*, which refers to the experience that participation in the work role is made easier by virtue of the family role or vice versa (van Steenbergen et al., 2007; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). As a result, research on the experience of facilitation and possibilities to enhance facilitation (instead of reducing conflict) is still relatively scarce.

Two recent studies, however, suggest that supportive environments might also have the capacity to enhance facilitation experiences among employees. That is, Voydanoff (2004b) found that having a family supportive supervisor not only related to lower WF conflict, but also to higher levels of WF facilitation. In addition, Thompson and Pottrass (2005) found that perceiving one’s supervisor and co-workers as family supportive related to lower WF conflict as well as higher levels of general facilitation (they did not distinguish between WF and FW facilitation). Moreover, studies assessing general support instead of “cross-domain” support indicate that receiving support at home from spouse, family, and friends predicted the level of FW facilitation employees experienced (Aryee et al., 2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

In the present chapter, we examine the family supportiveness of the work environment as well as the work supportiveness of the home environment and relate it to employees’ WF and FW conflict and facilitation experiences. In

previous work, scholars have argued that characteristics of the work environment predict the WF direction of conflict and facilitation experiences, whereas characteristics of the home environment are the primary antecedents of the FW direction (e.g., Frone et al., 1992). However, in the empirical literature, exceptions to this pattern also have been found, in that characteristics of the work environment related to the FW direction and characteristics of the home environment related to the WF direction of conflict and facilitation experiences (e.g., Aryee et al., 2005; Geurts et al., 2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kossek et al., 2001). This seems to suggest that supportive work and home environments benefit employees' general ability to balance work and family roles (Allen, 2001). In the present research, we therefore predict that supportive work and home environments relate to lower conflict and higher levels of facilitation experience among employees. Thus, we hypothesize that the support components of the work environment (support supervisor, support co-workers) relate to lower conflict and higher levels of experienced facilitation, whereas organizational time demands and negative career consequences relate to higher conflict and lower levels of facilitation. In the same vein, we hypothesize that the support components of the home environment (support partner, support family/friends) relate to lower conflict and higher levels of facilitation, whereas home time demands and negative relationship consequences relate to higher conflict and lower levels of experienced facilitation.

### 3.3 Different Types of Conflict and Facilitation

There are different ways in which work and family roles can hinder and benefit one another. However, little is known about how the different components that make a work or home environment supportive relate to the different types of conflict or facilitation experiences that people can have. This is unfortunate because different types of conflict and facilitation are known to have specific relationships with outcome variables (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). Moreover, knowing exactly which types of conflict or facilitation are affected would further our understanding of the subtleties of work-family dynamics (Adams et al., 1996; Poelmans et al., 2003), and could assist practitioners in designing interventions tailored to specific needs of individuals or organization in question.

From prior studies that adopted a scarcity perspective on human energy, we know that individuals can experience *strain-based*, *time-based*, *behavioral*, and *psychological conflict* (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Carlson & Frone, 2003).

*Strain-based conflict* exists “when strain produced in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role” (e.g., too tired from family responsibilities to concentrate on work). *Time-based conflict* occurs “when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role” (e.g., no time to meet a family activity). *Behavioral conflict* exists “when behavior required in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role” (e.g. difficulties to switch from tough managerial role to caring family role, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 76). Finally, *psychological conflict* refers to “the psychological preoccupation with one role, while performing another role, that interferes with one’s ability to become engaged in that last role”. For instance, someone keeps thinking or ruminating about home-life matters while at work which may render him or her unable to concentrate on work (Carlson & Frone, 2003, p. 518; Greenhaus, 1988).

We will also examine the effects on different types of facilitation. Based on premises of the role expansion theory (Marks, 1977; Barnett & Hyde, 2001) and prior empirical studies on facilitation (e.g., Ruderman et al., 2002; Wayne et al., 2004), we argued earlier (van Steenbergen et al., 2007) that individuals can also experience different types of facilitation, in parallel to the different types of conflict. In both qualitative and quantitative data, we found support for the distinction between *energy-based*, *time-based*, *behavioral*, and *psychological facilitation*. These types of facilitation were statistically distinguishable from the different types of conflict and demonstrated specific relationship with outcome variables we measured in the work, home, and health domain. Individuals experience *energy-based facilitation* when the energy obtained in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role (van Steenbergen et al., 2007). As an interviewee in our previous research indicated: “It is fun being a dad. It gives you a lot of pleasure and positive energy, which makes itself felt at work” (p. 285). Moreover, people can experience *time-based facilitation*, occurring when the time devoted to one role stimulates or makes it easier to effectively manage and use the time in another role. For instance, the time people spend on parenting tasks (picking up the children on time etc.) can make it easier for them to prioritize in the tasks they take on at work and can stimulate them to use their time at work more effectively. *Behavioral facilitation* occurs when behavior required or learned in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role, as expressed by an interviewee (van Steenbergen et al., 2007), “At work I function in a dynamic field where a lot of power and strategic games go on. So, I do not lose my head quickly when some problem arises at home. I have learned to deal with problems, I have those skills”. Finally, *psychological*

*facilitation* refers to the ability to put matters associated with one role into perspective by virtue of another role, which makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of the first role. For instance, participating in family activities can help one to put work matters into perspective, which benefits that person's functioning at work. To our knowledge, no prior study examined how supportive work and home environments affect different facilitation experiences of individuals. In the present research, we will explore how the components of supportive work and home environments relate to *strain-based / energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological* WF and FW conflict and facilitation experiences.

In doing this, we will explicitly examine whether there are any *gender differences* as there are indications that supportive environments can affect men and women differently (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). For instance, a previous study revealed that organizational time demands only predicted the level of conflict men reported, whereas perceptions that one could make use of the work-family benefits that were available and having a family supportive supervisor significantly predicted women's conflict experiences (Kluwer et al., 1997).

### 3.4 Method

#### *Sample and Participants*

A multinational financial service organization gave us permission to conduct a survey study and provided us with the work addresses of a random sample of 750 of their Dutch employees. In line with prior studies (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), we did not limit our sample to employees with children because this would reflect a too narrow conceptualization of family, as childless adults can also carry family responsibilities to parents, siblings, and other kin. The response rate was 48.4%, with 363 surveys returned<sup>§</sup>. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Frone et al, 1992) we excluded employees ( $N = 11$ ) who worked less than 20 hours per week. In accordance with our objective to study support of partner we limited the sample to employees who were married/cohabiting ( $N = 301$ ).

The 301 participants consisted of 185 males and 116 females. Participants were contracted to work for an average of 34.6 hours a week (range 20-40,  $SD =$

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<sup>§</sup> We used the same dataset as in Chapter 2 (van Steenbergen et al. 2007). In the current chapter, we focus on the work and home environment as antecedents of the different conflict and facilitation experiences. Since we aimed to study the effects of receiving partner support, we limited the data set to employees who were married or cohabiting.

4.92). Average organizational tenure was 14.7 years (range 0.5 – 41, *SD* 10.41). Of the participants, 9% indicated being in the age category “29 years or less”, 36.9% was “between 30 and 39”, 32.6% was “between 40 and 49”, and 21.6% was “50 years or older”. About half of the participants (49.3%) had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 50.7% had completed lower education (lower vocational education or high school). A large part of the participants had at least one child (70.9%). For participants with children, 31.7% had a youngest child that was not yet attending school (0-3 years old), 30.7% had a child in the Dutch elementary school age (4-12 years old), 18.3% had a youngest child in the Dutch high school/college age (13-21 years old), and 19.3% had a youngest child aged 22 years or older. The organization’s salary system consists of 15 ascending salary categories, ranging from 1 = *lowest* to 15 = *highest* in pay. The average salary category for these participants was 8.8 (range 2-15, *SD* = 2.45).

#### *Content of the Survey*

We measured *supervisor support* with three items adapted from Thompson et al. (1999): “My direct manager is sympathetic toward my family related responsibilities”, “My direct manager is accommodating of family-related needs” and “My direct manager gives me enough scope to balance my work and family life” ( $\alpha = .91$ ). *Co-worker support* was measured with the same items only this time these referred to co-workers ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Both *organizational time demands* ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and *negative career consequences* ( $\alpha = .73$ ) were measured with two items developed by Thompson et al. (1999). Sample items are, respectively, “Employees are often expected to take work home at night and/or in weekends” and “To turn down a promotion or transfer for family-related reasons will seriously hurt one’s career progress in my organization”. *Support of partner* and *support of family/friends* were both measured with three items (e.g., “My partner is accommodating of my work-related obligations” and “My family (other than spouse) and friends are accommodating of my work-related obligations” ( $\alpha = .86$  and  $\alpha = .90$ , van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2003). *Negative relationship consequences* and *home time demands* were both measured with two items, e.g., “Accepting a promotion or a more demanding job, would have negative consequences for the relationship with my partner” and “At home it is expected of me that I spend a lot of hours on caring tasks” (van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2003). The reliability

coefficients for these last two measures were somewhat low ( $\alpha = .65$  and  $\alpha = .67$ ). However, we corrected for measurement error in our analyses<sup>h</sup>

*Work-family conflict.* We used the three-item scales by Carlson et al. (2000) to examine strain-based, time-based, and behavioral conflict. Sample items are respectively: "Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I get home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy"; "I have to miss activities at home due to the amount of time I must spend on work"; "The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home". All scales demonstrated good reliability, ranging from  $\alpha = .71$  to  $\alpha = .92$ , except for behavioral WF ( $\alpha = .57$ ). However, we did correct for measurement error in our analyses (footnote 1). The three-item scales by Carlson and Frone (2003) measured psychological WF and FW conflict, ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $\alpha = .81$ ), e.g., "When I am at home, I often think about work-related problems".

*Work-family facilitation.* We used our own three-item sales to measure *energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW facilitation* (van Steenbergen, Ellemers & Mooijaart, 2007). Sample items are: "Because I relax and regain my energy at home, I can better focus on performing my work" (*energy-based FW facilitation*); "The amount of time I spend on my home life stimulates me to use my time at work effectively" (*time-based FW facilitation*); "The skills I use at work help me to better handle matters at home" (*behavioral WF facilitation*); "Because of my work, I am better able to put home-related matters into perspective" (*psychological WF facilitation*). Reliability for all scales<sup>i</sup> was high (range  $\alpha = .71$  to  $\alpha = .86$ ).

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<sup>h</sup> To ascertain that the four component of the work environment and the four components of the home environment were statistically distinct, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses. Results indeed supported the proposed 8-factor solution, which demonstrated close fit to the data ( $\chi^2 (142) = 288.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .93, GFI = .86, IFI = .93, RMSEA = .08), and fitted the data better than alternative models.

<sup>i</sup> Results from confirmatory factor analyses supported that the eight conflict and eight facilitation types were statistically distinct, as the proposed 16-factor solution demonstrated good fit to the data:  $\chi^2 (869) = 1428.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .91, GFI = .83, IFI = .92, RMSEA = .05), and fitted the data better than alternative models (see also van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

Table 3.1. (Inter)correlations for all Variables Used in this Study

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Sex			(-)															
2. Age			-.30	(-)														
3. Education			-.06	-.04	(-)													
4. Org. tenure	14.69	10.41	-.35	.72	-.22	(-)												
5. Salary	8.82	2.46	-.30	.11	.58	-.02	(-)											
6. Marital status			-.12	.11	.06	.07	.23	(-)										
7. Ctr. work hours	34.55	4.92	-.54	.11	.15	.06	.37	.06	(-)									
8. Child 0-3 (D)			.33	-.33	.17	-.30	.07	.05	-.12	(-)								
9. Child 4-12 (D)			-.06	.09	-.21	.13	-.14	.01	-.22	-.29	(-)							
10. Child 13-21 (D)			-.09	.26	.01	.24	.12	.04	.09	-.22	-.21	(-)						
11. Child 22+ (D)			-.20	.54	.07	.41	.09	.09	.14	-.22	-.22	-.16	(-)					
12. Sup. supervisor	3.47	0.84	.03	-.13	.12	-.22	.07	.03	-.06	.18	.03	-.06	-.11	(-)				
13. Sup. co-workers	3.57	0.75	.02	-.11	.16	-.19	.08	.04	-.10	.18	-.03	-.02	-.09	.66	(-)			
14. Neg. car. consequ.	3.33	0.91	.01	-.05	.09	.01	.12	.09	-.01	.04	.09	-.09	-.10	-.19	-.16	(-)		
15. Org. time dem.	3.10	0.89	-.06	.11	.04	.16	.20	-.03	.08	.02	.01	-.03	.07	-.27	-.17	.53	(-)	
16. Sup. partner	4.10	0.61	-.07	-.01	.13	.01	.04	-.04	.03	.04	-.09	-.05	.14	.18	.23	-.05	-.08	(-)
17. Sup. fam/friends	3.67	0.77	.07	-.10	.06	-.14	-.09	.01	-.07	.04	-.07	-.03	.04	.18	.25	-.12	-.15	.54
18. Neg. rel. consequ.	2.85	1.01	-.04	.04	-.09	.10	-.03	-.07	.08	-.01	.13	.03	-.10	-.06	-.03	.20	.28	-.29
19. Home time dem.	3.02	0.95	.05	.02	-.11	.07	-.13	-.02	-.19	.12	.18	-.09	-.07	.05	.04	.12	.12	-.18
20. Time cfl. WF	2.47	0.89	-.04	.02	.16	.02	.26	-.03	.13	-.06	-.01	.08	-.03	-.17	-.08	.21	.27	-.05
21. Time cfl. FW	1.96	0.77	.08	-.10	.03	-.06	-.01	-.03	-.14	.17	.08	-.04	-.15	-.03	.08	.18	.24	-.33
22. Time fac. WF	3.40	0.81	.16	-.10	.06	-.06	-.01	.01	-.10	.05	.01	-.07	-.03	.14	.07	-.06	-.07	.18
23. Time fac. FW	3.25	0.82	.16	-.11	.08	-.09	-.01	.02	-.15	.19	.03	-.01	-.13	.11	.07	.01	-.03	-.01
24. Strain cfl. WF	2.54	0.94	.08	.07	-.02	.07	-.03	-.05	.06	-.21	.02	.05	.08	-.23	-.16	.14	.30	-.08
25. Strain cfl. FW	1.87	0.88	.09	-.10	-.11	-.05	-.15	-.17	.10	-.03	.03	.01	-.09	-.01	-.01	.11	.10	-.35
26. Energy fac. WF	2.69	0.69	.11	-.10	.02	-.07	-.04	.06	-.07	.21	-.03	-.03	-.01	.28	.15	-.07	-.13	.11
27. Energy fac. FW	3.88	0.67	.08	-.19	.04	-.15	-.02	-.08	-.01	.05	-.08	-.06	-.07	.08	.13	.06	.06	.25
28. Psych. cfl. WF	2.97	0.99	.03	-.02	.22	-.09	.31	.03	.13	-.05	-.04	.02	.03	-.14	-.11	.07	.18	.05
29. Psych. cfl. FW	2.38	0.80	-.02	-.05	-.13	.01	-.18	-.06	-.05	-.01	.13	-.04	-.07	.01	-.01	.10	.06	-.23
30. Psych. fac. WF	3.09	0.81	.19	-.03	.05	-.05	-.03	.03	-.13	.09	.03	.08	-.11	.15	.12	.12	.10	.04
31. Psych. fac. FW	3.67	0.77	.03	-.13	.03	-.06	-.04	-.09	-.08	.08	.01	-.05	-.20	.11	.11	.11	-.02	.21
32. Beh. cfl. WF	2.88	0.81	.01	.03	.01	.09	-.01	.06	-.01	.05	-.02	.03	.05	-.04	-.07	.01	.11	-.02
33. Beh. cfl. FW	2.77	0.79	.02	.07	-.18	.13	-.10	-.01	-.02	.05	.05	-.05	.07	-.04	-.08	-.04	.05	-.06
34. Beh. fac. WF	3.24	0.79	.06	-.01	.13	-.06	.12	-.09	.13	-.08	.02	.05	-.03	.15	.09	.04	-.01	.20
35. Beh. fac. FW	3.37	0.73	.17	-.07	.05	-.06	-.07	-.05	-.06	-.01	-.02	.01	-.03	.19	.10	.03	-.01	.15

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Ctr. work hours refers to the amount of contracted working hours per week; Age of youngest child is measured with 4 dummy (D) variables, using employees without children as reference category. Correlations greater than .11 are significant at  $p < .05$ ; Correlations greater than .15 are significant at  $p < .01$ ; Correlations greater than .20 are significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 3.1 (continued)

Variables	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
17. Sup. fam/friends	(-)																	
18. Neg. rel. consequ.	-.11	(-)																
19. Home time dem.	-.05	.35	(-)															
20. Time cfl. WF	-.12	.20	.03	(-)														
21. Time cfl. FW	-.11	.40	.36	.27	(-)													
22. Time fac. WF	.21	-.15	-.03	-.12	-.06	(-)												
23. Time fac. FW	.17	.04	.03	-.08	.20	.44	(-)											
24. Strain cfl. WF	-.08	.19	.09	.46	.18	-.22	-.10	(-)										
25. Strain cfl. FW	-.17	.28	.19	.11	.42	-.01	-.01	.25	(-)									
26. Energy fac. WF	.20	-.09	-.01	-.17	-.01	.48	.37	-.40	-.01	(-)								
27. Energy fac. FW	.31	-.01	-.06	.02	.02	.26	.30	-.04	-.08	.27	(-)							
28. Psych. cfl. WF	.01	-.08	-.08	.24	.01	.01	.02	.33	.02	-.14	.08	(-)						
29. Psych. cfl. FW	-.05	.22	.17	.09	.43	-.03	-.01	.17	.52	-.01	-.09	-.04	(-)					
30. Psych. fac. WF	.13	-.01	.05	.01	.06	.30	.40	-.08	.02	.33	.24	.08	-.03	(-)				
31. Psych. fac. FW	.22	-.03	.04	-.01	.11	.25	.25	-.15	-.06	.24	.32	-.17	.10	.26	(-)			
32. Beh. cfl. WF	-.01	.06	.03	.11	.11	-.08	-.03	.11	-.01	-.05	-.05	.13	.07	.03	.01	(-)		
33. Beh. cfl. FW	.06	.04	.06	.06	.05	.02	.07	.08	.04	.04	-.03	.04	.02	-.02	-.01	.49	(-)	
34. Beh. fac. WF	.24	-.14	-.01	-.01	-.03	.38	.33	-.13	-.08	.33	.34	.12	-.02	.38	.24	-.10	-.01	(-)
35. Beh. fac. FW	.23	-.07	.05	-.08	.04	.22	.30	-.02	-.03	.26	.37	.01	.01	.25	.24	-.04	.03	.63



### 3.5 Results

First, we examined whether men and women differed in the extent to which they experienced their work and home environments as supportive or whether there were any gender differences in the level of conflict or facilitation. Mancova analyses (in which we corrected for differences in working hours, organizational tenure, age, education, age of youngest child, and salary) revealed no gender differences in perceived level of support received at work ( $F(4) = 0.95$ , ns) or at home ( $F(4) = 1.14$ , ns), nor in the level of conflict experienced ( $F(8) = 1.65$ , ns.). However, women did experience higher levels of facilitation than men ( $F(8) = 2.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Specifically, women experienced significantly higher levels of time-based WF, psychological WF, behavioral WF and FW facilitation, and marginally higher levels of time-based FW facilitation.

We used path analysis (EQS 6.0) to further analyze the data, for men and women separately. Using separate datasets, we built path models in which the components of the work and home environment predicted conflict and facilitation. Because the current sample sizes were not sufficiently large to use latent variables, the items for each scale were averaged to create single indicators for each construct. To correct for random measurement error we fixed the loadings from indicator to construct to the square root of the coefficient alpha internal consistency estimate for each construct, and fixed their respective error terms to 1 minus alpha. This approach is consistent with previous work (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Frone et al., 1992; Williams & Hazer, 1986). The home and work indicators were allowed to correlate, as were the conflict and facilitation indicators. Furthermore, we used the Wald test to determine which of these paths could be set to zero without significant loss of model fit. Model fit was evaluated with the chi-square statistic and the fit indices GFI, CFI, IFI, and the RMSEA. In general, models with fit indices greater than .90, and a RMSEA smaller than or equal to .08 indicate a good fit between the model and the data (Browne & Cudeck, 1989). The model for men demonstrated good fit with the data ( $\chi^2 (93) = 85.95$ ,  $p = .69$ , CFI = 1.00, GFI = .96, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01), as did the model for women ( $\chi^2 (96) = 71.61$ ,  $p = .97$ , CFI = 1.00, GFI = .95, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01). To facilitate interpretation, we present the results for both men and women in two separate figures. Figures 3.1A and 3.1B depict the prediction of conflict and facilitation for men. Figure 3.2A and 3.2B depict these relationships for women. The figures depict the standardized solution and only reflect the significant ( $p < .01$ ) relationships. The paths in the figures are depicted as either solid or dotted lines. We hypothesized that the support components

would relate to lower conflict and higher facilitation, and that organizational (home) time demands and negative career (relationship) consequences would relate to higher conflict and lower facilitation. Solid lines represent findings that were consistent with this hypothesis, observations that did not fit this prediction are represented by dotted lines. For men 17 paths were consistent with this prediction and five were not. For women, 16 paths were consistent with this prediction and six were not. We describe these results below.

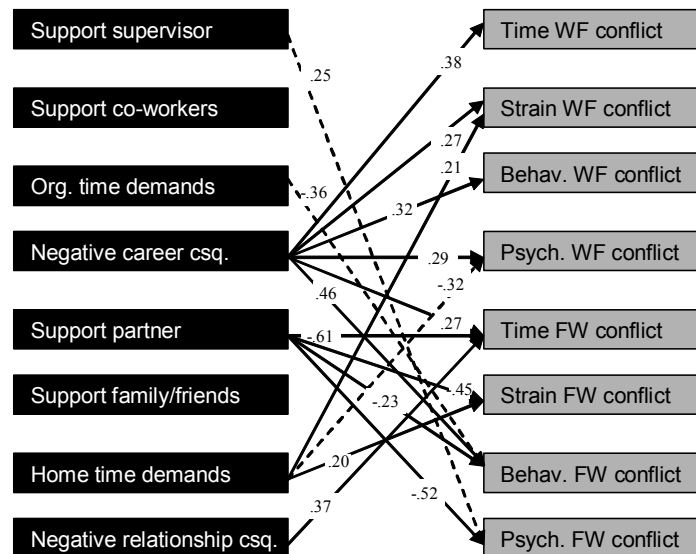


Figure 3.1A Prediction of Men's Conflict Experiences

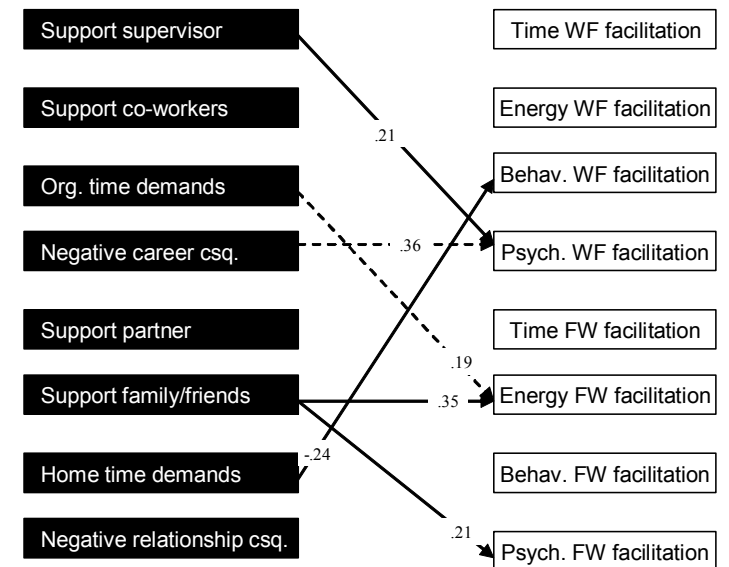


Figure 3.1B Prediction of Men's Facilitation Experiences

*Note.* We expected that the support components would relate to lower conflict and higher facilitation, and that organizational (home) time demands and negative career (relationship) consequences would relate to higher conflict and lower facilitation. Findings that contradict this expectation are represented by dotted paths.

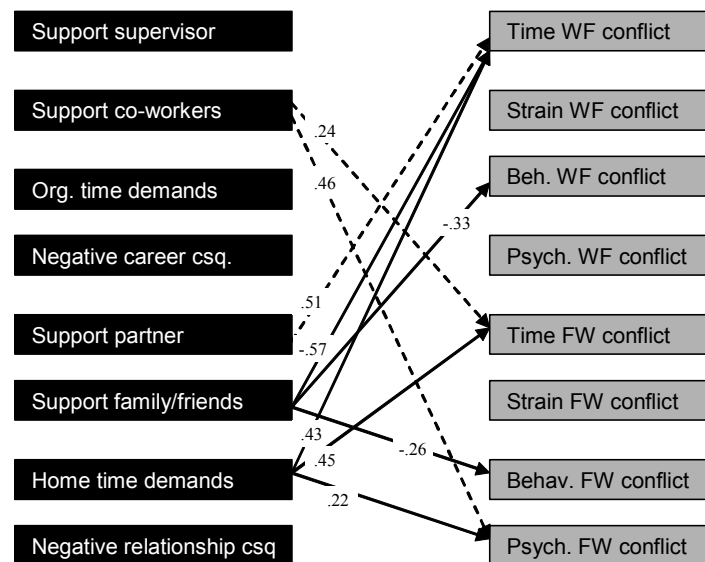


Figure 3.2A Prediction of Women's Conflict Experiences

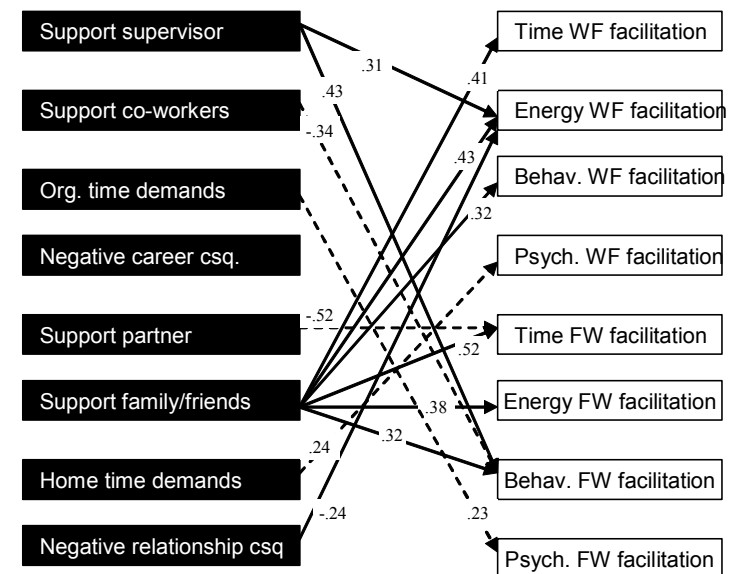


Figure 3.2B Prediction of Women's Facilitation Experiences

*Note.* We expected that the support components would relate to lower conflict and higher facilitation, and that organizational (home) time demands and negative career (relationship) consequences would relate to higher conflict and lower facilitation. Findings that contradict this expectation are represented by dotted paths.

*The Impact of a Supportive Work Environment*

Regarding the impact of the work environment on *men's* ability to combine work and family, Figure 3.1A and 3.1B show that for men the perception of negative career consequences was a very influential component. The perception that devoting more time to family responsibilities – thus having less “face-time” in the office – would have negative consequences for their career progress related to higher levels of almost every type of conflict we examined. Supervisor support was related to the perception that their work helped them to put their home-life matters into perspective, benefiting their functioning at home (higher psychological WF facilitation). Co-worker support was unrelated to men's conflict or facilitation experiences. In addition, we observed some relationships that were inconsistent with our expectation. That is, supervisor support was also related to *higher* psychological FW conflict. Thus, receiving supervisor support related to more preoccupation with home-life matters while at work. In addition, the perception of negative career consequences had a beneficial effect in that it related to *higher* psychological WF facilitation. Finally, organizational time demands did not seem to have detrimental effects because this component related to lower conflict, and higher facilitation. We will discuss these findings later.

For *women* (Figure 3.2A and 3.2B), a totally different picture emerged. Negative career consequences, a very influential component for men, was unrelated to conflict and facilitation for women. For women, supervisor support was related to higher levels of facilitation. That is, women who reported higher levels of support from their supervisors indicated to a higher degree that work provided them with extra energy that benefited their lives at home (energy-based WF facilitation). Moreover, women who reported more support from their supervisors indicated to a higher degree to deploy in their work the skills and behaviors they acquired at home (behavioral FW facilitation). We also observed some unexpected relationships. While this was not the case for men, co-worker support was related to women's conflict and facilitation experiences. However, it seems to have detrimental effects because higher levels of support from co-workers in fact related to *higher* levels of time-based FW and psychological FW conflict and *lower* levels of behavioral FW facilitation. Thus, for women, having co-workers who are understanding of family issues and accommodating to finding a balance between work and family seems to go hand in hand with higher perceptions that their family life negatively interfered with their work. As was the case for men, organizational time demands did not seem to have detrimental effects. Women who experienced higher time demands experienced

*higher* psychological FW facilitation, thus experiencing that their home life enabled them to put work matters into perspective which benefited their work.

*The Impact of a Supportive Home Environment*

The relationships between the home environment and conflict and facilitation were again fundamentally different for men and women. For *men*, receiving support from their partner was highly beneficial in the sense that it related to lower levels of all types of conflict in which family negatively interferes with work. Partner support was unrelated to men's facilitation experiences. However, men who received higher levels of support from family and friends experienced to a higher degree that their home lives provided them with extra energy and psychological benefits that positively affected their work (higher energy-based FW and psychological FW facilitation). Furthermore, men who reported high levels of home time demands (e.g. being expected to take on caring tasks at specified times) reported higher levels of both strain-based WF and FW conflict. Finally, for men, the perception that work-related absence from home would jeopardize their relationship (negative relationship consequences) was for men related to the experience that the time they spend on their home lives negatively interferes with their work (time-based FW conflict). This is all in line with our prediction. Inconsistent however is the finding that higher levels of home time demands also went hand in hand with *lower* preoccupation with work matters while at home (lower psychological WF conflict).

For women, support from family and friends seems to be a highly important resource in combining work and family roles. Women who indicated to receive higher levels of support experienced lower levels of time-based and behavioral WF and FW conflict. Moreover, the more support women received from family and friends, the more they experienced that the time they spent on one role made them use the time in the other role more efficiently (time-based WF and FW facilitation), the more they experienced that one role provided them with extra energy that could be used in the other role (energy-based WF and FW facilitation), and the more they experienced that one role learned them new skills and behaviors that were also useful in the other role (behavioral WF and FW facilitation). Perceptions of high home time demands were detrimental in the sense that they related to higher time-based WF and FW conflict and higher psychological FW conflict. Thus, being expected to perform a lot of caring tasks related to feelings of a "time-bind" between work and family and higher levels of preoccupation with home-life matters while at work. When women perceived to

a higher degree that work-related absence from home would jeopardize their relationship (negative relationship consequences), they experienced to a lower degree that their work gave them extra energy that benefited their home life (lower energy-based WF facilitation). We also observed some unexpected relationships. Although partner support consistently related to lower levels of conflict experiences for men, receiving partner support instead seems to have adverse effects for women. For women, higher levels of partner support related to *higher* conflict experiences and *lower* facilitation experiences. In addition, home time demands for women related to the perception that their work helped them to put their home-life matters into perspective, benefiting their functioning at home (higher psychological WF facilitation).

When comparing these results of men and women, the differences are striking. The supportiveness of the work and home environment primarily seem to affect men's conflict experiences (more paths), whereas for women they relate more to their facilitation experiences. Moreover, only one specific path was the same across gender (support of family and friends relating to higher energy-based FW facilitation). This indicates that receiving support at work and at home has a fundamentally different influence on men's and women's ability to manage work and family roles.

### 3.6 Discussion

The objective of this chapter was to gain more insight into the effects of support in the work and home environment on employee's ability to balance their work and family lives. This research contributes to the work-family literature in several ways. First, whereas prior studies predominantly focused on the "organizational contribution" to conflict experiences, the present research also provides insight in how the home environment relates to these experiences. Second, rather than merely examining conflict experiences we also examined the "positive side" of role-combining by also investigating experiences of facilitation. In this way, we were able to shed more light on possible ways to enhance the experience of facilitation by creating supportive work and home environments. Third, by examining different types of conflict and facilitation that individuals can experience and explicitly focusing on possible gender differences, we provided a fine-grained analysis of how supportive work and home environments differentially related to conflict and facilitation across gender.

*Supportive Work and Home Environments and the Experience of Conflict*

The present findings provide strong support for the need to examine both the work and the home environment when investigating experiences of conflict between work and family roles. Furthermore, these findings suggest that support for family issues at work and support for work issues at home affect employees' general ability to balance work and family roles (Allen, 2001), as the work and home environment related to conflict (and facilitation) experiences in both the WF and FW direction. Our findings replicated recent studies showing that support of family members for the work domain relates to lower reported conflict (Kossek et al., 2001; Lapierre & Allen, 2001). Our study extended these findings by showing that specific components of a work supportive home environment were differentially related to different types of conflict experiences reported by men and women. For instance, receiving support of one's partner strongly related to lower levels of conflict for men, whereas for women support from family and friends was way more important in this regard.

*Supportive Work and Home Environments and the Experience of Facilitation*

Because of the dominant focus on conflict in the work-family literature, research on the experiences of facilitation between work and family roles and possibilities to enhance these experiences is scarce. Two recent studies, however, found that employees who received support from their supervisors and co-workers for family issues experienced higher levels of facilitation between their work and family lives (Thompson & Pottrass, 2005; Voydanoff, 2004b). The present study adds to this literature by showing that both the family supportiveness of the work environment and the work supportiveness of the home environment relate to facilitation experiences of employees. In our study, especially supervisor support and support from family and friends were consistently related to increased levels of facilitation for both men and women. Thus, the present study indicates that supportive environments – besides reducing conflict - have the capacity to stimulate facilitation. When aiming at enhancing facilitation, supervisors seem to be in a key position to stimulate experiences of facilitation among employees, whereas support of family and friends is vital at home. However, it is important to note that we also found instances where receiving support did not have the expected beneficial effects, or where demands at work or at home did not seem to have detrimental effects. We discuss these results below in more detail.



*Different Effects for Men and Women*

In this study, men and women did not differ in *the extent* to which they rated their work and home environments as supportive. However, there were strikingly few similarities between men and women in terms of how the different components of the work and home environment related to their experiences in balancing work and family. This suggests that the *impact* of the work and home environment on conflict and facilitation is fundamentally different for men and women.

For *men*, the perception that devoting more time to family responsibilities (and thus having less “face-time” at work) would jeopardize their career was a strong predictor of experiencing conflict between work and family. Interestingly, in several studies within the Dutch context, where the present study was also carried out, men indicated the wish to work less hours per week while women indicated the wish to participate more hours in the work force (Schipper, 2001). Moreover, a recent study indicates that the actual “wage penalty” associated with working part-time is more severe for men than women (Hirsch, 2005). The present study suggest that the perceived (and real) negative career consequences for men play a role here, causing men to experience conflict, and possibly hindering couples to divide paid and unpaid work in a different, less traditional manner. With regard to the work supportiveness of the home environment, men especially benefited from receiving support from their partners as it related to reduced experiences of family negatively interfering with work.

Consistent with previous findings, *women* especially benefited from receiving support from their supervisors at work (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Kluwer et al., 1997), and from receiving support from family and friends at home. Having a family supportive supervisor for women related to enhanced experiences of facilitation, and having family and friends who were supportive of work issues related to lower conflict as well as higher facilitation between work and family. These different patterns for men and women underscore the importance of explicitly examining the role of gender in future work-family interface (instead of merely controlling for gender in statistical analyses), and, possibly, to develop different organizational policies to help avoid conflict and enhance facilitation for men and women.

*Demands not Always Detrimental and Support not Always Beneficial*

Intriguingly, the present findings suggest that demands at work and at home do not always have detrimental effects and that the effects of support are not always

beneficial. This indicates that striving for higher levels of support and lower demands is no panacea to reduce the experience of conflict or magic way to enhance the experience of facilitation, but rather that this picture is more differentiated. In our study, demands in terms of organizational and home time demands or negative career consequences had unpredicted effects in that they were also related to *higher* levels of psychological and energy-based facilitation and *lower* psychological conflict. Previous studies also found instances where job demands in terms of time pressure and workload and demands from friends related to higher instead of lower levels of facilitation (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004). An explanation the authors of this previous work gave was that their measures of demands might have also picked up unmeasured aspects of job quality or work engagement which could explain this positive relationship between demands and facilitation. Another explanation in our view is that, in fact, low levels of demands are not per definition preferable. Possibly, a certain level of demands can also be experienced as stimulating or motivating and only very high levels of demands become detrimental.

Moreover, we found that for women, higher levels of co-worker and partner support for family issues were actually associated with higher levels of conflict. Because data for this study were collected at a single point in time, issues of reverse causality could play a role here. It is also possible, for example, to explain support relating to higher conflict by arguing that individuals ask for and hence receive more support because they experience higher levels of conflict. Although supportive work and home environments are widely regarded as antecedents of conflict and facilitation (Allen, 2001; Carlson & Perrewé, 1995; Voydanoff, 2004), future longitudinal research is needed to fully rule out the possibility of reverse causation. However, this finding also relates to prior inconsistent findings in the literature on the role of social support. For instance, Fernandez (1995) found that social support of co-workers can also exacerbate self-reported strain. She referred to this effect as the “reverse buffering effect” and argued that talking with co-workers can also legitimize and highlight negative feelings, thus increasing strain or dissatisfaction. Although this interpretation is post hoc and hence remains speculative, this could explain the present findings. Combining work and family responsibilities is traditionally seen as a women’s issue and it is often assumed that women experience most difficulties in combining these different responsibilities. Possibly, in talking with co-workers and one’s partner, this negative side is most often highlighted and discussed, thus exacerbating experiences of conflict. Clearly, these interesting

findings merit future research, for instance on the role of “constructive or destructive” support.

*A Fine-grained Analysis*

We complied with the call to examine different types of conflict and facilitation (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Poelmans, et al., 2003). Strain(energy)-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW conflict and facilitation experiences had different antecedents in the work and home environment, thus supporting the need to distinguish between these experiences instead of examining generalized conflict and facilitation. Considering that different types of conflict and facilitation are also differentially related to outcomes in the work, home, and health domain such as job performance, home life satisfaction, and depression (Allen & Spector, 2002; van Steenbergen et al., 2007), the present approach is a first step towards designing tailored interventions that address specific aspects of conflict and facilitation among men and women.

*What about Work-Family Benefits?*

As described in the beginning of this chapter, previous research consistently showed that informal support in the work environment is stronger related to experienced success in role combination than the formal work-family benefits offered by organizations (e.g., Behson, 2006; Thompson & Pottrass, 2005). Therefore, in our research we focused on the extent to which individuals receive this informal support within their work and home environments. However, by no means do we wish to imply that work-family benefits are un-important or that organizations could put an end to offering them. Although the relationship between informal support and conflict is generally stronger, previous studies did show that work-family benefits related to lower conflict experiences of employees (Thompson & Ganster, 1995). Moreover, offering work-family benefits does seem to signal to employees that the organization cares about their well-being which can positively affect their attitudes (cf. social exchange theory), thus relating to higher levels of employee’s affective commitment to their organization as well as higher levels of job satisfaction (Hammer et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1999). This indicates that from the perspective of fostering organizational commitment and job satisfaction, offering benefits is clearly beneficial.

*Future Research Directions*

Our research clearly showed that the supportiveness of the work and the home environment were differentially related to different types of conflict and facilitation experiences of male and female employees. Therefore, we stress the importance of examining the effects of both the work and the home environment on individual's experiences in combining their work and family roles in future research. In doing so, it is important to distinguish between different types as well as different directions of (WF and FW) conflict and facilitation. In the view of the substantial gender differences we observed, we underscore the need to carefully examine, both theoretically and empirically, the role of gender in future work-family research.

Because this research represents a single study that was carried out in the Netherlands, additional research should assess the robustness of our findings in other contexts. Although most work-family research has been conducted within the United States, empirical research within the European context also demonstrated that conflict experiences of employees were much more related to the informal context than the use or availability of formal work-family benefits (Dijkers et al., 2004; Kluwer et al., 1997). We are unaware of studies that systematically compare the informal family supportiveness of work environments in different national contexts and think it is highly interesting and needed to conduct comparative studies between countries (Poelmans et al., 2003).

A limitation of the present study is that our sample size was relatively small. Although we took precautions to address this in our analyses (e.g., by creating single indicators for each construct, cf. Frone et al., 1992), future research should aim for larger scale research.

Furthermore, research that further extends our insight in antecedents of facilitation would make a strong contribution to literature and would be of great practical use. Also focusing on the applied perspective, we call for researchers and practitioners in this area to collaborate in designing ways to teach managers how to deal with work-family issues, to be supportive, and how to open up for discussion cultural norms that are perceived by employees as hindering. Of course, such interventions should be supported by top management. It would be important that managers are taught to create a "win-win" between organizational and employee interests. In the same vein, we call for designing (and measuring the effects of) interventions that aim to enable couples to better balance their work and family lives. Finally, we call for work-family researchers to include objective outcome measures in their studies (e.g., sales rates, objective

health indicators) to – hopefully – demonstrate in financial terms the gains of supporting employees in balancing their work and family lives.

#### *Conclusions*

In conclusion, this study indicates that employees' ability to combine work and family depends upon the extent to which their work environment is family supportive as well as the extent to which their home environment is supportive of work issues. A family supportive work environment and a work supportive home environment do not only seem to reduce the extent to which employees experience conflict between their work and family roles, but also seem to stimulate that employees experience a positive exchange between their work and family lives (facilitation). Finally, this study revealed important gender differences, thus providing a more complete picture of the different effects the work and home environment can have on men's and women's ability to combine work and family.

## **Are Successful Role-Combiners Healthier and Better Performing Employees? Relating Work-Family Facilitation and Conflict to Objective Health and Performance Indicators<sup>j</sup>**

Individuals who juggle work and family responsibilities can experience that work negatively interferes with the fulfillment of their family roles, and vice versa, that their family roles negatively interfere with the fulfillment of their work role. This experience of *work-family conflict* has been defined in the literature as “the individual’s experience that work and family roles are incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). However, individuals can also experience a *positive exchange* between their work and family roles. In this regard, scholars have assessed the construct of *work-family facilitation*, which refers to the individual’s experience that participation in one role is made easier by virtue of participation in another role (van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). These two sides of the work-family interface can be experienced by an individual at the same time since conflict and facilitation represent separate constructs rather than being opposite ends of a single continuum (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

In the work-family literature the argument is often made that organizations should support employees in balancing their work and family roles – aim to reduce conflict and enhance facilitation – because these experiences not only affect subjective well-being, but also impact upon *hard* outcomes relevant to the organization, such as employees’ health, absenteeism rates, and performance at work. Yet, up to date research to support this claim is scarce because scholars have almost exclusively relied on employees’ *self-reported* states (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). In fact, in a recent review of the work-family literature over the past 24 years this predominant reliance on self-reports has been identified as major shortcoming of the field (Casper et al., 2007).

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<sup>j</sup> This chapter is based on van Steenbergen, E. F. and Ellemers, N. Are successful role-combiners healthier and better performing employees? Relating work-family facilitation and conflict to objective health and performance indicators (manuscript under review).

#### 4.1 Previous Research Using Self-Reported Outcomes

Based on self-reported data, the work-family literature so far has quite consistently shown that employees who experience the combination of work and family roles to be successful *feel happier* and *healthier*. That is, employees who report lower conflict and higher levels of facilitation between their work and family lives also indicate that they feel more satisfied with their work, more satisfied with their home lives or marital relationships, more satisfied with their lives in general, less depressed and emotionally exhausted, and they report having better physical health (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Allen & Armstrong, 2006; Grzywacz, 2000; van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). Moreover, several studies found that these employees *reported to perform better* at work (e.g., Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; van Steenbergen et al., 2007; Witt & Carlson, 2006) and *reported to be less absent* from their work than employees who experience higher conflict and lower levels of facilitation between their work and family lives (Anderson, Coffey, Byerly, 2002). Qualitative interview data also converge to suggest that people who experience a lack of balance between work and family feel this ultimately goes at the expense of effectiveness and performance at work as well as at home (Kofodimos, 1990).

Only a handful of studies so far has linked employees' *conflict* experiences to objective outcome measures and to our knowledge not a single study to date has related employees' experiences of *facilitation* between work and family to objective outcomes. Thus it remains unknown whether efforts to support employees in achieving successful role combination would actually benefit objective outcomes relevant to the organization. There have been many calls in the literature to address this issue by relating employees' experiences in the work-family interface to bottom-line economic organizational indicators, such as actual absenteeism rates or objective indicators of employees' performance at work. It is felt that stronger evidence for such links would greatly advance the field and would provide practitioners with a stronger case to convince organizations to implement programs that support employees in successful role combination (Allen et al., 2000; Casper et al., 2007; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996; Voydanoff, 2002). However, to date such research is still sparse. In the present research we aim to address this issue by moving beyond the use of self-reports. The aim of the present research is to examine whether there is evidence for the claim that successful role combiners indeed *are* healthier and better performing employees by relating employees' conflict as well as their

facilitation experiences between work and family to *objective* indicators of employee health and work performance.

#### 4.2 Previous Research Relating Conflict Experiences to Objective Outcome Measures

As mentioned earlier, past research on the relationship between employees' experiences in role combination and objective outcome measures is scarce. To our knowledge, there are only four empirical studies that have examined this link. Moreover, these studies focused on employees' *conflict experiences* only and each focused on a specific outcome variable. In a small sample of 59 employees of a electronics and communications firm, Goff, Mount, and Jamison (1990) found that the experience of conflict related to higher levels of *absenteeism* as recorded by the organization. Additionally, a study among public accountants showed that employees who had reported higher levels of conflict were more likely to have left their occupation 22 months later than their colleagues who had indicated lower levels of conflict (*occupational turnover* Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997). There also is one study that examined an objective indicator of *job performance*. In this study among customer service employees of an electronic retail organization, employees' conflict experiences were negatively associated with their engagement in extra-role behaviors as rated by their supervisors, which in turn related to a lower intention of employees' customers to purchase another product from the firm (Netemeyer, Maxham III, & Pullig, 2005). Finally, with regard to *physical health*, Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1997) related conflict experiences longitudinally to objective measures of blood pressure and found that a higher level of conflict was related to a higher incidence of hypertension four years later.

Besides these studies, some other studies are consistent with the idea that conflict relates adversely to health outcomes. However, these studies actually examined *self-reports of health indicators* rather than assessing these objectively. For example, Thomas and Ganster (1995) assessed health care professional's conflict experiences via a survey and asked them to assess their own *cholesterol level* and report it. Indeed, higher levels of conflict related to increased self-reported cholesterol levels. Likewise, Frone's et al. (1997) longitudinal study showed that employees' conflict experiences were related to higher levels of self-reported *heavy alcohol consumption* four years later. Finally, findings with regard to keeping a *healthy weight* are inconclusive in that two studies that related



conflict to self-reports of body weight revealed inconsistent results. Grzywacz (2000) found that employees who reported higher conflict were more likely to be obese, whereas Allen and Armstrong (2006) found no significant correlation between conflict and employees' Body Mass Index (BMI). However, Allen and Armstrong's (2006) study did reveal that employees who reported higher conflict also reported less physical exercise and lower consumption of healthy foods (vegetables, full grain products etc.), which can be argued to have a detrimental effect on body weight in the long run.

Although additional research using objective outcome measures is clearly needed to make a more convincing case (e.g., to convince organizational management that it is worthwhile to address work-family issues), these studies offer support in line with the reasoning that employees' conflict experiences in combining work and family can negatively affect hard organizational outcomes. This suggests that organizations should aim for reducing employees' conflict experiences because these can adversely affect hard organizational outcomes. In other words, organizations should pay attention to work-family issues because they have something to lose by not doing so. However, by focusing on employees' conflict experiences only, the *negative side* of role combination is primarily highlighted and attended to. To our knowledge, there is not a single study in the literature that has attempted to link the upside of role combination (*facilitation between work and family*) to hard organizational outcomes. Nonetheless, it is crucial to not overlook the positive side of role combination (see also Frone, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004). When employees experience facilitation between their work and family roles they experience that participation in one role carries with it benefits for the other. This can include for instance learning new skills, acquiring new perspectives or gaining energy in one role (e.g., family) that benefits the fulfillment of another role (e.g., the work role, Marks, 1977; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). We posit that employees' facilitation experiences in the combination of work and family roles should positively affect hard organizational outcomes. Thus, rather than merely addressing the negative side, the positive side of role combination must also be linked to objective outcomes in order to examine whether organizations might also have *something to gain* by aiming for an enhancement of employees' facilitation experiences between work and family roles.

### 4.3 The Current Research

In the present research, we aim to examine whether there is evidence for the link between employees' conflict and facilitation experiences in role combination on the one hand and objective health and performance related outcome measures on the other. By examining objective indicators of health, actual absenteeism rates, and objective indicators of job performance, rather than employees' self-reports on these outcomes, we address an important shortcoming that Casper et al. (2007) have identified in past work-family research. In their review, Casper et al. (2007) also criticized the work-family literature for a) its one-sided focus on the negative side of role combination and b) its almost exclusive reliance on cross-sectional data rendering firm causal inferences inappropriate (see also Allen et al., 2000). We aim to address all of these shortcomings in the present research. That is, we will not only examine the negative side of role combination, but examine employees' facilitation experiences between work and family as well. Moreover, we will deploy a longitudinal research design to examine whether experiences in role combination causally predict objective health and performance indicators over time.

We present two studies. Study 1 is a larger scale *cross-sectional study*. Study 2 is a small-scale *longitudinal study*. In Study 1, we related work-to-family (WF) as well as family-to-work (FW) conflict and facilitation experiences to objective indicators of employees' poor health (cholesterol, body mass index, and physical stamina). We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Facilitation experiences relate negatively to indicators of a poor health (in terms of cholesterol, BMI, and physical stamina), whereas conflict experiences relate positively to these indicators.

Since examination of the link between facilitation and objective outcomes is non-existent in the literature so far, we decided to focus on employees' *facilitation experiences* in Study 2. We examined these in a detailed fashion by distinguishing between the different *types* of facilitation that individuals can experience between their work and family roles. Van Steenbergen and co-authors (2007) have identified four different types of facilitation experiences, namely energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation, which can all be experienced in the WF as well as the FW direction. Employees experience *energy-based* facilitation when energy obtained in one role (e.g., work) makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role (e.g., family). Time-based facilitation occurs when the time devoted to one role stimulates or makes it easier to effectively manage and use the time in another role. In addition, behavioral facilitation refers to the experience that behaviors that are required or learned in

one role make it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role. Finally, psychological facilitation occurs when the individual is able to put matters associated with one role into perspective, by virtue of another role, which makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of the first role. In Study 2, we longitudinally examined the relationship between these different types of facilitation at Time 1 and objective indicators of employees' health at Time 2 (cholesterol, BMI). We also had access to actual absenteeism and objective indicators of job performance one year later (Time 2). In each prediction of a Time 2 indicator (e.g., cholesterol Time 2), we corrected for the baseline of this indicator at Time 1 (cholesterol Time 1). We hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2:* Facilitation experiences at Time 1 negatively predict indicators of a poor health at Time 2 (cholesterol and BMI); *Hypothesis 3:* Facilitation experiences at Time 1 negatively predict absenteeism at Time 2; *Hypothesis 4:* Facilitation experiences at Time 1 positively predict job performance at Time 2.

#### **4.4 Method Study 1**

##### *Procedure*

Data for the study were obtained in a world-wide operating financial service organization in the Netherlands, as part of a larger Human Resources initiative to pay attention to employee's physical and mental vitality. The purpose of this organizational initiative, called the "vitality check", was to give employees the opportunity to get a physical check-up (e.g., assessment of their cholesterol level) as well as to provide them with information on their mental vitality (e.g., score on work engagement or emotional exhaustion). Managing directors of the organization were asked whether their organizational unit or department wanted to participate in this vitality check. Eight departments and their respective business units agreed to participate. All employees of these departments ( $N = 2101$ ) received an e-mail invitation for participation. It was explained that the check-up was voluntary and that individual results would remain confidential. Employees were also informed that the check-up consisted of a survey and a physiological check-up by a team of health care professionals. The Human Resources department of the organization gave us permission to add a set of work-family questions to the survey for research purposes, which was also explained to employees in the introductory e-mail.

Employees who were willing to participate were asked to complete the survey and were then invited to visit the "vitality check" bus that was parked in

front of the office. This bus was fully equipped to let individuals perform a range of physical tests.

#### *Participants*

In total 56.3% of the invited employees participated. Consistent with previous work-family research (e.g., Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992), we excluded 49 employees who worked less than 20 hours a week. This resulted in a sample of 1134 participants. The 1134 participants (700 males, 434 females) were contracted to work for an average of 34.8 hours per week (range 20 - 40;  $SD = 5.04$ ). Average age was 42.1 (range 22 - 62;  $SD = 8.92$ ). In the organization's salary categories ranging from 2 (€ 1,200 per month) to 15 (€ 9,900 per month), the average salary category for these participants was 8.5, approximately € 3,050 / US \$ 3,825 per month (range 3 - 15,  $SD = 2.40$ ). Nearly half of the participants (44.7%) had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 55.3% had only completed lower education (lower vocational education or high school). A large part of the participants (78.9%) were either married or cohabiting, the rest was single. Two third of the participants (62.7%) had at least one child.

We compared our sample with the total employee database on the background variables we measured (see Measures section below), using  $\chi^2$  tests and t-tests ( $p < .01$ ). Participants in our sample were on average somewhat older than employees in the total data base ( $M = 42.1$ ,  $SD = 8.92$  vs.  $M = 41.2$ ,  $SD = 9.30$ ). No differences were found for gender, working hours, salary, level of education, marital status or parental status. Thus, our sample can generally be regarded as representative for the organization as a whole.

#### *Measures*

*Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation.* We used the *four-item* scales developed by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) to measure conflict and facilitation in the WF and FW directions. These items were back-translated for use in the Dutch context. We used the following question format: "How often have you experienced each of the following in the past year?" Sample items are: "Stress at work makes you irritable at home" (*WF conflict*,  $\alpha = .80$ ); "Personal or family worries and problems distract you when you are at work" (*FW conflict*,  $\alpha = .82$ ); "Having a good day at work makes you a better companion when you are at home" (*WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .79$ ); and "Your home life helps you relax and feel ready for the next day's work" (*FW facilitation*). We excluded one item from this latter measure because this improved the scale's reliability ( $\alpha = .68$  for 3 items vs.

$\alpha = .63$  with 4 items). Participants answered on 5-point scales, ranging 1= never to 5= always.

*Health indicators.* Health care professionals classified participants' objective health status as healthy versus unhealthy on three indicators: cholesterol level, BMI, and physical fitness. They took a blood sample and directly determined participants' *cholesterol level* in the blood in mmol/l, using a Reflotron instrument (Boehringer), 0 = healthy cholesterol level [ $< 5$  mmol/l], 1 = cholesterol level is too high [ $\geq 5$  mmol/l]. In addition, they assessed participants' height and weight to determine their *Body Mass Index (BMI)*, 0 = healthy weight [ $BMI < 25$ ] and 1 = overweight [ $BMI \geq 25$ ]. Finally, they assessed *physical stamina* by examining participants' performance on a six minute home trainer test (Life Fitness, Life 9500HR). Following standard procedures (Åstrand protocol), this performance was categorized as either a good or bad performance taking into account participant's age and sex (0 = good performance, 1 = bad performance)<sup>k</sup>.

*Background variables.* We measured the following background variables: *Gender* (1 = male, 2 = female), *age* (in years), *working hours* (contractual hours per week), *level of education* (1 = lower vocational education or high school; 2 = university or higher vocational education), *salary category* (1 = lowest; 15 = highest), *marital status* (1 = single; 2 = married / cohabiting), and *parental status* (1 = no children, 2 = children).

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<sup>k</sup> Physical stamina was assessed via a home trainer test (Life Fitness, Life 9500HR) and conveyed in liters per minute per kilogram of body weight. The assessment of good or bad performance was made according to the Åstrand protocol, using the following categories: *Males* 20-29 years of age:  $\leq 43$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 44$  good performance. *Males* 30-39 years of age:  $\leq 39$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 40$  good performance. *Males* 40-49 years of age:  $\leq 35$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 36$  good performance. *Males* 50-59 years of age:  $\leq 31$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 32$  good performance. *Males*  $> 60$  years of age:  $\leq 26$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 27$  good performance. *Females* 20-29 years of age:  $\leq 34$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 35$  good performance. *Females* 30-39 years of age:  $\leq 33$  ml/kg/min bad performance;  $\geq 34$  good performance. *Females* 40-49 years of age:  $\leq 31$  ml/kg/min is bad performance;  $\geq 32$  good performance. *Females*  $> 50$  years of age:  $\leq 28$  ml/kg/min is bad performance;  $\geq 29$  is good performance.

## **4.5 Results**

### *Relating Conflict and Facilitation to Objective Health Indicators*

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study's variables are shown in Table 4.1. We hypothesized that experiences of facilitation would relate negatively to indicators of a poor health (in terms of cholesterol, BMI, and physical stamina), whereas conflict experiences would relate positively to these indicators (Hypothesis 1). For each of these indicators, we built a logistic regression model in which we included the above mentioned background variables on step 1 and entered the facilitation and conflict measures on step 2.

Table 4.2 shows that WF facilitation was indeed negatively related to the incidence of an increased cholesterol level, whereas WF conflict was positively related to this indicator. Furthermore, employees who experienced higher levels of WF facilitation were less likely to have a poor physical stamina (Table 4.3), which also supports our hypothesis. Finally, employees who experienced higher levels of FW facilitation were less likely to be overweight (BMI, Table 4.4), whereas the experience of WF conflict related positively to the chances of being overweight.

Table 4.1. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Variables in Study 1

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender			-													
2. Age	41.72	9.02	-.11	-												
3. Education			-.12	-.31	-											
4. Salary	8.45	2.40	-.32	-.12	.53	-										
5. Marital status			-.07	.11	.01	.14	-									
6. Working hours	34.83	5.05	-.55	-.10	.24	.48	-.05	-								
7. Children			-.12	.32	-.08	.13	.34	-.08	-							
8. WF conflict	2.74	0.64	-.03	.02	.02	.09	.02	.04	.06	-						
9. FW conflict	2.02	0.61	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01	-.08	-.03	.05	.33	-					
10. WF facilitation	2.88	0.73	.06	-.19	.09	.05	.03	.01	-.02	.01	.06	-				
11. FW facilitation	3.57	0.69	.11	-.13	.09	.09	.19	-.03	.01	-.01	-.20	.31	-			
12. Cholesterol			-.09	.25	-.13	-.04	.03	.01	.05	.05	-.02	-.13	-.03	-		
13. Poor physical stamina			-.07	.09	-.09	-.08	.02	.02	.06	.04	-.01	-.09	-.06	.08	-	
14. Body mass index			-.17	.15	-.15	-.02	.08	.08	.10	.06	.01	-.06	-.09	.11	.22	-

Note.  $N = 1134$ ; Correlations  $\geq .06$  or  $\leq -.06$  are significant at  $p < .05$ ; Correlations  $\geq .08$  or  $\leq -.08$  are significant at  $p < .01$ ; Correlations  $\geq .10$  or  $\leq -.10$  are significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 4.2. Logistic Regression Results for Cholesterol in Study 1.

Variables	Cholesterol			
	step 1		step 2	
	Wald	B	Wald	B
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender	3.77*	-.31*	3.82*	-.32*
Age	44.46***	.05***	38.57***	.05***
Education	3.66	-.29	3.39	-.29
Salary	0.01	-.01	0.07	-.01
Marital status	0.29	.08	0.12	.06
Working hours	0.05	.01	0.03	.01
Children	1.11	-.15	0.99	-.15
<i>Conflict and Facilitation</i>				
Conflict WF			3.79*	.20*
Conflict FW			0.42	-.07
Facilitation WF			9.97**	-.29**
Facilitation FW			1.53	.13
<i>Summary statistics</i>				
Nagelkerke $R^2$		.09		.11
$R^2$ change		.09		.02
$\chi^2$ step		78.36***		14.62**

Note. Wald statistics and B coefficients are depicted; \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$



Table 4.3. Logistic Regression Results for poor Physical Stamina in Study 1.

Variables	Poor Physical Stamina			
	step 1		step 2	
	Wald	B	Wald	B
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender	3.94	-.32	3.54	-.30
Age	1.19	.01	0.37	.01
Education	0.84	-.14	0.63	-.12
Salary	7.91**	-.10**	8.29**	-.10**
Marital status	0.04	.03	0.11	.06
Working hours	1.43	.02	1.20	.02
Children	2.42	.23	2.51	.23
<i>Conflict and Facilitation</i>				
Conflict WF			3.04	.18
Conflict FW			1.06	-.12
Facilitation WF			3.88*	-.18*
Facilitation FW			0.56	-.08
<i>Summary statistics</i>				
Nagelkerke $R^2$		.03		.05
$R^2$ change		.03		.02
$\chi^2$ step		27.45***		9.15*

Note. Wald statistics and B coefficients are depicted; \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Table 4.4. Logistic Regression Results for Body Mass Index in Study 1.

Variables	Body Mass Index			
	step 1 Wald	B	step 2 Wald	B
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender	14.73***	-.61***	13.11***	-.58***
Age	6.28*	.02*	4.84*	.02*
Education	16.24***	-.63***	15.58***	-.62***
Salary	0.26	-.02	0.30	-.02
Marital status	3.35	.30	4.68*	.36*
Working hours	2.46	.03	2.31	.03
Children	0.80	.13	0.75	.13
<i>Conflict and Facilitation</i>				
Conflict WF			4.39*	.22*
Conflict FW			0.83	-.10
Facilitation WF			.01	-.01
Facilitation FW			4.38*	-.21*
<i>Summary statistics</i>				
Nagelkerke $R^2$		.09		.10
$R^2$ change		.09		.01
$\chi^2$ step		81.12***		9.05†

Note. Wald statistics and B coefficients are depicted; †  $p = .06$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

#### 4.6 Discussion Study 1

In this first study we not only related employees' conflict experiences, but also their facilitation experiences between their work and family lives to objective indicators of their physical health (cholesterol, BMI, and physical stamina). In support of Hypothesis 1, we consistently found that experiencing conflict between one's work and family roles related to poorer scores on these indicators whereas experiencing facilitation between work and family related to better physical health in terms of these outcomes. Consistent with the findings of Thomas and Ganster (1995), we found that increased conflict experiences related to higher *cholesterol levels* in the blood. Whereas this prior study assessed health care employees' self-reports of self-taken cholesterol levels, the present study supports this link between conflict and cholesterol levels as assessed by an

independent health care professional. Furthermore, our approach of examining conflict as well as facilitation makes a contribution to the literature by not only showing that conflict relates positively to cholesterol levels, but also that facilitation relates to significantly lower cholesterol levels in the blood. Furthermore, we found that employees high in conflict were more likely to be *overweight* ( $BMI \geq 25$ ), which is consistent with a previous study using self-reported body weight (Grzywacz, 2000). Again, by also examining the positive side of the work-family interface (facilitation), we were able to show that being overweight is associated with a lower likelihood of experiencing facilitation between work and family. Finally, we established that employees who experienced higher levels of facilitation scored better in terms of physical stamina, an objective health indicator that has not been previously examined in the work-family literature.

Thus, this first study demonstrates that employees who experience less conflict and more facilitation between their work and family lives are indeed healthier in terms of objective health indicators. These “successful role combiners” had lower cholesterol levels in their blood, were less likely to be overweight, and had better physical stamina. However, this was a cross-sectional study, rendering firm conclusions about the causality of these relationships inappropriate. Therefore, we conducted a second *longitudinal* study. In this study, we focused on employees’ facilitation experiences between work and family and examined the relationship between these experiences and objective health indicators over time. We also longitudinally examined whether employees’ facilitation experiences predicted their actual absenteeism rates and performance at work as measured with objective indicators.

#### 4.7 Method Study 2

##### *Procedure and Sample*

As a second part of the organization’s “vitality check” initiative two Call Center departments of the organization (which did not participate in Study 1) were chosen to participate in Study 2. In this study, the organization wanted to examine longitudinal relationships between employee’s self-reports on mental vitality as examined via a survey and objective indicators of health, absenteeism, and job performance one year later. Again, the organization allowed us to add work-family questions to the survey they used in this study.

Call center employees receive telephone calls from existing or new (potential) customers about the organization’s financial products (e.g., bank

accounts, insurances, mortgages). These telephone calls can refer to questions, complaints or remarks. The job of call center employees is to provide adequate service to the caller and try to sell a financial product to this (potential) customer. Call center employees' absenteeism as well as performance is objectively measured and recorded by the organization.

Similar to Study 1, all employees received an e-mail invitation to participate in the "vitality check". This e-mail explained that the check-up was voluntary and confidential at the individual level. It also explained that the vitality check consisted of survey and a physiological check-up at Time 1, and participation in the same physiological check-up one year later (Time 2). At Time 1, 1,134 employees participated (response: 46.0%). Consistent with previous work-family research (e.g., Frone et al., 1992), we excluded 11 respondents who worked less than 20 hours a week, resulting in a sample of 123 participants.

The 123 participants (73 females and 50 males) were on average 45.7 years old (range 24 – 60,  $SD = 0.68$ ) and were contracted to work for an average of 30.1 hours per week (range 20 – 60;  $SD = 5.73$ ). The average salary category for these participants was 6.2, approximately € 2,300 / US \$ 2,732 per month (range 5 - 8,  $SD = 0.68$ ). All had received lower education (lower vocational education or high school). A large part of the participants (78.0%) were either married or cohabiting and had at least one child (69.9%). We compared the sample with statistics from the organizational data base for all call center employees, using  $\chi^2$  tests and  $t$  tests ( $p < .05$ ) on all background variables (see Measures section). We found no significant differences for any of these variables. Thus, our sample can be regarded as representative for all call center employees in this organization.

Unfortunately, not all of these employees participated in the physiological check-up one year later (at Time 2) and not all indicated in their survey to agree with the inclusion of their job performance data in this research. That is, about half of the original 123 participants at Time 1 again participated in the physiological check up at Time 2 ( $N = 58$ ). Likewise, only about half of the original 123 participants agreed that their performance data would be included in this research ( $N = 55$ ). Because there was only partial overlap between the two sub samples we provide the means, standard deviations, and (inter)correlations for these two sub samples separately in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. We examined whether participants who provided follow-up data at Time 2 differed in any significant way from participants who did not, using  $\chi^2$  tests and  $t$  tests ( $p < .05$ ). Employees who participated in the second physiological check-up on average worked somewhat less hours a week ( $M = 28.9$ ,  $SD = 5.61$ ) than participants who did not ( $M = 31.2$ ,  $SD = 5.65$ ),  $t(121) = -2.27$ ,  $p < .05$ . Moreover, female employees were

more likely to have participated in the second physiological check-up than male employees,  $\chi^2(1) = 10.43, p < .01$ . We found no significant differences for any of the other background variables or participants' scores on the facilitation measures (see Measures section). Moreover, there were no differences in background variables or facilitation scores for employees who did or did not agree to have their performance data included at Time 2. Importantly, there were also no differences in terms of physical health scores (cholesterol, BMI) and absenteeism at Time 1 or mean scores on the Time 1 job performance indicators (again see Measures section) for those who provided health and/or performance data at Time 2 compared to those who did not. Thus, there is no reason to believe that any significant selection bias had occurred.

#### Measures

*Work-Family Facilitation.* We used the *three-item* scales developed by van Steenbergen et al. (2007) to measure *energy-based*, *time-based*, *behavioral*, and *psychological WF and FW facilitation*. Sample items are: "When I get home from work I often feel emotionally recharged, enabling me to make a better contribution at home" (*energy-based WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .77$ ); "Because I relax and regain my energy at home, I can better focus on performing my work" (*energy-based FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .93$ ); "The amount of time I spend on my work stimulates me to undertake enjoyable activities in the time I spend on my home life" (*time-based WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .85$ ); "The amount of time I spend on my home life stimulates me to use my time at work effectively" (*time-based FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .88$ ); "The skills I use at work help me to better handle matters at home" (*behavioral WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .88$ ); "Because of the things I learn at home I also function better in social contacts at work" (*behavioral FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .93$ ); "Because of my work, I am better able to put home-related matters into perspective" (*psychological WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .92$ ); "Because of my home life, I am more able to put work-related matters into perspective" (*psychological FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .91$ ). Participants answered these items on 5-point scales (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Discriminant and construct validity of these measures was established in previous research (van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

*Physical Health and Absenteeism.* Following the same procedure as in Study 1, blood samples were taken to determine participant's *cholesterol* levels. In addition, participant's height and weight were assessed to determine their *BMI*. In Study 1, the health care professionals who assessed participants' physical health had classified employee's cholesterol and BMI data as dichotomous variables (0 = healthy score, 1 = unhealthy score). This time, we obtained more

fine-grained information as participant's precise cholesterol level in the blood and their exact BMI were recorded as continuous variables. This enabled us to examine whether employee's cholesterol level and BMI indeed changed over time as a function of their facilitation experiences even if it stayed in the same (healthy or unhealthy) range. Participants' average cholesterol level at Time 1 was 5.4 ( $SD = 1.37$ ; range 2.59 - 11.50), which is a little bit too high according to health standards [ $< 5$  mmol/l is a healthy score]. Average BMI at Time 1 was 25.89 ( $SD = 4.55$ , range 19.57 - 41.78), which is also a little too high [BMI  $< 25$  is a healthy weight]. *Absenteeism* was examined using data from standard organizational records. For each individual employee, the organization recorded the number of days the employee had called in sick or unable to work. The organization provided employee's mean percentage of absenteeism over the year following our survey. To be able to correct for *previous* absenteeism in our analyses, we also obtained individual-level data on absenteeism prior to the survey. The organization was able to provide us with average absenteeism over the three months prior to the survey.

*Job Performance.* We examined *objective job performance* with two job performance indicators as recorded by the organization. The first is the employee's annual average *Success Ratio (SR)*. The SR depicts the extent to which an employee has met set performance targets (ratio performance/target). Performance targets regard the number and kind of sales the employee has to achieve and are formally set by the organization. A SR of 1.00 means that the employee has exactly met the target. A SR smaller than 1.00 means that the employee has not met the target, whereas a ratio larger than 1.00 means that the employee's performance has exceeded the target. The second (negative) performance indicator was the annual average of the number of times per month an employee did not answer his or her telephone in time as a result of which the call was being transferred to a colleague (Return On No Answer: RONA). A higher number of times of not answering the telephone is seen as a negative indicator of job performance by the organization. To be able to correct for *previous* job performance, we also obtained individual-level data regarding the period prior to the survey (at Time 1). The organization was able to provide us with average SR as well average RONA over the three months prior to the survey.

*Background variables.* We examined the following background variables: *Gender* (1 = male, 2 = female), *age* (in years), *working hours* (contractual hours per week), *salary category* (1 = lowest; 15 = highest), *marital status* (1 = single; 2 = married / cohabiting), and *children* (1 = no, 2 = yes).

Table 4.5. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Participants who Provided Health Data (Study 2).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<i>Time 1</i>																					
1. Cholesterol	5.41	1.37																			
2. BMI	25.89	4.55	.17																		
3. Absenteeism	2.70	4.04	.06	-.04																	
4. Gender			.02	-.08	.09																
5. Age	46.01	7.58	.05	-.05	-.14	-.22															
6. Salary	6.14	0.69	-.13	.08	-.16	.13	-.18														
7. Marital status			.01	.09	.02	-.12	.35	-.16													
8. Working hours	28.67	5.65	.10	.21	-.09	-.58	-.08	.08	-.11												
9. Children			.08	.09	.01	.05	.46	-.05	.48	-.35											
10. Energy WF fact.	2.56	0.79	-.24	-.13	-.29	-.22	.04	-.10	.18	-.02	.06										
11. Energy FW fact.	3.55	0.89	.01	.07	-.22	-.14	.04	.01	-.02	-.03	.04	.56									
12. Time WF fact.	3.29	0.85	.13	-.19	.01	-.04	.06	-.18	.01	-.14	.07	.41	.60								
13. Time FW fact.	3.15	0.85	.02	-.12	.07	.06	.16	-.06	.09	-.16	.10	.38	.61	.82							
14. Behavioral WF fact.	3.10	0.96	-.07	.05	-.33	-.10	.18	.05	-.04	.09	-.01	.54	.57	.54	.56						
15. Behavioral FW fact.	3.12	0.91	.09	.01	-.20	.01	.15	.06	.08	.01	.02	.44	.55	.64	.72	.76					
16. Psych. WF fact.	3.18	0.91	-.25	-.10	.02	.04	.19	-.18	.21	-.10	.14	.62	.50	.53	.59	.66	.59				
17. Psych. FW fact.	3.47	0.91	-.16	-.04	-.10	-.05	.06	.13	-.02	-.04	-.01	.48	.69	.44	.52	.64	.56	.65			
<i>Time 2</i>																					
18. Cholesterol	5.23	0.88	.59	-.01	.10	.11	.20	-.02	.05	-.05	.17	-.33	-.15	.02	-.10	-.14	-.06	-.13	-.12		
19. BMI	25.3	4.66	.13	.94	-.01	-.09	-.02	.06	.14	.25	.07	-.17	.03	-.29	-.20	.05	-.08	-.10	-.07	-.01	
20. Absenteeism	2.09	2.54	.01	-.06	.61	.11	-.09	-.19	-.09	.05	-.10	-.47	-.50	-.40	-.33	-.54	-.45	-.32	-.44	.01	-.01

Note.  $N = 58$ ; Correlations  $\geq .27$  or  $\leq -.27$  are significant at  $p < .05$ ; Correlations  $\geq .33$  or  $\leq -.33$ ; at  $p < .01$ ; Correlations  $\geq .45$  or  $\leq -.45$  are significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 4.6. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Participants who Provided Performance Data (Study 2).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<i>Time 1</i>																			
1. Job performance: SR	1.53	0.79																	
2. Job performance: Rona	4.28	6.69	-.04																
3. Gender			-.36	-.06															
4. Age	46.33	7.23	.16	.09	-.29														
5. Salary	6.20	0.68	-.28	-.15	.08	-.11													
6. Marital status			-.10	-.01	.01	.41	.01												
7. Working hours	29.72	5.69	.14	.11	-.63	.03	.01	-.23											
8. Children			-.10	.04	-.08	.44	.12	.73	-.23										
9. Energy WF fact.	2.52	0.68	.03	-.20	-.03	.17	-.15	.16	.03	-.01									
10. Energy FW fact.	3.59	0.70	.11	-.12	-.01	.07	.04	.05	-.02	-.03	.44								
11. Time WF fact.	3.33	0.77	.30	.03	.15	.11	-.18	.05	-.17	.11	.25	.42							
12. Time FW fact.	3.25	0.75	-.07	-.22	.26	.24	-.13	.19	-.34	.18	.36	.56	.63						
13. Behavioral WF fact.	3.18	0.85	.02	.05	.11	.26	.09	.10	-.08	.18	.45	.44	.53	.42					
14. Behavioral FW fact.	3.24	0.74	-.08	-.11	.24	.25	.13	.13	-.22	.16	.49	.49	.48	.61	.79				
15. Psych. WF fact.	3.22	0.82	.16	-.10	.36	.23	-.12	.28	-.28	.21	.52	.43	.55	.62	.56	.59			
16. Psych. FW fact.	3.60	0.80	-.03	-.15	.14	.22	.05	.12	-.11	.05	.17	.57	.19	.39	.28	.47	.48		
<i>Time 2</i>																			
17. Job performance: SR	1.31	0.52	.60	-.16	.02	.18	-.06	.11	-.18	.16	-.01	-.01	.37	.14	.09	.16	.28	.03	
18. Job performance: Rona	3.55	6.17	-.12	.65	.01	-.16	-.13	-.14	.10	-.09	-.08	-.24	-.02	-.18	.01	-.09	-.23	-.39	-.11

Note.  $N = 58$ ; Correlations  $\geq .28$  or  $\leq -.28$  are significant at  $p < .05$ ; Correlations  $\geq .36$  or  $\leq -.36$ ; at  $p < .01$ ; correlations  $\geq .44$  or  $\leq -.44$  are significant at  $p < .001$ .



## 4.8 Results

### *Predicting Employee's Physical Health and Absenteeism*

As mentioned earlier, we obtained longitudinal data on the physical health indicators for 58 participants. Because of this small sample size we were restricted in the number of predictors we could include in the regression models (we included a maximum of three predictors because at least 15 participants per predictor are needed, Stevens, 1992). We preserved statistical power by only including the background variables and facilitation measures that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable we predicted (see Table 4.5). None of the background variables were significantly related to any of the dependent measures. Therefore, we did not include any of these in the regression analyses. Thus, for the prediction of each dependent variable (e.g., cholesterol Time 2), we built a hierarchical regression model in which we corrected for that same indicator on Time 1 in step 1 (e.g., cholesterol Time 1) and entered the relevant facilitation measures on step 2.

We hypothesized that facilitation experiences at Time 1 would negatively predict poor health at Time 2 (Hypothesis 2). The results for *cholesterol levels* and *BMI* are summarized in Table 4.7 and 4.8 respectively. Initial cholesterol levels and BMI (at Time 1) were strong predictors of these same indicators one year later (at Time 2). In addition however, the inclusion of individual's facilitation experiences did enhance the prediction of these outcomes over time. Employees who experienced higher levels of energy-based WF facilitation at the time of the survey had decreased cholesterol levels one year later at Time 2. Furthermore, experiencing higher levels of time-based WF facilitation at Time 1 predicted a lower BMI at Time 2. These findings support Hypothesis 2.

We furthermore hypothesized that higher levels of facilitation at Time 1 would predict a lower level of *absenteeism* at Time 2 (Hypothesis 3). All facilitation measures were significantly (and negatively) correlated with absenteeism at Time 2. Since we were restricted to the use of three predictors because of the small sample size (Stevens, 1992), we selected the facilitation measures that showed the strongest correlations with Time 2 absenteeism. As can be seen in Table 4.9, the inclusion of facilitation in the analysis added a considerable amount of variance that was explained in absenteeism over the year after the survey, namely 19%. Specifically, employees who reported higher levels of energy-based FW facilitation and behavioral WF facilitation experiences at Time 1 were less absent during the year thereafter (as assessed at Time 2).

Table 4.7. Regression Results on Cholesterol (continuous variable) in Study 2.

Variables	Cholesterol Time 2	
	step 1	step 2
	Beta	Beta
<i>Indicator Time 1</i>		
Cholesterol Time 1	.59***	.54***
Facilitation		
Energy WF facilitation		-.19†
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
$R^2$	.35	.38
$R^2$ change	.35	.03
$F$ change	30.27***	3.05†

Note. †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 4.8. Regression Results on BMI (continuous variable) in Study 2.

Variables	Body Mass Index Time 2	
	step 1	step 2
	Beta	Beta
<i>Indicator Time 1</i>		
BMI Time 1	.94***	.92***
Facilitation		
Time WF facilitation		-.11*
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
$R^2$	.89	.90
$R^2$ change	.89	.01
$F$ change	438.62***	6.82*

Note. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 4.9. Regression Results for Absenteeism in Study 2.

Variables	Absenteeism Time 2	
	step 1	step 2
	Beta	Beta
<i>Previous indicator</i>		
Previous absenteeism	.57***	.46***
<i>Facilitation</i>		
Energy FW facilitation		-.25*
Behavioral WF facilitation		-.26*
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
$R^2$	.33	.52
$R^2$ change	.33	.19
$F$ change	26.55***	10.34***

Note. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

#### *Predicting Employee's Job performance*

We predicted that higher levels of facilitation at Time 1 would predict enhanced job performance in the following year (Hypothesis 4). As described earlier, we preserved statistical power by only including the background variables and facilitation measures that were significantly correlated to the dependent variable we wanted to predict (see correlations in Table 4.6). Again, none of the background variables were significantly related to any of the performance indicators, so that the hierarchical regression models consisted of two steps (Step 1: previous job performance, and Step 2: relevant facilitation measures). Tables 4.10 and 4.11 present the regression results for the two objective indicators of employee's job performance: Success Ratio's (SR, positive performance indicator) and Return On No Answers (RONA, negative performance indicator). As anticipated, the strongest predictors of these job performance indicators were previous job performance scores on these indicators. However, our facilitation measures still added a significant amount of variance in these job performance indicators (6% and 9% respectively). Employees who experienced higher levels of time-based WF facilitation performed better during the year following the survey, in terms of their Success Ratio (SR). Likewise, employees who experienced higher levels of psychological FW facilitation also performed better in terms of RONA in that on average they left a lower number of telephone calls unanswered. These results support Hypothesis 4.

Table 4.10 Regression Results for Success Ratio (positive performance indicator) in Study 2

Variables	Success Ratio Time 2	
	step 1	step 2
	Beta	Beta
<i>Previous indicator</i>		
Previous success ratio	.47***	.40**
<i>Facilitation</i>		
Time WF facilitation <sup>a</sup>		.25*
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
$R^2$	.21	.27
$R^2$ change	.21	.06
$F$ change	14.17***	3.91*

Note. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . <sup>a</sup> When we included both facilitation measures that significantly correlated with this dependent measure (time WF facilitation and psychological WF facilitation, see Table 5.6), the  $R^2$  change at step 2 was 7%. However, because of co-variation between these predictors, none of these individual predictors reached conventional significance levels. Therefore, we decided to present the regression results in which we only included the facilitation measure that was most strongly correlated with the dependent variable.

Table 4.11 Regression Results for RONA (negative performance indicator) in Study 2

Variables	Rona Time 2	
	step 1	step 2
	Beta	Beta
<i>Previous indicator</i>		
Previous rona	.65***	.61***
<i>Facilitation</i>		
Psych. FW facilitation		-.30**
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
$R^2$	.42	.51
$R^2$ change	.42	.09
$F$ change	37.56***	8.64**

Note. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

#### 4.9 Discussion Study 2

The purpose of this study was to examine whether employees' facilitation experiences indeed *predicted* objective indicators of better physical health, lower absenteeism, and higher job performance *over time*. In accordance with the cross-sectional findings of Study 1, and in support of Hypothesis 2, we found that employees who experienced more facilitation at the time of the survey indeed had significantly lower *cholesterol levels* and a lower *BMI* one year later (after correction for the initial value of these indicators at Time 1). More specifically, employees who experienced that their work provided them with extra energy at home (energy-based WF facilitation) had a lower cholesterol level one year later. In addition, employees who experienced that their work-role made them use their time at home more efficiently (time-based WF facilitation) had a lower BMI one year later.

Employees' facilitation experiences also significantly predicted *absenteeism*. Whereas Goff's et al. (1990) study showed that *conflict* related to increased absenteeism rates, the present findings revealed that experiences of *facilitation* between work and family resulted in lower absenteeism rates, which supported our third hypothesis. Employees who, at the time of the survey, reported that their home lives helped them to relax and regain their energy (energy-based FW facilitation) and felt that they had learned new skills and behaviors at work which they could also use at home (behavioral WF facilitation) had been less absent during the year thereafter.

Finally, we examined whether experiencing facilitation between one's work and family life makes one a better performing employee. A study conducted by Neytemeyer et al. (2005) among customer service employees had already shown that *conflict experiences* related negatively to job performance as measured with an objective indicator. In this sample of call center employees, we demonstrated that *facilitation experiences* (time-based facilitation) positively predicted job performance in terms of sales volume (success ratio's) *over time*, which corroborates Hypothesis 4. Also in support of this hypothesis, we found that employees who experienced higher levels of facilitation (specifically that their family lives elicited psychological benefits for their work, psychological FW facilitation) performed better in terms of answering the phone in time. These findings contribute to the work-family literature in showing that experiencing facilitation between work and family results in enhanced objective job performance.

All four types of facilitation (energy-based, time-based, behavioral,

psychological facilitation) emerged as relevant predictors of the outcomes we measured. Moreover, the work-to-family (WF) direction as well as the family-to-work (FW) direction of facilitation significantly predicted the outcome variables. Employees' feeling that their work role benefited their roles at home in the sense that work a) provided them with extra energy at home, b) made them use their time at home more efficiently, and c) gave them the opportunity to acquire new skills and behaviors that are useful at home, had a better physical health (in terms of cholesterol and BMI), had lower absenteeism, and actually performed better at work. Additionally, their feeling that their family roles were of benefit to their work role, in that these family roles a) provided them with extra energy at work and b) helped them to put work matters into perspective, was also related to lower absenteeism and better performance at work. These results clearly indicate that the feeling of a positive exchange between work and family roles does not only represent a pleasant subjective experience for employees, but also results in concrete gains for these employees (e.g., better health), and through their enhanced performance and lower absenteeism, this directly benefits the organizations they work in.

#### **4.10 General Discussion**

Whereas there is quite substantial evidence in the work-family literature showing that employees who experience the combination of work and family roles subjectively as successful feel happier, healthier, and self report lower absenteeism and higher performance at work, (e.g., Allen et al., 2000, Allen & Armstrong, 2006), the purpose of the present research was to examine whether employees who experience successful role combination actually *are* healthier and better performing employees as indicated on objective measures. By examining how experiences in role combination related to objective indicators of physical health, actual absenteeism, and objective indicators of performance at work, we have aimed to address an important shortcoming in the work-family literature (Casper et al., 2007). Moreover, we contribute to the literature by also examining the *positive side* of the work-family interface (facilitation), rather than focusing exclusively on employees' experiences of conflict between work and family roles (Casper et al., 2007). Although scholars start to acknowledge the value of addressing facilitation as well as conflict experiences to understand the work-family interface (e.g., Voydanoff, 2004; Frone, 2003), to our knowledge, there is no previous study in the published literature that examined the causal link between facilitation experiences and objective indicators of health and

performance. In Study 1, we related employees' conflict as well as facilitation experiences to objective indicators of their physical health (cholesterol, BMI, and physical stamina). In this way, we were able to show that the experience of conflict related to poorer scores on these health outcomes, whereas facilitation experiences were related to better scores on these health indicators. In Study 2, we focused on employees' facilitation experiences and used a longitudinal research design. This enabled us to demonstrate that the extent to which employees experience facilitation between their work and family lives indeed predicts their physical health, absenteeism, job performance over time.

At first glance, some of the relationships we report between experiences in role combination and objective outcome measures may seem small and inconsequential even though they are statistically significant. For instance, in Study 2 employees' facilitation experiences explained only 3% of the variance in cholesterol levels and only 1% of the variance in BMI. However, small effects can be important when examining such "difficult-to-influence" dependent variables (Prentice & Miller, 1992). Objective physical health indicators depend for a large part on variables such as genetic predispositions, acquired food preferences, and living circumstances, leaving limited space for the effects of psychological factors - such as experiences in role combination - to explain the variance in such indicators. Therefore, it is all the more striking that the extent to which employees experienced facilitation between their work and family lives reliably predicted their cholesterol level and body mass index over time. In fact, using the current regression results, it can be calculated that experiencing more facilitation at Time 1 (for instance a score of 4 compared to a score of 3 on the 5-point scale) translates into a decrease in body weight of 1,82 kilogram one year later at Time 2<sup>1</sup>. The importance of these effects becomes even more pronounced when we keep in mind that these effects could, at least to a certain degree, accumulate over time (Abelson, 1985; Prentice & Miller, 1992).

#### *Practical Implications*

We think the most important practical implication of these research findings is that they can serve as input for building a "business case" for organizations to support employees in combining work and family responsibilities. Several

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<sup>1</sup> For body mass index the regression formula is as follows:  $BMI_2 = 2.98 + .94[BMI_1] - .63 [\text{time-based WF facilitation}]$  ( $Y = a + bx_1 + cx_2$ ). Thus, a one-point difference on time-based WF facilitation (e.g., a score of 4 compared to a score of 3 on the 5-point scale) means a decrease in BMI with .63 at Time 2. When using participant's mean BMI1 (i.e. 25.89) and length (i.e. 1.72) this equals to a decrease in body weight of 1.82 kilo's at Time 2.

researchers have pointed out that employees' conflict and facilitation experiences in relation to their work and family roles should be related to the economic bottom-line indicators in the organization (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Casper et al., 2007; Frone et al., 1997). Whereas many previous studies have shown that successful role-combiners *feel* healthier and *report* less absenteeism and better job performance, the present research provides further support for the claim that successful role-combiners in fact *are* healthier, less absent, and better performing employees. This makes a stronger case for organizations to implement work-family support programs. If such support programs could realize a reduction of employees' work-family conflict experiences, as well as induce an enhancement of their work-family facilitation experiences (see van Steenbergen, Ellemers, and Mooijaart, in press), they would optimally serve the interests of individual employees as well as the organizations they work in.

#### *Limitations and Future Research Directions*

Despite several strengths, this research also has its limitations. First, because of restrictions to survey length, we focused on measuring the different types of facilitation that have been identified in previous research, but as a consequence, we could not include an equally detailed measure of conflict as well (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). To be able to more closely examine the combined effects of facilitation and conflict, in future research it would be valuable to relate energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation, as well as these specific conflict experiences longitudinally to the objective outcome variables such as the ones we have measured. Second, on the one hand, the opportunity we had to conduct Study 2 among call center employees implied a great advantage because the job performance of these employees was quantifiable and is recorded by the organization as a matter of routine. At the same time, however, this could be regarded as a limitation of the study because one might argue that our sample represents a rather specific group of (relatively lower educated) employees. Nevertheless, the two studies reported here yielded similar results for the outcomes we assessed across both samples (cholesterol level and BMI). That is, the study among call center employees, as well as our large scale study among a broad sample of employees (Study 1) showed that experiencing higher levels of facilitation related to lower cholesterol levels and a lower BMI. This suggests that the results regarding absenteeism and performance might also hold for a broader group of employees. An additional limitation of Study 2 was that the two sub



samples of employees for whom we had health and performance data were, although representative for the population they were drawn from, relatively small. Thus, clearly, future larger-scale longitudinal research in other organizational contexts is needed to further establish the robustness of the present findings. Another important avenue for future research is to address potential *mediators* of the relationships between conflict and facilitation experiences and outcomes in terms of health and performance. The purpose of the present research was to examine whether there was evidence for the link between employees' subjective experiences of conflict and facilitation between work and family and objective indicators of their physical health and performance at work. Now that the results of this research support the existence of such a link, it is important to gain further insight in the psychological mechanisms that explain these relationships. Recently, for instance, based on cross-sectional self-reported data, Allen and Armstrong (2006) have found that the relationship between conflict and physical health was mediated by type of food consumption and frequency of exercise. This suggests that conflict experiences between work and family result in a less healthy lifestyle, which in turn negatively affects one's health. Future longitudinal research is needed to further uncover such processes linking experiences in the work-family interface to health and performance outcomes.

#### *Conclusions*

With the present research, we aimed to advance the work-family literature by examining whether there is empirical evidence for a link between employees' subjective work-family conflict and facilitation experiences and hard organizational outcomes (Casper et al., 2007). In Study 1, we have shown that employees' experiences of conflict between the work and family domains relate adversely to objective indicators of their physical health whereas experiences of facilitation relate to better scores on these health indicators. In Study 2, we have demonstrated that employees' facilitation experiences between work and family actually resulted in better physical health, less absenteeism as recorded by the organization, and enhanced objective job performance over time. Thus, we found support for the claim that successful role-combiners are indeed healthier and better performing employees. We hope these findings inspire scholars as well as organizational practitioners to create innovative work-family intervention programs that aim to relieve work-family conflict and enhance experiences of facilitation to the benefit to individual employees, their families, and their employers as well.

**There is Nothing Either Good or Bad but Thinking Makes it so:  
Social Influence and Cognitive Appraisal  
of the Work–Family Interface<sup>m</sup>**

It is typically assumed that juggling work and family responsibilities is difficult and stressful. However, according to the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), no situation or event is stressful in and of itself — it is how we *cognitively construe* a particular situation that matters. In the words of Epictetus (50 A.D. – 135 A. D.): “Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them” (Ellis, 1962 p.54); or as Shakespeare put it “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” (Hamlet, 2,ii). Consistent with this idea, studies into the formation of cognitive appraisals reveal that the appraisals individuals make - and thus the levels of stress they experience - can be influenced by information they receive from others (Haslam, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Tomaka, Blascovitch, Kibler, & Ernst, 1997).

In the present research, we apply these insights to study the way in which individuals appraise and experience the task of *combining their work and family lives*. We present a field experiment in which we examined whether employees’ cognitive appraisals regarding their situation of work–family role combination are fixed, or in fact can be changed by information provided by others. Below, we first discuss two different theoretical views on role combination that have been central in the work-family literature. We then draw upon the transactional model of stress to study cognitive appraisals in regard to the work-family interface and present the prediction that information provided by others can affect the way people appraise and experience role-combing.

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<sup>m</sup> This chapter is based on: Van Steenbergen, E. F., Ellemers, N., Haslam, S. A., & Urlings, F. There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so: Social influence and cognitive appraisal of the work-family interface. We want to express our gratitude to Marianne Dijkstra and Huiberdine Nuijt for coding the qualitative data of this research (manuscript under review).

### 5.1 Scarcity Theory and Work-Family Conflict

Research on the work-family interface has predominantly focused on the negative aspects of participating in both work and family roles. The scarcity theory on human energy has been central to this work, which assumes that personal resources of time, energy, and attention are *finite*. As a result, devoting attention to one role necessarily implies that fewer resources can be invested in another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Marks, 1977). Accordingly, the fundamental assumption in this theory is that participation in one role tends to have a *negative effect* on other roles. Guided by this perspective, researchers have focused on experiences of *work-family conflict*, defined as: “A type of role conflict that arises when joint role pressures from work and family domains are experienced as incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). As such, the work role can make it more difficult to fulfill family roles and vice versa (WF and FW conflict, Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992).

### 5.2 Role Expansion Theory and Work-Family Facilitation.

As opposed to the scarcity theory, Marks (1977) argued that role combination should be viewed from a different perspective. In his *role expansion theory* he considers human energy to be abundant and expandable and posits that participation in one role can also have *positive* effects on other role performances. This positive perspective has recently begun to receive substantial attention in the empirical literature. Within this perspective, scholars have examined the construct of *work-family facilitation*, capturing the individual’s experience that participation in one role makes it easier to fulfill the requirements of another role (van Steenbergen et al., 2007; Wayne et al., 2004). Facilitation is also bi-directional in nature in that work can facilitate the fulfillment of family roles and vice-versa (van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

In this way, scarcity and expansion theories represent two different ways of viewing the work-family interface: Either as a “fixed pie” where involvement in one role can only negatively affect another role, or as an “expanding pie” which implies that the fulfillment of one role can positively affect other role performances. Yet, counter to the idea that the theoretical choice here is of an ‘either/or’ nature, empirical studies show that individuals who combine work

and family can experience *both* conflict and facilitation, since conflict and facilitation represent separate constructs rather than being opposite ends of a single continuum (e.g., Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

### 5.3 The Transactional Model of Stress and Cognitive Appraisals of the Work-Family Interface

The experience of stress is the response of an individual to demands in the environment. However, the nature of these environmental demands in itself is not decisive for the experience of stress. Instead, the same stressor can elicit different stress reactions in two different people. The transactional model of stress explains individual differences in the perceived stressfulness of encounters by conceptualizing the occurrence of stress as something that is *psychologically mediated*. According to this model, stress is then conceptualized as the strain imposed on a person by stressors in the environment which are appraised by that person to be in some way threatening to his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; see also Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001; Haslam, 2004).

The transactional model of stress focuses on the role that *cognitive appraisal* plays in the experience of stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) cognitive appraisal is the process of classifying an event or situation, and its various facets, in terms of its significance for well-being. These researchers differentiate between two components of appraisal. In *primary appraisal* the individual assesses the degree to which a particular event or situation poses a threat to the self. Basically, this concerns the question: "Is this stressful?" If something is categorized as stressful these appraisals can be characterized as "harm-loss", "threat" or "challenge". Whereas harm-loss appraisals refer the assessment that injury has already taken place in the past (e.g., harm to a friendship, health), threat and challenge appraisals refer to ongoing or upcoming situations. A threat appraisal refers to the potential for harm or loss, whereas a challenge appraisal refers to the potential for growth, mastery or gain. When comparing threat and challenge appraisals, a threat appraisal relates to increased levels of negative affect whereas a challenge appraisal is associated with low levels of negative affect or higher levels of positive affect (Tomaka et al., 1997; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). In *secondary appraisal* the individual evaluates the available resources through which he or she can deal with the situation. The basic question here is: "Can I cope?" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). As such, the impact of a certain stressor in the environment on the individual

depends on the way that it is *construed* by the individual who is exposed to it (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal & Penna, 2005).

Importantly, primary and secondary appraisal are dynamic processes in that over time an individual can come to redefine a particular situation through re-evaluation of situational demands or coping resources in the light of new information or new experiences in the situation. Moreover, the two components of appraisal are interdependent in that a negative secondary appraisal ("I cannot cope") negatively affects one's primary appraisal ("This is stressful"; Haslam, 2004; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985, Tomaka et al., 1993). The two components of primary and secondary appraisal thus combine to determine whether an event or situation is regarded as significant for well-being, as if so, whether it is primarily seen as *threatening* (involving possibility for harm or loss) or as *challenging* (involving possibility of mastery or benefit; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986). This difference between cognitively appraising a situation as *threatening* or *challenging* is also important in terms of behavioral consequences. That is, when facing an upcoming performance situation (e.g., a mental arithmetic task, Tomaka et al., 1993; athletic performance, Blascovich, Seery, Mugridge, Norris, & Weisbuch, 2004), individuals who appraise the situation as challenging have been found to put greater effort in the task at hand and actually to outperform those who appraise the situation as threatening.

In the case of fulfilling work and family roles, too, two individuals in similar work and family roles can fundamentally differ in how they experience combining these roles. As noted by Voydanoff (2004), the concept of cognitive appraisal is also relevant for work-family research that examines people's experiences of conflict and facilitation. Here the experience of conflict derives from the individual's appraisal that demands of the environment are taxing or exceeding one's coping resources, whereas the experience of facilitation derives from appraising one's resources as exceeding the demands of the environment (Voydanoff, 2004).

When individuals appraise their own situation of juggling work and family demands, we posit that the two components of primary and secondary appraisal come into play, such that the individual attempts to answer the questions of the form: "Is this combination of roles stressful?" and "Can I cope with this combination of roles?" Again, primary and secondary appraisal together determine whether the situation of role-combining is primarily seen as *threatening* (containing the possibility for harm or loss) or primarily perceived as *challenging* (holding the possibility of mastery or benefit; Folkman et al., 1986). When appraising the situation primarily as a threat, the individual is likely to

experience conflict. However, when the individual appraises role-combination primarily as a *challenge*, (anticipated) mastery of role-combination is more likely to occur and he or she is more likely to experience the beneficial effects that work and family roles can have for each other as evidenced by the experience of facilitation.

Although previous research has traditionally assessed conflict and facilitation as aspects of the individual's *subjective experience* (i.e. via self-reports<sup>n</sup>), we are unaware of research that applies current insights from the transactional model of stress to the formation of cognitive appraisals in work-family research. In the present study, our main purpose is to examine whether it is possible to influence the way that individuals appraise and experience combining their work and family roles. To the extent that such influence is possible, this would provide important new insights for designing intervention programs that aim to reduce employees' experiences of conflict and enhance the experience of facilitation. This in turn would be expected to have positive consequences for employee's health, together with their well-being and performance at work and at home (van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

#### 5.4 Can Cognitive Appraisals be Influenced?

In the stress literature, several studies have shown that it is possible to exert *influence* on the formation of cognitive appraisals. In these studies, individuals have been provided with credible *information* by others that have subsequently influenced their own appraisal of a situation. Indeed, along these lines, informational support (also called *appraisal support*) is thought to provide individuals with the opportunity to increase their understanding of the situation, compare their appraisals with others, and assess the appropriateness of their emotional reactions (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Haslam et al., 2005).

A classic demonstration of the effects of appraisal support was provided by Lazarus in a study that involved participants watching a film about accidents in a wood-working shop (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Before seeing the film, those in the experimental conditions received information about the material they were about to watch — namely that people in the film were actors and that the accidents were simulated (e.g., because the video was for training

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<sup>n</sup> One exception in the literature is the study by Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) where *time-balance* is assessed by comparing the objective amount of hours one spends per week on work versus family roles.

purposes). These conditions were designed to encourage participants to develop appraisals that prevented them from experiencing stress. Participants in the control condition received no such information. Consistent with the study's hypothesis, participants in the experimental conditions reported and showed fewer physiological signs of stress than those in the control condition. Additionally, Holmes and Houston (1974) demonstrated that appraisal manipulations that were provided *during* the experience of electric shocks reduced participant's stress reactions. More specifically, participants who were encouraged to appraise shocks as an interesting new physiological experience, or who were encouraged to remain uninvolved and detached, reported less anxiety and showed less physiological stress reactions during shock sequences than did participants who were not encouraged in this way. Further empirical evidence of such effects was provided by a study in which participants performed a mental arithmetic task after receiving one of two instructional sets. The "threat set" emphasized accuracy of task performance and potential evaluation whereas the "challenge set" emphasized effort and doing one's best (Tomaka et al., 1997). As predicted, participants' threat and challenge appraisals as well as their physiological responses differed depending on the instructional set. This indicates that the way one is encouraged to cognitively appraise a situation can determine situational meaning (Tomaka et al., 1997). In this way, these studies demonstrated not only the importance of cognitive appraisal processes to the experience of stress but also that these can be manipulated by providing information that bears upon people's interpretation of the situation (Haslam, 2004).

To our knowledge, no previous study within the work-family literature has examined the possibility that cognitive appraisals regarding role-combining can be changed. However, Grzywacz and Bass (2003) do identify this possibility when recommending that work-family intervention programs should help employees better understand the personal benefits they and their families might receive from combining work and family. In their view, awareness of these benefits and gains might become a cognitive resource that can be drawn upon during difficult episodes.

Grzywacz and Bass (2003) thus alert practitioners to the interesting possibility that individuals can be helped to view role combination in a different, more positive light. The main purpose of the present field experiment is to see how realistic this possibility is by examining whether it is indeed possible to exert influence on the cognitive appraisals that employees make regarding the combination of work and family roles. To do this, the study involved providing

participants with credible information that made salient either a *scarcity perspective* or an *expansion perspective* on role combination. In line with the above theorizing, it was expected that that this would influence the way in which employees cognitively appraised and experienced the process of combining their work and family roles and the degree to which they experienced positive or negative emotions when thinking about role combination. In addition, the study invited participants to report their thoughts about combining work and family roles (free thought listing), as we expected that, compared to reading the scarcity message, the expansion message would initiate a more positive train of thought regarding role combination.

Accordingly, it was predicted that, compared to participants who receive a *scarcity message*, those who receive an *expansion message* would (a) appraise role combination as less stressful, less threatening and more challenging, (b) report less conflict and more facilitation, (c) report less negative emotions and more positive emotions associated with role combination, and (d) spontaneously report more positive thoughts about role combination (Hypothesis 1).

### 5.5 The Role of Group Membership in Cognitive Appraisals

In addition to an examination of the effects of manipulating information *content*, the study also explored the role that the *source* of the appraisal information plays in the appraisal process. In this regard, previous work informed by social identity and self-categorization theory suggests that appraisal processes are structured by people's internalized group memberships (Haslam et al., 2005; Levine & Reicher, 1996; see also McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson & Turner, 1994). Specifically, following Turner (1991), because members of an ingroup are categorized as part of the (collective) self, they are predicted to be seen as a more valid source of normative information than members of an outgroup (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Applied to the analysis of stress, this implies that a person's appraisal of stressors should be affected most by those who are seen as members of one's own group (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). For example, norms that develop within one's working group concerning the interpretation of particular events and situations as stressful can have an important influence on the stress that is experienced by the individual employee, whereas the views of other work teams may have less of an impact because these are seen as less self-relevant (Haslam, 2004).

In an experimental study on the role of source identity in the appraisal process, students were given informational support that encouraged them to



construe a mathematical task as either *challenging* or *threatening and stressful* (Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien & Jacobs, 2004). The experiment was designed in such a way that participants thought the information was provided by someone they were likely to identify with (i.e., another University student) or not (a stress disorder sufferer). Consistent with predictions, when participants performed the mathematical task the informational support they received only impacted on experienced stress levels when the information came from another University student.

Along similar lines, the present research aims to also explore the role of source identity in cognitive appraisals of role combination. To do this, the study systematically varies the source of information about role combination. In one set of conditions, this information was said to originate from a self-relevant source — employees within the participants' own organization. In a second set, it was said to originate from a less self-relevant source — employees within a healthcare organization. The study as a whole then examines whether the impact of message content (i.e., expansion vs. scarcity) is moderated by the source from which it emerges.

## 5.6 Method

### *Design and Procedure*

A world-wide operating financial service organization in the Netherlands gave us permission to conduct a field experiment among their employees. We conducted our research among female employees with a youngest child younger than six years of age. We decided to select this relatively homogenous group of employees for our field experiment to keep constant as many factors as possible. The organization provided the e-mail addresses of a sample of 428 female employees with a youngest child aged younger than six, which was randomly drawn from the total sample of female employees in the organization with a youngest child in this age category. We invited these women to take part in our *online survey* via e-mail. Participants could win one of three coupons worth 50 Euros (US \$ 62.7) when returning the completed survey.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions arranged in a 2 (*message*: scarcity/expansion) X 2 (*source*: own organization/other organization) between-subjects design. Prior to completing the survey, participants were instructed to read one of two articles about combining work and family life. These articles supposedly described *scientific research findings* concerning people's experiences of combining work and family roles. The *scarcity*

*message* explained that people possess only a limited amount of energy and that, as a result, devoting energy to work implies that less energy can be invested at home and vice versa. Moreover, this article indicated that negative aspects and experiences appear to predominate when people combine work and family roles and it outlined some of these negative aspects. In contrast, the *expansion message* explained that people possess an abundance of energy and that participation in one role, such as the work role, can provide a person with energy for the use in home-life roles and vice versa. It indicated that positive aspects and experiences appear to dominate when people combine work and family roles and provided examples of some of these. Different versions of these articles also informed participants that the scientific research findings either originated from colleagues within their *own organization*, or from healthcare employees (i.e., *other organization*).

After completing the survey, the participants were fully debriefed. They were informed about the true nature of the study and were told that the views about role combination were one-sided, as people's actual experiences of combining work and family can be both positive (facilitating) and negative (conflicting) in content. Participants were also informed that the alleged research findings they had read were not based on any real or existing situation within their organization or elsewhere. Participants were requested not to discuss the study's procedure with colleagues until the closing date for participation.

#### *Measures*

First, a *manipulation check for message content* asked the participants: "The research findings I just read showed that combining of work and home life roles is generally experienced to be....."; Responses were made on a seven-point scale (1 = mainly negative, 7 = mainly positive). The *manipulation check for source* read: "The described research was conducted within..." (1 = my organization, 2 = another organization).

*Cognitive appraisals* were measured with two items developed by Tomaka et al. (1997) which were adapted to specifically refer to role combination: "How stressful do you find combining your work and home life" (*primary appraisal*; 1 = not stressful at all, 7 = very stressful) and "How able are you to cope with combining your work and home life?" (*secondary appraisal*; 1 = not at all, 7 = very well). Following Tomaka et al. (1997), we calculated the *ratio* of primary to secondary appraisal, which reflects the extent to which demands are appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources or ability to cope. A ratio greater than 1.00 indicates that demands exceed coping resources, whereas a ratio smaller than

1.00 indicates that resources exceed demands. Because the Tomaka et al. (1997) measure only comprises two items, we also added the measures developed by Kessler (1998). To tap *primary appraisal* five items assessed the degree to which participants appraised role-combining as a *threat* (e.g., "The combining of my work and home life is frightening to me",  $\alpha = .87$ ) and six items assessed the degree to which participants appraised role-combining as a *challenge* (e.g., "The combining of work and home life enables me to learn more about myself",  $\alpha = .84$ ). Following Kessler (1998), secondary appraisal was assessed with five items, e.g., "I can make changes in the way that I combine my work and home life" ( $\alpha = .75$ ). Participants answered on seven-point scales (1= fully disagree, 7= fully agree).

*Work-family conflict and facilitation.* Following Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) and Carlson and Frone (2003), we examined different types of conflict that people can experience: Strain-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW conflict. Sample items are as follows: "Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I get home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy (*strain-based WF conflict*,  $\alpha = .86$ )"; "Tension and anxiety from my home life often weakens my ability to do my job" (*strain-based FW conflict*,  $\alpha = .91$ ); "I have to miss activities at home due to the amount of time I must spend on work" (*time-based WF conflict*,  $\alpha = .71$ ); "The time I spend on responsibilities at home often interferes with my work responsibilities" (*time-based FW conflict*,  $\alpha = .71$ ); "The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home" (*behavioral WF conflict*,  $\alpha = .85$ ); "Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work" (*behavioral FW conflict*,  $\alpha = .87$ ); "When I am at home, I often think about work-related problems" (*psychological WF conflict*,  $\alpha = .86$ ); "When I am at work, I often think about things I need to accomplish at home" (*psychological FW conflict*,  $\alpha = .90$ ; Carlson & Frone, 2003).

We used the three-item scales developed by van Steenbergen and co-authors (2007) to measure *energy-based*, *time-based*, *behavioral*, and *psychological WF and FW facilitation*. Sample items are: "When I get home from work I often feel emotionally recharged, enabling me to make a better contribution at home" (*energy-based WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .86$ ); "Because I relax and regain my energy at home, I can better focus on performing my work" (*energy-based FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .87$ ); "The amount of time I spend on my work stimulates me to undertake enjoyable activities in the time I spend on my home life" (*time-based WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .79$ ); "The amount of time I spend on my home life stimulates me to use my time at work effectively" (*time-based FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .74$ ); "The skills

I use at work help me to better handle matters at home" (*behavioral WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .83$ ); "Because of the things I learn at home I also function better in social contacts at work" (*behavioral FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .85$ ); "Because of my work, I am better able to put home-related matters into perspective" (*psychological WF facilitation*,  $\alpha = .86$ ); "Because of my home life, I am more able to put work-related matters into perspective" (*psychological FW facilitation*,  $\alpha = .83$ ). Participants answered on 7-point scales (1= fully disagree, 7= fully agree).

*Emotions.* We asked participants to indicate their emotional state when thinking about combining their work and home life with six emotions. We examined three *negative emotions* ("desperate", "angry", and "depressed";  $\alpha = .83$ ) and three *positive emotions* ("motivated", "calm", and "satisfied";  $\alpha = .72$ ). For each emotion we used the following question format: "When I think about combining my work and home life, I feel ....." (1= not at all [emotion], 7= very [emotion]).

*Spontaneous thoughts about combining work and family.* We asked participants to report their thoughts about combining their work and home life using the following open-ended question (free listing): "We would now like to ask you to write down your own thoughts about combining your work and home life. These can be anything. There are no right or wrong answers".

*Demographic variables.* The following background variables were also assessed: *Working hours* (contractual hours per week), *age* (1 = "29 years or less"; 2 = "between 30 and 39"; 3 = "between 40 and 49"; and 4 = "50 years or older"), *education* (1 = lower vocational education or high school; 2 = university or higher vocational education), *organizational tenure* (in years), *salary category* (1 = lowest; 15 = highest), *marital status* (1 = single; 2 = married / cohabiting), *number of children*, and *age of youngest child* (in years).

#### *Participants*

The response rate was 35.1% ( $N = 150$ ). We excluded six participants who incorrectly answered the manipulation check for source<sup>o</sup>. We also had to leave out one participant because she did not meet the criteria for inclusion because she indicated having no children, leaving 143 participants in the final sample. These were distributed equally across the experimental conditions ( $Ns = 37, 33, 37, 36$ ).

Participants in this sample (all females) were contracted to work for an average of 31.1 hours per week (range 18-40,  $SD = 5.30$ ) and had an average

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<sup>o</sup> Inclusion of these participants did not affect the pattern of results reported here.

organizational tenure of 7.9 years (range 1-27,  $SD = 4.18$ ). The organization's salary system consists of 14 ascending salary categories, ranging from 2 = €1,200 per month to 15 = €9,900 per month (US \$1,504 - 12,415). The average salary category for participants was in the middle of this range: 8.7 (approximately €3,050, US \$3,825). Of the participants, 14% indicated being in the age category "29 years or less", 79.7% were "between 30 and 39", and 6.3% were "between 40 and 49". About two-thirds of the participants (62.9%) had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 37.1% had received lower education (lower vocational education or high school). Most of the women (96.5%) were married or cohabiting, the rest were single. In line with our sampling procedure, all participants had a child aged less than six years old. On average, these women had 1.5 children (range 1-3,  $SD = 0.60$ ).

We compared our sample with statistics from the employee database on these control variables for all female employees with a youngest child 6 years of age or younger. This analysis revealed no significant differences (all  $\chi^2$  tests and  $t$  tests,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that our sample was representative of this group of female employees within the organization as a whole. We also checked whether there were differences between the four conditions prior to our study, by conducting ANOVAs and  $\chi^2$  tests for the control variables. No significant differences were found. This indicates that random sampling was successful and that any differences between participants in the experimental conditions cannot be explained by differences in background characteristics.

## 5.7 Results

### *Manipulation checks*

As mentioned earlier, we excluded six participants who incorrectly answered the manipulation check for source. The manipulation for message content was successful. Participants who received the expansion message indicated that the article had shown that combining work and home life roles is experienced more positively ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) than did participants who received the scarcity message ( $M = 2.26$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ),  $t(141) = 23.26$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Our main predictions were that, compared to participants who received the scarcity message, participants who received the expansion message would (a) appraise their own situation of role combination as less stressful, less threatening and more challenging, (b) would report less conflict and more facilitation, (c) would report less negative emotions and more positive emotions associated with role-combining, and (d) would spontaneously report more positive thoughts

about role-combining. We also examined whether the impact of the information differed depending on the source that provided the information (employees from own organization vs. other organization). To test these predictions, 2 (message content) X 2 (message source) analyses of variance were conducted for all dependent variables. None of the analyses revealed significant source or interaction effects. However, consistent with the main predictions, there were consistently reliable main effects for message content.

#### *Cognitive appraisals*

Consistent with predictions, participants in the expansion condition made a more positive *primary appraisal* than participants in the scarcity condition. That is, they appraised the combination of work and home life roles as *less stressful* ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) than those in the scarcity condition ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $F(1,139) = 12.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$  (primary appraisal; Tomaka). Participants in the expansion condition also appraised role combination more as a *challenge* ( $M = 5.69$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) than participants in the scarcity condition ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ),  $F(1,139) = 13.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$  and *less of a threat* ( $F(1,139) = 14.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ ,  $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.26$  vs.  $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ , primary appraisal; Kessler). Furthermore, when asked about their ability to cope with combining their work and home life roles — *secondary appraisal* — participants in the expansion condition scored higher ( $M = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) than those in the scarcity condition ( $M = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ),  $F(1,139) = 12.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ , secondary appraisal; after Tomaka). The same effect was also observed on the secondary appraisal measure developed by Kessler ( $F(1,139) = 4.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ,  $M = 5.24$ ,  $SD = 1.05$  vs.  $M = 4.85$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ , secondary appraisal; after Kessler).

Finally, we examined the *ratio* measure of primary to secondary appraisal, reflecting the extent to which demands were appraised as exceeding resources or ability to cope (ratio primary/secondary appraisal; Tomaka et al., 1997; Tomaka et al., 1993). Mean scores on this ratio measure revealed smaller ratios for participants in the expansion condition ( $F(1,139) = 13.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ ). Indeed, participants' mean score in the expansion condition was below 1.00 ( $M = .67$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ), indicating that these participants appraised their coping resources as exceeding the demands of role-combining. On the other hand, participant's mean score in the scarcity condition was somewhat higher than 1.00 ( $M = 1.04$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), indicating that these participants appraised the demands of role-combining to exceed their resources to meet these demands. In summary, we found consistent support for our hypothesis that participants in the expansion

condition appraise role-combining more positively than participants who received the scarcity message.

#### *Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation*

Also consistent with the study's main hypothesis, a MANOVA on the facilitation scales showed that, overall, participants in the expansion condition reported experiencing higher levels of *facilitation* ( $F(8, 132) = 2.02, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$ ) than those in the scarcity condition. More specifically, those in the expansion condition reported more *time-based WF facilitation* ( $F(1) = 5.55, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04, M = 5.07, SD = 1.42$  vs.  $M = 4.51, SD = 1.43$ ), *energy-based WF facilitation* ( $F(1) = 9.45, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.6, M = 3.83, SD = 1.23$  vs.  $M = 3.18, SD = 1.33$ ), *energy-based FW facilitation* ( $F(1) = 4.87, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03, M = 5.21, SD = 1.12$  vs.  $M = 4.77, SD = 1.27$ ), *behavioral FW facilitation*, ( $F(1) = 6.18, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04, M = 4.99, SD = 1.21$  vs.  $M = 4.46, SD = 1.32$ ), *psychological WF facilitation*, ( $F(1) = 4.88, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03, M = 4.80, SD = 1.29$  vs.  $M = 4.32, SD = 1.45$ ), and *psychological FW facilitation* ( $F(1) = 6.77, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05, M = 5.65, SD = 1.01$  vs.  $M = 5.19, SD = 1.12$ ) than participants in the scarcity condition. However, contrary to hypothesis, results of a MANOVA on the conflict scales revealed no significant differences between participants in the expansion and scarcity conditions ( $F(8, 132) = 0.58, p = ns$ ).

#### *Emotions*

Consistent with our hypothesis, relative to participants in the scarcity condition, participants in the expansion condition reported a higher degree of *positive emotions* ( $F(1, 139) = 3.73, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03, M = 4.85, SD = 1.07$  vs.  $M = 4.65, SD = 1.23$ ) and a lower degree of *negative emotions* ( $F(1, 139) = 4.71, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03, M = 2.39, SD = 1.20$  vs.  $M = 2.76, SD = 1.33$ ) when thinking about combining work and family life.

#### *Spontaneous Thoughts about Combining Work and Family*

Of the 143 participants, 125 participants wrote down one or more remarks about combining their work and home life. On average participants provided 2.3 remarks (range 1-10,  $SD = 1.57$ ). There were no significant differences across the conditions in the number of remarks provided ( $Ns = 33, 32, 30, 30$ ). Two independent raters who were blind to our prediction coded each remark as either "positive" or "negative". They could also categorize a remark as "neutral". The inter-rater agreement was highly satisfactory (Cohen's kappa = .88).

Examples of remarks the raters coded as negative are: "Running to and fro, stressing in traffic because you have to pick up your child, and having the

feeling that you're not performing optimally at work and at home"; "Because of a busy job and making long hours I spend less time with my family than I would like to. I also have very little time for hobbies, like working out. I often have to miss department outings because I have to be home in time to fulfill my responsibilities there. I would like to have more space for quality time"; "Because of the high demands I set for myself, I run short in time. I am tired. I only get it half right. I haven't got the time to do the things. I would like to do things differently".

Examples of positive remarks are: "Because of my work, I am certainly a happier person, and as a consequence a better partner and mother at home. I would be very unhappy if I did not have a job, my world would become much too small for me"; "While at work, you're able to put aside the things you encounter in your home life (change of perspective). Moreover, sometimes the things you learn at work are also applicable at home"; "I feel that having children has a positive effect on my work: 1) I am better able to put aside my work while at home, 2) I am better able to put work matters into perspective, 3) It makes me feel cheerful, children give me a positive feeling."

To test the hypothesis that participants in the expansion condition would spontaneously report more positive thoughts compared to those in the scarcity condition, we calculated the percentage of positive remarks as a function of the total number of positive and negative remarks for each participant. Analysis of variance revealed a main effect for message ( $F(1, 121) = 7.36, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$ , see Table 5.1). As hypothesized, participants in the expansion condition reported more positive thoughts about combining their work and family roles (65.2%) than did participants in the scarcity condition (45.4%). Also, when dividing our participants in three groups, namely, (a) participants who reported a higher percentage of positive than negative thoughts, (b) participants who reported an equal percentage of positive and negative thoughts, and (c) participants who reported a higher percentage of negative than positive thoughts (Table 5.1), results revealed that a greater number of participants in the expansion condition were in a positive mindset than in the scarcity condition.



Table 5.1. Spontaneous Positive and Negative Thoughts about Role-Combining

	Message	
	Scarcity	Expansion
<i>Mean percentages of positive and negative thoughts</i>		
Positive thoughts	45.4%	65.2%
Negative thoughts	54.6%	34.8%
<i>Participants divided in three groups</i>		
Positive	26 (40.0%)	36 (60.0%)
Neutral	8 (12.3%)	7 (11.7%)
Negative	31 (47.7%)	17 (28.3%)

## 5.8 Discussion

In the present research, we used insights from the transactional model of stress concerning the role of cognitive appraisals in stress experiences (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to examine cognitive appraisals relating to the combination of work and family roles. The main purpose of our research was to examine whether cognitive appraisals and experiences regarding this combination can be influenced by informational (appraisal) support. In a field experiment, we provided participants with information that supported either a *scarcity perspective* on human energy (suggesting that work and family roles can affect one another negatively) or a *role expansion perspective* (suggesting that work and family roles can have positive effects on each other).

Based on studies in the stress literature showing that cognitive appraisals can be influenced (e.g., Haslam et al., 2004; Lazarus, 1966; Tomaka et al., 1997), we predicted and found that it was possible to change the way in which individuals appraised this combination of work and family life. Employees in the expansion condition appraised role combination as less stressful, less threatening, and more challenging (primary appraisal) than those in the scarcity condition. Moreover, employees in the expansion condition appraised their capacity to cope with role combination (secondary appraisal) as being greater

than those in the scarcity condition. Furthermore, the standard ratio measure of primary to secondary appraisal (Tomaka et al., 1997) indicated that employees in the expansion condition assessed their resources for coping with role combination as exceeding the demands of the environment, whereas, in contrast, employees in the scarcity condition appraised the environmental demands as exceeding their coping resources (see Voydanoff, 2004).

Also confirming our main hypothesis, the study showed that, compared to the scarcity condition, participants in the expansion condition reported experiencing *higher levels of facilitation, more positive emotions, and less negative emotions* when thinking about combining their work and family lives. However, we found no significant differences in *conflict experiences* between participants who read the expansion versus the scarcity message. This is an interesting finding that warrants further research. Although speculative, one possible explanation is that scarcity is the predominant social norm that people are exposed to in the workplace (Acker, 1999; Ferree, 1990; Williams, 2000). As a result, it is likely that participants have more often thought about, for example, the way in which time devoted to one role negatively interferes with the other roles they fulfill, thereby making these assessments harder to influence. It might also be the case that some of the zero-sum nature of role-combination is undeniable (or at least that there are reality constraints on this) meaning that this constitutes a source of conflict which is relatively insensitive to appraisal information. This in turn would imply that there is potentially more scope to help individuals become aware of the positive side of combining their work and family roles and recognize how these different roles can facilitate each other. This suggestion maps on to Grzywacz and Bass's (2003) reasoning that intervention programs should make people become aware of the beneficial side of combining work and family roles, which would make the total assessment of combining work and family more positive.

At the end of our survey, participants were asked to write down their thoughts about combining work and family and told that these thoughts could take any form. These qualitative data, too, revealed very vividly that, compared to the scarcity condition, participants in the expansion condition were more likely to reflect on the positive aspects of combining work and family. Again, this suggests that the expansion message about role combination set in train a more positive thought process about role combining than the scarcity message.

In the present research, we also explored whether the impact of the information depended upon the *source* providing it by varying whether the alleged scientific information (scarcity vs. expansion perspective) was based on

research findings from within participants' own organization or another organization (healthcare employees). The social identity approach suggests that appraisal processes are structured by people's group membership in such a way that people are influenced most by the views of one's own group (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; McGarty et al., 1994; Turner, 1991). In our research, though, participants were equally affected by the content of the message (expansion vs. scarcity perspective) regardless of the source of this message. Several factors may account for this lack of an effect for source. First, the messages in this study were all said to describe scientific research findings, thereby making the information highly credible and universally valid. As such, receiving "objective information" conceivably made it less relevant whom this information was coming from. Second, the healthcare sector is a sector in which a lot of females work. It is possible that our participants — all female employees — saw this group of employees as a self-relevant group. In many ways, though, the lack of an effect for source makes the present findings even more significant — for it indicates that messages from multiple different sources have the potential to affect the way people cognitively construe the experience of meeting work and life demands.

In sum, this research showed that it is possible to influence the way in which employees cognitively appraise and experience the combination of their work and family lives. Assuming a scarcity perspective on this role combination, the literature has for a long time advanced a one-sided and largely negative view of the work-family interface. Recently, however, scholars have started to pay attention to the positive aspects of role combination by adopting the role-expansion perspective (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Marks, 1977; Voydanoff, 2004). We took these different theoretical perspectives on role combination from the literature and demonstrated that exposure to either one of these perspectives will affect the individuals' views about role combination. This is important knowledge which suggests that information provided in the media, or by the people around us in our organizations and home lives, all serves to shape the way we appraise and experience the combination of our work and family roles.

From an applied perspective this implies that it is important to pay attention to the way in which these topics are discussed and framed in organizational communication. When employees are repeatedly or chronically exposed to either one of these views this could lead to internalization of that perspective. Thus, when organizations and their agents (e.g., managers) work from an assumption that commitments outside work only distract employees from their work (Acker, 1999; Ferree, 1990; Williams, 2000), the communication of this scarcity perspective will in turn make it more likely that employees also

appraise and experience combining their work and family roles more negatively, and focus on negative thoughts and negative consequences of role-combining. Moreover, although additional research is needed, this research provides a promising first step towards designing an intervention that helps employees to appraise role-combining in a different, more positive light (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003). Previous initiatives have focused on providing employees with formal work-family benefits or programs that support role combination (e.g., better work-time arrangements, day-care facilities, Thompson & Pottrass, 2005) and providing informal support (e.g., managerial support for work-family issues, Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999; van Steenbergen, Ellemers & Mooijart, in press). However, alongside these changes, we propose that it may also be beneficial to look into possibilities for intervention programs that aim to enhance positive subjective appraisals and experiences of role combination by providing informational support (appraisal support) that alludes to the positive side of combining work and family.

Strengths of the current research are that it examined employees' conflict as well as their facilitation experiences in role combination and tested hypotheses experimentally. A recent review of research methods in IO/OB work-family research showed that only a few studies examined the work-family interface through frameworks other than scarcity theory and that scholars almost exclusively relied on cross-sectional and correlational data (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). In order to advance the field, the authors recommended, amongst other things, examination of the positive as well as the negative side of role combination and the use of experimental research designs. Moreover, we used both structured closed-format response scales and free thought listing methods in order to capture spontaneous associations. Both methods supported our prediction. Finally, a strong and novel feature of the research is that it allows us to make inferences about "real employees with real family responsibilities" because we conducted our experiment among organizational employees who experience role-combining, rather than for instance among students who are unfamiliar with such a situation.

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

Since this study is the first to investigate whether cognitive appraisals regarding the work-family interface can be changed, future research on different ways of manipulating these appraisals is needed to establish the robustness of the present findings. Moreover, the present study was conducted among only a select group of employees, namely women with young children. We selected this relatively

homogenous group of employees for our field experiment to keep constant as many factors as possible and focus on a group of participants for whom concerns about role-combining would be relevant and realistic. Although we expect, on theoretical grounds, that the study's conclusions would generalize to other groups of employees in other organizational contexts, future research is needed to further confirm this.

Another important avenue for future research would be to investigate the *time-span* of these effects. It would be interesting to examine how long the effects of informational influence last, whether (and how) these effects could be prolonged (e.g., by providing several repeated messages over time), and when and how internalization of particular views occurs (cf. Turner, 1991). In order to clarify the role that social identity plays in this process (cf. Haslam, 2004), future research should also examine variations in the *source* providing the information about role combination, for instance by using strong ingroup versus outgroup source manipulations (along the lines of Haslam et al., 2005). In this regard, it would be particularly interesting to examine whether the impact of informational support provided by males or females is dependent upon the gender of the message recipient and also their gender identification in ways predicted by the social identity approach (e.g., Ellemers, Van Rijswijk, Roefs, Simons, 1997; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz & Owen, 2002). At a practical level, such research would provide valuable information about the conditions under which intervention programs which aim to influence individuals' subjective appraisals and experiences are likely to be successful.

### *Conclusions*

To our knowledge, this is the first study in the work-family literature that examines the role that cognitive appraisals play in shaping people's understanding of work-life balance. In demonstrating the sensitivity of these appraisals to message content, this research offers new insights into the psychological and practical dynamics that relate to the experience of combining work and family roles. At a theoretical level, a focus on the contribution of cognitive appraisal points to ways in which understanding of the stress of role combination can be enhanced — not least, by taking us beyond the either-or approach of role-expansion and scarcity perspectives. Moreover, at a practical level, the research points to the potential for intervention programs to provide informational support that helps alleviate or prevent stress of role combination.

In both regards, this research encourages a more nuanced perspective on the challenges of combining work and family lives than has prevailed to date.

For not only do we see that “there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so”, but so too we see that the basis of that thinking is both social and political. It is not the case, then, that stress is all ‘in the mind’. Rather, it is the society we create (and the messages this communicates) that structures the stresses we have, and it is partly through changes to that society that stress can be overcome (Haslam & Reicher, 2006).



## General Discussion

The combination of work and family roles is difficult and will unavoidably cause individuals to experience *role conflict* and *stress*. Since time, energy, and attention are fixed and scarce resources, participation in both work and family roles reflects a *zero-sum game*: The more resources one spends on one role, the less resources can be spent on another role. From this perspective, Edgell (1970) has portrayed work-family role combination as an inevitable dilemma between being “married” to your work *or* to your family life since “any degree of commitment to one role will detract from commitment, and chances of success, in the other, simply in terms of the availability of time and energy” (p. 320).

This scarcity view on role combination has been the dominant point of departure in the work-family literature over the past 40 years. As a consequence, little research attention has been devoted to the possibility of work and family roles *positively* affecting each other. The central objective of this dissertation was to increase understanding of the *positive side* of the work-family interface, by focusing on people’s experiences of *facilitation* between their work and family roles<sup>P</sup>. The research presented in this dissertation reveals a much more positive perspective on role combination than expressed by Edgell. Complementing current views on *role conflict*, the present research demonstrates that work and family roles can also *facilitate* each other, resulting in beneficial outcomes for employees as well as organizations. The message for organizations is that – in addition to reducing employees’ conflict experiences – they should try to capitalize on this positive possibility and aim to enhance employees’ experiences of facilitation. In this way, a win-win can be achieved between their own and employees’ interests.

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<sup>P</sup> As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the work-family literature is also referred to as the “work-home” or “work-nonwork” literature because scholars often examine how individuals experience the interface between their work role on the one hand and other roles in their life (e.g., parent, husband/wife, family member, friend) on the other (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Witt & Carlson, 2006; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). In this dissertation, consistent with this approach, my use of the term *family* is intended to denote individuals’ “non-work” roles in a broad sense.



The present chapter is structured as follows. First, based on the combined findings of this dissertation, I discuss what the present findings tell about the construct of work-family facilitation, and elaborate on why it is important to take this positive side of the work-family interface into account. Second, I discuss antecedents of facilitation experiences in the work and home domains, and address possibilities to influence these experiences. Third, I elaborate on the gender differences found in this dissertation with regard to facilitation in particular. Furthermore in this chapter, the theoretical as well as practical implications of this program of research will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the present work will be discussed along with directions for future research.

### **6.1 Work-Family Facilitation Experiences and their Beneficial Consequences**

*Work-family conflict* has been the central construct in the work-family literature; the individual's experience that participation in one role (e.g., in the family) makes it more *difficult* to fulfill the requirements of another role (e.g., at work). As opposed to the scarcity perspective in the literature, Marks (1977) formulated his *role expansion theory*, which views human energy and attention as abundant and expandable and posits that fulfilling one role can *create* energy for the use in that or other roles. As such, this theory postulates that participation in one role can have *positive effects* on other role performances. In this dissertation, I aimed to provide more insight in this positive perspective and focused on experiences of *work-family facilitation*, defined here as the individual's experience that participation in one role makes it *easier* to fulfill the requirements of another role. Based on the two theoretical perspectives offered in the literature, I posited that *both* individuals' facilitation and their conflict experiences in role combination can be understood by the examination of four experiential domains, namely 1) energy (strain), 2) time, 3) behavior, and 4) psychological state. An initial qualitative study (Chapter 2) confirmed that individuals indeed can experience that their work and family roles facilitate each other. It also supported the proposed distinction between the different *types* of facilitation, namely that participation in one role can a) provide individuals with extra energy in the other role (*energy-based facilitation*), b) make them manage and use their time in the other role more efficiently (*time-based facilitation*), c) give them the opportunity to acquire new skills and behaviors for the use in the other role (*behavioral facilitation*), and d) enable them to put matters associated with the other role into a broader perspective (*psychological facilitation*). In a subsequent quantitative study (Chapter 2), these four types of facilitation (in the work-to-family as well as

the family-to-work direction) proved to be distinct, in addition to the different types of conflict that had been identified in previous research (strain-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological WF and FW conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Thus, in managing their work and family roles, people can experience role conflict. However, this dissertation also reveals the ways in which people experience their work role benefiting their family roles, and vice versa. In this way, this differentiation in types of facilitation shows that facilitation also occurs in domains that are often assumed (e.g., Edgell, 1970) to be finite and inherent sources of conflict, such as *time* and *energy* (“you can only spend your energy once”, “there are only 24 hours in a day”). Even in these domains, however, individuals’ psychological experience can be that of experiencing *time benefits* and having *more energy* due to role combination.

But what is the added value of addressing these facilitation experiences and thus go beyond the tradition in the literature to examine individual’s experiences of conflict? Two principal motivations can be given. First, as has been shown, conflict and facilitation are separate and distinct experiences. This means that the absence of conflict does not automatically imply the presence of facilitation and vice versa. Thus, experiencing low strain-based conflict from work to family for example does not imply that one feels *energized* after a working day in a way that positively affects the family domain. Similarly, not worrying about family issues at work (low psychological FW conflict) is different from the positive experience that one’s family roles actually *helps* one to put work into perspective. Second, my research shows the importance of examining facilitation in combination with conflict for a better understanding of the effects of role combination on outcomes in the work, home, and health domains. The examination of employees’ facilitation experiences in role combination – in addition to their conflict experiences – significantly and substantially improved the prediction of *work outcomes* (job performance, affective organizational commitment, work satisfaction), and *non-work outcomes* (home performance, home commitment, home satisfaction, global life satisfaction), and also enhanced the prediction of mental *stress-related outcomes* (emotional exhaustion, depression). Whereas a focus on conflict primarily addressed the detrimental consequences of role combination (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000), the present approach of taking the *positive side* of the work-family interface into account has shown that the combination of work and family roles also involves *beneficial consequences*, namely higher levels of performance in, commitment to,

and satisfaction with the work and home domains, and a lower level of mental health problems (depressive complaints, Chapter 2).

Importantly, this research also demonstrated that employees who experience more facilitation are *objectively* in better *physical health*; they have lower cholesterol levels, better physical stamina, and are less likely to be overweight (Chapter 4). Even more so, the *longitudinal* study that was conducted among call center employees (again Chapter 4) showed that the experience of facilitation actually predicts better physical health one year later (namely lower cholesterol levels and a lower body mass index). Furthermore, this longitudinal study showed that experiencing facilitation between work and family benefits employees' *performance at work* as assessed via *objective* indicators (e.g., actual sales volumes), and predicts lower levels of *actual absenteeism* from work. These latter results thus demonstrate that employees' experiences of facilitation between their work and family roles not only enhance their subjective well-being, but also result in concrete, objective gains for these employees (e.g., better health) as well as for their employers (e.g., enhanced job performance, lower absenteeism). In other words, enabling employees to experience a successful combination of work and family roles is a business concern, with bottom-line implications.

## **6.2 Antecedents and Possibilities to Increase the Experience of Work-Family Facilitation**

Since employees can experience facilitation and since these facilitation experiences relate to a wide range of *beneficial outcomes* for employees and employers, it is important to know how these experiences come about and how they can be *stimulated*. Previous investigations already revealed that employees who have family supportive managers and co-workers, and who perceive cultural norms in their organization to be family supportive (referred to as a *family supportive work environment*) experience *lower conflict* between their work and family roles (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2005; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Thus, by providing "cross-domain support" – e.g., support for the family domain at work – the organization can lower employees' experiences of conflict in role combination. In addition to this earlier approach, the present dissertation (Chapter 3) shows that receiving support for work issues at home, a *work supportive home environment* (i.e. support from partner and family/friends for work issues, and norms in the home environment that are work supportive), can

also help individuals to experience lower conflict between their work and family roles.

Besides lowering conflict, I argued that family supportive work environments and work supportive home environments could also *stimulate* the experience of *facilitation* in role combination. A family supportive manager, for example, provides the employee with instrumental and emotional assistance, is open to discuss new ways of combining roles, and communicates trust in the employee. This provides more potential for an optimal integration of, and positive exchange between, work and family roles (see also Voydanoff, 2004b). In support of this reasoning, employees who experienced their work and home environments to be supportive indeed reported *increased facilitation* between their work and family roles. At work, especially having a family supportive manager related to increased facilitation. At home, receiving support from one's family and friends was consistently related to higher levels of facilitation (Chapter 3). Thus, these findings indicate that, by creating a *family supportive work environment* and a *work supportive home environment*, not only can individuals' experiences of role conflict be reduced, but their experiences of *facilitation* can be *enhanced* as well. This underscores the importance of how work-family issues are discussed and dealt with on a day-to-day basis on the work floor and in people's home lives. For example, at work, when organizational norms and representatives of the organization (i.e. managers) implicitly or explicitly communicate to employees that commitment to family roles can only "distract from work" and show little understanding for family issues, this will adversely affect employees' experiences in role combination. Instead, when the work environment recognizes, values, and supports the individual's family responsibilities, rather than viewing the home domain as "distractor from or enemy to work" (and vice versa, when the home domain is supportive of work issues), this is likely to decrease conflict and increase individual's experiences of facilitation between their work and family roles.

Also important in this regard are the results from the field experiment presented in Chapter 5. These showed that reading either negative or positive information about role combination affects how individuals appraise the combination of their work and family roles in their own lives. In this experiment, one group of employees read information that supported a *scarcity perspective* on human energy, which described human energy to be limited and fixed and focused on the difficulties and negative aspects of role combination. In contrast, another group of employees read information that supported an *expansion perspective* on human energy, which focused on human energy being abundant

and expandable, and emphasized the positive aspects of role combination. This experiment showed that employees who read the expansion information appraised their own situation of combining work and family roles *more positively*. That is, as compared to the scarcity perspective, employees who read the message framed from an expansion perspective appraised their own combination of work and family roles *as less stressful, less as a negative threat, and more as a positive challenge*. They also reported *higher levels of facilitation* and reported *more positive and less negative emotions* when thinking about their own role combination. Additionally, the spontaneous comments the employees provided about their own situation of combining work and family revealed a more positive train of thought about role combination (qualitative data, free thought listing). These findings thereby show that information provided by others can affect how we ourselves appraise an event or situation (informational or appraisal support, Holmes & Houston, 1974; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kibler, & Ernst, 1997). Importantly, this suggests that the messages communicated by others, for example at work, at home or in the media, can shape the appraisal of our own situation. Although the effect of receiving one such a message may be short-lived, *repeated* or *chronic* exposure to certain views could lead to internalization of that perspective. For organizations this implies that it is important to pay attention to how work-family issues are framed in organizational communications or how they are discussed by managers and employees of the organization. When, for instance, managers or coworkers always tend to approach role combination from a scarcity perspective (e.g., by exclusively talking about the downside of the combination of work and family roles), this will make it more likely that others appraise and experience the combination of work and family roles more negatively as well. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the formal and informal messages that are communicated in organizations. Rather than communicating a one-sided scarcity perspective on role combination to employees, it is important to recognize and “place the spotlight on” the *beneficial side* to role combination. This in turn will make it more likely that employees view and experience the combination of their own work and family roles from a more positive perspective as well, potentially starting off a positive spiral.

### 6.3 Gender Differences

In the work-family literature (and perhaps also in daily society?), it is often assumed that the combination of work and family roles is especially problematic

for women. However, by addressing the positive side of the work-family interface (experiences of facilitation between work and family), my research revealed that women – at least in this organization – are doing well in combining their work and family roles. That is, women experienced to a greater degree than men a *positive exchange* between the work and family domain in that their work role facilitated the fulfillment of their family roles and vice versa. Thus, taking a role expansion perspective has been especially valuable to open up the way to uncover the benefits that women experience from participating in multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Choice is the key word here. I argued and found that, for women, the work role has a different psychological meaning than for men in that for women the element of *choice* for the work role is more salient (see also Rothbard, 2001; Thoits, 2003). In present-day society, both in Europe and the U.S, it is still more common for men to fulfill the work role, to fulfill this role fulltime, and to provide for the main part of the family income, whereas it still is more common for women to take on the largest part of the care-taking and household activities (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Pottrass, 2002; Emancipatie Monitor, 2006). Moreover, the provider role is culturally still regarded as the primary role for men, while the role of care-taker is still assigned primarily to women (Ridgeway & Corell, 2004). Based on these gender differences in actual role fulfillment and gendered role expectations, I posited that, whereas fulfilling the work role is fairly self-evident for men, women experience the work role to a higher degree as a *self-chosen* role, that is instrumentally and/or emotionally easier to exit. I argued that, on average, women are thus more likely to fulfill the work role because of positive aspects that are attached to this role or to combining this role with their other roles in their lives. As such, I argued that female employees should experience higher levels of facilitation between their work and family roles. The results from the organizational survey, which was completed by a large part of the organization's employees ( $N = 18,355$ , *Appendix Chapter 2*), confirmed this. Women experience the work role (and the combination of work and family roles) more as self-chosen than males do. Also supporting this reasoning, women experienced more facilitation between their work and family roles than men. Women specifically reported that their work and family roles positively affected each other in terms of time benefits, learning new skills and behaviors, and acquiring additional psychological perspectives (higher levels of time-based WF and FW and behavioral WF and FW facilitation and higher psychological WF facilitation than men). The results from the large-scale organizational survey also

confirmed that women experienced a higher level of facilitation between work and family than their male colleagues.

Furthermore, it appears to be *more important* for women to experience facilitation between work and family. That is, the extent to which women experienced facilitation had a *greater impact* than for men on relevant outcome variables in the work and home domain, for example on their level of satisfaction with and own assessment of their performance at work. Therefore, it is highly important to achieve that female employees experience a positive exchange between their work and family roles. The results discussed in this dissertation indicate that, for women, this can be primarily achieved via managerial support.

Apart from the finding that women tend to experience more facilitation and that the experience of facilitation has more impact on outcome variables for women, it is important to note that the present results underscore the need to pay attention to the issue of work family role combination for both men and women. This issue is often exclusively considered as a “women’s issue” (Thompson et al., 1999). However, the present research shows that experiencing a successful combination of work and family roles (high levels of facilitation, low conflict) has important consequences for women and men, and that both women and men will benefit from receiving support to achieve this.

#### **6.4 Theoretical Implications**

The results discussed in this dissertation complement and balance the scarcity perspective that has long prevailed in the work-family literature. The combination of work and family roles is not inherently difficult, nor will participation in one role necessarily imply only negative effects for another role. The scarcity perspective has been valuable in identifying the role conflicts that individuals can experience, which are significant phenomena with real negative consequences. However, the dominance of this perspective in the work-family literature has painted a picture of role combination that is exceptionally *one-sided* and too negative (see also Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004). In line with the reasoning proposed by role expansion theory (Marks, 1977), the present research shows, for example, that fulfilling one role can also make people feel *energized* to perform in the other role. In fact, this dissertation has shown that the experiential domains that are traditionally seen as the basis of the occurrence of role conflict, namely strain (energy), time, behavior, and psychological state (Carlson et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus, 1988; Carlson & Frone, 2003) can also be used to explain the different ways in which individuals

experience that their work and family roles facilitate each other (energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation).

The present results on facilitation between work and family roles evidently challenge the validity of a singular focus on the negative side of the work-family interface. For example, the results regarding job performance contest the major contention of the scarcity perspective on role combination that participation in other roles can *only undermine* one's effectiveness at work. The present findings show that this can be the case; I found that for both men and women experiencing strain-based FW conflict relates to the assessment of lower performance at work. However, this research also revealed that the extent to which individuals experience facilitation – for instance energy-based and psychological FW facilitation – relates to *higher* performance levels at work. The latter result is even confirmed with the examination of self assessments as well as objective measures of job performance, which underscores the significance and robustness of these positive effects on employees' job performance.

With this research, I have aimed to provide a balanced view on role combination by addressing both role facilitation and role conflict experiences, and I have demonstrated the value of this approach to understand *both* the beneficial and detrimental consequences that can be associated with role combination. Accordingly, these results provide evidence to move beyond an *either/or* approach of the scarcity perspective versus the expansion perspective in work-family research (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Kirchmeyer, 1992), and speak to the need to develop an *integrated theory* that accounts for the origination of both conflict and facilitation experiences and their consequences. In work-family research scholars often focus either on the occurrence of conflict – addressing the scarcity perspective (e.g., Allen & Armstrong, 2006; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997) or only describe the resources that should be related to the experience of facilitation – focusing on the role expansion perspective (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Wayne et al., 2007). However, concurring with other researchers (e.g., Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004), I argue that, rather than examining these experiences in isolation, both sides of the work-family interface should be examined *conjointly* for an improved understanding of individuals' experiences in the combination of their work and family roles as well as their consequences. In this regard the Dual Process Model developed by Bakker and Geurts (2004) offers a valuable and promising approach. This model acknowledges and integrates the two theoretical perspectives in one parsimonious model in which *demands* of the job or job context (e.g., high work pressure, and poor working conditions) lead to feelings of exhaustion and



conflict, whereas *resources* of the job or job context (e.g., learning and career opportunities, feedback, autonomy) lead to feelings of flow, motivation, and experiences of facilitation. An important extension of this model suggested by our findings would be to not only look at demands and resources at work. By also examining resources and demands in the *home domain* a comprehensive model could be developed in which resources and demands in the work and home environment are related to employees' facilitation and conflict experiences, and outcomes in the work and home domain.

Moreover, in future research it would be valuable to further examine the beneficial effects of "cross-domain support". The research discussed in this dissertation showed that employees who received cross-domain support (i.e., support for the family domain in the work environment, and support for the work domain in the family environment) experienced higher levels of facilitation and lower levels of conflict between their work and family roles. It would be interesting to try to disentangle the practical, instrumental forms of support from the more psychological forms of support. A manager for example, can provide practical support in offering enough scope and flexibility which enables employees to find a combination of their work and family roles that works for them. This provides employees with more opportunities to engage more completely and gratifyingly in family roles, which makes it more likely that they feel energized by those roles and, for instance, learn additional skills, behaviors, and psychological perspectives. However, it would also be interesting to examine the extent to which the employee feels that his or her family roles are really acknowledged and valued by the organization and the effects of this. Conceivably, experiencing such psychological support for the family domain would stimulate the occurrence of facilitation even further as this communicates to employees that there is value in their participation in other life roles and that participation in these roles can form important assets to their work role. I argue that this would foster that employees recognize, identify, and actively apply the behaviors, skills, and insights from other roles, thus increasing the likelihood that these roles positively feed the fulfillment of their work role.

Furthermore, an interesting extension of the present research would be to examine whether the beneficial effects of providing these forms of instrumental and psychological cross-domain support extend *beyond* enabling employees to experience a better combination of their work and family roles. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) posits that the relationship between the employee and the organization (and representatives of the organization, i.e., managers) is a reciprocal relationship in that employees'

behavior and attitudes commensurate with the degree in which the organization (manager) displays commitment to them as individuals. When an employee feels valued and cared about by the organization and one's manager, he or she will "repay" this with increased motivation and effort at work and loyalty towards the organization (Wayne et al., 1997). In this line of reasoning, I posit that providing support for employees' life roles other than the work role signals to employees that the organization (manager) cares about and invests in their overall well-being (see also Greenhaus & Powell, 2000). Thus, it is likely that these positive actions will be repaid by the employee with enhanced effort at work and positive attitudes about the manager and the organization. In this way, a "chain of reactions" can be set in motion that is characterized by increased levels of mutual trust, commitment, and positive interaction. Thus, I propose that providing cross-domain support can also be seen as a more general, positive strategy for the organization and managers to motivate and retain employees. Future research is needed to empirically examine this.

### 6.5 Practical Implications

The findings discussed in this dissertation have important implications for organizational practice. The examination of the *interface* between employees' work and home life roles shows that difficulties experienced in role combination (*conflict*) can have detrimental consequences for the employee as well as the organization, such as emotional exhaustion (burnout), depressive complaints or lower work satisfaction. This indeed is one side of the story. However, this dissertation also reveals that employees' work and home life roles can *positively affect* each other (as indicated by experiences of *facilitation* between work and family). Participation in other life roles can actually facilitate the work role in that this can (*re-*) *energize* an employee for work, make the employee more *efficient*, provide opportunities to acquire new *skills and behaviors* that help them to perform well at work, and brings about *psychological benefits* in terms of a broader frame of reference that helps the employee to put work matters into perspective. In the same vein, participation in the work role can facilitate one's home life roles. Importantly, these experiences of facilitation are associated with a range of *beneficial consequences* for employee well-being as well as the organization. For instance, employees who experience more facilitation between their work and home lives are more committed to the organization, more satisfied with their jobs, and happier with their lives in general. Additionally, this research demonstrates that employees' experiences of facilitation result in *concrete*

(objectively measured) gains for employees as well as the organization, namely *improved employee health, better job performance, and lower levels of absenteeism* from work. For organizations, this implies that, in addition to reducing employees' experiences of conflict in role combination, they should aim to enhance the experience of facilitation in order to achieve these beneficial outcomes for the employee and the organization. The present research thus shows that, in current times of heightened, more global competition, it can be a *business advantage* to enable and actively support employees in finding a successful combination of their work and family roles. Moreover, because it is likely to become more and more common that both males and females actively engage in paid work, and because current employees tend to attach great importance to finding a balance between their work and family lives (Peeters & Heiligers, 2003), it is highly advisable for organizations to adequately manage work-family issues. If organizations are capable to support employees in successful role combination, this will contribute to a happy, high-performing workforce and to retaining their human capital. Moreover, supporting employees in work-family role combination is likely to have the additional advantage of signaling to (potential) future employees that the organization invests in employee well-being, thus making the organization an attractive place to work in.

It is important that these research findings are used to make managers and organizations' top management more *knowledgeable* about the positive side of work-family role combination. The difficulties associated with combining work and family often first come to mind, and among managers, the fear can exist that participation in other roles than the work role can "only distract" from work. The benefits associated with the participation in multiple roles are less well known. Managers should therefore be informed that employees' family roles can be an important asset to the work domain, and that by accomplishing that employees experience facilitation between their work and home lives, concrete benefits can be achieved (e.g., higher work satisfaction, better performance, less absenteeism).

In this regard, proactive steps in the work environment can be undertaken to assist managers in this task. Contemporary managers should know how to discuss and practically deal with work-family issues. The present findings show that the nature of the work climate and (lack of) support from managers and co-workers can have an important positive or negative influence on employees' experiences in role combination. When employees receive little *managerial support* for family issues at work, this has a negative impact on their experiences in role combination. Likewise, when *organizational norms* communicate to employees that making use of work-family benefits (e.g., part-time work, parental leave) or

otherwise devoting more time to family responsibilities will be interpreted in the organization as a lack of commitment - and will thus have “negative career consequences” - this detrimentally affects employees’ experiences in role combination. Thus, it is important to question such organizational norms and it is highly advisable to *train* managers, for example by the use of workshops, to be supportive of work-family issues. Managerial support for work-family issues does not imply becoming “soft” in that managers cannot be firm on work targets or deadlines or should always accommodate to family issues. Nevertheless, it is important that managers are *aware* of employees’ family situations and that they are *approachable* for employees in the case of problems in role combination. In this regard, managers should be taught to be *sensitive* on these issues and to communicate to employees that they are *willing to discuss* issues of this kind. It is important that managers support employees in a practical fashion when needed, for example by constructively and creatively discussing with employees new ways of organizing the combination of their work and family roles. In this way, it is most likely to create a “win-win” between the organizational and employee interests. But it is also important that managers signal to employees that they acknowledge and value employees’ participation in other roles than the work role alone. In this way, managers can stimulate that employees’ work and family roles reinforce each other, for example by stimulating that employees recognize and apply the valuable behaviors, skills, and insights they acquire from the participation in other life roles. Moreover, it is probable that such a constructive approach of supporting employees to find a successful combination of their work and family roles prevents employees from making “either/or” choices in role combination, such as quitting one’s job, or opting for only a small part-time job (Ellemers, 1993).

Thus, rather than assuming that commitment to family roles is incompatible with effective performance at work and restricting the career opportunities of individuals who display such commitments (see also Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007), it is important to create a *family supportive work environment*, in which organizational norms and managers not only acknowledge, but also value and actively support family roles. This will reduce employees’ conflict experiences and enhance their facilitation experiences in role combination, resulting in beneficial consequences for employees and the organization alike.

Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to the way in which the topic of work-family role combination is discussed in organizations – in organizational communications, by managers, and informally among co-workers - but in a

broader societal context as well. The results presented in this dissertation showed that the mere reading about positive or negative aspects associated with role combination *influenced* how positively or negatively employees appraised their own situation of combining work and family roles. This indicates that messages communicated by others in one's organization or home life shape the perspective the individual takes of combining work and family roles. Repeated or chronic exposure to such views can thus impact upon employees' subjective well-being in important ways. For example, when co-workers among each other exclusively talk about the difficulties in the combination of work and family roles or when a manager only approaches role combination from a negative perspective ("It must be difficult for you, working four days a week with a young child at home"), this makes it more likely that employees focus on the negative side and experience the combination of work and family roles more negatively as well. The need to not only discuss and highlight this negative side is illustrated by my observation that, during the interviews I conducted, it happened many times that employees spontaneously mentioned that in their work *and* daily lives others often only tend to ask about the difficulties associated with role combination and they were pleasantly surprised that I didn't. In the media as well, the problems and difficulties that employees are faced with in role combination are frequently highlighted and discussed, especially in articles or broadcasts concerning working women. Illustrative of the fact that this perspective is one-sided and that the positive side deserves coverage as well, is a small article in a Dutch newspaper (Bolwijn, NRC, 2005) that discussed some of the findings of the present dissertation. In this article, which focused on the experiences of female employees in role combination, the different ways in which women can experience a positive exchange between their work and family roles (types of facilitation) were described. This article received an abundance of reactions from women who were glad to finally see this positive side of role combination to be addressed as well (and for instance also said they put it on their bulletin board for inspiration). These observations thus indicate that, in our work and home lives and in society at large, work-family issues too often are exclusively approached from a negative perspective. This is highly unfortunate. Firstly because this view does not present an adequate picture of employees' experiences in role combination. Secondly because placing a spotlight on the beneficial side to role combination would make a difference in that it is likely to make others approach the combination of work and family roles from a more positive perspective as well.

To recapitulate, this research reveals what can and also needs to be done from a *psychological perspective* to support employees in achieving a successful combination of work and family roles. It is often thought that getting employees to experience a more successful combination of work and family roles can only be achieved by making changes in the objective situation at work or at home (e.g., reducing working hours, increased support in housekeeping) or in the formal arrangements and material provisions sphere (e.g., providing formal benefits and arrangements to employees such as day care facilities). The present research, however, demonstrates the importance of psychological support: having a supportive work climate, receiving informal support from one's manager and co-workers, and the importance of how the topic of role combination is dealt with and discussed on a day-to-day basis. As such, this research reveals the psychological factors that need to be addressed in order to assist employees in finding a successful combination of work and family roles.

## 6.6 Future Research

### *Additional Longitudinal Research*

A possible limitation of the present research lies in the reliance on cross-sectional survey data in Chapter 2 and 3. In Chapter 2, cross-sectional data were used to examine whether there was added value in examining people's facilitation experiences – in addition to their conflict experiences – for the prediction of variables that are widely regarded as *outcomes* in work-family research (Allen et al., 2000; Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Witt & Carlson, 2006). In Chapter 3, in coherence with previous theoretical and empirical research (e.g., Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 2007), I argued that receiving support enables one to achieve a more successful combination of roles, thus viewing supportive environments to be *antecedents* of conflict and facilitation. However, since most previous work-family research is cross-sectional in nature as well, additional longitudinal, multi-source research designs are needed to fully rule out the possibility of reverse causation and to conclusively address concerns of mono-method bias (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). However, a strong point of the present dissertation is that, besides the use of cross-sectional survey data, longitudinal and experimental research designs were used in further chapters. As such, the longitudinal data in Chapter 4 supported that employees' facilitation experiences predict objective outcome variables over time (employee health, performance, and absenteeism). An interesting avenue for future longitudinal research would be to test the *reciprocal relationships* over

the years between one's resources in the work and home domain, experiences of facilitation between one's work and family roles, and outcomes, such as performance and health. For example, it is conceivable that performance at work and one's health must not only be seen as outcome variables in the process. It could be that there is a reciprocal relationship as well in that superior performance at work, and being in good physical health again bring about additional resources (e.g., additional learning and career opportunities), which in turn stimulate the experience of facilitation, thus possibly creating a "gain spiral" of positive outcomes (Bakker & Geurts, 2004).

#### *Research in other Contexts*

The studies that are presented in this dissertation were conducted in one single financial services organization (ING). Because this concerns a very large organization (over 30,000 employees), in which employees work in highly diverse jobs and job contexts, it is reasonable to assume that other research will find comparable results. However, the financial services sector is a sector with attractive primary and secondary compensation and good working conditions (e.g., relatively high salaries, professional technologies, high levels of autonomy at work). These resources could be associated with experiencing higher overall levels of success in the combination of work and family roles. Thus, additional research in other sectors and organizational contexts is needed to further establish the robustness of the present findings.

An interesting extension of the present research - and the work-family literature more generally (Casper et al., 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) - would be to conduct *comparative international studies* to increase our understanding of the culture-specific and universal experiences in the work-family interface. Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000) proposed that collectivist, feminine, low uncertainly avoidant, and/or low power distance cultures promote more role integration than masculine, high uncertainly avoidant, and/or high power distance cultures. Thus, it is conceivable that, as compared to the latter cultures, employees in the former cultures generally receive more support for family issues in their work environments (and more support for work issues in their family environments), which increases the likelihood that employees in these cultures experience a more successful combination of their work and family roles. In the comparison of the Netherlands and the U.S., for example, (the Netherlands being a more feminine and less individualistic country, Hofstede, 2005), it is plausible that Dutch employees, on average, are more likely to experience facilitation and less likely to experience conflict between their work

and family roles than American employees. Differences in institutional factors such as countries' welfare systems should also be taken into account in comparative studies. Social-democratic regimes (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands) have a more extensive well-fare system that is accessible for all citizens and communicates the importance of combining work and family than liberal regimes (e.g., United States, United Kingdom) or conservative regimes (e.g., Italy; van der Lippe & van Dijk, 2002). It should be examined how differences in these resources at the national level (e.g., job security, pension rights, family benefits) relate to the element of experienced choice for the work role and employees' facilitation and conflict experiences in role combination. Additionally, it would be important to further examine *gender differences* in comparative studies. In the present research, women experienced higher levels of facilitation between their work and family roles than their male colleagues. Based on traditional gender role expectations and gender differences in role fulfillment that still exist in present-day society, I argued and found that, for women, the element of choice for the work role is more psychologically salient than for men. To the extent that such expectations are held, I expect that female employees should experience more facilitation than male employees. Women in a representative U.S. sample also have been found to experience more facilitation than men (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). These parallel findings suggest that our conclusions are likely to apply to other national contexts. However, when role expectations are different (e.g., in a different cultural system, or due to different gender beliefs) or when there are fewer gender differences in fulfilling the work role, I do not necessarily expect to find the same pattern of results. Future research is needed to more systematically examine this.

#### *Different Types of Facilitation and Conflict*

The present research established that individuals can experience different types of facilitation (energy-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological facilitation). Addressing these types of facilitation, together with strain-based, time-based, behavioral, and psychological conflict, has been an important first step to understand the different experiences that individuals have in the combination of their work and family roles, and the beneficial as well as detrimental consequences that can result from these experiences. In the present research, all four types of facilitation emerged as reliable predictors of one or more of the outcome variables examined. Moreover, many of the differential relationships observed were *gender specific*, which makes the pattern of results even more complex. For instance, energy-based WF facilitation was related to



higher work satisfaction for both men and women. At the same time, however, behavioral WF facilitation related to increased work satisfaction for men, whereas psychological WF facilitation related to increased work satisfaction for women. Another example is that *psychological FW facilitation* (the experience that one is better able to put work matters into perspective by virtue of one's family roles) related to higher self-rated job performance for *women*, but related to higher levels of home performance, home commitment, home satisfaction, and global life satisfaction for *men* (Chapter 2). Thus, although the present research revealed that these different types of facilitation experiences exist, that they are statistically distinct, and that they relate to a broad range of beneficial outcomes, additional research is needed to predict more specifically which types of facilitation specifically yield beneficial outcomes for women and men.

#### *The Interplay between Situational and Dispositional Factors*

Another interesting extension of the present research would be to further establish which *antecedents* are likely to stimulate the specific types of facilitation distinguished here. In recent research, jobs and job contexts that are rich in resources (e.g., autonomy, learning opportunities, feedback, and managerial support) have been found to increase the likelihood that employees experience generalized facilitation between their work and family roles (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Voydanoff, 2004). It should be examined whether specific resources in the work and home environment differentially affect the different types of facilitation experiences. For instance, having much freedom to decide how to use the time at work - and at home - conceivably increases the opportunity to experience time-based facilitation, whereas having a lot of learning and feedback opportunities in one's work and home life could primarily increase chances for experiencing behavioral facilitation.

In addition to the examination of situational characteristics of the work and home environment, an important question also is *which* individuals generally are most likely to experience (specific types of) facilitation or conflict. Since individuals cannot leave their dispositions behind when they come to work or participate in their family roles (Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002), it is important to examine which *personality traits* make individuals more prone to experience facilitation and conflict. Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) have defined dispositional traits as stable and consistent ways of *thinking, feeling, or acting* exhibited by individuals. Moreover, they regard dispositional traits as the "*frame*" through which situational appraisals are made (see also Stoeva et al., 2002). As such, personality factors can influence how individuals *perceive*,

*appraise*, and *react* to situations of work-family role combination. For example, *proactive individuals* tend to identify opportunities and act on them, to show initiative, and to persevere under difficult circumstances. In contrast, less proactive individuals are passive and reactive, and tend to adapt to circumstances, rather than changing them (Aryee et al., 2005). Thus, with regard to role combination, the proactive individual conceivably is more likely to appraise a situation as a *challenge* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and is more likely to actively look for and apply available resources, and constructively react to the situation at hand (Geenhaus & Powell, 2006). As such, proactive individuals may generally be more likely to experience facilitation, but again it may also be that specific types of facilitation are most closely linked to this personality variable. For example, proactive individuals may be particularly likely to seek new situations or opportunities to learn new skills, thus especially increasing their chances to experience behavioral facilitation.

Logically, in future research it would also be important to shed more light on the specific conditions in the work and home environment under which certain individuals are most likely to experience facilitation or conflict between their work and family roles. For example, it is conceivable that a job context that is rich in learning opportunities especially increases behavioral facilitation among pro-active individuals because, conceivably, these individuals are more likely than passive individuals to identify and use the different possibilities to learn new skills and behaviors that are available to them. Such future research on the interplay between situational and dispositional characteristics would assist in designing specific work-family interventions programs that suit individual employees.

#### *The Power of Appraisal Support*

In this dissertation, I have examined the role of appraisal support and have shown - by means of a field experiment - that the appraisals individuals make about their combination of work and family roles can be *influenced* by information provided by others. I believe it is a novel and fruitful direction for future research to devote more attention to these cognitive appraisal processes regarding the combination of work and family roles, and how individuals affect each other in this respect. Recently, scholars have started to underscore that stress experiences must not be viewed as isolated personal phenomena, but rather to acknowledge that stress has important social dimensions (Haslam, 2004). Others in our social environment and the groups we belong to shape what we view as important, desirable, ignoble, or damaging, thus influencing how we

ourselves cognitively construe events and situations in our lives. An interesting question is to examine how powerful the influence of others can be on the appraisals we make about role combination. Previous research on burnout in the work place, for example, shows that burnout can to a certain degree be “contagious”. In a study among teachers, it was found that those who frequently talked with their burned-out colleagues (e.g., about problematic students) had the highest chances of “catching” the negative attitudes expressed by their colleagues (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). Additionally, another study conducted among 85 work teams of the Dutch police force revealed that collective feelings of burnout, but also positive feelings of work engagement, affect the individual team member (Bakker, Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006). The authors explain that this process could occur via non-conscious emotional contagion (people’s tendency to automatically mimic each others expressions, postures, and behaviors) but also via a conscious cognitive process of “tuning in” to the other’s emotions, which triggers memories of similar emotions, in turn making it more likely that two persons experience the same emotion. The latter explanation appears to be related to the appraisal support process in which information and views expressed by others influences one’s own interpretation of a situation. In the context of the combination of work and family roles, it seems highly relevant to examine how, for example, team members affect each others’ assessments of experiencing conflict and facilitation between their work and family roles. It would also be interesting to systematically examine how for instance in “women’s friends groups” work-family issues are discussed (e.g., primarily highlighting the stressful or the positive aspects), and how this impacts upon the individual’s own views and experiences. In this regard, it would be valuable to design an *intervention program* in which employees are stimulated to actively think about and discuss the positive side of role combination with others in a group, and examine whether this indeed yields that they appraise and experience the combination of their work and family roles more positively over time.

However, prior to designing such interventions it is needed to conduct *additional field experiments* to closely study the conditions under which providing appraisal support is most effective. Along the lines of the field experiment in Chapter 5, future studies could further uncover what kind of (repeated) informational messages are most likely to influence individuals’ appraisals of role combination, the *time-span* of these effects, and when and how *internalization* of a certain view on role combination occurs. Moreover, it would be interesting to also include *behavioral measures* in future experiments. For example to examine

whether individuals who are stimulated to appraise role combination as a challenge rather than a threat also display differences in terms of their actual behaviors (e.g., more pro-active searching behavior for information about work-family role combination). Furthermore, it is important to study in depth whether the effectiveness of informational support varies as a function of the *source* that provides it. As explained earlier in this dissertation, social identity theory suggests that the appraisal process is structured by people's internalized group memberships in such a way that ingroup members are seen as a more relevant source of information than members of an outgroup (Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Reicher, 1996; Turner, 1991; Ellemers, de Gilder, Haslam, 2004). This would, for example, imply that the information and views expressed on role combination by our team members and friends will be more influential in shaping our interpretation on the combination of work and family than views and information from strangers. However, an interesting question that needs to be addressed is which others are viewed as "relevant" ingroup concerning the issue of work-family role combination. For example, can any team member provide effective appraisal support, or is it a pre-condition that someone is a same-sex team member in a comparable family situation to impact one's appraisal of work-family role combination? In sum, conducting additional field experiments will provide important insights on whether and how precisely coaching and intervention programs could, by providing informational support, "train" employees to view and approach combining work and family from a more positive perspective.

#### *The Partner Relationship*

An interesting and important extension of the present research would be to simultaneously examine both husbands' and wives' experiences in the combination of work and family roles, thus taking the *couple* as unit of the analysis. Previous research has shown that partners can affect each other in that conflict experiences can *crossover* from one partner to the other (Hammer, Allen, Grigsby, 1997). It would be interesting to examine if crossover of facilitation experiences can also occur. Moreover, up to date, little is known about how interaction patterns between partners impact upon both partners' conflict and facilitation experiences in role combination. Taking the couple as the unit of analysis could, for example, enhance our insight into the effects of *social support in the partner relationship* on both husbands' and wives' experienced success in role combination. In this regard it could be valuable to make a distinction between different forms of social support (Haslam, 2004, House, 1981), such as

*emotional support* (e.g., understanding of and listening to the other's worries), *instrumental support* (e.g., direct assistance in taking over chores or staying at home when a child is ill), and *appraisal support* (e.g., providing information that changes the other's interpretation of a situation). It would be interesting to examine the patterns of support that husbands and wives provide each over a certain period of time to investigate whether, for instance, husbands and wives differ in the extent to which they provide each other with instrumental and emotional support and to examine how this affects their level of conflict and facilitation experiences in role combination. Such an examination would also be relevant in view of the rather intriguing finding in the present dissertation that, for men, receiving support from one's partner related to lower levels of conflict (as was expected), whereas, for women, higher levels of partner support were actually associated with higher levels of conflict. Although other explanations are possible as well (e.g., reverse causation), Fernandez (1995) has pointed out the interesting possibility that social support can also have a "reverse buffering effect" in that talking with others can underscore and legitimize negative feelings, thus increasing one's feelings of strain. Thus, it would be highly interesting to examine *how* exactly husbands and wives support each other in role combination to gain more insight in possible "constructive" and "destructive" forms of support and their effects on facilitation and conflict experiences.

Moreover, an important direction for future research would be to assess how both partners' conflict and facilitation experiences affect the *work-family choices* partners make, for instance regarding the division of caring and household tasks and the division of paid labor between partners (Kluwer & van der Lippe, 2004; Kluwer, Heesink, & van de Vliert, 1996). When examining how such work-family choices are made it would also be highly interesting to assess the way in which partners *negotiate* about these issues at home. Negotiation research in business and interpersonal conflict situations has shown that negotiators often fail to realize their *integrative potential*, which is unfortunate because in integrative agreements the available resources are used in an optimal way, both parties are highly satisfied, and the probability of future conflict is reduced (de Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). When are partners in the intimate relationship most likely to reach integrative agreements it that the available resources are optimally used (e.g., material resources, individual talents), both partners are satisfied, and the chances of marital conflict are reduced? In this regard it would be fruitful to examine both partners' *individual characteristics* (e.g., social values orientation, achievement

motivation), their *experiences in role combination* (e.g., level of facilitation and conflict), and *characteristics of their relationship* (e.g., status, procedural justice). In such examinations broader *societal* and *economic* factors (e.g., social norms, relative wage rates) should be taken into account as well (Kluwer & van der Lippe, 2004; van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994). Finally, it would be interesting to examine how these (negotiated) work-family choices in turn impact upon longer term outcomes such as the quality of parent-child relationships or both partners' career outcomes.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research presented in this dissertation has provided a balanced picture of the experiences that individuals can have in the combination of their work and family roles. Extending the common focus in previous literature on experiences of role conflict (and their detrimental consequences), the present research has also addressed the *positive side* of work-family role combination and has shown different ways in which work and family roles can *facilitate* each other. This research shows that experiencing facilitation between work and family roles has *beneficial consequences* for employees' *well-being* in their work and home lives (e.g., higher work satisfaction, higher life satisfaction), contributes to employees' *mental and physical health* (e.g., lower depressive complaints, lower cholesterol level, healthier body weight), and results in *concrete gains for the organization* as well (e.g., enhanced job performance, lower absenteeism). Furthermore, this research indicates that the experience of facilitation can be stimulated by means of appraisal support and by providing support for family issues in the work environment as well as support for work issues in the home environment. For a long time, the work-family literature has been dominated by a focus on the negative side of work-family role combination. This dissertation provides a positive perspective on the combination of work and family roles, which will hopefully also find its way to a non-academic audience. Especially in a society that will become more and more reliant on active labor participation of both the male and female population, a better understanding of how these roles can positively influence and support each other will become of paramount importance.

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### Organizational statistics

#### Background Information

##### *Description of the Sample*

As described in the Introduction and Chapter 2, the organization's HR department wanted to know their current employees experienced the combination of work with other roles in their lives. Therefore, they decided to pay attention to this topic in their *employee survey* that is sent bi-annually to all employees of the organization. The findings presented here concern the organizational survey of 2006. The response rate of this survey reached: 66.7% ( $N = 20,796$ ). We excluded participants who did not provide information on one of the control variables (see below), which resulted in a dataset of 18,355 employees.

Of the participants, 11,398 (62.1%) were males and 6,957 (37.9%) were females. Participants' average age was 41.2 years old (range 18 - 63,  $SD = 9.30$ ) and average organizational tenure was 14.3 years (range 0.1 - 45 years,  $SD = 10.89$ ). About half the participants (55.4%) had received higher education (university or higher vocational education), 44.6% had only completed lower education (lower vocational education or high school). On average, participants were contracted for 34.7 hours per week (range 8 - 40,  $SD = 5.25$ ). Most were either married or cohabiting (79.4%), the rest was single. The organization's salary system consists of 15 ascending salary categories, ranging from 2 = *lowest* to 15 = *highest* in pay. The average salary category for these participants was 8.5 (range 3 - 16,  $SD = 2.34$ ). Over half of the participants (59.0%) had at least one child. Of the participants with children, 16.1% had a youngest child of pre-school age (0 - 3 years old), 20.5% had a youngest child in the elementary school age (4 - 12 years old), 15.5% had a youngest child of high school / college age (13 - 21 years old), and 6.9 % had a youngest child aged 22 years or older. Please refer to Table A for correlations.

Table A. (Inter)correlations for Variables in Organizational Study

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	(-)	-.26	.76	.12	.20	-.01	-.26	.08	.41	.38	.03	-.05	-.02	-.07
2. Education	-.28	(-)	-.42	.47	.01	.11	.14	.01	-.16	-.13	.04	.11	.06	.04
3. Org. tenure	.69	-.41	(-)	-.08	.14	-.04	-.26	.01	.38	.39	.02	-.09	-.04	-.08
4. Salary	-.08	.60	-.20	(-)	.18	.28	.10	.14	.03	-.03	.05	.11	.12	.04
5. Marital status	.03	.02	.04	.06	(-)	.09	.19	.16	.13	.10	.02	.04	.03	.01
6. Work hours	-.23	.30	-.30	.38	-.26	(-)	.04	.04	.04	.01	-.01	.09	.03	.01
7. Child 0-3	-.22	.12	-.19	.15	.21	-.10	(-)	-.22	-.13	-.13	.03	.06	.04	.03
8. Child 4-12	.10	-.09	.15	-.03	.13	-.39	-.23	(-)	-.24	-.16	.04	-.01	.03	-.01
9. Child 13-21	.32	-.17	.24	-.16	.02	-.18	-.16	-.17	(-)	-.15	.01	-.01	-.02	-.04
10. Child 22+	.33	-.12	.12	-.13	.01	-.02	-.10	-.11	-.07	(-)	-.03	-.01	-.01	-.01
11. Conflict	-.07	.13	-.04	.14	-.01	.04	.12	.03	-.09	-.06	(-)	-.52	-.30	-.48
12. Facilitation	.06	.04	-.01	.08	.14	-.11	.07	.10	.06	.04	-.51	(-)	.36	.43
13. Choice work	.08	-.05	.07	.04	.10	-.09	.03	.05	.05	.03	-.33	.36	(-)	.49
14. Choice comb.	.05	-.04	.02	.01	.09	-.09	.01	.04	.05	.02	-.47	.42	.55	(-)

*Note.* ( $N = 18,355$ ). Correlations greater than .03 are significant at  $p < .01$ . Correlations greater than .04 are significant at  $p < .001$ . Figures for women are presented below the diagonal, figures for men above the diagonal. Work hours refer to the amount of contracted working hours per week. Age of youngest child is measured with 4 dummy variables, using employees without children as reference category.

### *Measures*

Because of restrictions to survey length, we were limited to examine employees' experiences with regard to the interface between their work and home lives with six questions in total. Because of these restrictions, we could not use existing measures. We therefore developed three items to measure employees' experiences of conflict and three items to measure employees' experiences of facilitation between their work and home life roles.

The *conflict* construct has traditionally been examined within the scarcity theory on human energy - which postulates that human energy is finite - and assesses the extent to which employees experience incompatibilities and difficulties in combining their work and home life roles and feel that the work and home domain enact a negative influence on each other. We aimed to capture this essence of the conflict construct with the following questions: "In general, I find combining my work and home life exhausting and stressful"; "In general, I feel that my work and home life conflict with each other"; "In general, I feel that my work and home life exert a negative influence on each other" ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Participants could answer on 5-point scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The *facilitation* construct has been examined within the expansion theory on human energy, which posits that human energy is expandable and that participation in multiple roles can create energy. The facilitation construct refers to the extent to which employees experience benefits from the combination of work and home life roles and experience that work and home life roles exert a positive influence on each other. We tried to capture the essence of facilitation with the following questions: "In general, combining my work and family life gives me positive energy"; "In general, I feel that my work and home life facilitate each other"; "In general, I feel that my work and home life exert a positive influence on each other" ( $\alpha = .93$ ). Participants answered on 5-point scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

In addition, we assessed *experienced choice for the work role* with one item: "I experience the way my work is organized (type of work, working hours, etc.) mainly as....." Respondents answered on a 5-point scale, of which the ends were defined (1 = imposed by external circumstances, 5 = my own choice). Likewise, we assessed *experienced choice for role combination* with one item: "I experience the way in which I combine my work and home life mainly as ....." (1 = imposed by external circumstances, 5 = my own choice).

*Control variables.* In the survey, the following control variables were assessed: *Gender* (1 = male; 2 = female), *age* (in years), *education* (1 = lower

vocational education or high school; 2 = university or higher vocational education), *marital status* (1 = single; 2 = married/ cohabiting), *organizational tenure* (in years), current *salary* category (1 = lowest; 17 = highest), *working hours* (contractual hours per week) and *age of youngest child* (1 = "0-3 years old", 2 = "4-12 years old", 3 = "13-21 years old", and 4 = "22 years or older."

## Results Organizational Survey

### *Employees' Conflict and Facilitation Experiences*

Please remember that participants answered the conflict and facilitation questions on 5-point scales, ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". With regard to conflict experiences, 86.4% of the participants ( $N = 15,859$ ) experienced low conflict between their work and family lives (score  $\leq 3$ ), and 13.6% of the participants ( $N = 2,496$ ) indicated to experience (high) conflict between their work and home lives (score  $> 3$ ). Concerning facilitation, 44.5.9% of the participants ( $N = 8,166$ ) experienced low facilitation between their work and home lives (score  $\leq 3$ ) and 55.5% of the participants ( $N = 10,189$ ) indicated to experience (high) facilitation between their work and home lives. Figure 1 presents the extent to which employees *on average* experience conflict and facilitation. These results show that employees, on average, experience higher levels of facilitation between their work and home lives than they experience conflict. This indicates – also among this broad sample – that facilitation is a relevant indicator of the way employees experience the combination of their work and family lives.

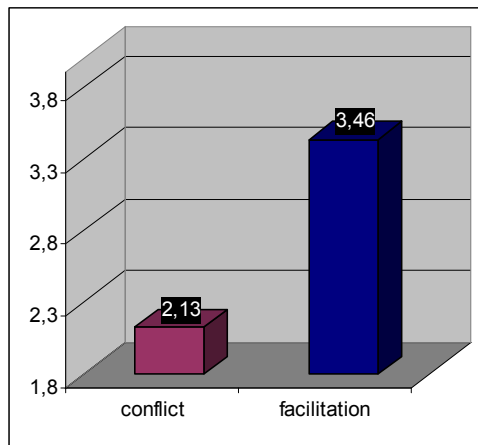


Figure 1. Experiences of Conflict and Facilitation between Work and Family

### *Gender Differences in Conflict and Facilitation Experiences*

We conducted an Ancova on the conflict scale and on the facilitation scale (including the control variables as covariates<sup>q</sup>). Women on average reported somewhat less conflict than men, although the average difference was very small:  $F(1) = 35.54, p < .001$ . Moreover, women reported a significantly higher level of facilitation between their work and home lives than men did,  $F(1) = 408.93, p < .001$ , see Figure 2. Thus, consistent with our expectations and findings in Chapter 2, these organizational findings confirm that women, on average, experience higher levels of facilitation than their male colleagues.

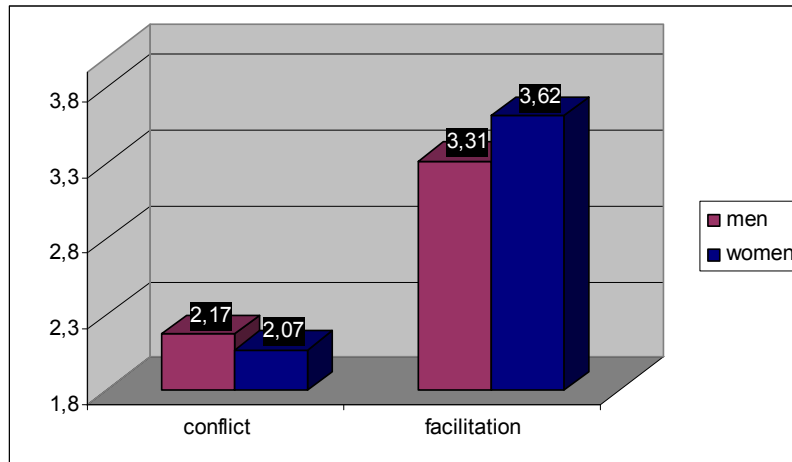


Figure 2. Men's and Women's Experiences of Conflict and Facilitation between Work and Family

### *Gender Differences in Experienced Choice for the Work Role and Role Combination*

We conducted an Ancova to examine whether men and women differed in the extent to which they thought of their work-role as a self-chosen role (including the control variables as covariates<sup>r</sup>). Supporting our line of reasoning in Chapter 2, women, on average, indeed experienced their work to a higher degree as self-chosen than men did,  $F(1) = 350.78, p < .001$ . In the same vein, we examined

<sup>q</sup> Age of youngest child was included with four dummy variables, representing the four age categories of the youngest child, using individuals without children as the reference category.

<sup>r</sup> Age of youngest child was included with four dummy variables, representing the four age categories of the youngest child, using individuals without children as the reference category.



whether men and women differed in the extent to which they experienced the combination of work and home life roles to be self-chosen. Again supporting our reasoning, women experienced role combination to a higher degree as self-chosen than men did,  $F(1) = 223.12, p < .001$ . The results are shown in Figure 3.

In sum, these organizational statistics among this broad sample of employees confirm that 1) employees experience facilitation between their work and home lives, 2) female employees experience higher levels of facilitation, and 3) female employees experience the work role (and their combination of roles) to a higher degree as self-chosen than their male colleagues.

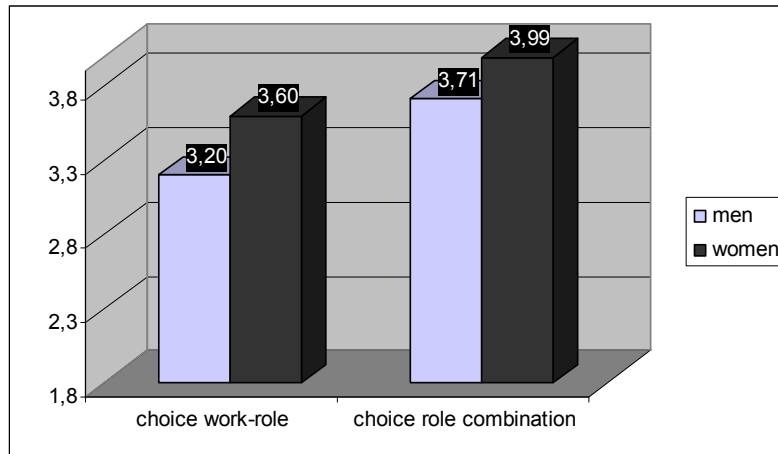


Figure 3. Men's and Women's Experiences of Choice for the Work Role and for Role Combination

## Nederlandse samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

### Facilitatie tussen het Werk en Thuis Domein: een Positief Psychologisch Perspectief op het Combineren van Rollen

Werk speelt een belangrijke rol in het leven van veel mensen. Echter, de meeste mensen vervullen ook andere rollen in hun leven, bijvoorbeeld de rol van ouder, grootouder, broer, zus of vriend. In dit proefschrift wordt ingegaan op de vraag hoe werk en andere levensrollen elkaar kunnen beïnvloeden (de zogenaamde 'werk-thuis interface'). De afgelopen 40 jaar is er bijna uitsluitend onderzoek gedaan naar de *negatieve kant* van het combineren van rollen. In de literatuur op dit gebied was de algemene aanname dat het vervullen van meerdere (veeleisende) rollen – bijvoorbeeld de werkrol en de rol van ouder - *inherent problematisch* en *stressvol* is. Aangenomen werd dat een mens slechts beschikt over een beperkte, vaststaande hoeveelheid energie, tijd en aandacht. Wanneer hiervan meer verbruikt wordt in één rol is er automatisch minder over om aan een andere rol te besteden, wat betekent dat participatie in de ene rol een *negatief effect* zal hebben op het uitvoeren van een andere rol. Gebaseerd op deze *rolschaarste theorie* is onderzoek in het verleden vooral gericht geweest op het optreden van *werk-thuis conflict*. Dit type rolconflict is de ervaring van het individu dat taken en eisen vanuit het werk- en thuisdomein onvereenigbaar zijn, met als resultaat dat participatie in de ene rol het moeilijker maakt om een andere rol te vervullen (Greenhaus, 1985). Echter, omvat dit negatieve perspectief het volledige verhaal? Is al wat kan gebeuren in het combineren van rollen dat er conflict optreedt en is de afwezigheid van conflict de best mogelijke uitkomst? In dit proefschrift beargumenteer ik dat dit zeker niet het geval is. In deze dissertatie bekijk ik het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen vanuit een *positief psychologisch perspectief*. Het centrale doel van dit onderzoek is het begrip te vergroten van de *positieve kant* van het combineren van rollen.

In het inleidende hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift (Hoofdstuk 1) wordt de theoretische en empirische achtergrond geschetst waartegen het huidige onderzoek is uitgevoerd. Eerst wordt de dominante *rolschaarste theorie* beschreven en wordt een overzicht gegeven van wat bekend is over de ervaring van *werk-thuis conflict*. Zo wordt uiteengezet dat conflict in beide *richtingen* kan plaatsvinden; participatie in de werkrol kan het vervullen van thuisrollen bemoeilijken (werk=>thuis conflict), en omgekeerd kan participatie in thuisrollen het vervullen van de werkrol moeilijker maken (thuis=>werk conflict). Verder kunnen er verschillende *typen* conflict ervaringen worden onderscheiden. Een

individueel ervaart *spanningsgerelateerd conflict* wanneer de spanning/ vermoeidheid ontstaan in de ene rol het moeilijker maakt om de taken en eisen van een andere rol te vervullen (bijv. te moe of gespannen zijn van het werk om thuis een goede bijdrage te leveren). Een *tijdsgerelateerd conflict* treedt op wanneer de tijd die besteed wordt aan één rol het moeilijker maakt om de taken en eisen van de andere rol te vervullen (bijv. het missen van een vergadering vanwege de tijd besteed aan een ziek kind). *Gedragsgelateerd conflict* ontstaat wanneer het gedrag dat vereist wordt in de ene rol het bemoeilijkt om de taken en eisen van de andere rol te vervullen. In dit geval heeft iemand bijvoorbeeld moeite met 'omschakelen' van zakelijk gedrag op het werk, naar gezellig gedrag thuis. Tenslotte wordt *psychologisch conflict* ervaren wanneer iemand mentaal gepreoccupeerd is met de ene rol terwijl hij of zij fysiek aanwezig is in een andere rol (bijv. blijven denken of piekeren over problemen thuis, waardoor iemand zich niet goed richt op wat op het werk moet gebeuren). Verder wordt ingegaan op de negatieve consequenties van het ervaren van conflict voor het welbevinden, zoals burnout klachten en depressie.

Wat betreft de *positieve kant* van het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen postuleerde Marks al in 1977 zijn *rol expansie theorie*, welke ook wordt beschreven in Hoofdstuk 1. In contrast met de *rolschaarste theorie* stelt de rol expansie theorie dat mensen beschikken over een rijkelijke hoeveelheid energie en aandacht. Ook stelt deze theorie dat het vervullen van een rol iemand niet perse energie hoeft te *kosten*, en sterker zelfs energie kan *opleveren* die gebruikt kan worden in dezelfde of een andere rol. Marks benadrukt dus dat participatie in de ene rol ook een *positief effect* kan hebben op het uitvoeren van een andere rol. Pas zeer recentelijk wordt aandacht besteed aan deze theorie in de literatuur, waardoor nog weinig bekend is over de wijze waarop rollen elkaar *positief kunnen beïnvloeden*, of de *positieve consequenties* die het combineren van rollen voor individuen kan hebben. Het doel van deze dissertatie was hier meer inzicht in te verschaffen. Ik heb mij gericht op het construct *werk-thuis facilitatie*. Dit is de individuele ervaring dat participatie in de ene rol het *beter of makkelijker* maakt om een andere rol te vervullen (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). Alle onderzoeken die gepresenteerd worden in de vier empirische hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift zijn de afgelopen vier jaar uitgevoerd onder Nederlandse medewerkers van een internationale, financiële dienstverlenende organisatie. Deze organisatie heeft in Nederland ruim 30.000 medewerkers in dienst.

*Hoofdstuk 2: Typen facilitatie en conflict en hun consequenties voor vrouwen en mannen*

Het eerste empirische hoofdstuk (hoofdstuk 2) verschaft meer inzicht in de positieve kant van het combineren van rollen door aan te tonen *hoe* werk en thuis rollen elkaar kunnen *faciliteren*. Gebaseerd op de uitgangspunten van de Rol Expansie Theorie (Marks, 1977), en eerder theoretisch en empirisch onderzoek naar conflict en facilitatie, veronderstelde ik dat er vier ervaringsdomeinen bekeken moeten worden om niet alleen mensen hun conflict ervaringen, maar ook hun facilitatie ervaringen in het combineren van werk en thuis rollen te begrijpen, namelijk: 1) energie (spanning), 2) tijd, 3) gedrag, en 4) psychologische staat. Een eerste kwalitatieve studie (interviews,  $N = 25$ ), alsmede een hier opvolgende kwantitatieve studie ( $N = 352$ ), leverden bewijs voor de geldigheid van dit onderscheid. Dit betekent dat - naast de eerder beschreven typen van conflict ervaringen - mensen ook verschillende typen *facilitatie* kunnen ervaren tussen hun werk en thuis rollen. Een individu ervaart *energiegerelateerde* facilitatie wanneer die energie die hij of zij opdoet in de ene rol het vergemakkelijkt om de taken en eisen van een andere rol te vervullen (bijv. energiek en 'opgeladen' uit het werk komen, waardoor je thuis een betere bijdrage kunt leveren). *Tijdsgelateerde* facilitatie treedt op wanneer de tijd die een individu besteedt aan één rol het stimuleert of makkelijker maakt om de tijd in een andere rol effectief te gebruiken (bijv. om 5 uur de kinderen moeten ophalen kan bevorderen dat je grenzen en prioriteiten stelt aan werktaken en de tijd op het werk efficiënt gebruikt). *Gedragsgelateerde* *facilitatie* ontstaat wanneer een individu gedrag en vaardigheden in de ene rol leert die het uitvoeren van een andere rol vergemakkelijken (bijv. het opdoen van sociale vaardigheden op het werk die thuis ook van goed pas komen). Tenslotte wordt *psychologische* *facilitatie* ervaren wanneer iemand, vanwege participatie in één rol, beter in staat is de zaken die in een andere rol spelen te relativeren en in een ander perspectief te plaatsen, wat het vervullen van de laatstgenoemde rol vergemakkelijkt (bijv. door actieve participatie thuis werkzaken beter kunnen relativeren of hier vanuit een nieuw perspectief naar kunnen kijken).

In dit hoofdstuk heb ik ook laten zien wat de *toegevoegde waarde* is van het kijken naar deze typen facilitatie ervaringen, boven de meer traditionele aanpak in de literatuur om alleen mensen hun conflict ervaringen in het combineren van rollen te onderzoeken. Ten eerste toont dit onderzoek aan dat conflict en facilitatie echt verschillende constructen zijn. Dit betekent dat *afwezigheid* van conflict niet hoeft te impliceren dat facilitatie *aanwezig* is en vice versa, ze kunnen onafhankelijk van elkaar optreden. Ten tweede bewijst dit onderzoek dat - naast het kijken naar conflict - het een toegevoegde waarde heeft om ook de

positieve kant van het combineren van rollen (facilitatie) te bekijken, omdat dit leidt tot een beter begrip van de effecten van rolcombineren op tal van belangrijke uitkomst variabelen in het werk, thuis en gezondheidsdomein. Door niet alleen naar conflict, maar ook naar facilitatie te kijken bleek het beter mogelijk te voorspellen welke consequenties ervaringen in rolcombineren kunnen hebben voor het werk (werk prestaties, affectieve betrokkenheid bij de organisatie, werk tevredenheid), voor het leven naast het werk (prestaties thuis, betrokkenheid leven thuis, tevredenheid met het leven thuis, en algemene levenssatisfactie) en voor mensen hun mentale gezondheid (emotionele uitputting/burnout, depressie). Terwijl de eerdere eenzijdige focus op conflict ervaringen slechts de *nadelige consequenties* van het combineren van rollen heeft blootgelegd (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000), toont de huidige aanpak dus aan dat het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen ook gepaard kan gaan met tal van *positieve consequenties*, namelijk betere prestaties in, verhoogde betrokkenheid bij, en verhoogde tevredenheid met het werk en thuis domein, alsook minder mentale gezondheidsklachten.

Tot slot onderzocht ik *seks verschillen*. Vaak wordt verondersteld dat vrouwen de meeste problemen en conflict ervaren in het combineren van hun werk en rollen thuis. Echter, vanuit een *positief psychologisch perspectief* beargumenteerde ik juist dat vrouwen in onze hedendaagse maatschappij, meer dan mannen, het element van *keuze* voor de werkkrol ervaren. In een organisatiebrede vragenlijst ( $N = 18.355$ , zie Appendix Hoofdstuk 2) werd hiervoor inderdaad ondersteuning gevonden. Hierop voortbouwend verwachtte ik dat vrouwen *juist meer* dan mannen de positieve kant van het combineren van rollen zouden moeten ervaren, en dus meer facilitatie zullen rapporteren dan mannen. Het onderzoek in Hoofdstuk 2 en ook de resultaten van de organisatiebrede vragenlijst toonden aan dat dit inderdaad het geval was. Ook bleek het voor vrouwen *belangrijker* te zijn om facilitatie te ervaren dan voor mannen. Zoals verwacht had de mate waarin vrouwen facilitatie ervaren tussen hun werk- en thuisrollen *meer invloed* dan voor mannen op relevante uitkomsten, zoals de tevredenheid met en inschatting van prestaties in hun werk en leven thuis.

Concluderend laten deze bevindingen zien dat de heersende benadering in de literatuur om alleen aandacht te besteden aan conflict ervaringen in het combineren van rollen *eenzijdig* en *veel te negatief* was. Het huidige onderzoek laat de positieve kant zien van het combineren van rollen, door aan te tonen dat er verschillende manieren zijn waarop werk- en thuisrollen elkaar kunnen *faciliteren* en de *positieve consequenties* hiervan voor de individuele medewerker én de organisatie in kaart te brengen.

*Hoofdstuk 3: Een zorgvriendelijke werkomgeving en een werk vriendelijke thuisomgeving kunnen conflict reduceren en facilitatie verhogen*

In hoofdstuk 3 richtte ik mij op het identificeren van relevante *antecedenten* van de typen conflict en facilitatie ervaringen. Veel hedendaagse organisatie bieden hun medewerkers verschillende regelingen en voorzieningen aan om hen te ondersteunen bij het combineren van hun werk- en thuisrollen, zoals de mogelijkheid tot thuiswerken, flexibele werktijden, of kinderopvang. Echter, eerder onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat, veel meer dan de toegang tot deze formele regelingen en voorzieningen, het voor medewerkers van belang is om *informele steun* te ontvangen in hun werkomgeving (e.g., Behson, 2004, Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Medewerkers in een *zorgvriendelijke werkomgeving* (bijv. steun van leidinggevenden en collega's voor zaken die thuis spelen, ondersteunende normen en verwachtingen op het werk) ervaren *minder conflict* tussen hun werk- en thuisrollen. In dit hoofdstuk beargumenteerde ik dat een zorgvriendelijke werkomgeving niet alleen conflict reduceert, maar ook *bevordert* dat medewerkers *facilitatie* ervaren. Bovendien wilde ik de eerdere lijn van onderzoek uitbreiden door niet alleen te kijken naar de effecten van het ontvangen van informele *steun voor het thuisdomein in de werkomgeving*, maar ook naar de effecten van het ontvangen van *steun voor het werkdomein in de thuisomgeving* (bijv. steun van partner en familie/vrienden voor zaken die op het werk spelen, ondersteunende normen en verwachtingen thuis). Aldus onderzocht ik hoe een *zorgvriendelijke werkomgeving* en een *werk vriendelijke thuisomgeving* gerelateerd zijn aan de conflict en facilitatie ervaringen van medewerkers in het combineren van werk en thuis rollen ( $N = 301$ ).

Het patroon van bevindingen bevestigde de veronderstelling dat medewerkers in een ondersteunende werk- en thuisomgeving inderdaad niet alleen minder conflict, maar ook *meer facilitatie* ervaren. In de werkomgeving was vooral het ontvangen van steun van de *leidinggevende* gerelateerd aan het ervaren van verhoogde facilitatie. Thuis was in dit opzicht vooral het ontvangen van steun van familie en vrienden van belang. In dit hoofdstuk wordt wederom ingegaan op interessante *seks verschillen* die aan het licht kwamen door specifiek te kijken naar de relaties tussen steun in de werk- en thuisomgeving en conflict en facilitatie ervaringen van mannen en vrouwen.

Voor de organisatie praktijk geven deze bevindingen aan dat het essentieel is dat er op de werkvloer goed wordt omgegaan met werk-privé issues. Wanneer een leidinggevende weinig ondersteunend is (bijv. uitdraagt dat het thuisdomein alleen maar 'afleidt' van het werk, of er niet voor open staat om dit soort onderwerpen te bespreken), zal dit een negatief effect hebben op de

ervaringen van medewerkers in het combineren van rollen. Wanneer de werkomgeving daarentegen actieve steun en waardering biedt voor het thuisdomein kan juist worden bewerkstelligd dat de medewerker minder conflict en meer facilitatie ervaart. Net zo hangt steun voor het werk in de thuisomgeving samen met het ervaren van minder conflict en meer facilitatie in het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen.

*Hoofdstuk 4: Succesvolle rolcombineerders zijn gezondere en beter presterende medewerkers*

Hoofdstuk 2 (en eerder onderzoek) heeft laten zien dat medewerkers die een succesvolle combinatie ervaren van hun werk- en thuisrollen *gelukkiger* zijn en zich *gezonder* voelen. Medewerkers die *minder conflict* en *meer facilitatie* ervaren zijn meer tevreden met hun werk, meer tevreden met hun leven thuis en met de relatie met hun partner, zijn meer tevreden met hun leven in het algemeen, rapporteren minder depressieve en burnout klachten, én rapporteren een betere fysieke gezondheid (Allen et al., 2000; Allen & Armstrong, 2006; Grzywacz, 2000; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). Ook geven deze medewerkers aan betere *werkprestaties* te leveren dan medewerkers die meer conflict en minder facilitatie ervaren (e.g., Witt & Carlson, 2006; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). Echter, eerder onderzoek is bijna uitsluitend gebaseerd op *zelfgerapporteerde uitkomstmaten*. Dit betekent dat medewerkers die minder conflict en meer facilitatie ervaren te kennen geven zich (*subjectief*) gezonder *voelen* en *zelf aangeven* dat zij goede werkprestaties leveren. Echter, er is nog niet voldoende aangetoond dat zij *daadwerkelijk* gezondere en betere presterende medewerkers *zijn* - in objectieve zin. Het centrale doel van Hoofdstuk 4 was deze vraag te beantwoorden.

De resultaten van Studie 1, een grootschalig cross-sectioneel onderzoek ( $N = 1134$ ), toonden aan dat het ervaren van meer conflict inderdaad samenhangt met een *slechtere* score op *objectieve gezondheidsindicatoren* (cholesterol niveau, body mass index). Het ervaren van meer facilitatie daarentegen hing samen met een objectief *beter* gezondheid. Medewerkers die meer facilitatie ervoeren hadden een lager cholesterol niveau, minder vaak overgewicht en een beter uithoudingsvermogen. In een tweede studie, een kleinschalig *longitudinaal* onderzoek onder Call Center medewerkers ( $N = 58$ ), onderzocht ik of het ervaren van facilitatie de *fysieke gezondheid over de tijd* *prediceert*. Daarnaast bekeek ik ook de *verzuim* gegevens van deze medewerkers en objectieve indicatoren van hun *arbeidsprestaties*. In overeenstemming met mijn veronderstelling bleken de facilitatie ervaringen van medewerkers betrouwbare voorspellers te zijn van hun fysieke gezondheid, verzuim, en arbeidsprestaties over de tijd. Medewerkers die

meer facilitatie tussen hun werk- en thuisrollen ervoeren op Tijdstip 1 hadden een jaar later een betere fysieke gezondheid (cholesterol, BMI), hadden gedurende dat jaar minder verzuimd, en hadden bovendien beter gepresteerd in hun werk.

Concluderend, leveren deze resultaten bewijs dat medewerkers die een succesvolle combinatie van hun werk- en thuisrollen ervaren inderdaad *objectief* gezondere en beter presterende medewerkers zijn. Hiermee is een belangrijke bijdrage aan de literatuur geleverd. Voor de organisatie praktijk betekenen deze resultaten een extra stimulans om medewerkers te ondersteunen in het combineren van hun werk- en thuisrollen, niet alleen voor het welbevinden van individuele medewerkers, maar ook vanuit een zakelijk perspectief voor de organisatie als geheel.

*Hoofdstuk 5: Medewerkers stimuleren een positief perspectief te nemen op rolcombineren*

Vaak wordt aangenomen dat het moeilijk en stressvol is om werk- en thuisrollen te combineren. Echter, volgens het Transactionele Model van Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is geen enkele situatie of gebeurtenis stressvol op zichzelf, waar het om gaat is hoe we deze situatie of gebeurtenis voor onszelf *cognitief construeren*. Bovendien bleek uit eerdere studies dat de beoordeling of interpretatie (cognitieve appraisal) van een situatie of gebeurtenis – en dus het stress niveau dat wordt ervaren – *beïnvloed* kan worden door informatie die men ontvangt van anderen (Haslam, 2004). Dit wordt informationele of appraisal support genoemd. Kortom, hoe we ergens tegenaan kijken (een situatie bijvoorbeeld primair zien als negatieve bedreiging, of juist als positieve uitdaging) is geen puur individuele beoordeling, maar kan beïnvloed worden door anderen in onze omgeving.

In het laatste empirische hoofdstuk (Hoofdstuk 5) paste ik deze inzichten uit de stress literatuur toe om te onderzoeken of het mogelijk is om de cognitieve appraisals over het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen te *beïnvloeden* door het verstrekken van informationele support. Hiertoe voerde ik een *experiment* uit ( $N = 143$ ). Eén groep medewerkers kreeg een ‘rol schaarste boodschap’ te lezen, waarin zogenaamd verslag werd gedaan van wetenschappelijk onderzoek naar het combineren van rollen. Hierin stond dat mensen slechts over een beperkte hoeveelheid energie beschikken, waardoor het besteden van energie aan één rol automatisch betekent dat er minder energie over is om te besteden aan een andere rol. Beweerd werd dat werk- en thuisrollen elkaar vooral *negatief* beïnvloeden. Een andere groep medewerkers kreeg juist een ‘rol expansie boodschap’. In deze tekst stond dat mensen over een rijkelijke hoeveelheid



energie beschikken en dat het vervullen van rollen energie kan opleveren. Beweerd werd dat werk- en thuisrollen elkaar vooral *positief* kunnen beïnvloeden. Het toeval bepaalde of een medewerker de rolschaarste of expansie boodschap kreeg. Hierna kreeg iedereen dezelfde vragenlijst voorgelegd, waarin medewerkers aangaven hoe zij tegen hun eigen combinatie van werk- en thuisrollen aankijken en hoe zij dit ervaren. Mijn centrale hypothese was dat medewerkers die de rol expansie boodschap hadden gekregen het combineren van rollen *positiever* zouden beoordelen dan medewerkers die de rol schaarste boodschap hadden gelezen. Daarnaast onderzocht ik of het uitmaakt van welke *bron* deze informatie afkomstig is. In één set van condities werd verteld dat de informatie afkomstig was van medewerkers van de eigen (financiële) organisatie. In de andere set van condities werd gezegd dat het ging om medewerkers van een andere (gezondheidszorg) organisatie. Aldus werd een 2 x 2 experiment uitgevoerd.

Er waren geen effecten van de *bron* van de informatie. Echter, consistent met de centrale hypothese van dit onderzoek bleek dat, vergeleken met de rol schaarste conditie, medewerkers die de rol expansie informatie hadden gekregen inderdaad hun eigen combinatie van werk- en thuisrollen als *minder stressvol*, *minder bedreigend*, en *meer als uitdaging* beoordeelden. Ook schatten zij hun *eigen capaciteit* om hun werk- en thuisrollen te kunnen combineren *hoger* in, rapporteerden zij *hogere niveaus van facilitatie*, en rapporteerden zij, denkend aan het combineren van hun werk- en thuisrollen, *meer positieve* en *minder negatieve emoties*. Tot slot schreven medewerkers aan het einde van de vragenlijst hun spontane gedachten op over het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen (kwalitatieve data). Wederom consistent met de verwachting bleek dat medewerkers in de rol expansie conditie *meer positieve gedachten* rapporteerden over rolcombineren dan medewerkers in de rol schaarste conditie.

Concluderend geven deze bevindingen aan dat het mogelijk is om te *beïnvloeden* hoe (positief of negatief) medewerkers tegen het combineren van hun eigen werk- en thuisrollen aankijken door middel van het bieden van informationele (appraisal) support. Dit suggereert dat de boodschappen die gecommuniceerd worden door anderen in de organisatie, het leven thuis, of in de media invloed hebben op hoe het individu de eigen situatie van het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen beoordeelt en ervaart. Wanneer bijvoorbeeld managers in de organisatie een rol schaarste benadering uitdragen of medewerkers onderling uitsluitend de negatieve aspecten van het combineren van rollen bespreken is het waarschijnlijk dat de individuele medewerker het combineren van rollen ook negatiever beoordeelt. Wanneer de sociale omgeving

juist de positieve kant van rolcombineren belicht, lijkt bewerkstelligd te kunnen worden dat het individu het combineren van zijn of haar eigen werk- en thuisrollen ook positiever beoordeelt en ervaart. Dit impliceert dat het voor organisaties van belang is om aandacht te besteden aan *hoe* werk-privé kwesties benaderd en besproken worden in de organisatie. Alhoewel nader onderzoek zeker nodig is, vormen deze bevindingen een belangrijke eerste stap op weg naar een interventie programma dat medewerkers helpt om het combineren van werk- en thuisrollen vanuit een positiever perspectief te benaderen, met de positieve gevolgen voor de medewerker zelf en de organisatie die elders in dit proefschrift zijn gedocumenteerd.

### Conclusie

De resultaten van dit proefschrift geven een meer evenwichtig en genuanceerd beeld van de verschillende ervaringen die medewerkers kunnen hebben in het combineren van hun werk- en thuisrollen dan dusver gebruikelijk in de literatuur. Terwijl de algemene aanname in de literatuur was dat het combineren van rollen inherent problematisch en stressvol is, en men primair aandacht besteedde aan het ontstaan van rolconflict en de negatieve consequenties hiervan, laat het huidige onderzoek ook de *positieve kant* zien van het combineren van rollen. Deze dissertatie verschaft inzicht in de verschillende wijzen waarop werk- en thuisrollen elkaar kunnen *faciliteren*. Ook toont dit onderzoek aan dat het ervaren van facilitatie *positieve consequenties* heeft voor het *welzijn* van medewerkers in hun werk en leven thuis (bijv. hogere niveaus van tevredenheid met het werk, hogere niveaus van algemene levenssatisfactie), hun *mentale en fysieke gezondheid* (bijv. minder depressieve klachten, lager cholesterol niveau, een gezonder lichaamsgewicht), en resulteert in *concrete voordelen voor organisaties* in termen van verhoogde arbeidsprestaties en verminderd verzuim. Tot slot is een belangrijke conclusie van dit onderzoek dat vanuit de organisatie *bevorderd* kan worden dat medewerkers facilitatie ervaren door het bieden van gerichte informatie/appraisal support en het bieden van steun voor het thuisdomein in de werkomgeving. Hiermee geeft deze dissertatie een positief psychologisch perspectief op de combinatie van werk- en thuisrollen, een perspectief dat hopelijk ook doordringt in de praktijk van organisaties evenals in de maatschappelijke discussie.



### **Curriculum Vitae**

Elianne van Steenbergen was born on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1980 in Leiderdorp, the Netherlands. After graduating from the Da Vinci secondary school in Leiden in 1998 (*cum laude*), she studied Psychology at Leiden University. Her interest in becoming a researcher matured during her internship at a financial service organization and writing her Master's thesis, both supervised by Professor Naomi Ellemers. Therefore, after receiving her Master's Degree in Social and Organizational Psychology (*cum laude*), Naomi Ellemers and Elianne set up a PhD project in collaboration with this organization. Elianne worked on this project between May 2003 and May 2007, resulting in the present dissertation. Considering her continued interest in the interdependencies between work and family life she choose to further pursue this topic in her current work as a postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University.

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