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

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Chapter 3

Combining Work and Family: How Family Supportive Work Environments and Work Supportive Home Environments can Reduce Work-Family Conflict and Enhance Facilitation[f]

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, & Pottras, 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 & Pottras, 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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employees from the 2002 Study of the Changing Workforce, Thompson and Pottras (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 & Pottras, 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 & Pottras, 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 & Pottras, 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; Dikkers, 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 & Pottras, 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 & Pottras, 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 Pottras (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 were 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[g]. 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 =

[g] 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" (α = .91). *Co-worker support* was measured with the same items only this time these referred to co-workers (α = .91). Both *organizational time demands* (α = .73) and *negative career consequences* (α = .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 (α = .86 and α = .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 (α =. 65 and α = .67. However, we corrected for measurement error in our analyses[h]

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 α = .71 to α = .92, except for behavioral WF (α = .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, (α = .88, α = .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[i] was high (range α = .71 to α = .86).

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[h] 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 (χ^2 (142) = 288.35, p < .001, CFI = .93, GFI = .86, IFI = .93, RMSEA = .08), and fitted the data better than alternative models.

[i] 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: χ^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. conseq.	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. conseq.	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. conseq.	-.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 (χ^2 (93) = 85.95, $p = .69$, CFI = 1.00, GFI = .96, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01), as did the model for women (χ^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.

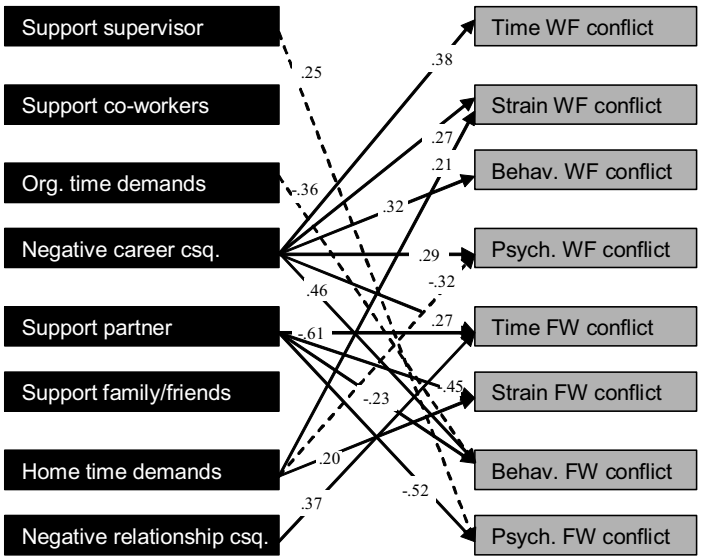

Figure 3.1A Prediction of Men's Conflict Experiences

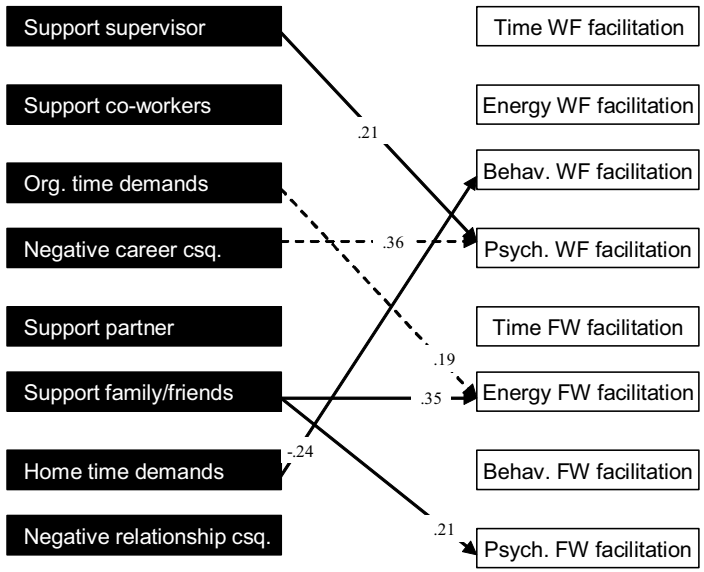

Figure 3.1B Prediction of Men's Facilitation Experiences

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.

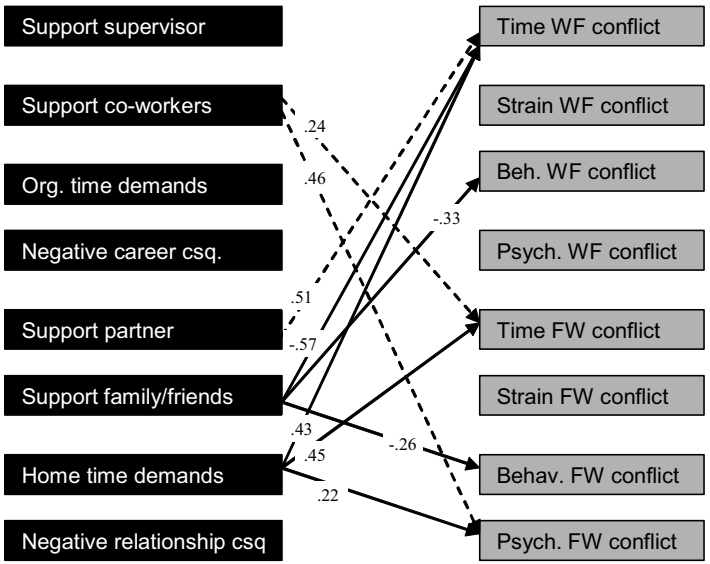

Figure 3.2A Prediction of Women's Conflict Experiences

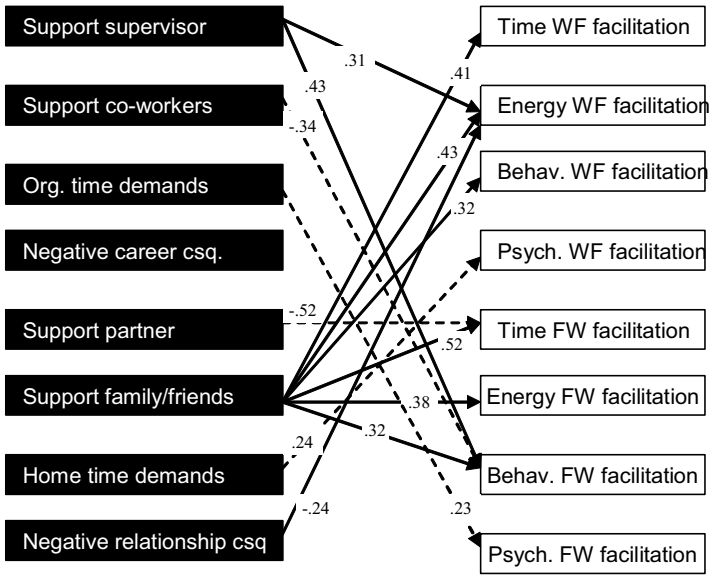

Figure 3.2B Prediction of Women's Facilitation Experiences

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 & Pottras, 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 (Schippers, 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; Tompson & Pottras, 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 (Dikkers 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.