**Managing a sustainable career in the contemporary world of work: personal choices and contextual challenges**
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Managing a Sustainable Career in the Contemporary World of Work:
Personal Choices and Contextual Challenges

# Managing a Sustainable Career in the Contemporary World of Work: Personal Choices and Contextual Challenges

PROEFSCHRIFT

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*door*

## Maral Darouei

geboren te Shiraz, Iran

in 1991

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                   prof. dr. M. Verbruggen (KU Leuven, België)

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# 1 | Introduction

## 1.1    BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Most of us dedicate a large portion of our lives to work. In fact, the average person spends more than one third of their lifetime working (Pryce-Jones, 2011). It is then safe to say that our jobs and careers can have a huge impact on the quality of our lives. Indeed, the degree to which we are satisfied with our job has been shown to affect our levels of well-being, satisfaction with life, and career success (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005; Gallup & Oswold, 2014; Unanue, Gomez, Cortez, Oyanedel, & Mendiburo-Sequel, 2017). Considering this impact, it is not surprising that many of us are continuously concerned with making the right career choices and are desperately seeking careers that can make us happy while bringing us success. This concern is especially relevant for the 21st century, where individuals have an endless number of career options and a plethora of career paths to follow (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010).

Unlike previous generations, people are no longer bound to work under a permanent contract within a single organization for the rest of their working life. The modern employee has many alternative employment opportunities to choose from, ranging from project work to independent contracting (e.g., self-employment) and everything in between (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017; Kelliher & Menezes, 2019). In addition to employment-related career decisions, employees face numerous career decisions related to their day-to-day work life. Contrary to former times, when work was performed during standard work hours at the office, many employees are given the opportunity to decide how, when, and where (e.g., working from home) they want to perform their work (Kelliher & Menezes, 2019). Thus, while it used to be perfectly fine for organizations to manage their employees' career, nowadays, individuals are expected to be proactive and take greater responsibility for managing their career and everyday work life. In essence, this means that the responsibility for career management has shifted from organizations to the person.

The shifting responsibility for career management from organizations to individuals is reflected in scholarly career research, with several theoretical frameworks underlining the importance of individuals taking responsibility for their own career success (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; King, 2004). Two theories that have gained particular momentum in the career literature are the *boundaryless* and *protean career* paradigms. Both theories postulate that individuals are independent actors that can self-manage their careers through career decision-making (Crawford, French, & Loyd-Walker, 2013),

by developing competencies and showing proactive career behaviours (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996).

Taking this perspective, many researchers have studied how career decision-making, career planning, and job crafting can influence career success (see Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017, for a literature review). However, as much as we want to, our agentic behaviours are not always sufficient to make a career; it is in fact very unlikely to craft and manage a successful career on our own. To illustrate, we can take the career progress barriers that women (still) face as an example. Although many women are carefully managing their career, and are willing to go the extra mile by working on their competencies, they are still underrepresented in management positions (see EIGE, 2018), which, largely, can be explained by social norms and gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ellemers, 2018). This example demonstrates the influence that less controllable aspects in our life can have on our careers, and the development thereof.

Indeed, recent career research suggests that if we are to better understand how careers develop, we should look at the intersection between the individual and the broader life context (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2014; De Vos et al., 2018; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007). For instance, Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015) recently added the career sustainability framework to the literature to argue that both the *person* and the *context* play a fundamental role when analysing the development and the sustainability of careers. While the person dimension refers to individual agency and personal factors, the context denotes influences that are outside of individuals' control, such as the work environment and society. Consistent with this notion, De Hauw & Greenhaus (2015) define a sustainable career as one "in which employees remain healthy, productive, happy and employable throughout its course and that fits into their broader life context" (p. 224). De Vos and colleagues (2018) recently built on this definition by considering health, happiness and productivity to be key indicators of a sustainable career. My dissertation contributes to this stream of research, and more specifically to the conceptual framework put forward by De Vos and colleagues (2018), by

(i)  Investigating how *personal* choices, such as contemporary career decisions and personal factors, such as career self-efficacy and demographics, impact career sustainability.
(ii) Examining the impact of different *contextual* factors, and in particular those originating from work and society, on sustainable careers.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline the building blocks of this dissertation. First, I will explain in more detail how sustainable careers can be analysed. Hereafter, I will discuss how career sustainability is affected at the *person* level and how the *context* influences sustainable careers. Then, I will present the research questions that guide the empirical chapters in this dissertation. Finally, an overview of the methodology will be provided.

## 1.2 BUILDING BLOCKS

### 1.2.1 Characteristics of a Sustainable Career

The concept of a sustainable career is still very much in its infancy and there seems to be little consensus in the field on what sustainable careers are. In fact, scholars have argued that "there is still a lack of an overarching and clear theoretical framework that allows grounded empirical investigation of this phenomenon" (De Vos et al., 2018, p. 2). In an attempt to build clarity and advance our understanding of what makes a career sustainable, De Vos and colleagues (2018) developed a conceptual model of sustainable careers. Their model presents three indicators that can be used to analyse what makes a career less or more sustainable. These indicators include health, happiness, and productivity, and are based on earlier definitions that underline resilience, satisfaction and employability as key characteristics of a sustainable career (e.g., De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015).

*Health* refers to both physical and mental states of well-being and denotes the fit of individuals' careers with their mental and physical abilities. For instance, jobs in which individuals experience frequent mental exhaustion may not be sustainable as an individual may withdraw from work due to a burnout (Barthauer, Kaucher, Spurk, & Kauffeld, 2019). *Happiness* encompasses the subjective element of individuals' feeling of satisfaction with their work and career. Jobs in which employees are not satisfied may not be sustainable as they increase individuals' turn-over intentions (Blau, 2007; Van der Heijden, van Dam, & Hasselhorn, 2007). Van der Heijden and colleagues (2007) for instance, found that nurses who were dissatisfied with their job were more inclined to leave the profession. *Productivity* includes both performance at one's current work and chances of future employability. To illustrate, careers in which employees can develop their competencies may foster sustainability as they increase individuals' career potential in the future (Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, Huibers, & Blonk, 2013; Akkermans & Tims, 2017).

De Vos and colleagues' (2018) conceptualization of a sustainable career is central to the studies presented in this dissertation. Specifically, the first two empirical chapters examine a sustainable career in terms of health, while chapters 4 and 5 use the productivity indicator to analyse a sustainable career. Having established the characteristics of a sustainable career, the next steps are to explore how such sustainability can be achieved and in which ways career sustainability is affected.

### 1.2.2 The Person Dimension

Individuals have a major impact on their career sustainability, through agentic behaviours, but also through other person-related factors, such as their skills and beliefs (De Vos et al., 2018). I will discuss these two elements

in more detail below and describe how my dissertation builds on these elements.

*Agentic behaviours*

Career research typically studies how individuals influence their career path through agentic behaviours, such as career decision-making (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015). In fact, a recent paper by Akkermans and Kubasch (2017) identified career decision-making as the second most trending topic in contemporary career research. Scholars have studied the concept to understand the processes by which individuals' decision-making strategies, career ambitions, and specific career paths and career choices influence career development (e.g., Kaminsky & Behrend, 2015). In the current dissertation, I focus on the latter. Understanding how specific career choices and career paths influence the sustainability of careers is important because individuals nowadays have a wide variety of possible career paths to follow (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015; Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

   Before I move towards the discussion of the impact of specific career choices on sustainable careers, I will provide an overview of the different career decisions that individuals can engage in. In so doing, I use the taxonomy of contemporary career decisions created by De Hauw and Greenhaus (2015). In essence, the taxonomy distinguishes two ways in which employees can engage in contemporary career decision-making, namely (i) altering the content of work, and (ii) choosing alternative work arrangements. Career decisions related to making changes in the work content represent changes in individuals' job status and their function. Alternative work arrangements, on the other hand, define how employees decide to perform their job, such as opting for part-time work, choosing to work off-site (i.e., remote working) or deciding to be self-employed. Specifically, there are five dimensions (see Figure 1.1), which I will explain in further detail below.

1.  Time, which enables employees to change their working hours. While traditionally, employees worked on a standard full-time basis, nowadays individuals can change the number of hours they work. To illustrate, employees can choose to decrease their working hours and engage in part-time work.

2.  Continuity denotes individuals' career experiences across the lifespan. Today, many careers involve breaks and discontinuities. For instance, employees interrupt their careers to travel the world or to start a family, depending on their lifecycle.

3.  Employment relation, by which individuals can choose a variety of employment contracts. The increasing number of individuals who are

engaging in independent employment is a clear example of contemporary employment relations.

4. Location refers to individuals' ability to pursue global careers. Because of globalization, nowadays, individuals have the opportunity to take on (short-term) international projects.

5. Personalization is a trend that has become possible because of developments in information technology. In contrast to the traditional 9 to 5 office mentality, many individuals today can choose where and when they perform their work on a daily basis (e.g., work from home or flexitime).
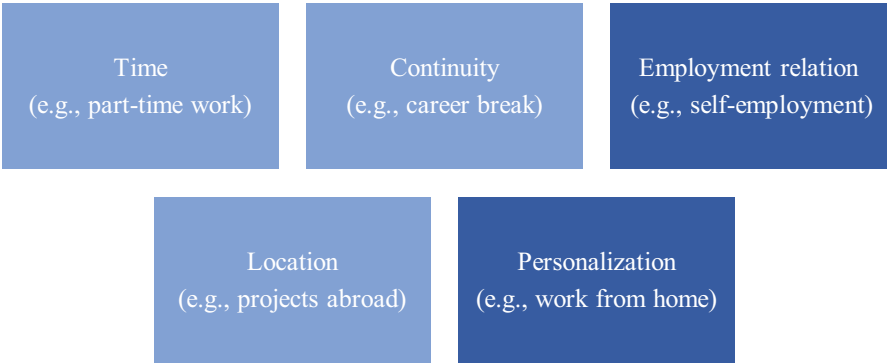


*Figure 1.1 | An overview of contemporary career decisions*

The contemporary career decisions illustrated above are assumed to have implications for career sustainability by influencing employees' productivity, health and happiness (De Vos et al., 2018). While I acknowledge the importance of all dimensions, I specifically focus on the *employment relation* (i.e., self-employment in Chapter 2) and *personalization* dimensions (i.e., working from home in chapters 3 & 4), as these are the most common forms of alternative work arrangements (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). For instance, in the Netherlands, 17% of the working population generates their own work and engages in self-employment (OECD, 2019). Moreover, figures from the European Working Conditions Survey, drawing on 43,850 employees across 35 European countries, show that 18% of the working population works frequently from home or at other locations outside the office and 30% in the EU28 can determine their own working schedules (Eurofound, 2015).

*Personal factors*

In addition to the impact of individuals' career decisions on sustainability, scholars have argued that "personal needs, values, and resources form

an important foundation for career-related decision making and are a key ingredient of the sustainability of one's career" (Akkermans, Keegan, Huemann, & Ringhofer, 2019, p.8). Put differently, career-related resources play a key role in navigating one's career. Career-related resources that are central to career development include career adaptability (Spurk, Kauffeld, Meinecke, & Ebner, 2016), competencies (Akkermans et al., 2013), resilience and self-efficacy (Guerrero & Hatala, 2015). Previous research has shown that employees with well-developed career competencies (e.g., proactively exploring career opportunities) experience greater objective as well as subjective career success (Colakoglu, 2011; Francis-Smythe, Haase, Thomas, & Steele, 2013), which relates to the productivity proxy of sustainable careers.

Other personal resources that have been identified as key ingredients of career sustainability include resilience and self-efficacy. Scholars claim that self-efficacy, in particular, plays a critical role in enabling a sustainable career because it reflects "the strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Indeed, the importance of self-efficacy has been demonstrated in research on career success and career adaptability (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Jiang, Hu, & Wang, 2018). Building on this stream of research, the final chapter (5) of my dissertation examines the role of career self-efficacy in career decision-making.

Moreover, meta-analytic studies have shown that personal factors related to demographics also have the potential to affect the sustainability of careers. In their meta-analysis, Ng and colleagues (2005), for example, found that marital status, gender, age and race predict career success-related outcomes, such as promotions and salary. In addition, research suggests that also individuals' parental status has negative consequences for career success because parents are perceived as being less committed to their work than childless employees (e.g., Benard & Correll, 2010). This dissertation adds to the literature by investigating whether there are differences in the career sustainability of parents and non-parents (Chapter 4).

## 1.2.3   The Context Dimension

As mentioned in the early sections of the introduction, sustainable careers are not entirely makeable and cannot be exclusively self-managed. Put differently, the context in which careers take place may either create challenges for individuals' career sustainability by creating constraints or foster sustainable careers by generating opportunities (Akkermans, Seibert, & Mol, 2018; De Vos et al., 2018; De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017; Van der Heijden et al., 2020).

Before I elaborate on the impact of the context on sustainable careers, I will discuss which contextual factors exist, and where they originate from. To do this, I draw on the conceptual framework of De Vos and colleagues (2018). According to these scholars, the different layers of contextual factors that can create challenges or opportunities come from work, the broader

labour market, and private life (see Figure 1.2). In what follows, I will provide a detailed explanation of each contextual layer with examples from the literature.

| Work (e.g., supervisors) | Broader labour market (e.g., society) | Private life (e.g., spouse) |
|---|---|---|
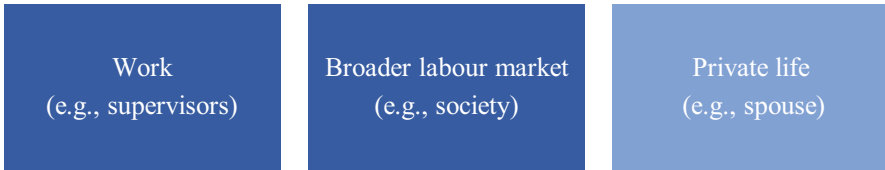
*Figure 1.2 | An overview of the contextual layers*

1.  Work. The work-related context includes factors at the work group level and organizational level. At the work group level, one can think of social support. For instance, supervisory support at work can buffer the negative effect of high workload on emotional exhaustion (Pluut, Ilies, Curseu, & Liu, 2018), and foster a workplace in which productivity does not come at the cost of employees' well-being. Talent management practices and Human Resource Development practices are clear examples of how context at the organizational level can influence career sustainability, in terms of employability (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014).

2.  The broader labour market. On a more general level, individuals are influenced by the occupational sector and institutional environment in which their careers develop. Technological advancement is a good illustration of how the careers of administrative support staff may be affected at the occupational level (Frey & Osborne, 2017). The institutional environment can be thought of in terms of society and culture. For example, social norms and gender stereotypes create career (advancement) barriers for women (Cardoso & Marques, 2008; Krivkovich, Robinson, Starikova, Valentino, & Yee, 2017) consequently challenging the sustainability of their career, in terms of employability.

3.  The private life. An example of the private life context is the spouse within dual-earner couples who influences and is influenced by the individual's career-related decision (Pluut, Büttgen, & Ullrich, 2018; Schooreel, Shockley, & Verbruggen, 2017).

These examples show that there are two ways in which contextual factors can influence career sustainability. First, the extent to which individuals' career decisions are beneficial for career sustainability is dependent on contextual factors, because sustainable careers can only be crafted when there is a clear alignment between the person and the context (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). Second, contextual factors can influence individuals' career decision-making, by creating opportunities or restricting what

is possible (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015; Feldman & Ng, 2007). In line with the above reasoning, I study contextual factors as an antecedent of career decision-making and a contingency factor that influences the consequences of career decision-making. That is, although contextual factors might directly influence sustainable careers, this dissertation focuses on the interplay between contextual factors (e.g., society) and person-related factors (i.e., career decision-making) that eventually has an impact on the sustainability of careers. The ways in which contextual factors influence sustainable careers is visualized in Figure 1.3. Against this background, the final two empirical studies in the current dissertation examine how *work* responds to individuals' career decisions (Chapter 4) and how differences in promotional opportunities because of *societal* norms influence individuals' career decision-making (Chapter 5).
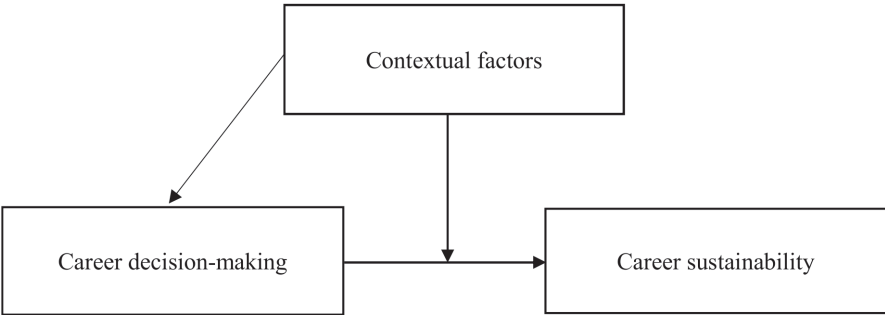


*Figure 1.3 | The role of contextual factors in sustainable careers*

## 1.3    RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the previous paragraphs, I gave a detailed overview of the frameworks that will be used in this dissertation to study the impact of both individuals and their surrounding stakeholders on sustainable careers. In what comes next, I will specify what is examined in each study of my dissertation and how these studies contribute to career sustainability literature. In addition, I will outline the research questions that form the foundation of these chapters.

In chapter 2, we take a *person* centred approach to the *employment relation* dimension of the taxonomy created by De Hauw and Greenhaus (2014) to investigate how the contemporary career decision to be self-employed influences individuals' career sustainability. Most studies to date have primarily paid attention to the career sustainability of "traditional employees in organizations" (Akkermans et al., 2019, p. 15) and thus in-depth knowledge about the impact of new employment relations for sustainable careers is still mostly lacking. Yet, for a better understanding of sustainable careers, we need to acknowledge the variety of types of employment that exist in the contemporary world of work (Barley et al., 2017; De Vos et al., 2018). In

fact, scholars have only begun to examine how the health and happiness of those who are not organization-based employed is affected. Recent studies, for example, have investigated the career sustainability of the self-employed and have shown that the self-employed experiences less stress, greater well-being (Baron, Franklin, & Hmieleski, 2016; Hessels, Rietveld, & Van der Zwan, 2017; Stephan & Roesler, 2010) and higher levels of work satisfaction (Van der Zwan, Hessels, & Rietveld, 2018). Yet, an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms through which type of employment influences well-being seems to be missing (Van der Zwan, Hessels & Rietveld, 2018) and it is therefore unclear why there are career sustainability differences across these employment relations.

Chapter 2 aims to add to the literature by elucidating the process by which type of employment affects career sustainability. Specifically, using multi-wave panel data gathered over 15 years from Australian workers, we hypothesize that schedule flexibility and work-home processes can explain any differences in the career sustainability of the self-employed and wage workers on the long-term. Here, career sustainability is conceptualized in terms of individuals' general health status and the variability in their health over time. The central research question guiding this chapter is:

*Research Question 1: To what extent does the career sustainability of individuals who decide to be self-employed differ from those who decide to be organization-based employed?*

Chapter 3 also investigates how the person can influence career sustainability. Yet, whereas Chapter 2 sheds light on the consequences of new *employment relations* for career sustainability on the long-term, Chapter 3 investigates the impact of daily changes in careers; that is, *personalization* of work (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2014). Specifically, Chapter 3 reports on a study that links employees' daily decision to work from home to daily experiences of sustainability. Given that the number of individuals who work from home is continuously growing (Matos, Galinsky, & Bond, 2016), it is imperative to examine the impact that this decision has on the sustainability of their career (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Indeed, a number of studies have investigated how working from home relates to happiness and health (Golden, Henly, & Lambert, 2014; Grzywacz, Carlson, & Shulkin, 2008) with numerous papers reporting beneficial effects of working from home for individuals' well-being (see Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015, for a meta-analyses).

However, the vast majority of these studies have taken an all-or-nothing approach, where experiences of full-time office employees are compared with full time teleworkers (Allen et al., 2015; Delanoeji, Verbruggen, & Germeys, 2019). Yet, considering that work personalization frequently happens on a daily basis as many individuals alternate between their home and office days (Biron & Van Veldhoven, 2016; Delanoeji et al., 2019), it is imperative to examine how day-to-day decisions related to the workplace

affect individuals' well-being. To this end, we adopted a more episodic approach of working from home and developed an intraindividual model that examines the implications of working from home for individuals' well-being on a day-to-day basis. Data for this chapter were collected among 34 professional workers and 24 spouses, who were asked to fill out three surveys (the spouses only one) a day for two consecutive workweeks. The central research question to this chapter is as follows:

*Research Question 2: How does the decision to work from home influence individuals' daily path towards sustainable careers?*

An individual who chooses to work from home is assumed to fare better in terms of his or her well-being (i.e., the health indicator of career sustainability), which is the focus of Chapter 3. But what about the implications for his work performance and employability and thus the productivity proxy of sustainable careers? Here is where the *context* comes into play. As mentioned earlier (see section 1.2.3.), the positive outcomes of individuals' career decisions for sustainable careers can only prevail if contextual factors do not create constraints for the individual, and hence support the decision. Drawing on the contextual layers as provided by De Vos and colleagues (2018) Chapter 4 looks at employees' decision to work from home from the perspective of *work*, and in particular that of supervisors.

Working from home changes the social dynamics of careers, where traditionally the individual worked in an office surrounded by colleagues or clients (Richardson & Kelliher, 2015). Deviating from traditional career norms may hinder individuals' career sustainability, in terms of employability, because the career success model of several workplaces still revolves around the ideal worker who has no obligations outside of work and is always at the office (Blair-Loy, 2003; Wynn & Rao, 2019). Indeed, recent research suggests that there is a dark side to flexible working practices (FWPs) in terms of employees' career progression (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008; Leslie et al., 2012; Yam, Fehr & Barnes, 2014). Yam and colleagues (2014), for instance, showed that supervisors give lower performance ratings to employees who arrive later at work. Although these studies are primarily focused on flexitime as a practice (Leslie et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2014) recent research suggests that working from home may also have a dark side and has the potential to negatively affect individuals' careers.

Some studies, for instance, have shown that the strength of employees' relationship with their supervisor influences the job outcomes of employees who decide to work from home (Golden & Veiga, 2008; Gajendran et al., 2014). Moreover, Greer and Payne (2014) show in their qualitative study that supervisors are worried when employees work from home they are not as focused on their work as in the office. These studies clearly highlight the importance of supervisors, and in particular, supervisors' perceptions for sustainable careers. Yet, research to date has only begun to investigate the precise psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions that help under-

stand why working from home has a dark side. It therefore remains elusive why and when working from home is harmful to career sustainability.

In Chapter 4, we address this limitation and focus on the perceptions that supervisors have of their employees who work from home, because supervisor perceptions influence key HR-related processes in organizations, such as performance evaluations (Bratton & Gold, 2012; Schuh et al., 2018). Here, we identify supervisors' perceptions of employees' organizational commitment and work centrality as key mechanisms that explain why working from home may negatively affect performance ratings and therefore career sustainability. Yet, we also acknowledge that the negative effects of working from home may not always prevail, and may depend on characteristics related to the *person*. We focus on parental status in particular as previous research suggests that parents are more likely to be penalized when using flexible working practices (Leslie et al., 2013). That is, we hypothesize that supervisors form a different perception of employees who choose to work from home, depending on whether the employee is a parent or not.

To examine these perceptions, we developed two experimental vignette studies in which students and professional workers were asked to assume the role of the supervisor and rate the job performance of an employee who chooses to either work from home on a regular basis or always at the office. Moreover, we manipulated the parental status of the employee to understand whether demographic factors related to the *person* impact the strength and direction of the proposed relationships. Thus, other than investigating the interplay between a person's decision to work from home and supervisors' perceptions about this behaviour, this empirical study examines how demographic factors interact with perceptions coming from the context.

The research questions that will be answered in this chapter are:

*Research Question 3a: What are the implications of working from home for supervisory performance ratings?*

*Research Question 3b: To what extent does parenthood influence the relationship between working from home and supervisory performance ratings?*

Chapter 5 continues focusing on the interplay between *person* and *context* on sustainable careers. However, while Chapter 4 investigates how the context reacts to individuals' career decisions, the final chapter investigates how individuals' career decisions are influenced by contextual constraints. Specifically, this chapter looks at contextual challenges originating from *society* (De Vos et al., 2018).

Countless studies have shown that women are more likely than men to encounter barriers to career progression (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012) – often referred to as the glass ceiling (Eagly & Carli, 2007), because of implicit *think manager – think male* biases. Nonetheless, society has witnessed a rise of women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2017). Yet,

these are leadership positions with a great risk of failure (Glass & Cook, 2016; Ryan & Haslam, 2005), a phenomenon that Ryan and Haslam (2005) termed the glass cliff. While research has examined why organizational gatekeepers put women in glass cliff positions, it remains unknown why women take the helm of such positions. A female job seeker's perspective will enhance our understanding of how contextual factors influence the career paths of employees belonging to minority groups.

Here, we posit that due to the limited number of promotional opportunities that women are offered through their career, they are more willing than men to accept a risky leadership positions. Thus, perceptions of the leadership position as a promotional opportunity may explain differences in men's and women's willingness to accept a risky position. However, we also acknowledge that personal resources can help individuals to remain persistent in the face of challenges and aid them in building a sustainable career (De Vos et al., 2018). Building on previous research that postulates that career self-efficacy plays a particularly important role in building a sustainable career (Bandura, 1977; De Vos et al., 2018) we shed light on the role of this career resource.

Incorporating the perspective of the job seeker, Chapter 5 reports on two vignette experiments conducted among students and professional workers that capture individuals' perceptions of a risky leadership position, their willingness to accept such a position and their beliefs in their own ability (i.e., career self-efficacy). Investigating how both contextual and personal factors affect individuals' decision making and eventually career paths may enrich our understanding of the interplay between the person and the context (De Vos et al., 2018). The research questions guiding this chapter are:

*Research Question 4a: To what extent do external barriers (i.e., lack of promotional opportunities) explain women's willingness to make a risky career move, in terms of accepting a risky leadership position?*

*Research Question 4b: How do personal resources, such as career self-efficacy, influence women's career decision to accept a risky leadership position?*

1.4     Outline and Relevance of Methodology

Research on career sustainability has been mainly conceptual and theoretical (De Vos et al., 2018; De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015; Valcour, 2015). The current dissertation consists of four quantitative studies with different research methodologies that are aimed at contributing to the empirical validation of the career sustainability framework. The first empirical chapter makes use of multi-wave, longitudinal, data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) that yearly collects data from more than 12,000 Australians on many well-being and employment-related outcomes. Utilizing 15 years of data, this chapter contributes to the career

sustainability literature by advancing our understanding of how individuals' careers develop each year and what makes careers more or less sustainable on the long term (Van der Heijden et al., 2020).

While multi-wave data can tell us more about how careers unfold over time, such an approach limits our understanding of what can be done on the short-term to enhance sustainability. That is why Chapter 2 employs experience sampling methodology and conceptualizes career sustainability (i.e., health) as a day-to-day process that is linked to individuals' *daily* decision to work either from home or at the office. I follow a total of 34 employees and 24 partners over two workweeks and collect data on where they work on a particular day (i.e., either from home or at the office) and how well they feel each day. This study is among the first (see also Delanoeije et al., 2019) to study the relationship between working from home and the health indicator of career sustainability on a daily basis.

A final methodological contribution lies in the use of experimental vignette studies. I believe that experimental vignettes have the potential to improve our understanding of biases, perceptions and attitudes that influence individuals' path towards career sustainability. Such a design can help capture psychological mechanisms underlying individuals' perceptions and biases that may be difficult to study in real-life scenarios because of confounding variables that cannot be controlled (Evans et al., 2005).

In sum, the different study designs that are utilized across the chapters of this dissertation enable us to answer different types of questions related to sustainable careers. That is, the multi-wave study can enhance our understanding of what makes careers sustainable over the long term, the experience sampling chapter helps elucidate what individuals can do on a daily basis to promote sustainability and the experimental vignettes provide insight into the perceptions and biases (e.g., ideal worker bias) that cause some more than others to experience challenges in managing a sustainable career. A structural overview of the four empirical chapters and research questions is presented in Figure 1.4.
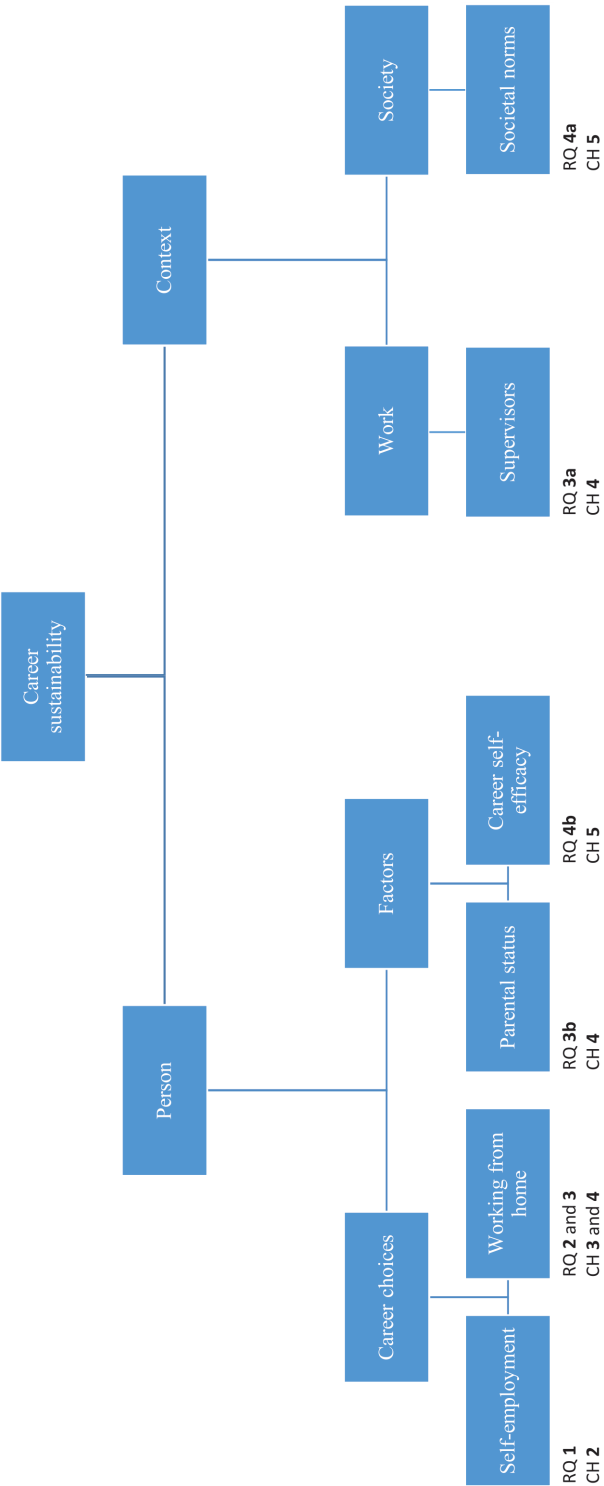
*Figure 1.4 | Structural overview of the four chapters (CH) and research questions (RQ)*

# 2 | Pathways to Career Sustainability Among the Self-employed and Wage Workers: A Study of Flextime, the Work-family Interface, and Health During Parenthood*

Abstract

Pressure for employees to prolong their careers while achieving a satisfactory work-life balance and remaining healthy has spurred interest in the notion of career sustainability. In this study, we examined differences in the career sustainability of the self-employed and employees during parenthood, which is a life stage in which concerns for career sustainability are perhaps most pronounced. Building on the principles of conservation of resources (COR) theory, we proposed that the resourcefulness of work environments explains differences in the work-home interface and health status (as prerequisites of sustainable careers) between the self-employed and employees as well as any changes in the sustainability of their careers across the parenthood life stage. We used multi-wave data (2001-2015) from the HILDA survey in Australia. Results showed that self-employed parents are richer in the flextime resource than employees, leading to lower levels of work-family conflict and higher levels of work-family enrichment, and ultimately better health. Moreover, the self-employed experienced less variability in their health status over time compared with employees. We conclude that the self-employed are able to build more sustainable careers than employees. Practical implications and potential avenues for future research are discussed.

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## 2.1   INTRODUCTION

Employees are confronted with an intensified workplace characterized by pressing demands, often resulting in high levels of job strain (Kubicek, Paškvan, & Korunka, 2015). Intensification of job demands creates challenges for employees to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and family life and also impairs employees' health (OECD, 2017). Concerns are being raised about how employees can overcome the detrimental effects of job demands and find a good work-life balance while remaining healthy throughout their career (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015). These concerns have spurred interest in managing careers, which is currently reflected in a growing body of research on career sustainability (e.g., De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015, 2017; De Vos, Van der Heijden, & Akkermans, 2018; Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014; Van Engen, Vinkenburg, & Dikkers, 2012).

Sustainable careers are those that fit into employees' broader life context and promote individual well-being, such as good health, over time (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015; Kossek et al., 2014). Indeed, health is a key indicator of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2018). We concur with Greenhaus and Kossek (2014) that a work-home perspective to sustainable careers is imperative because "a sustainable career requires a sustainable nonwork life" (p. 378). For many individuals, a satisfactory work-life balance may be the single most important part of remaining healthy throughout the course of a career. Importantly, organizations can support the sustainability of individuals' careers and lives by offering flexible work arrangements to their employees (De Vos et al., 2018). Surprisingly, only a limited amount of organizations adopts flexible scheduling. A study across 1,051 American organizations with 50 or more employees showed that only 11 per cent allow most or all employees to adjust their worktimes (starting and ending) on a daily basis, while 42 per cent of organizations offer *some* employees this flexibility (Matos, Galinsky, & Bond 2016).

The lack of autonomy and flexibility among employees motivates people to start their own business (Benz & Frey, 2008; Brenner, Pringle, & Greenhaus, 1991). The self-employed constitute an increasingly large share of the work force, with 16 per cent in European countries and ten per cent in Australia (OECD, 2018), and they play a prominent role in economic development (Van Praag & Versloot, 2007). The self-employed, therefore, make a non-negligible group that deserves attention in terms of career sustainability. Although differences between the self-employed and employees—also in terms of autonomy and flexibility—are widely documented (Hessels, Rietveld, & Van der Zwan, 2017; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001; Stephan & Roesler, 2010), it remains elusive how the self-employed manage their careers and how sustainable their careers are in comparison with those of employees.

We posit that the challenges of achieving career sustainability, in particular those related to being and remaining healthy, do not apply equally to

the self-employed and employees. The aim of the present paper is to examine the pathways through which both the self-employed and employees achieve career sustainability. Importantly, we compare these occupational groups during years of parenthood, which represents a life stage in which sustainability is increasingly problematic (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Our study examines how the careers of parents in self-employment and in paid employment evolve over time in relation to key prerequisites of sustainability. To this end, we first compare the self-employed and employees in terms of health status and examine their possibly distinct pathways to health via flextime and the work-home interface. Health is a key indicator of career sustainability because it is important not only for one's individual prosperity but also for the welfare of other stakeholders such as the organization or family and friends (De Vos et al., 2018). Second, we uncover change patterns in our study variables over time and investigate whether the self-employed and employees exhibit time trends that differ from each other. Third, in response to a call by Stephan (2018) to focus on variability of entrepreneurs' mental well-being, we compare the stability of health of the self-employed and employees and investigate predictors of health stability across the parenthood life stage.

Our aim is to contribute to theory and research on career sustainability in at least three noteworthy ways. First, research on career sustainability has put a premium on work flexibility, the work-home interface, and employee well-being (i.e., health). Our model integrates these key concepts and examines their interplay in order to elucidate the process of career sustainability. Second, we use multi-wave (longitudinal) data that covers up to 15 years to advance our understanding of what makes careers more sustainable on the long term and what triggers changes in the sustainability of careers across the lifespan. We study individuals in a life stage in which concerns for career sustainability are perhaps most pronounced, namely during parenthood. Third, we compare employees with the self-employed, which is a relatively understudied group in research on career sustainability. Our study addresses recent calls in the literature on career sustainability for research that considers different worker types and adopts a long-term perspective (see De Vos et al., 2018), as we compare two occupational groups on key work-based predictors of health as well as in terms of change patterns and variability in health over the years.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Preservation and generation of resources across one's career are important for assuring sustainability in one's career (De Vos et al., 2018). Thus, for a better understanding of the career sustainability differences between employees and the self-employed, in particular in terms of remaining healthy, it is imperative to compare the resources they have at their disposal. It has long been established that the self-employed possess more job

resources than employees (Eden, 1975; Benz & Frey, 2008; Hamilton, 2000; Hundley, 2001; Hyytinen & Ruuskanen, 2007; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). In this study, we focus on flextime as a resource and aim to understand its impact on the sustainability of careers. In building our conceptual model, we draw on conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) and its premise that resources are at the core of understanding well-being. Here, we follow De Vos and colleagues (2018), who posited that COR theory provides a lens for investigating the mechanisms that underlie sustainable careers.

COR theory postulates that people actively strive to retain, protect, and build resources. The types of resources that can be lost or gained are objects (e.g., house), conditions (e.g., marriage), personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem), and energies (e.g., time). Objects and conditions are categorized as contextual resources (i.e., those that can be found in the social environments of the individual), while personal characteristics and energies are personal resources that are proximate to the self (see also Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Importantly, those are resources to the extent that they are also instrumental in attaining further resources. The concept of a *gain spiral* in COR theory entails that resources can generate new resources. However, individuals may also find themselves in a *loss spiral*. Because individuals are motivated to maintain their resources, they will experience stress if their resources are threatened or lost, increasing the likelihood of additional resource loss. Importantly, a central tenet of COR theory is that people are not equally vulnerable or resilient to stressful circumstances. Individuals with a larger pool of resources are more likely to avoid problematic situations and, when they do face resource drains, they are less negatively affected because they possess substitute resources. Thus, whereas individuals with few resources are forced to invest in the prevention of losing additional resources, those who already possess resources can invest in accruing more resources. The gain and loss spirals in COR theory imply that "over time, those in resource rich environments are likely to accumulate resource gains and those in resource poor environments are likely to accumulate resource losses" (Hobfoll, Stevens & Zalta, 2015, p. 177), and these processes can impact one's career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2018).

The work-home resources (W-HR) model is a more specific model derived from COR theory that postulates that people derive resources from their work and home environments that lead to the development of other resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). We build on this model—and the COR principles underlying it—for several reasons. First, it offers a basis for investigating how flextime as a contextual work resource contributes to better health. In the W-HR model, health is conceptualized as a relatively durable personal resource that individuals aim to develop and maintain over time through utilization of resources that they have access to in their environment (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Second, this model explicates the enriching and depleting relationships between the work and home

domains and proposes that contextual work resources, such as flexible scheduling, improve outcomes for family life and may diminish work-family conflict triggered by contextual work demands. Thus, the processes in the work-home resources model enable us to examine the roles of both work-family conflict and enrichment in relation to career sustainability.

Our reasoning in this paper starts from the notion that the self-employed and employees are occupational groups that differ in how resource rich their work environments are. We build on COR theory and the W-HR model, also a resource conservation model, to posit that structural contextual resources in the work domain facilitate employees to achieve a good health status. Here, we specifically focus on flextime as a contextual work resource. It has been argued that resource poor environments undermine resilience of individuals (Hobfoll et al., 2015). In a similar vein, we build the case that work environments that do not offer flexibility to schedule work in ways that meet one's personal needs may undermine career sustainability. Put differently, flextime may be a starting point for building a sustainable career. If employees and the self-employed do not find themselves in environments that are equally rich in this resource, then their work-home interface and health status may not be comparable either. Moreover, the loss and gain spirals in COR theory imply that differences between employees and the self-employed will increase over time, thus explaining why one occupational group is better able to build a sustainable career than the other. Our conceptual model is presented in Figure 2.1. In the sections below, we build and formulate hypotheses that specify the various pathways through which type of employment relates to health in our model.
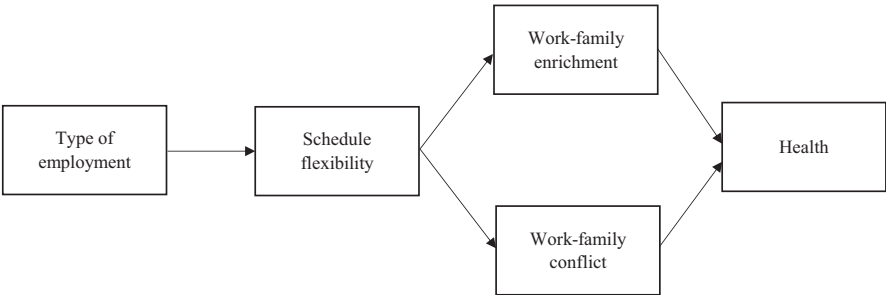


*Figure 2.1 | Pathways to career sustainability*

## 2.2.1    Type of Employment and Career Sustainability

The occupational health literature is replete with research on the well-being of employees, yet relatively little is known about the health of the self-employed (Van der Zwan, Hessels & Rietveld, 2018; Stephan & Roesler, 2010). In order to gain insight in the sustainability of the careers of the self-employed and how it compares with those of employees, we need

to examine the nature of their occupations. It appears there are substantial differences with regard to the demands of the job. For instance, the working hours of the self-employed are longer than those of employees (Eurofound, 2017; Hyytinen & Ruuskanen, 2007). In addition, uncertainty is strongly associated with being self-employed (Stephan, 2018). Moreover, the self-employed have high levels of responsibility, in such a way that "they must bear the costs of their mistakes while fulfilling lots of diverse roles such as recruiter, spokesperson, salesman, and boss" (Buttner, 1992, p. 224). Despite the stressful nature of their job, however, the self-employed report less work-related (Hessels et al., 2017) and life-related stress (Baron, Franklin, & Hmieleski, 2016) and less risk of illness (Yoon & Bernell, 2013) as well as higher levels of work satisfaction (Van der Zwan, Hessels & Rietveld, 2018) and life satisfaction (Stephan & Roesler, 2010) compared to employees. These results seem to go against the ubiquitous notion that self-employment is one of the most stressful jobs (Cardon & Patel, 2013). Not surprisingly, then, scholarly interest in the mental health and well-being of the self-employed is growing (Stephan, 2018).

Even though the self-employed shoulder high levels of responsibility and face other job demands, their work environment is rich in resources (e.g., autonomy). As they are their own boss, the self-employed have substantial decision authority and control over how their work is scheduled. Indeed, a vast body of research has found significant differences in the level of job control between the self-employed and employees (Eden, 1975; Benz & Frey, 2008; Hamilton, 2000; Hundley, 2001; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). COR theory proposes that being in a resource rich environment may contribute to a better health status in three ways. First, individuals in resource rich environments can focus on the accumulation of resources because they encounter problems less often. Second, those individuals are better able to handle stressful situations that pose a threat to their resources and thus their health. Third, if their resources do get lost, they have substitute resources to protect their health. Thus, we argue that the self-employed work in an environment that offers more resources compared with that of employees and they are therefore in better health than employees.

*Hypothesis 1:* The health of the self-employed is better than the health of employees.

To address whether the self-employed have more sustainable careers than employees, we build on the notion of gain and loss spirals in COR theory and investigate health on the longer term. As noted earlier, individuals in self-employment have higher levels of job control and decision-making authority (Eden, 1975; Hamilton, 2000; Hundley, 2001; Hyytinen & Ruuskanen, 2007; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), while employees are often subject to the decisions of others and thus lack such resources at work (Benz & Frey, 2008). It follows that the self-employed are working in a resource rich environment. Importantly, the resource reservoir that they have at their

disposal grows over time. In contrast, employees are operating in a resource poor environment and are more likely to develop stress and accumulate resource loss. Due to these gain and loss spirals, the disparity between those in research rich and research poor environments expands across the lifespan (Hobfoll et al., 2015). Both occupational groups face major challenges in multiple life domains, yet they are not equally equipped to handle stressors and remain healthy throughout their careers. Thus, we expect that the difference in health between the self-employed and employees (see Hypothesis 1) will increase over time.

*Hypothesis 2:* The disparity in health between the self-employed and employees increases over time.

By its very nature, a sustainable career is one "in which employees remain healthy" (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015, p. 224) and the stability of one's health over time is thus a key indicator of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2018). Remaining healthy is a challenge for the self-employed because ambiguity and uncertainty are a given in entrepreneurship (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). As Stephan (2018) noted, "entrepreneurs' experience may be highly variable, and may include spikes of high and low mental well-being" (p. 34). Nevertheless, they may develop resilience over time by means of working in a resource rich environment. Hobfoll and colleagues (2015) define resilience as "the ability of individuals or human systems to absorb stressors and return to their original state when that stressor is lifted without creating permanent damage or harm" (p. 174). We posit that the resilience process is central to achieving sustainability in one's career. COR theory sheds light on how one's position in a resource rich versus poor environment influences one's stability in health across the lifespan. To build resilience over time, individuals need to work within a resource rich environment, have access to the resources in that environment, and be able to generate more resources while being protected against resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2015). As the self-employed work in a richer resource environment, they acquire gradually the resources for resilience in terms of mental and physical health. The work environment of employees is less resourceful and they are therefore more heavily affected by adversity and stressful circumstances. Thus, we argue that the self-employed are better able to build resilience than employees, which is reflected in higher stability in health over time.

*Hypothesis 3:* The health of the self-employed is more stable over time than the health of employees.

2.2.2    Flextime and Work-Family Conflict and Enrichment as Mediating
         Mechanisms

In the preceding sections, we argued that the self-employed are healthier than employees and that their health status is also more sustainable over time. However, since prior research on the relationship between self-employment and well-being is relatively scarce, mechanisms that could account for any differences in well-being between employees and the self-employed are yet left unexplored (Van der Zwan, Hessels & Rietveld, 2018). Here, we aim to elucidate the process by which type of employment affects health, focusing on schedule flextime and the work-home interface as mediating mechanisms that explain any differences in the health status of the self-employed and employees.

     One job resource that stands out when comparing the work environment of individuals in self-employment to that of employees is the flexibility to rearrange their work schedules. The self-employed have high levels of job control and decision-making authority (e.g., Benz & Frey, 2008) and are less constrained by the need to coordinate with coworkers and conform to organizational work routines. Accordingly, a large body of research shows that the self-employed have higher schedule flexibility compared to employees (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001; Hundley, 2001; Golden, 2001). This flextime resource is instrumental in fulfilling needs in the nonwork environment, and it has therefore been widely studied in research on work-life balance (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). It has been argued that goals change over the life span and the value of a particular resource for assuring career sustainability is likely to vary depending on personal circumstances (De Vos et al., 2018). Flextime may be particularly valuable as a resource during the parenthood life stage, when individuals have greater family responsibility (see Shockley & Allen, 2007).

     In line with the theory from the work-home resources (W-HR) model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), which proposes that resources in the work environment (such as flextime) can bring about positive outcomes in the family domain, research has reported mostly beneficial effects of schedule flexibility on employees' work-home interface (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Hammer, Allen & Grigsby, 1997; Kelly, Moen, & Transby, 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; for a systematic review, see Nijp et al., 2012). The majority of those studies, however, are focused on work-family conflict rather than work-family enrichment. Our study investigates how flextime relates to both work-family conflict and enrichment. The W-HR model sheds light on the ways in which flextime may diminish depleting work-home processes and promote enriching work-home processes. The flextime resource has the ability to facilitate outcomes in the home domain (i.e., lead to work-family enrichment), for instance when individuals gain quality time spent with family members. Moreover, the flextime resource can help individuals deal with job demands that would otherwise deplete one's resources and impair outcomes at home (i.e., work-family conflict).

Thus, on the basis of the W-HR model, we expect that flextime as a resource reduces work-family conflict and increases work-family enrichment.

Depleting and enriching work-home processes may be strong predictors of health. A large-scale study across a variety of European countries concluded that poor work-life balance poses serious risks for people's health (Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo, Van der Wel, & Dragano, 2014). Resources get lost in the process of juggling dual roles, such as work and family, leading to a deterioration of health (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and unhealthy behaviours (e.g., substance abuse) are some of the commonly reported adverse outcomes of work-family conflict (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). However, resources may also be gained rather than lost through multiple role enactment. The process of work-family enrichment entails that resources are accumulated (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), which makes individuals better equipped to handle stress and improve their health. Indeed, meta-analytic studies have shown a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and physical and psychological health (McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010; Zhang, Xu, Jin, & Ford, 2018). Thus, we expect that work-family conflict and enrichment are predictors of health status. The previous arguments lead us to put forward two parallel mediation hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 4a:* The association between type of employment and health is mediated in serial by flextime and work-family conflict.

*Hypothesis 4b:* The association between type of employment and health is mediated in serial by flextime and work-family enrichment.

Thus far, we proposed that the self-employed have more schedule flexibility and are therefore less likely to experience work-family conflict and more likely to experience work-family enrichment than employees, which explains why they are in better health. We have also proposed that the disparity in health between the self-employed and employees expands over time. If the flextime resource and its effects on the work-home interface are indeed explaining why the health of the self-employed and employees are different, then change patterns in these concepts over time (i.e., gain and loss spirals) should explain why the difference in health between these occupational groups increases over time. Put differently, the process by which type of employment affects health may be contingent on time such that the disparity between the self-employed and employees increases as their tenure increases.

We posit that the self-employed gain experience over the years on how to effectively employ the flextime resource that is available to them. Over time, they may find more opportunities for rearranging their work schedules and become more successful in utilizing this flexibility to meet their work-life goals. In contrast, employees, who are low on the flextime

resource, are more vulnerable to additional resource loss and may become pessimistic about their capabilities to successfully adapt to work and family demands. Work-family conflict entails a situation in which resources are drained (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), and those who experience work-family conflict repeatedly may over time become more negatively affected by this stressful situation in terms of impaired health. In sum, we expect that resources evolve in a cycle and explain the growing disparity in health across years; that is, differences between the self-employed and employees in flextime and a satisfactory work-home interface become larger over time and health becomes more strongly impacted by the work-home interface over time.

*Hypothesis 5a:* Time moderates the indirect effect of type of employment on health via flextime and work-family conflict such that this relationship is stronger for those who have been working for a longer period of time.

*Hypothesis 5b:* Time moderates the indirect effect of type of employment on health via flextime and work-family enrichment such that this relationship is stronger for those who have been working for a longer period of time.

The health of the self-employed and employees is unlikely to be static. A prerequisite for a sustainable career is a sense of well-being, which is obtained by preserving one's physical and mental health (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015; De Vos et al., 2018). Thus, it is important that individuals do not only have high levels of health aggregated across years but also are able to keep variability in health to a minimum. We have proposed that the stability in health status is higher among the self-employed than among employees. Central to this proposition is the notion that resource rich environments are stable environments, and those who live in such environments "have high rates of resilience, even when faced with significant short-term, or single episode, life adversity" (Hobfoll et al., 2015, p. 176). Across the lifespan, the work environments of the self-employed are characterized by higher average levels of the flextime resource than those of employees. In addition, their work-home interface is on average more satisfactory than that of employees, with lower levels of work-family conflict and higher levels of work-family enrichment aggregated across years. These mean levels are a fertile ground to build resilience and thus enable individuals to remain healthy across the parenthood life stage.

*Hypothesis 6a:* The association between type of employment and stability in health is mediated in serial by average levels of flextime and average levels of work-family conflict.

*Hypothesis 6b:* The association between type of employment and stability in health is mediated in serial by average levels of flextime and average levels of work-family enrichment.

2.3    Method

2.3.1    Sample

Data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey were utilized for our analyses. HILDA yearly follows more than 12,000 Australians and reports on their well-being levels, labor market status, family life situation and many other (employment) characteristics. The HILDA project started the data collection process in 2001 among a nationally representative sample of Australian households. We used fifteen years of data (2001-2015) for the present analysis. HILDA is a household-based (one-person and multi-person) survey, and is representative of all Australian households. Individual interviews with household members were conducted with individuals aged 15 years and over. Mainly face-to-face interviews were used to collect the data, while phone interviews were conducted in only 0.5 per cent to 10.1 per cent of the instances, depending on the wave (Summerfield et al., 2016). The household response rate, defined as the percentage of households for which interviews were completed with at least one household member, was 74 per cent (own calculations, based on Summerfield et al., 2016). A detailed description of the sampling methodology is provided in Chapters 7 and 8 of Summerfield et al. (2016).

Our estimation sample contained panel data including 43,752 person-year observations. In total 8,655 persons were included and hence, the average number of years an individual was observed was 5.06 on average. Differences between our estimation sample and the number of observations available in HILDA can be explained by the following selection criteria. First, and most importantly, to identify the parenthood life stage, individuals without children were excluded for further analyses. That is, our sample included parents only. Second, about 90 per cent of the individuals across the fifteen waves responded to questions about flextime, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, and health. These questions were recorded using a separate paper-based questionnaire (Summerfield et al., 2016). This self-administered questionnaire includes questions that respondents may feel uncomfortable with to answer in the presence of an interviewer (Watson & Wooden, 2015). Third, case wise deletion of missing data was used when at least one of the variables under investigation had missing values.

2.3.2    Measures

The following variables are available for each of the fifteen years under investigation (2001-2015).

**Type of employment**. Participants were requested to self-classify themselves in terms of their employee status (i.e., self-employed or employee). We then distinguished employees (coded as 0) from the self-employed (coded as 1).

**Health**. Participants assessed their health status using the item "In general, would you say your health is …" with possible answers ranging from 1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent. A* single-item measure of current health status is very common and the validity of such measure is recognized across a large body of literature (Bowling, 2005; Lee, Walker, & Shoup, 2001).

**Flextime**. The availability of schedule flexibility was measured using the following three items (Cronbach's α = 0.82): (1) "I have a lot of freedom to decide when I do my work," (2) "My working times can be flexible," and (3) "I can decide when to take a break." Responses were given on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Work-family conflict**. We measured work-to-family conflict with the following four items (Cronbach's α = 0.84): (1) "Because of the requirements of my job, I miss out on home or family activities that I would prefer to participate in," (2) "Because of the requirements of my job, my family time is less enjoyable and more pressured," (3) "Working leaves me with too little time or energy to be the kind of parent I want to be," and (4) "Working causes me to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent." Answers were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Work-family enrichment**. Individuals responded to the following four items on work-to-family enrichment (Cronbach's α = 0.78): (1) "Working makes me feel good about myself, which is good for my children," (2) "My work has a positive effect on my children," (3) "Working helps me to better appreciate the time I spend with my children," and (4) "The fact that I am working makes me a better parent." Similar to the scale for work-family conflict, responses were given on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

The multi-item measures for work-family conflict and work-family enrichment have been validated in earlier research (see Marshall & Barnett, 1993).

**Control variables**. In our models, we controlled for gender (female = 0; male = 1), age, the square of age, and education (at least post-secondary education = 1; secondary education or lower = 0). These demographic variables have been included as control variables in numerous previous studies with self-assessed health as the dependent variable (Böckerman & Ilmakunnas, 2009). Given the substantially higher demands of the self-employed (Eurofound, 2017; Hyytinen & Ruuskanen, 2007), we controlled for the total number of working hours per week, to enable a fair comparison between the two occupational groups. We also controlled for industry (distinguishing between 19 industries in total). Moreover, we controlled for job tenure as indicated by the number of years in the current business for the self-employed and the number of years in the current job for employees. Working hours and job tenure were logarithmically transformed to make their distributions less skewed. Finally, we controlled for the specific HILDA wave (15 waves/years in total).

### 2.3.3    Analyses

We tested our hypotheses using ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. Note that the estimated coefficients in an OLS regression inform us about the impact of a one-unit change in an independent variable on the change in the conditional mean of the dependent variable. Because of repeated measures for individuals in our dataset, we clustered standard errors by individual respondents (see Kakarika, González-Gómez, & Dimitriades, 2017). Our hypotheses require distinct analysis techniques for testing. First, Hypothesis 2 states that health differences between the self-employed and employees will increase over time, in line with an interaction effect. To test for moderation, we computed a product term between type of employment and job tenure (see *Control variables*); hence, the time aspect reflects the number of years in the current business (the self-employed) or job (employees). Second, our model is a multiple mediator model with a blend of serial and parallel mediation processes. Indirect effects and the associated bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were obtained using the methods described in Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Hayes (2017) involving 5,000 bootstrap samples.[1]

Our set of hypotheses implies a model with both moderation and mediation properties. Hypothesis 2 articulates an interaction between type of employment and job tenure in predicting health, while Hypotheses 4a and 4b put forward a mechanism linking type of employment to health. Accordingly, Hypotheses 5a and 5b suggest that the indirect effects are conditional on job tenure. We followed a stepwise approach and ran separate regressions with product terms that enabled us to investigate whether any of the indirect paths from type of employment to health are moderated by job tenure (i.e., time). If any of the paths is moderated, it implies that the indirect effect of type of employment on health is a function of time, and our model can be recast in terms of *moderated mediation* processes (Hayes, 2017).

Finally, Hypotheses 3, 6a and 6b take the stability (or variability) of health as the dependent variable. For each individual we identified the time spells in self-employment and in paid employment. We calculated the variation in health over time for each spell using the standard deviation of the health variable. To test this set of hypotheses, we used the same conceptual model as in Figure 2.1 but replaced current health status with the variability of health over time (that is, the standard deviation of health) and we replaced the mediators with their average values across years in self-employment or paid employment.

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1    In fact, our model is a specific case of Model 81 in Hayes (2017).

## 2.4    Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 2.1.

*Table 2.1 | Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables*

|  | M | SD | Min | Max | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Type of employment | 0.17 | 0.38 | 0 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Health | 3.56 | 0.84 | 1 | 5 | 0.03 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 Flextime | 4.14 | 1.82 | 1 | 7 | 0.36 | 0.06 | | | | | | | | |
| 4 Work-family conflict | 3.77 | 1.47 | 1 | 7 | −0.06 | −0.16 | −0.16 | | | | | | | |
| 5 Work-family enrichment | 4.81 | 1.19 | 1 | 7 | 0.02 | 0.11 | 0.12 | −0.23 | | | | | | |
| 6 Gender | 0.54 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | 0.12 | −0.04 | 0.07 | 0.13 | 0.01 | | | | | |
| 7 Age | 40.33 | 7.85 | 15 | 64 | 0.11 | −0.06 | 0.07 | −0.03 | 0.02 | 0.06 | | | | |
| 8 Education | 0.32 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | −0.05 | 0.11 | 0.06 | 0.05 | 0.03 | −0.07 | 0.10 | | | |
| 9 Working hours (log) | 3.53 | 0.54 | −4.61 | 4.97 | 0.07 | −0.01 | *0.01* | 0.31 | 0.04 | 0.51 | 0.10 | 0.00 | | |
| 10 Job tenure (log) | 1.28 | 1.44 | −3.95 | 3.83 | 0.12 | *0.01* | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.28 | 0.08 | 0.14 | |

*Note.* Type of employment is coded as 1 = self-employed and 0 = employee. Gender is coded as 1 = male and 0 = female. Education is coded as 1 = post-secondary education, 0 = otherwise. Pearson correlations are presented, except with the following variable pairs, for which Spearman's rho is given: type of employment-gender, type of employment-education, and gender-education. All correlations have *p*-values < .05, except for the working hours-flextime and job tenure-health variable pairs (indicated in italics).

About 17 per cent of our observations refer to self-employment. Table 2.1 reveals a positive correlation between type of employment (self-employment versus paid employment) and health ($r_s$ = .03, $p$ < .001). Flextime is negatively related to work-family conflict ($r$ = −.16, $p$ < .001) and positively related to work-family enrichment ($r$ = .12, $p$ < .001). Finally, work-family conflict and health are negatively related ($r$ = −.16, $p$ < .001), whereas there is a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and health ($r$ = .11, $p$ < .001).

Table 2.2 provides tests of Hypotheses 1 (Model 1), 2 (Model 2) and 3 (Model 3). We found a significant association between type of employment (self-employment versus paid employment) and health (B = 0.11, $p$ < .001; Model 1), indicating that the health of the self-employed is better (0.11 points, on average, on a 5-points scale) than employees' health, lending support for Hypothesis 1.

*Table 2.2 | The effect of type of employment on health*

|  | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Health (H1) | | Health (H2) | | *SD* of health (H3) | |
|  | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE |
| Type of employment | 0.113*** | 0.022 | 0.088*** | 0.024 | −0.031** | 0.010 |
| Type of employment × Job tenure (log) |  |  | 0.016 | 0.012 |  |  |
| Gender | −0.039 | 0.021 | −0.039 | 0.021 | 0.012 | 0.008 |
| Age/10 | 0.199** | 0.070 | 0.202*** | 0.070 | −0.053* | 0.026 |
| (Age/10)$^2$ | −0.036*** | 0.009 | −0.036*** | 0.009 | 0.003 | 0.003 |
| Education | 0.169*** | 0.021 | 0.170*** | 0.021 | −0.002 | 0.008 |
| Working hours (log) | 0.002 | 0.014 | 0.001 | 0.014 | 0.003 | 0.009 |
| Job tenure (log) | 0.005 | 0.005 | 0.002 | 0.005 | 0.019*** | 0.005 |
| Number of observations | 43,752 | | 43,752 | | 8,354 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.03 | | 0.03 | | 0.01 | |

*Note*. Type of employment: 1 = self-employed, 0 = employee. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. Education: 1 = post-secondary education, 0 = otherwise. Industry and wave number were controlled for. The intercept is not reported. Age was divided by 10 to obtain more easily interpretable coefficients. Average values were calculated for age/10, (age/10) squared, education, and working hours across years in self-employment or paid employment; the maximum value for job tenure was taken.
$^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$ $^{***}p < .001.$

The (relatively small) effect sizes as found in the present study are comparable to those found in other studies on self-assessed health (Monden, 2010). This 'total effect' of type of employment on health is decomposed into direct and indirect effects in Hypotheses 4a and 4b. In Model 2, we did not find support for an increasing health disparity between the self-employed and employees over time. That is, the coefficient of the interaction term between type of employment and job tenure was positive but non-significant (B = 0.02, $p = .19$), indicating that the number of years in the current business (self-employed) or job (employees) did not impact the relationship between type of employment and health. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. The dependent variable in Model 3 of Table 2.2 is the variability of health (i.e., standard deviation). It was revealed that the self-employed experience less variation in their health over time than the employees (B = −0.03, $p = .002$), which is in support of Hypothesis 3.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b focus on the indirect effects that run from type of employment to health through the mediators. These indirect effects can be estimated using four regressions (see Table 2.3) in which each mediator acts as the dependent variable (Models 1-3) and with health as the dependent variable while controlling for all mediators (Model 4). We observed a significant association between type of employment and flextime (B = 1.50, $p < .001$), indicating that the self-employed have more schedule flexibility (1.50 points higher, on average) than employees. In turn, flextime was negatively associated with work-family conflict (B = −0.14, $p < .001$) and positively associated with work-family enrichment (B = 0.08, $p < .001$). If one compares

two individuals with below-average flextime (one *SD* below the mean) and above-average flextime (one *SD* above the mean) the estimated coefficients imply a difference in work-family conflict and work-family enrichment of 0.51 and 0.29, respectively. Finally, we found a negative association between work-family conflict and self-assessed health (B = −0.09, $p < .001$) as well as a positive association between work-family enrichment and self-assessed health (B = 0.05, $p < .001$). The differences in health are 0.26 and 0.12 for individuals with below-average and above-average values for work-family conflict and work-family enrichment, respectively. Given that the multiple pathways of influence between type of employment and health are significant, the results in Table 2.3 provide preliminary support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

*Table 2.3 | The indirect effect of type of employment on health*

|  | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Flextime | | WFC | | WFE | | Health | |
|  | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE |
| Type of employment | 1.496*** | 0.037 | −0.065 | 0.038 | −0.032 | 0.031 | 0.058** | 0.022 |
| Flextime |  |  | −0.138*** | 0.007 | 0.079*** | 0.006 | 0.017*** | 0.004 |
| WFC |  |  |  |  |  |  | −0.091*** | 0.005 |
| WFE |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.050*** | 0.006 |
| Gender | 0.031 | 0.039 | −0.011 | 0.035 | −0.007 | 0.029 | −0.040* | 0.020 |
| Age/10 | 0.426** | 0.126 | 0.403*** | 0.108 | −0.162 | 0.090 | 0.229** | 0.068 |
| (Age/10)$^2$ | −0.046** | 0.016 | −0.063*** | 0.014 | 0.020 | 0.011 | −0.041*** | 0.009 |
| Education | 0.382*** | 0.037 | 0.234*** | 0.033 | 0.001 | 0.028 | 0.178*** | 0.020 |
| Working hours (log) | −0.215*** | 0.029 | 0.857*** | 0.027 | 0.109*** | 0.022 | 0.082*** | 0.014 |
| Job tenure (log) | 0.041*** | 0.009 | 0.012 | 0.008 | −0.010 | 0.007 | 0.005 | 0.005 |
| Number of observations | 43,752 | | 43,752 | | 43,752 | | 43,752 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.22 | | 0.13 | | 0.04 | | 0.07 | |

*Note.* Type of employment: 1 = self-employed, 0 = employee. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. Education: 1 = post-secondary education, 0 = otherwise. WFC = work-family conflict. WFE = work-family enrichment. Industry and wave number were controlled for. The intercept is not reported.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

To examine our mediation hypotheses directly, the specific values of the indirect effects and the inferential tests for these indirect effects were obtained using the approach advocated by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The *total indirect effect* quantifies how type of employment relates to differences in health through all mediators at once, and it can be calculated by the sum of five specific indirect effects of type of employment on health. However, we formulated hypotheses only regarding the pathways of influence of type of employment to health through flextime and work-family conflict (Hypothesis 4a) and through flextime and work-family enrichment (Hypothesis 4b). Table 2.4 lists the estimates of the total indirect effect, the

two specific indirect effects that we hypothesized, and the three remaining indirect effects. The lower and upper limits of the 95% confidence intervals are also provided in Table 2.4.

*Table 2.4 | Indirect effects of self-employment on health*

|  | Estimate | 95% CI lower limit | 95% CI upper limit |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total indirect effect | 0.054 | 0.046 | 0.063 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → WFC → Health (H4a) | 0.019 | 0.017 | 0.021 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → WFE → Health (H4b) | 0.006 | 0.005 | 0.007 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → Health | 0.025 | 0.018 | 0.033 |
| Type of employment → WFC → Health | 0.006 | 0.003 | 0.010 |
| Type of employment → WFE → Health | −0.002 | −0.003 | 0.001 |

*Note*. WFC = work-family conflict. WFE = work-family enrichment.

A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the total indirect effect based on 5,000 bootstrap samples did not include zero (95% CI of [0.046, 0.063]). The confidence intervals of the indirect effects through flextime and work-family conflict (95% CI of [0.017, 0.021]) and through flextime and work-family enrichment (95% CI of [0.005, 0.007]) also did not include zero. Hence, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b focused on the growing disparity in health between the self-employed and employees. Although we did not find a significant interaction when testing Hypothesis 2, it is possible for distinct paths in the mediated sequence to be moderated and hereby influence the outcome (Hayes, 2017). To test whether any of the pathways in our conceptual model (Figure 2.1) are contingent on time, we included interaction terms with job tenure in each of the regression models shown in Table 2.3. The results are presented in Table 2.5. Model 1 investigates flextime as the dependent variable and tests the interaction effect between type of employment and job tenure. Model 2 and Model 3 take work-family conflict and work-family enrichment as dependent variables, respectively, and focus on the interaction between flextime and job tenure. Model 4 regresses health on the predictor variables and incorporates product terms between work-family conflict and job tenure and between work-family enrichment and job tenure. As can be seen in Table 2.4, only one pathway was significantly moderated by job tenure (i.e., number of years in the current business or job); that is, the negative association between flextime and work-family conflict became stronger over time (B = −0.01, $p$ = .004).

*Table 2.5 | The moderating role of job tenure*

|  | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Flextime | | WFC | | WFE | | Health | |
|  | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE |
| Type of employment | 1.541*** | 0.042 | −0.061 | 0.038 | −0.033 | 0.031 | 0.058** | 0.022 |
| Job tenure (log) | 0.045*** | 0.010 | 0.055** | 0.017 | −0.017 | 0.015 | 0.022 | 0.021 |
| Flextime |  |  | −0.125*** | 0.008 | 0.077*** | 0.007 | 0.017*** | 0.004 |
| WFC |  |  |  |  |  |  | −0.086*** | 0.006 |
| WFE |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.050*** | 0.007 |
| Type of employment × Job tenure (log) | −0.029 | 0.021 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Flextime × Job tenure (log) |  |  | −0.011** | 0.004 | 0.002 | 0.003 |  |  |
| WFC × Job tenure (log) |  |  |  |  |  |  | −0.005 | 0.003 |
| WFE × Job tenure (log) |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.000 | 0.003 |
| Gender | 0.031 | 0.039 | −0.011 | 0.035 | −0.008 | 0.029 | −0.040* | 0.020 |
| Age/10 | 0.420** | 0.126 | 0.393*** | 0.108 | −0.160 | 0.089 | 0.232** | 0.068 |
| $(Age/10)^2$ | −0.045** | 0.016 | −0.062*** | 0.014 | 0.019 | 0.011 | −0.041*** | 0.009 |
| Education | 0.381*** | 0.037 | 0.233*** | 0.033 | 0.001 | 0.028 | 0.178*** | 0.020 |
| Working hours (log) | −0.215*** | 0.029 | 0.857*** | 0.027 | 0.110*** | 0.022 | 0.081*** | 0.014 |
| Number of observations | 43,752 | | 43,752 | | 43,752 | | 43,752 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.22 | | 0.13 | | 0.04 | | 0.07 | |

*Note.* Type of employment: 1 = self-employed, 0 = employee. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. Education: 1 = post-secondary education, 0 = otherwise. WFC = work-family conflict. WFE = work-family enrichment. Industry and wave number were controlled for. The intercept is not reported.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < 0.001$.

Because one of the paths is moderated, the indirect effect becomes contingent on the moderator such that the type of employment-flextime-work-family conflict-health relationship may differ in strength as a function of time. To formally test whether this indirect effect is conditional on time, we used conditional process analysis and assessed the indirect effects at one *SD* below and one *SD* above the mean of the tenure variable (Hayes, 2017). The index of moderated mediation was estimated at 0.0015 with a 95% CI of [0.0008, 0.0022], which indicates that the indirect effect of type of employment on health via flextime and work-family conflict depended on time.[2] The indirect effect was 0.017 with a 95% CI of [0.015, 0.019] for lower (- *SD*) levels of tenure, while the indirect effect was 0.021 with a 95% CI of [0.019, 0.023] for higher (+ *SD*) levels of tenure. Thus, the relationship became stronger as job tenure increased. These results are partially supportive of Hypothesis 5a and not supportive of Hypothesis 5b.

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2       The time contingency was incorporated in the model by means of an interaction between flextime and job tenure in predicting work-family conflict.

We conducted four regressions to test Hypotheses 6a and 6b. Results are presented in Table 2.6, analogous to Table 2.3. Models 1 to 3 predict average values (across years in self-employment or paid employment) of flextime, work-family conflict, and work-family enrichment, respectively. The dependent variable in Model 4 represents the variability in health over time. Type of employment was significantly related to average flextime (B = 1.53, $p <$ .001). We also found a negative association between average flextime and average work-family conflict (B = −0.16, $p <$ .001) and a positive association between average flextime and average work-family enrichment (B = 0.09, $p <$ .001). Average levels of work-family conflict were positively associated with health status variability (B = 0.01, $p =$ .01), but we did not find a significant association between average levels of work-family enrichment and variability in health status (B = 0.003, $p =$ .37).

*Table 2.6 | The indirect effect of type of employment on the variability of health*

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Average flextime | | Average WFC | | Average WFE | | SD of health | |
| | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE | Coeff. | SE |
| Type of employment | 1.532*** | 0.036 | 0.040 | 0.038 | −0.100** | 0.032 | −0.026* | 0.011 |
| Flextime | | | −0.157*** | 0.011 | 0.094*** | 0.010 | −0.002 | 0.003 |
| WFC | | | | | | | 0.013*** | 0.003 |
| WFE | | | | | | | 0.003 | 0.004 |
| Gender | 0.061 | 0.036 | 0.110** | 0.035 | −0.051 | 0.029 | 0.011 | 0.008 |
| Age/10 | 0.397*** | 0.107 | 0.408*** | 0.109 | −0.072 | 0.095 | −0.057* | 0.026 |
| (Age/10)² | −0.045** | 0.013 | −0.058*** | 0.014 | 0.001 | 0.012 | 0.003 | 0.003 |
| Education | 0.371*** | 0.035 | 0.213*** | 0.033 | 0.036 | 0.028 | −0.004 | 0.008 |
| Working hours (log) | −0.257*** | 0.039 | 0.785*** | 0.036 | 0.199*** | 0.033 | −0.009 | 0.010 |
| Job tenure (log) | 0.075*** | 0.018 | −0.019 | 0.016 | −0.039** | 0.014 | 0.019*** | 0.005 |
| Number of observations | 8,354 | | 8,354 | | 8,354 | | 8,354 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.29 | | 0.14 | | 0.03 | | 0.02 | |

*Note.* Type of employment: 1 = self-employed, 0 = employee. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. Education: 1 = post-secondary education, 0 = otherwise. WFC = work-family conflict; WFE = work-family enrichment. Industry and wave number were controlled for. The intercept is not reported. The dependent variables are average flextime (Model 1), average work-family conflict (Model 2), average work-family enrichment (Model 3), and the standard deviation in health (Model 4). Average values were calculated for age/10, (age/10) squared, education, and working hours across years in self-employment or paid employment; the maximum value for job tenure was taken.
$^*p < .05.\ ^{**}p < .01.\ ^{***}p < .001.$

Table 2.7 shows the results of formally testing Hypotheses 6a and 6b and presents the estimates of the total indirect effect, the two indirect effects as hypothesized, and the three remaining specific indirect effects. The indirect effect through flextime and work-family conflict was significant (95% CI of [−0.005, −0.002]), but the confidence interval for the indirect effect through flextime and work-family enrichment included zero (95% CI of [−0.001, 0.001]). Thus, Hypothesis 6a was supported while Hypothesis 6b was not.

*Table 2.7 | Indirect effects of self-employment on the variability of health*

|  | Estimate | 95% CI lower limit | 95% CI upper limit |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total indirect effect | −0.005 | −0.013 | 0.003 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → WFC → *SD* of health (H6a) | −0.003 | −0.005 | −0.002 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → WFE → *SD* of health (H6b) | 0.0005 | −0.001 | 0.001 |
| Type of employment → Flextime → *SD* of health | −0.002 | −0.011 | 0.006 |
| Type of employment → WFC → *SD* of health | 0.001 | −0.0005 | 0.002 |
| Type of employment → WFE → *SD* of health | −0.0003 | −0.001 | 0.0003 |

*Note.* WFC = work-family conflict. WFE = work-family enrichment.

## 2.4.1    Additional Analyses

In addition to health (used in the analyses above), De Vos and colleagues (2018) consider happiness as another key indicator of career sustainability. To test whether our results can be replicated in terms of happiness, we focused on life satisfaction, which is a commonly used measure of happiness (or, equivalently, subjective well-being) (Cho & Tay, 2016). Here, we found additional evidence for our hypotheses using life satisfaction rather than health status. Participants' life satisfaction was measured using the single item "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life? Pick a number between 0 and 10 to indicate how satisfied you are". Similar to our health measure, it is very common to use a single-item measure of life satisfaction and the validity and performance of our measure has been demonstrated in the quality of life literature (Cheung & Lucas, 2014; Li, Zhou, & Leung, 2011; Lucas & Donnellan, 2012). In terms of Hypothesis 1, we found that the self-employed are more satisfied with their lives than the employees (B = 0.09, $p$ = .01). We did not find support for Hypothesis 2 with a non-significant interaction term (B = 0.02, $p$ = .10). Hypothesis 3 was supported for life satisfaction: the self-employed experienced less variation in life satisfaction compared to the employees (B = −0.06, $p$ < 0.001). Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported as well. The mean indirect effect of self-employment on life satisfaction through flextime and work-family conflict was 0.04 (95% CI = [0.04; 0.05]), and through flextime and work-family enrichment 0.01 (95% CI = [0.01; 0.02]). Hypothesis 5a was partially supported, because the index of moderated mediation was 0.003 with a 95% CI of [0.002, 0.005]. Hence, the indirect effect of type of employment on life satisfaction via flextime and work-family conflict depended on time. Hypothesis 5b was not supported: the index of moderated mediation was non-significant (95% CI = [−0.005; 0.012]. Finally, Hypotheses 6a and 6b were supported (indirect effect through flextime and work-family conflict was −0.01 (95% CI of [−0.02, −0.01]), and through flextime and work-family enrichment −0.002 (95% CI of [−0.005, −0.001])).

In the current analyses we did not distinguish between self-employed individuals employing others and those who work on their own account (i.e., solo self-employment, without employees). Previous research, however, has shown differences between the two groups in terms of (mental) health (Beutell, Schneer, & Alstete, 2014; Hessels, Rietveld, & Van der Zwan, 2017). For a more nuanced understanding of career sustainability among those in self-employment, we distinguished between two groups (having employees or not). The most important findings were as follows. It was found that both those with employees (B = 0.14, $p$ < .001) and those without employees (B = 0.07, $p$ = .01) had better health than employees, which was explained by the mediators in our models (the 95% confidence intervals did not include zero). In both comparisons, the product terms with job tenure had non-significant coefficients (with employees: B = 0.02, $p$ = .33; without employees: B = 0.01, $p$ = .59). Both groups' health was less variable over time than employees' health (B = −0.05, $p$ < .001 for both with and without employees), which was explained by average levels of flextime and work-family conflict, but not by average levels of flextime and work-family enrichment.

## 2.5    Discussion

This study compared two occupational groups—the self-employed and employees—on key prerequisites of career sustainability during the parenthood life stage. We used health as a key indicator of career sustainability, in line with previous research (De Vos et al., 2018). Our aim was to elucidate the process by which working parents remain healthy throughout their careers. Parenthood is a life stage in which career sustainability is increasingly problematic due to high levels of family responsibility (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Van Engen, Vinkenburg & Dikkers, 2012). As a family-friendly arrangement, flextime may be a critical resource for parents to manage the work-home interface and build a sustainable career. We observed that parents in self-employment had better health than parents in paid employment, which could be attributed to differences in the resourcefulness of their work environments. Specifically, we found that parents in self-employment were higher in the flextime resource than parents in paid employment. Schedule flexibility enhanced experiences of work-family enrichment and decreased experiences of work-family conflict, ultimately affecting their health status. Surprisingly, we did not observe a growing disparity in health between these occupational groups over time (which would be in concordance with the loss and gain spirals in COR theory). Yet, an explanation for this finding might nonetheless be found in adaptation theory (Ritter et al., 2016). Adaptation theory posits that individuals are able to adapt to stressors over time (i.e., adjust to resource loss), and thus return to preexisting levels of well-being. Indeed, a recent longitudinal research from Matthews and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that the negative relationship between work-family conflict and well-being on the

short term became less negative on the long term. Still, the self-employed showed higher stability in health than employees during the parenthood life stage. We conclude that the work environments of the self-employed allow them to build more sustainable careers than their counterparts in paid employment are able to do. Our supplementary analysis indicated that this conclusion holds for both the self-employed with and without personnel.

The present paper responds to numerous calls in the growing body of research on career sustainability (see De Vos et al., 2018). First, we examined the interplay between key concepts in this literature—namely flexibility, the work-family interface, and health—to enhance our understanding of how career sustainability can be achieved. Drawing on COR theory, we identified the resource environment of individuals as a key antecedent of career sustainability. We believe that our theorizing on how the flextime resource can bring about good health and help individuals remain healthy on the longer term moves research on career sustainability forward. Second, our longitudinal dataset to study the careers of the self-employed and employees during the parenthood life stage is an important step forward in research on career sustainability. Our results suggest that the process of career sustainability is conditional on time (the number of years in the current job), but more research is needed that investigates how resources evolve in cycles such that differences between those in resource rich and resource poor environments increase over time.

Importantly, our study acknowledges the changing needs of individuals in different life stages and was specifically focused on how working individuals can remain healthy during the parenthood life stage. We compared the pathways of parents in self-employment and parents in paid employment towards sustainable careers. Little is known about the work-home interface and health of the self-employed, as most of this scholarly work has focused on employees (Jager, Kelliher, Peters, Blomme, & Sakamoto, 2016; Munkejord, 2017). Our examination of the self-employed has provided us with a better understanding of how employment type influences outcomes related to the work-home interface and health. We contend that further theoretical development of career sustainability as a concept should reflect the fundamental roles of time, life stage as well as type of employment. Moreover, we, like others (De Vos et al., 2018), see great potential in COR theory and its principles, in particular the notions of loss and gain cycles (Hobfoll, 1989) and resilience (Hobfoll et al., 2015), for helping scholars understand what makes careers sustainable across the lifespan.

### 2.5.1    Practical Implications

Our study has a number of important implications for practice. We have focused on the parenthood life stage and can offer insights as to what can help make this life stage less problematic in terms of achieving career sustainability. In particular, the results indicated that flextime is a critical resource that reduces work-family conflict and fosters work-family enrich-

ment, in turn positively affecting health status. However, the implications of this result are different for the self-employed and employees. It is of utmost importance that the self-employed conserve the flexibility resource over the years in order to build a sustainable career in which they can remain healthy. It must not be forgotten that this occupational group is frequently burdened by uncertainty (McMullen & Shephard, 2006) and operates in a complex and frequently changing environment (Baron, 2008). Without flexibility, the self-employed find themselves in high-strain jobs characterized by high demands combined with low job control (Stephan & Roesler, 2010). We recommend the self-employed to be mindful of the beneficial effects of flextime and actively strive to hold on to this resource, which should enable them to experience an active job situation that fosters career sustainability. Our results are promising in this regard, as they suggest that the self-employed learn to better employ the flextime resource over the years to reduce work-family conflict.

We also see practical implications for organizations and employees. The notions of boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1994) and protean careers (Hall, 2004) capture the increasing flexibility of careers over the last couple of decades. Contemporary careers are less strongly tied to one or a small number of organizations, and it is the employee "who steers his/her career in the preferred direction and who needs to make sure that it stays aligned with the demands from the labour market and his/her own physical and psychological needs" (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015, p. 224). However, our results indicate that employees lack job control in terms of schedule flexibility and they may feel they are restricted in ensuring that their career fits their core life values. That said, we are by no means encouraging employees to become self-employed but merely provide them with an understanding that flextime may be a starting point for building a sustainable career. To that end, we recommend employees to be proactive and seek opportunities for crafting their own jobs and enhancing their resources at work, to offset resource losses in the future. Yet, in line with the notion that career sustainability is a shared responsibility between organizations and workers (see Veld, Semeijn, & Van Vuuren, 2015), we encourage organizations to offer their employees flexibility in rearranging their schedule, thereby taking responsibility in fostering individuals' career sustainability. Moreover, as flextime lists the top three of individuals' motivating factors in making career decisions (Global Candidate Preferences Survey, 2016), it is important for organizations to realize that flextime is a strategic tool in recruitment and retention, especially for those who are faced with high family responsibilities (Shockley & Allen, 2007).

## 2.5.2 Limitations and Future Research

We draw attention to some limitations of our study and directions for future research. First, we focused on availability of the flextime resource but do not know whether or to what extent employees and the self-employed actually

used their flextime options. As the frequency of flexibility use may influence the magnitude of associations (Lapierre & Allen, 2006), we recommend future research to include frequency of flexibility use for a more refined understanding of the effects of flexible working practices on the work-home interface and health.

Second, there may be limits to the generalizability of our findings due to the specifics of our sample. We focused on the parenthood life stage, yet in our sample of parents we did not distinguish among households on the basis of number and age of children. As these factors may influence parenting responsibilities, we recommend future work to distinguish between stages in the family life cycle. Moreover, we suggest that researchers test our model in other samples to see if our findings generalize to those without children, as parenthood represents a life stage in which flexibility is vastly appreciated (Shockley & Allen, 2007).

Finally, our data did not allow us to shed light on the employability of employees and the self-employed. That is, our study focused exclusively on well-being as a prerequisite of career sustainability and did not explore the aspect of security (i.e., employability) (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Akkermans and Tims (2017) noted that "it is not quite clear yet how workers can safeguard their work-home balance while simultaneously managing their employability" (p. 169). Similarly, our study leaves unanswered how the self-employed can endure a sense of job security while remaining healthy. Future work can focus on involuntary withdrawal and what happens in the aftermath of business failure for the self-employed (see Ucbasaran & Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2013). All in all, for a full-fledged understanding of career sustainability, we encourage researchers to compare employees and the self-employed on multiple indicators of career sustainability (see also De Vos et al., 2018).

# 3 Work from Home Today for a Better Tomorrow! How Working from Home Influences Work-family Conflict and Employees' Start of the Next Workday*

**Abstract**

Previous research examining the career sustainability of teleworkers has predominantly taken an all-or-nothing approach, where individuals working full-time at home are compared with full-time office workers. Yet, individuals' decision to work from home or at the office varies on a daily basis, thus it may be more appropriate to examine within-individual variation in career sustainability on office versus home days. Drawing on the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory, we build an intraindividual model that investigates the day-to-day effects of working from home on employees' time pressure, work-family conflict and work-related well-being. A total of 34 professional workers participated in our study and were asked to respond to ten daily morning, ten daily afternoon and ten daily evening surveys, across two consecutive work-weeks. In line with our hypotheses, results indicated that on days when employees worked from home, they experienced less time pressure, and in turn, they reported lower levels of work-family conflict on that particular day. Moreover, we found that experiences of work-family conflict predict individuals' next morning engagement and exhaustion levels and affective states towards the organization they work for. These findings suggest that working from home can support individuals in building a sustainable career. We recommend organizations to encourage a work-from-home protocol aimed at supporting individuals' career sustainability.

## 3.1   Introduction

Today, 32% percent of employees in the EU struggle to fulfill family responsibilities because of pressing job demands (Eurofound, 2018). Striking a balance between work and family is crucial as it has a significant impact on employees' well-being (OECD, 2017). Given the commonality of today's high pressure work environments (Prem, Paškvan, Kubicek, & Korunka, 2018), concerns are being raised about how employees can overcome the detrimental effects of high job demands and achieve a satisfactory work-life balance (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015). These concerns have urged organizations to re-evaluate their employment policies and seek alternative forms of working that promote sustainable careers. Indeed, an increasing number of firms have implemented telecommuting arrangements with the hope that employees can better manage their work-home interface, safeguard their well-being (Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Kelliher & Menezese, 2019; Matos, Galinsky, & Bond, 2016) and eventually craft a sustainable career. Telecommuting, often referred to as telework or working from home, is an arrangement that enables employees to perform their job at home during some part of the week and stay connected to the office by means of communication technologies (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). Yet, is it effective?

Interest in the effectiveness of the working from home practice for employees' work-home interface and well-being is reflected in the academic literature, with a growing body of research on the effects of telework on work-family conflict (Delanoeije, Verbruggen, & Germeys, 2019; Fiksenbaum, 2014; Yao, Tan, & Ilies, 2017). Work-family conflict is defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Numerous studies have shown a negative association between working from home and work-family conflict (for meta-analytic studies, see Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013, and Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), indicating that the work arrangement can be used as a means to alleviate conflict between the two life domains. The vast majority of such studies, however, have taken a between-individual perspective, where work-family conflict experiences of individuals working frequently at home is compared with those of full-time office workers (Allen et al., 2015). Yet, individuals rarely work from home every day but rather combine working from home days with office days (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Delanoeije et al., 2019). Scholars lack a thorough understanding of what happens on days that employees work from home. As a consequence, organizations and employees run the risk that working from home arrangements are adopted and used without proper management. Thus, we believe that it is an important step forward for research on the effectiveness of the working from home practice to capture day-to-day fluctuations in working from home and study relatively short-term effects.

Against this background, we build an intraindividual model that examines the day-to-day effects of working from home on the work-home interface and work-related employee well-being. Specifically, we focus on work interfering with family as an outcome related to the work-home interface, as previous studies have shown that working from home affects work-to-home conflict more directly than home-to-work conflict (Allen et al., 2015; Delanoeije et al., 2019). We propose that experiences of work-family conflict fluctuate across office days versus working from home days because some days are more resource draining than others. We also propose that time pressure is an important mechanism (i.e., mediator) that explains the relationship between working from home and work-family conflict. We then examine how work-family conflict influences the next workday. Here, we focus on how work-family conflict experiences in the evening relate to employees' well-being (i.e., work engagement and exhaustion) and emotions towards the organization the next morning. Our full conceptual model is presented in Figure 3.1.
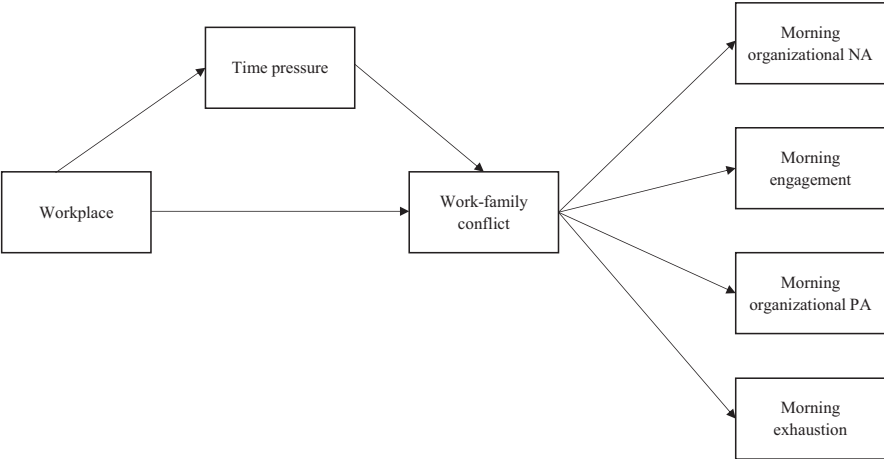


*Figure 3.1 | Overall conceptual model*

## 3.2    THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Recent research recommends scholars to move away from a cross-sectional (i.e., between-person) approach towards a more episodic approach, to gain a better understanding of the implications of working from home (Allen et al., 2015; Anderson, Kaplan, & Vega, 2015; Kelliher & Menezese, 2019; Maertz & Boyar, 2011; Vega, Anderson, & Kaplan, 2015). We posit that the working from home practice offered by an organization can be conceptualized as rather stable but employees' use of this practice is volatile. Hence, we conceptualize working from home at the intraindividual level and examine its effects on work-family conflict and work-related well-being on a day-to-day basis.

In building our conceptual model, we draw on the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Resources, such as, time, and energy are limited and once used in one domain become unavailable for other life domains (Eckenrode & Gore, 1990). Thus, on a demanding workday, employees' personal resources are more likely to be drained, leaving them with fewer resources in the family domain (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Time-based and strain-based work-family conflicts refer to situations in which work consumes time and energy, respectively, that cannot be spent at home (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Interestingly, individuals' work-family conflict experiences are likely to vary daily as a result of day-to-day fluctuations in job demands (Ilies et al., 2007; Pluut, Ilies, Curşeu, & Liu, 2018). A commonly experienced job demand that causes work-family conflict is time pressure (Brosch & Binneweis, 2018; De Carlo et al., 2019), indicating that time is a scarce personal resource for employees. Employees' daily work environment (i.e., in the office or at home) may influence the drain of this resource such that time pressure as a job demand fluctuates across days. We take a resource drain perspective and examine how working from home is related to a key precursor of work-family conflict, namely time pressure.

We further use the resource loss spiral principle of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018) to propose that the resource drain associated with work-family conflict may extend to the next workday. Once resources are lost, individuals become more vulnerable to further resource loss and may find themselves in a resource loss spiral. Researchers have examined the long-lasting impact of resource loss as well as the role that resources play on the shorter term, such as across days or weeks (Airila et al., 2014; Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015; Donald et al. 2016). We propose that work-family conflict (which refers to a situation in which resources are depleted) influences how employees feel about their upcoming workday. Specifically, we examine how experiences of work-family conflict in the evening influence work-related well-being the next morning. In examining work-related well-being, we follow a recent line of research that integrates positive and negative perspectives on well-being in the workplace (Fujimoto, Ferdous, Sekiguchi, & Sugianto, 2016; Van den Tooren & Rutte, 2016; Zacher, Schmitt, Jimmieson, & Rudolph, 2018) by focusing in this study on work engagement, emotional exhaustion, and positive and negative affect towards the organization.

## 3.3    Hypotheses

Individuals experience work-to-family conflict when demands from work deplete personal resources (e.g., time and energy) and consequently hamper performance at home (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). On days when employees work from home instead of

at the office, they may find execution of their work role less demanding (e.g., less interruptions). Indeed, a vast body of research has shown that telecommuting is negatively related to work role stress (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and work exhaustion (Allen et al., 2015; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012). In line with work-family spillover theory, this would imply that working from home reduces the likelihood of experiencing negative spillover from work to family because employees are left with more resources that can be used to actively participate in the family role. While working from home may blur the boundaries between work and family and hence result in work-family conflict (see Schieman & Young, 2010), from a resource (drain) perspective, it should reduce work-family conflict. Indeed, the majority of studies on the relationship between telecommuting and work-family conflict shows a negative association between the two constructs (see Allen et al., 2013, and Gajendran & Harrison, 2007, for meta-analyses). Although most research on the relationship between working from home and work-family conflict has employed a between-individual approach, recent intraindividual research substantiates our claim by showing that on teleworking days, individuals experience less work-to-home conflict than on days they work at the office (Delanoeije et al., 2019). We aim to replicate this finding and put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1*: Within individuals, working from home (compared with at the office) will be negatively associated with work-family conflict.

Time pressure is a work-related stressor that refers to the experience of having to work at a fast pace or having insufficient time to complete work-related tasks (Baer & Oldham, 2006). We argue that on days when employees work at home they experience less time pressure, for the following three reasons. First, on working from home days, employees have significantly reduced contact with their colleagues and supervisors, and thus less work-related distractions that may keep them from focusing on their work-related tasks (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008; Haddad, Lyons, & Chatterjee, 2009; Kolb & Collins, 2009; Peters & Wildenbeest, 2010; Taylor & Kavanaugh, 2005). The lack of interruptions may decrease the individual's feeling to speed up the work pace. Another potential explanation for why employees may experience less time pressure on a working from home day is the greater autonomy in deciding how and when to perform their tasks (Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2014). Control over scheduling one's own working day can be used to schedule work efficiently, thus saving energy and time. A final reason for why working from home may have a time pressure reducing potential is that it eliminates commuting time (Peters, Tijdens, & Wetzels, 2004), consequently leaving the employee with more time that can be spent on work-related tasks.

Lending support to the above arguments, empirical research suggests that the working from home practice has the potential to reduce experiences of time pressure (Peters & Van der Lippe, 2007). In their cross-sectional study among 807 employees in The Netherlands, Peters and Van der Lippe (2007), showed that employees working from home more than one day per week on average experience less time pressure than full-time on-site workers. Thus, we expect that on working from home days, individuals experience less time pressure than on office days. Time pressure, in turn, may be a strong predictor of daily work-family conflict. Dealing with time pressure on a given day may keep individuals from actively participating in the family role because of depleted (emotional) resources (Pluut et al., 2018; Prem, Kubicek, Diestel, & Korunka, 2016; Prem et al., 2018). In line with the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory, which proposes that once resources are expended in one domain they become unavailable for other domains, we put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2:* Within individuals, time pressure experienced at the end of the workday mediates the negative relationship between working from home and work-family conflict experienced at home.

On days when employees are not able to satisfy the needs of the home domain due to the demands of the work role (i.e., work-family conflict), they may experience stress because they could not successfully manage both roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). We posit that work-family conflict is an exhausting and resource draining experience for two reasons. First, previous research has suggested that experiences of work-family conflict may lead to a negative *state of being*, including negative emotions such as anxiety and dissatisfaction (Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006). Judge and colleagues (2006), for instance, showed that on days when employees' work interferes with the family role, they experience more negative emotional responses (i.e., hostility and guilt) at home. Second, when stress arises from the incompatibility of two salient life roles, the individual is likely to ruminate about "whether and how one can fix the issues causing the conflict and the potential consequences of the conflict" (Davis, Gere & Sliwinski, 2016, p. 330). In order to overcome negative emotions and prevent rumination, the individual experiencing work-family conflict is likely to engage in self-regulation (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) and invest personal resources, such as optimism (Beal et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2015), to offset further resource loss.

In line with the resource loss principle of COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), then, conflict between work and family may negatively affect well-being the next morning. We know from previous empirical work that work-related well-being has a state-like component and fluctuates on a daily basis (Liu et al., 2015; Pluut et al., 2018; Simbula, 2010; Sonnentag, Mojza, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011; Van Gelderen, Bakker, Konijn, & Demerouti, 2011). Day-level variations in well-being can be explained by fluctuations in personal resources (Liu et al., 2015;

Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010). As we argue that individuals who experience work-family conflict are more likely to start the next morning with inadequate personal resources, we expect that day-level variations in work-family conflict explain fluctuations in employees' levels of emotional exhaustion and work engagement the next workday.

First, several studies have shown that work-family conflict is positively associated with burnout and emotional exhaustion (for a review, see Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Taking a resource drain perspective, Simbula (2010), for instance, showed that at the within-person level, work-family conflict experiences predicted emotional exhaustion. Moreover, there is empirical evidence for the longitudinal effect of work-family conflict on emotional exhaustion and burnout (Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield, & Thompson, 2010; Innstrand, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum, & Aasland, 2008; Karatepe & Tekinkus 2006; Leineweber et al., 2014). Although previous research has shown that work-family conflict predicts emotional exhaustion on the day level and on the long term, we know little about how daily work-family conflict experiences influence the *next* day, specifically how employees feel the next workday. Based on the above theoretical arguments and empirical insights, we put forward the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is positively related to emotional exhaustion the next morning.

Second, we expect that the effect of daily work-family conflict on next morning work-related well-being is not limited to feelings of exhaustion but also affects their levels of engagement. Employees who have enough personal resources (e.g., high levels of energy and mental resilience) are likely to be engaged in their work. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that feeling recovered and refreshed in the morning (i.e., having energetic resources) helps employees to feel engaged in their work during the day (Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Bledow, 2012; Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014; Sonnentag, 2003). When employees find themselves in a resource-depleting situation (i.e., work-family conflict), however, they may decrease their level of job engagement to protect their remaining resources (Babic, Stinglhamber, Bertrand, & Hansez, 2017). Indeed, numerous cross-sectional studies have shown that work-family conflict is negatively associated with engagement (Opie & Henn, 2013; Wilczek-Ruzyczka, Basinska, & Dåderman, 2012), and this negative relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement (vigor in particular) appears to hold over time (see Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen's, 2007, for a 2-year longitudinal study). It remains to be investigated, however, how work-family conflict and work engagement relate across days. Using the above empirical insights and in line with the resource loss principle of COR theory, we hypothesize that experiences of work-family conflict in the evening reduce individuals' feelings of work engagement the next morning.

*Hypothesis 4:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is negatively related to work engagement the next morning.

So far, we proposed that experiences of work-family conflict deplete personal resources and leave employees to start the next workday with scarce energy. In what comes next, we argue that work-family conflict also influences individuals' emotions towards the organization. Emotions refer to affective responses to specific events (Lazarus & Cohen-Charash, 2001). Depending on the pleasantness of the event, individuals can experience either positive (e.g., enthusiasm) or negative (e.g., hostility) emotions (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

   Failing to meet family demands because of work is unpleasant and thus may trigger a state of negative affect (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Indeed, studies that used within-individual designs found that work-family conflict predicts negative emotions, such as guilt and hostility (Judge et al., 2006). Importantly, these negative emotions are directed to the cause of the conflict as employees are likely to psychologically attribute blame to what has caused the conflict (i.e., the source) and become dissatisfied with that role (Shockley & Singla, 2011; Speights, Bochantin & Cowan, 2019). In fact, previous cross-sectional studies have shown that when work interferes with family, individuals appraise their work negatively, become dissatisfied with their job, and show less commitment to their organization (for meta-analytic studies, see Allen et al., 2000, and Amstad et al., 2011). Consistent with previous within-individual studies that have shown that state-level emotions can last until the next morning (Wang et al., 2013; Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2018), we hypothesize that experiences of work-family conflict in the evening increase feelings of negative affect and reduce feelings of positive affect towards the organization the next morning.

*Hypothesis 5a:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is positively related to negative affect towards the organization the next morning.

*Hypothesis 5b:* Within individuals, work-family conflict experienced at home in the evening is negatively related to positive affect towards the organization the next morning.

In sum, we propose that on days when employees work from home they are less likely to experience work-family conflict than on office days and this relationship is explained by reduced time pressure. Moreover, we propose that the effects of work-family conflict spill over to the next workday, in terms of employees' exhaustion and engagement levels in the morning and how they feel (i.e., positive and negative affect) about the organization they work for.

## 3.4    Method

### 3.4.1    Sample and Procedure

We posted an online application form on network platforms, such as LinkedIn, to recruit professional workers. In order to qualify for participation in the study, the individual needed to be married or co-habiting and to work from home at least two days a week. Furthermore, the invitation indicated a preference for partner participation. A total of 34 individuals and 24 partners indicated to be eligible and agreed to participate in our daily research study. As an appreciation for participants' effort, ten raffle prizes were distributed among the participants. Winners were randomly selected from all eligible participants. Prior to the start of the diary study, participants were requested to respond to a one-time web-based questionnaire, which assessed demographic variables. All of the respondents completed the initial web-based questionnaire. Of the 34 focal employees who participated in our study, more than half (68%) were women. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 58, with a mean of 33 years. On average, participants worked 38 hours and worked from home 2.7 days a week. Individuals held jobs in a variety of sectors, such as the legal sector, academia, and IT.

Over a period of two workweeks individuals were required to fill out three daily web-based surveys, one in the morning at home, one in the afternoon at work (or at home on a working from home day) and one in the evening at home. Participants were instructed to answer the morning questions within an hour of waking up, fill out the afternoon questionnaire within an hour of finishing work and respond to the evening surveys within an hour of going to bed. During this same period, the spouse of the participant received one survey each evening and was asked to fill out the survey before going to sleep. In order to protect the anonymity of each individual, participants were requested to create an identification code, which could be used to link their records across days. Spouses were asked to use the same identification code as their partner, which we could then use to link the answers of participants and their spouses. Given that the recorded surveys contained a time stamp, we could check whether respondents filled them out on the same day. Surveys that were completed the day after were removed for further analyses. Our final sample consists of 34 participants, who provided 324 daily records with an average of 9.4 days per person, out of a maximum of 10 workdays. In terms of the spouse sample, we obtained 205 out of a possible 240 daily responses from 24 participants, with an average of 8.5 days per person.

### 3.4.2     Measures

**Workplace.** As part of the morning survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would work from home or at the office on that particular day. We then assigned a code to each category, where 0 indicates a working at the office day and 1 represents a working from home day.

   **Time pressure.** Employees' daily experience of time pressure was measured in the afternoon survey, with three items out of the five-item workload scale previously used by Pluut and colleagues (2018). We asked respondents to indicate their agreement with statements such as "I had problems with the pace of work today" and "I worked under time pressure today" on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Our measure of time pressure had an average Cronbach's alpha of .82 across days.

   **Work-family conflict.** Work-family conflict was assessed using the five-item work-family conflict scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). Following other intraindividual studies who used this scale (e.g., Pluut et al., 2018; Derks, Bakker, Peters, & Wingerden, 2016), we slightly modified the items to capture employees' daily work-family conflict experiences. Each evening, within an hour of going to bed, respondents rated the level of experienced work-family conflict with statements such as "Today, my job produced strain that made it difficult to fulfill family duties". Answers were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree.* The average internal consistency across evenings was .93.

   In the spouses' surveys, we assessed the perceptions of partners regarding the level of work-family conflict of the focal participants. The items used for the self-reports of work-family conflict (as described above) were slightly modified to change the referent. Each evening, spouses were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as "Today, my partner's job produced strain that made it difficult for him/her to fulfill family duties" on a five-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree* to *5 = strongly agree*). The Chronbach's alpha of our spouse-rated work-family conflict variable was .94 across evenings.

   **Work engagement.** Employees' daily engagement was measured in the morning within an hour of their wake-up time with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The nine-item UWES consists of vigor, absorption, and dedication as dimensions of engagement. To measure *state* work engagement, scholars have created an adapted version of the UWES, which has been validated using daily diary data (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & Hetland, 2012). We slightly modified Breevaart and colleagues' questions to measure work engagement in the morning instead of retrospectively in the evening. Moreover, given that the absorption dimension of the UWES is only relevant at the end of the work day, we decided to exclude it from our scale. We asked respondents to indicate their agreement to statements such as "This morning, I feel strong

and vigorous when I think about my job" (vigor) and "This morning, I am enthusiastic about my job" (dedication) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Our six-item measure of daily engagement had an average Cronbach's alpha of .91 across days.

**Emotional exhaustion.** We measured emotional exhaustion in the morning survey with six items from the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The items were slightly modified to capture individuals' daily experiences of emotional exhaustion. Each morning, within an hour of waking up, participants were requested to respond to questions such as "When I got up this morning, I felt too fatigued to face another day on the job" and "This morning, I feel like I am at the end of my rope". Respondents indicated their agreement with the statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Across days, the average internal consistency was .91.

**Positive and negative affect towards the organization.** Affective states towards the organization were measured each morning with five positive adjectives (e.g., "active" and "excited") and five negative adjectives (e.g., "jittery" and "afraid"), taken from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Employees were asked to indicate the extent (1= *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely much*) to which they felt each of the adjective descriptors at that moment thinking about the organization they work for. Positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) had an average Cronbach's alpha of .94 and .69 across mornings, respectively.

## 3.5    ANALYSES

The data used for the analyses has a nested structure, where days (Level 1; $n$ = 324) are nested within individuals (Level 2; $n$ = 34). Before conducting the analyses, we calculated the between-individual and within-individual variance components of all our study variables, by estimating null models (i.e., no predictors) for each construct. The percentage of variance because of within-individual variation in study variable scores ranged from 18% (morning organizational PA) to 89% for the workplace variable (see Table 3.1). The overall high day-to-day fluctuations of our study variables confirm that within-individual analyses are suitable to test our model. We used hierarchical linear modelling (HLM 6; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992) to test our theoretical model. Each level-1 predictor variable was centered relative to the individuals' means across days on the focal variables. In this way, the scores signify deviations from an individual's respective mean, and "the subject serves as his or her own control" (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988, p. 487).

*Table 3.1 | Variance components of null models for level-1 variables*

| Dependent variable | Within-individual variance ($\sigma^2$) | Between-individual variance ($\tau^2$) | Percent variability within individuals |
|---|---|---|---|
| Workplace | 0.225 | 0.026 | 89.5 |
| Time pressure | 0.786 | 0.354 | 69.0 |
| Work-family conflict employee-rated | 0.804 | 0.346 | 69.9 |
| Work-family conflict spouse-rated | 0.600 | 0.404 | 59.8 |
| Morning engagement | 0.313 | 0.488 | 39.1 |
| Morning organizational PA[a] | 0.187 | 0.826 | 18.4 |
| Morning exhaustion | 0.334 | 0.456 | 42.3 |
| Morning organizational NA[b] | 0.081 | 0.129 | 38.6 |

*Note.* N = 34. [a]PA: Positive affect, [b]NA: Negative affect. Percent variability within individuals was computed as $\sigma^2 / (\sigma^2 + \tau^2) * 100$. All within-individual variances were significantly different from zero ($p < .001$).

## 3.6    RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for all focal variables and the between- and within-individual correlations are presented in Table 3.2. As a first step, to test Hypothesis 1, we regressed work-family conflict on workplace. Lending support to our first hypothesis, the results showed that on days when employees worked from home, they experienced less work-family conflict compared with days on which they worked at the office ($B = -0.60$, $p < .001$). We then used the procedures of Bauer and colleagues (2006) to holistically test a model in which time pressure mediates the path between workplace and work-family conflict. In support of Hypothesis 2, the findings indicated that working from home was negatively associated with time pressure ($B = -0.55$, $p < .001$) and time pressure was positively related with work-family conflict ($B = 0.25$, $p = .002$). Thus, both paths of the mediation model were significantly different from zero. As a next step, we employed an R package called 'RMediation' (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011), to test our mediation hypothesis directly. This package produces indirect effect estimates and generates confidence intervals around the effects on the basis of the distribution-of-the-product method. RMediation estimated the indirect effect of workplace to work-family conflict via time pressure at $-0.14$ with a 95% CI of $[-0.251, -0.049]$. These results provide support for Hypothesis 2. Put differently, on days when employees worked from home, they felt less time pressure and consequently experienced less work-family conflict, compared with office days.

To test our third and fourth hypotheses, we regressed work-family conflict on emotional exhaustion and engagement, respectively. We observed that on evenings when individuals experienced heightened levels of work-family conflict, they felt more emotionally exhausted ($B = 0.20$, $p = .004$) and less engaged ($B = -0.12$, $p = .010$) the next morning. Finally, we regressed work-family conflict on positive and negative affect towards the organization, to examine Hypothesis 5. Lending support for Hypothesis

5a, the findings indicated that on days when individuals experienced more work-family conflict, they felt more negative emotions towards the organization they worked for the upcoming workday ($B = 0.06$, $p = .007$). Within individuals, experiences of work-family conflict did not predict positive emotions towards the organization the next morning ($B = -0.03$, $p = .588$), which leads us to reject Hypothesis 5b.

*Table 3.2 | Within-individual and between-individuals correlations of study variables*

| | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Workplace[a] | 0.48 | 0.23 | | −0.29*** | −0.31*** | −0.21 | 0.02 | 0.01 | −0.06 | 0.01 |
| 2. Time pressure | 2.78 | 0.66 | −0.29 | | 0.26** | 0.19 | −0.08 | 0.03 | 0.25 | 0.16 |
| 3. Work-family conflict employee-rated | 2.07 | 0.67 | −0.23 | 0.37* | | 0.40** | −0.19** | −0.07 | 0.34** | 0.20** |
| 4. Work-family conflict spouse-rated | 1.86 | 0.98 | −0.34 | 0.26 | 0.50* | | −0.01 | −0.04 | 0.27* | 0.16* |
| 5. Morning engagement | 3.19 | 0.73 | −0.13 | 0.12 | −0.15 | 0.15 | | 0.38*** | −0.50*** | −0.05 |
| 6. Morning organizational PA[b] | 2.62 | 0.92 | 0.02 | 0.12 | −0.08 | 0.25 | 0.78** | | −0.11 | 0.15 |
| 7. Morning exhaustion | 1.88 | 0.70 | 0.07 | 0.12 | 0.35* | 0.13 | −0.73** | −0.62** | | 0.29*** |
| 8. Morning organizational NA[c] | 1.35 | 0.37 | −0.06 | 0.23 | 0.11 | 0.15 | −0.17 | −0.02 | 0.41* | |

*Note.* [a]Workplace: working at the office = 0, working from home = 1, [b]PA: Positive affect, [c]NA: Negative affect. Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) are between-individual descriptive statistics. The correlations below the diagonal represent between-individual associations, which are calculated based on individuals' aggregated scores (*n*s = 34 to 24, pairwise). The correlations above the diagonal represent within-individual associations and are calculated using the group-mean centered scores (*n*s = 152 to 305 for correlations involving spousal ratings and self-reported scores, respectively).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .00$

## 3.6.1 Additional Analyses

To reduce the common rater day-specific bias concern related to experience sampling methodology (Ilies, Schwindt, & Heller, 2007), we replicated our mediation analyses with spouse-rated work-family conflict as an outcome. Using spousal rating, we did not find support for Hypothesis 2, which states that time pressure mediates the negative relationship between workplace and work-family conflict (indirect effect = −0.053, 95% CI of [−0.145, 0.026]). However, the direct effect of workplace on spouse-rated work-family conflict was significant ($B = -0.36$, $p = 0.007$). In other words, spouses confirmed that on days when employees worked from home, work was less likely to interfere with the family domain.

## 3.7 Discussion

Our intraindividual study aimed to elucidate the process by which working from home affects employees' work-home interface and consequently work-related well-being. Integrating work-family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) with the resource loss spiral principle from COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), we argued that on days when employees work at the office, they are more likely to (a) lose resources and (b) find themselves in a

loss spiral. In line with the first argument, we demonstrated that on office days, individuals experienced more work-family conflict, through greater perceptions of time pressure. In addition, we found that on working from home days not only employees but also their spouses reported higher levels of work-family conflict. Yet, we did not find support for the mediating effect of time pressure on the relationship between workplace and spouse-rated work-family conflict. It may be that the effects of time pressure as a work stressor are less noticed by the partner. This finding is in line with recent research that posits that some work-related demands are less observable by the significant other, and may be perceived by partners as less interfering with family participation (Ilies, Huth, Ryan, & Dimotakis, 2015).

Lending support to the second argument, we illustrated that employees start the next morning feeling emotionally exhausted and less engaged and they have higher negative affect towards the organization they work for. Interestingly, experiences of work-family conflict in the evening did not predict employees' positive affect towards the organization the upcoming day. An explanation for this finding might be that work-family conflict is a negative situation and positive affective states correspond with positive events instead of negative events (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000). It should also be noted that positive affect showed very small within-person variability (18%, see Table 3.1), suggesting that this variable is less sensitive to day-to-day fluctuations.

### 3.7.1    Strengths and Implications for Research

Our findings contribute to research on work and family by elucidating what happens on a working from home day, why it has a work-family conflict-reducing potential and how work-family conflict experiences spill over to the next workday. First, we are among the first (see also Delanoeije et al., 2019) to relate working from home to work-family conflict on a daily level. But it remains elusive *why* precisely working from home has a work-family conflict-reducing potential. This study examined how time pressure explains the negative relationship between working from home and work-family conflict. Consistent with the idea that the very nature of telework supports individuals in saving (working) time (Haddad, Lyons, & Chatterjee, 2009), our results show that on days when individuals work from home they experience less time pressure than on office days. Second, it seems that employees who work from home are left with more resources that can be used to actively participate in the family role, and therefore experience less work-family conflict. Third, we drew on COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) to posit that experiences of work-family conflict also extend to the upcoming workday, in terms of employees' energetic levels and how they feel about the organization they work for. Research to date has mostly tested negative spillover effects from work to family within the same day (e.g., Pluut et al., 2018), and little effort has been expanded to study overnight effects of work-family conflict (Du, Derks, & Bakker, 2018). The current

research suggests that the resource draining nature of work-family conflict has cross-day implications. Specifically, we found support for the resource loss spiral principle of COR, such that experiences of work-family conflict deplete personal resources, such as energies, leaving employees to feel emotionally exhausted and less engaged in their work the next morning. This is in accordance with the process view of the work-home resources model of Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012), which entails that effects of work-family conflict develop over time. In addition, our findings propose that individuals wake up with negative affect about the organization they work for when work has interfered with their family life the previous day. This result is entirely consistent with prior research suggesting that people are likely to become unhappy with the cause of the conflict as they attribute blame to the source (Shockley & Singla, 2011). Yet, our study is unique in that it is among the first to show how daily work-family conflict experiences influence how individuals feel about the organization they work for and how such emotions last till the next workday.

Finally, our study contributes to research on the working from home policy. Most working from home research has studied between-person differences (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016). Such cross-sectional studies require employees to place themselves in either a "home worker" or "office worker" category. Although this approach is appropriate when examining differences between the two worker types, it may not portray a realistic picture of how the policy is used. In The Netherlands, for instance, approximately one-fifth (19%) of the working population works from home on an occasional basis (CBS, 2018), indicating that many individuals work from home on some days and spend the rest of their workdays at the office. Consistent with this trend, a recent review (Allen et al., 2015) posited that working from home should be studied at the within-individual level because employees' workplace is likely to fluctuate on a day-to-day basis. For the current study we sought out participants that showed very high within-person variability for this construct (89.5%, see Table 3.1). It enabled us to develop an intraindividual model of the daily consequences of working from home. Our results show that everyday decisions to work from home or at the office have important consequences, not only for how employees experience the workday (i.e., time pressure) and how this affects their home life but also for how they start their next workday. In doing so, we believe our study advances research on the working from home policy.

### 3.7.2    Practical Implications

Our day-level research study holds critical practical implications for organizations and employees. First, organizations are highly recommended to offer employees the possibility to work from home, at least on some days, as part of their employment policies. Results from our research showed that working from home can reduce the likelihood that employees experience conflict between work and family and may aid in shaping more energetic

and positive subsequent workdays. We know from previous research that engaged employees perform better, have more creative ideas, and transfer their energy to co-workers (Christian, Gartza, & Slaughter, 2011; Orth & Volmer, 2017; Van Mierlo & Bakker, 2018). Adopting a working from home policy may enable employees to successfully manage both the work and family role and organizations can reap the productivity benefits of employees' work engagement.

A second implication is related to our finding that reduced feelings of time pressure (at least partly) account for why working from home results in lower work-family conflict. It seems that many employees experience the office as a rather stressful work environment that puts them under time pressure, which in turn has negative consequences for their work-home interface. Organizations need to take proactive measures in regard to this problem. We believe solutions can be found in the domains of social support and stress management. Prior research has shown that daily social support from supervisors can reduce the strain caused by work demands and thus aid in alleviating experiences of work-family conflict among employees (Pluut et al., 2018). We therefore suggest supervisors to help employees manage their time effectively and find non-disturbing workspaces to minimize work-related interruptions. Moreover, in terms of stress management, supervisors can help employees to change their appraisal of time pressure. It seems the employees in our sample appraised time pressure as a hindrance given that it had unfavorable consequences for their work-home interface. According to recent research, however, daily experiences of time pressure may also have a motivating effect (i.e., increased work engagement) when controlling for strain (Baethge, Vahle-Hinz, Schulte-Braucks, & Van Dick, 2017). Helping employees to appraise time pressure as a challenge instead of a hindrance may reduce its negative effect on individuals' work-home interface.

Finally, our results have crucial implications for employees. Employees who can make use of the working from home policy need to become aware that their everyday decision to work from home or at the office has critical consequences in terms of well-being. Our findings suggest that working from home days are less resource depleting than office days because employees experience less time pressure. Frequent exposure to a work-related stressor, such as time pressure, may not be sustainable on the long-term (e.g., becoming burned out, see Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Thus, it is key that individuals seek the opportunity to work from home for at least some portion of the week.

### 3.7.3    Limitations and Directions for Future Research

We should note several limitations of the current research. First, while we measured daily spouse reports of work-family conflict at home, common method bias is a possible limitation since our remaining variables were self-reported (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). However, considering that

on working from home days employees are not in direct contact with their supervisors and colleagues, it would not be feasible to collect multisource data for the other work-related constructs in our model (e.g., time pressure, engagement). Another limitation relates to the generalizability of our findings because our sample consisted exclusively of office workers. Jobs that cannot be performed by means of information technology may not be suitable for telework (Allen et al., 2015) and thus our findings may not extend to all types of workers. For instance, occupations that require presence at the workplace for personal interaction with customers (e.g., healthcare) may not lend themselves to working from home.

A second limitation relates to the conceptualization of our predictor and outcome variable. First, employees' use of the telework policy was merely assessed in terms of working from home. That is, we specifically recruited employees who mainly choose their home as the location of the worksite on teleworking days. Thus, our sample does not lend itself to examine differences in the effects of various work environments outside of the office. Perhaps working at a café yields different results in terms of experiences of time pressure because of increased interruptions. For a more nuanced understanding of the daily consequences of the telework policy, future research should collect data from employees who choose to work from different locations outside the office and examine any differences between these telework locations. Second, our outcome variable referred to work-family conflict (as perceived by either the focal participant or the spouse) but we did not test directly family in-role behaviours. To better understand how family life is affected by experiences of time pressure during the workday, future research may want to supplement our model with measures such as spousal interactions and time spent with the family. Existing research provides some guidance, such as looking at the daily relationship between work-family conflict and social interactions with the family (Ilies et al., 2007).

Third, the current study lacks data on possible boosters that may exacerbate the proposed relations in our model. We know from prior research, for instance, that employees who have telecommuted for over a year are better able to reap the benefits of the practice than individuals who have less experience (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). It would be a valuable research endeavour to collect data regarding individuals' telecommuting experience (e.g., years) to test for possible cross-level moderating effects.

Finally, our findings do not provide a thorough picture of the next-day consequences of work-family conflict because we did not explore why (i.e., mediators) experiences of work-family conflict negatively affect work-related well-being the next morning and when (i.e., moderators) these effects are more likely to hold. It would be interesting to examine whether evening recovery experiences alleviate the negative effects of work-family conflict on next morning experiences, as previous research has shown that psychological detachment from work and sleep quality predict negative affect and fatigue the next morning before going to work (Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008).

# 4 Does Flexible Working Stand in the Way of Objective Performance Ratings? Psychological Mechanisms and Boundary Conditions Explaining the Dark Side of Working from Home*

Abstract

While flexible working practices have been introduced seemingly as a tool to promote sustainable careers, recent research suggests that flexible workers may find their careers to be negatively affected. Integrating signaling theory with key tenets from social role theory and social identity theory, in this paper we identify factors that could account for this dark side. In two vignette studies, 149 university students (Study I) and 320 supervisors (Study II) were asked to rate the job performance of an employee who either worked from home on a regular basis or always worked at the office. The two studies did not yield entirely consistent results, but together they indicated that employees working from home on a regular basis were perceived as worse performers because supervisors perceived their work centrality and organizational commitment as lower. This was particularly so for those who regularly work from home but have no children and when the supervisor is a man and never works from home himself. These finding suggest that supervisors have a great influence on how the careers of employees develop. Our paper contributes to the literature on flexible working practices by showing that careers are contextualized. Moreover, our study is among the first to investigate psychological factors and boundary conditions that explain why and when employees working from home are perceived as lower performers.

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## 4.1   Introduction

Over the past years, technological advancement has transformed the way work is done and traditional work patterns are fading. This trend is reflected in the flexible working practices (FWPs) that many employers offer, which give employees the opportunity to choose when, how and where to work (Kelly & Moen, 2007). For many organizations, the adoption of FWPs has been a response to the growing concern for sustainable careers (Kelliher & Menezes, 2019), the introduction of laws giving parents the right to request FWPs (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) and the need to attract and retain talent (Onken-Menke, Nüesch, & Kröll, 2017). FWPs cover a range of working patterns and include flexible working hours, working from home and compressed working time (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). The number of employers that offer FWPs, especially in terms of working from home, is increasing. A study across 1,051 American organizations with 50 or more employees showed that 66 per cent of organizations (compared to 34 percent in 2005) allow at least some employees the opportunity to work from home on an occasional basis and 40 per cent (compared to 31 percent in 2005) allow some employees to work from home on a regular basis (Matos, Galinsky, & Bond, 2016).

Given the rapid growth in the availability of flexible working, it is not surprising that FWPs have received significant research attention in terms of their consequences. The benefits of these practices for both organizations (e.g., reduced employee turnover intention and higher employee productivity) and employees (e.g., reduced stress, increased well-being and lower work-family conflict) are widely documented (for meta-analyses, see Baltes et al., 1999; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; the latter relates specifically to working from home outcomes). However, recent research suggests that there is also a dark side to FWPs (e.g., fewer opportunities for learning and promotion, see Kelliher & Anderson, 2008, lower reward recommendations when FWPs are used for personal life accommodation, see Leslie et al., 2012, and lower performance ratings for employees who arrive late at work, see Yam, Fehr, & Barnes, 2014). Yet, research to date has only begun to focus on the precise psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions that help understand this dark side. It therefore remains elusive *why* and *when* flexible working is harmful to career progression.

In the current paper, we address these limitations by focusing on one of the most frequently utilized forms of FWPs: working from home (Matos et al., 2016). Scholars focusing on the negative impact of FWPs have mostly focused on flextime as a practice (Leslie et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2014). This study is among the first to focus on flexplace as a practice and thereby provides much-needed insight into the effects of this form. We start from the premise that flexplace can stand in the way of objective performance evaluations. Similar to flextime, employees who work from home on a regular basis are less visible in the workplace, specifically in

terms of their work attitudes and behaviours. Supervisors may then decide to rely on employees' use of flexplace as a signal to form perceptions about employees' job attitudes (e.g., how important is work for them, how committed are they to the organization?) and how well they perform at their job. Previous research on the dark side of FWPs has shown that underlying any detrimental effects are the perceptions that supervisors develop of employees using FWPs. In this article, we focus on how employees who work from home on a regular basis are perceived in terms of work centrality and organizational commitment.

Whether those perceptions are positive or negative may depend on the employee's characteristics. Discretion over where one works may be more appealing to some individuals than others (Thompson, Payne, & Taylor, 2015) and this may be taken into account by supervisors when they evaluate those who work from home on a regular basis. In this study, we focus on the employee's parental status as a key individual difference that may shape the perceptions of supervisors. In addition, we propose that not all supervisors are equal. Specifically, we posit that the gender and own working from home pattern of supervisors influence the degree to which they hold employees to an 'ideal worker' standard by which employees always work at the office. Thus, we aim to identify important boundary conditions for the negative effects of working from home on supervisory performance ratings, focusing on the employee's parental status and the supervisor's gender and own working from home pattern. In doing so, we provide a detailed understanding of when and for whom working from home is related to lower performance ratings.

## 4.2    Theoretical Framework of the Current Study

Supervisors' perceptions of their subordinates influence key HR-related processes, such as performance evaluations (Bratton & Gold, 2012; Schuh et al., 2018). It has long been established that supervisors use observable signals from employees to draw conclusions about characteristics that are more difficult to observe. For instance, supervisors may want to learn about an employee's work centrality, which refers to the degree of importance that work plays in that person's life (Paullay, Alliger, & Stone-Romero, 1994). To this end, they may decide to focus on an employee's FWP use, which signals to them that the employee has personal life responsibilities that may reduce their commitment to the organization (e.g., Glass, 2004; Weeden, 2005). Drawing on signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973), we start from the notion that working from home might signal that the employee does not devote their full attention to the work role (i.e., has lower work centrality).

However, signaling theory would also suggest that the interpretation and implication of working from home is dependent on the employee's parental status. That is, it may send a different signal when a parent decides

to work from home than when an employee without children works from home on a regular basis. For instance, the care responsibilities of parents are more salient than those of employees without children. Hence, we propose that the negative effects of working from home depend on the employee's parental status in that supervisors may draw a different conclusion about (i.e., form a different perception of) employees who work from home when it concerns a working parent compared with an employee without children.

Supervisors are the receiver of the signal that is sent by employees who do or do not use flexplace as a practice. We argue that individual differences on the receiver's end impact the perception of those who work from home. In other words, we ask *which supervisors* are more likely to view employees who work from home as less devoted to their work than those who always work at the office. To this end, we integrate signaling theory with key tenets from social role theory and social identity theory.

First, we draw on social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016) to argue that the supervisor's gender influences the negative perceptions of employees who work from home. Social role theory postulates that men and women are socialized into different roles. Traditionally, women have occupied the role of the family caregiver and spent little time in paid employment (Cejka & Eagly, 1999), while men were expected to take on the role of breadwinner for the family. Because gender norms have led men and women to differ in the importance they lend to the work role, we expect that male supervisors will perceive employees who work from home on a regular basis differently than female supervisors do. Second, we use social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to propose that supervisors' assessments of employees who work from home is dependent on their habits in terms of working from home. According to social identity theory, individuals may demonstrate a similarity bias by which they evaluate another person more favorably as a result of shared characteristics (Tajfel, 1978). We investigate this proposition by examining whether supervisors' own working from home behaviours influence how they perceive and evaluate those who work from home compared with those who are always at the office. The full model that we test is presented in Figure 4.1.

Given recent critique of psychological research for a lack of replicability examinations (Jiang & Johnson, 2018; Open Science Collaboration, 2015), we test our theoretical model in two different samples. Following the research of Leslie and colleagues (2012) and Yam and colleagues (2014), who tested their models among both college students and a working sample, we collected data from 149 university students for our first study and for our second study we recruited 320 respondents employed as supervisors. In both studies, we used an experimental vignette to examine the effect of the employee's use of the flexplace practice on supervisory performance ratings. In addition, we investigated whether the employee's parental status and the gender of the supervisor acted as boundary conditions for the effects of working from home on the supervisor's perceptions of the employee.
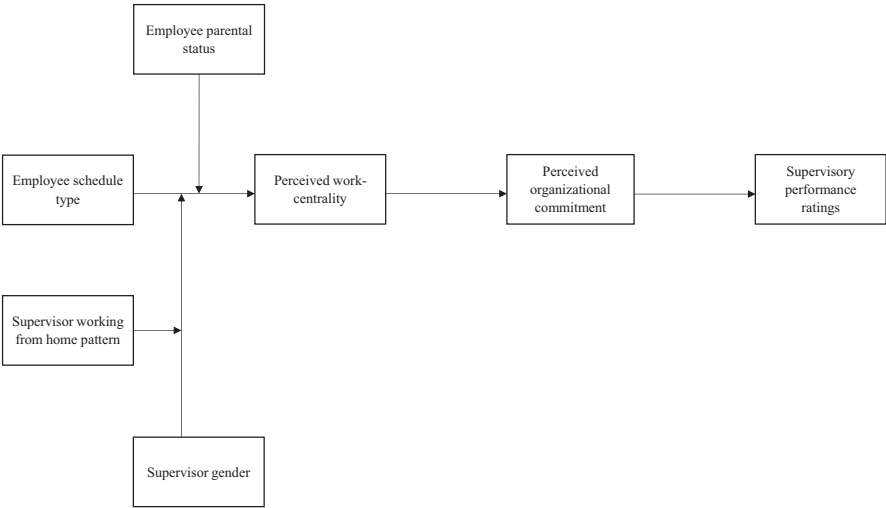
*Figure 4.1 | Theoretical model*

The sample for our second study (i.e., supervisors) allowed us to examine whether the supervisor's own working from home pattern acted as another important boundary condition. In the sections below, we build and formulate hypotheses that specify *why* and *when* working from home results in lower performance ratings.

## 4.3 HYPOTHESES

### 4.3.1 Determinants and Boundary Conditions of Supervisory Performance Ratings

Employees are often held to an 'ideal worker' standard where an employee should give work their full and unwavering dedication (Blair-Loy, 2003; Fuegen et al., 2004; Reid, 2015). The ideal worker is expected to be fully devoted to work, center their life on a full-time job, while someone else takes care of their caring responsibilities (Acker, 1990, Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). In other words, the ideal worker is constantly available for work and puts work before personal life interests at all times (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This image of the ideal worker is closely related to the concept of work centrality. Individuals who consider work (as opposed to non-work activities) as a central interest in their lives attach great importance to their work (Carr, Boyar, & Gregory, 2008). When one makes use of an employee-friendly policy, such as flexplace, it makes the personal life of the employee (and hence their interests outside of work) more salient (Leslie, Dahm, & Manchester, 2018) and this likely violates the image of the ideal worker who puts work ahead of all else. Based on these arguments, and in line with signaling theory (Spence, 1973), we expect that

supervisors interpret working from home on a regular basis as a signal that the employee has lower work centrality than those who always work at the office.

Perceptions of work centrality, in turn, are likely to shape supervisors' perceptions of the employee's organizational commitment. We posit that once supervisors perceive employees to have lower work centrality based on their schedule type, the employee is also perceived as less committed to the organization. Because individuals with high levels of work centrality attach great value to their work (Bal & Kooij, 2011), are very engaged in their work (Hirschfield & Feild, 2000) and have a strong work ethic (Fakunmoju, 2018), they tend to show higher levels of commitment to the organization (see Kostek, 2012 for a meta-analysis). Individuals with high levels of work centrality are more motivated to invest in building a relationship with the organization (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Diefendorff et al., 2002; Gavriloaiei, 2016). Thus, we expect that supervisors draw conclusions about an employee's organizational commitment based on how they view the employee's work centrality.

Perceptions of organizational commitment may be a strong predictor of supervisor performance ratings. Committed employees are productive (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003), motivated to learn and eager to undergo training (e.g., Facteau et al., 1995; McNeese-Smith, 1995). Moreover, committed employees benefit the organization through their devotion and loyalty (Leslie et al., 2012) and exert extra-role contributions on behalf of the organization (i.e., organizational citizenship behaviour; Meyer et al., 2002). In line with the notion that committed workers are valuable workers that deserve rewards for their efforts, research shows that supervisors give higher job performance ratings to employees that are highly committed to the organization (Shore, Bommer, & Shore, 2008; see Meyer et al., 2002, for a meta-analysis).

Taken together, we posit that supervisors interpret working from home as a signal that the employee has lower work centrality and hence is less committed to the organization. As supervisors hold employees to an 'ideal worker' standard, perceptions of lower work centrality and organizational commitment will result in lower supervisory performance ratings. The previous arguments lead us to put forward the following serial mediation hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1:* Use of flexplace is negatively associated with supervisory ratings of job performance and this association is mediated in serial by perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment.

### 4.3.2    Boundary Conditions of Supervisory Performance Ratings

Here, we aim to examine which employees who work from home are more, or less, likely to *receive* lower performance ratings and which supervisors are more, or less, likely to *give* lower performance ratings to employees

who work from home. We posit that the employee's parental status, the supervisor's gender and the supervisor's own working from home pattern influence the strength of the effect of working from home on supervisory performance ratings.

*The Role of Employees' Parental Status*

Previous research suggests that parents are sometimes viewed unfavourably in terms of work attitudes (Kelly et al., 2010; Reid, 2015). Fuegen and colleagues (2004), for instance, found that parents are perceived as less committed to the job and less likely to be available on the job (i.e., lower number of working hours, leaving early and taking sick days). As Heilman and Okimoto (2008) noted, "being a parent brings distractions and conflicting demands, which can be seen as limiting the unadulterated focus on work and as causing individuals to give their job lower priority in their lives than would be the case if they were not parents" (p. 190). The use of FWPs enables individuals with family responsibilities to accommodate their personal lives (Shockley & Allen, 2012), yet it makes their caring responsibilities also more salient to their supervisors. Indeed, while reasons for working from home can be numerous (e.g., avoid commuting time, video-conferencing, elder care), a recent paper by Leslie and colleagues (2013) showed that supervisors believe that parents make use of flexible working policies to accommodate their personal lives (e.g., caring responsibilities), while it is thought that non-parents do so for productivity reasons. Based on signalling theory, we posit that working from home sends a different signal depending on who does it and for what reasons; supervisors are likely to interpret parents' working from home behaviour as putting their family role first instead of the work role, which is not in line with the 'ideal worker' standard. Hence, we expect that being a parent strengthens the negative relationship between working from home and supervisors' perceptions of employees' work centrality.

*Hypothesis 2:* The employee's parental status moderates the relationship between use of flexplace and perceived work centrality, such that working from home is associated with perceptions of lower work centrality more strongly so for parents than non-parents.

*The Role of Supervisors' Gender*

Social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016) suggests that the 'ideal worker' norm may be more salient among men than women. Men have traditionally been socialized into the breadwinner role and thus are expected to give more weight to the work role than the family role (Cejka & Eagly, 1991). Recent research shows that men continue to devote less time to the family role than women (Horne et al., 2018). Indeed, scholars have indicated that gender is a prominent factor influencing one's work centrality (Harpaz & Fu, 1997;

Mannheim, 1983; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997), with men reporting higher work centrality than women (see Kostek et al., 2012 for a meta-analysis). Men may therefore be less understanding and tolerant of a work pattern that may be seen as placing emphasis on the importance of the family role. Women, in contrast, should be less likely to interpret working from home as a signal that the employee has lower work centrality. Thus, we suggest that the negative effect of working from home on perceptions of work centrality will be stronger when the supervisor is a man rather than a woman.

*Hypothesis 3:* The supervisor's gender moderates the relationship between use of flexplace and perceived work centrality, such that working from home is associated with perceptions of lower work centrality more strongly so for male supervisors than female supervisors.

Combining Hypothesis 1 with Hypotheses 2 and 3 implies that employees' parental status and supervisors' gender should influence the strength of the indirect effect from flexplace use to supervisory performance ratings through the serial mediators we proposed. Hence, we put forward two additional hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 4:* The employee's parental status moderates the indirect association between use of flexplace and supervisory ratings of job performance via perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment, such that the indirect association is stronger for employees who are parents than for those without children.

*Hypothesis 5:* The supervisor's gender moderates the indirect association between use of flexplace and supervisory ratings of job performance via perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment, such that the indirect association is stronger for male supervisors than female supervisors.

*The Role of Supervisors' Own Working from Home Pattern*

When an employee uses FWPs and works from home regularly, this may make salient a particular work pattern that the supervisor shares with the employee or on which they differ. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people categorize and identify themselves along certain dimensions and they make judgments about another person on the basis of whether that person belongs to the same group as themselves or not. People are known to generally evaluate those who belong to the same group that they derive their identity from more favourably (in-group favouritism; Tajfel, 1978). When an individual evaluates another person more favourably on the basis of shared characteristics, this is known as similarity bias (Byrne, 1971). Consistent with SIT, we argue that supervisors who have a habit of working from home occasionally themselves believe they share similarities

with employees who use the flexplace practice. This view of shared identity should make it less likely that those supervisors consider working from home as a signal of lower work centrality. In contrast, supervisors who always work at the office may be less tolerant of this work habit; they will evaluate employees who work a standard schedule more favourably, demonstrating a similarity bias. In sum, we posit that the negative effect of working from home on perceptions of work centrality will be less strong when supervisors have a tendency of working from home themselves.

*Hypothesis 6:* The supervisor's working from home pattern moderates the relationship between use of flexplace and perceived work centrality, such that working from home is associated with perceptions of lower work centrality more strongly so for supervisors who always work at the office compared with supervisors who occasionally work from home.

Combining Hypothesis 1 with this latter hypothesis would imply that the supervisor's own working from home pattern should also influence the strength of the indirect effect from flexplace use to supervisory performance ratings through the serial mediators perceived work centrality and organizational commitment.

*Hypothesis 7:* The supervisor's working from home pattern moderates the indirect association between use of flexplace and supervisory ratings of job performance via perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment, such that the indirect association is stronger for supervisors who always work at the office compared with supervisors who occasionally work from home.

## 4.4     Study I

### 4.4.1    Participants and Procedure

For Study I we recruited 149 students ($M_{age}$ = 21. 2 years; 84.5% Dutch; 51.4% men) at a large university in The Netherlands. Participants were asked to assume the role of a supervisor at a fictitious consultancy firm and were randomly assigned to one of eight profiles of an employee working at the firm. Across all eight conditions, the employee worked a 40-hours working week and the employee's schedule was approved by the company. Specifically, all vignettes emphasized that the company supported flexible working, indicating that there was an organizational culture supportive of working from home. After reading the vignette, participants were asked to fill out a survey, which assessed their perceptions of the employee's work centrality and organizational commitment. The study has a two (working schedule: flexible or standard) × two (gender: man or woman) x two (parental status: children or no children) design. Whilst these respondents were not super-

visors themselves, the majority indicated that they had work experience (85.7%), with 60.4% reporting at least one year of work experience and 60.5% specified that they currently had a job, suggesting that they would have some knowledge of what a supervisory role entails. We also measured participants' demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, and nationality).

### 4.4.2    Manipulation and Measures

**Employee schedule type, parental status and gender manipulations.** We randomly presented participants with one of eight profiles. In the flexible schedule condition, participants were told that the employee works two days a week at the office and the remaining three days from home. In the standard schedule condition, the employee works five days a week at the office. Parental status was manipulated by describing the employee as having children or not. The employee was either a woman (named Anne) or a man (named Gregg); hence, we also manipulated the gender of the employee (see our section on control variables). In all conditions, participants were presented with the same objective performance chart of the employee over the last 26 weeks. In this way, we could ensure that objective performance was held constant. The chart that we used was taken from work conducted by Yam and colleagues (2014).

**Perceived work centrality.** We measured perceptions of employees' work centrality using the 12-item work centrality scale developed by Paullay, Alliger and Stone-Rome (1994). We adapted the items for peer rating and excluded those that were not suitable for peer rating (e.g., "If the unemployment benefit was really high, I would still prefer to work"). This left us with five items from the 12-item work centrality scale. An example item adjusted to peer rating is "[Name employee] has other activities more important than his/her work." Moreover, we selected one extra item from Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) Job Involvement scale, namely "[Name employee] quite often feels like staying home from work instead of coming in." Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree.* The internal consistency for this scale was $\alpha = .58$.

**Perceived organizational commitment**. Consistent with the work of Leslie and colleagues (2012), respondents' perceptions of the employee's organizational commitment was measured with two items (e.g., "[Name employee] does not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization") selected from the Affective Organizational Commitment scale developed by the six-item scale of Meyer and colleagues (1993) and one item selected from the Perceived Commitment Measure of Heilman and Okimoto (2008) (i.e., "[Name employee] is very committed to the company"; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .57$.

**Supervisory performance ratings.** Supervisors were asked to rate their employees' job performance with three items selected from a five-item Job Performance Scale (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1989). This measure has been

used in other studies on perceived employee job performance (see Yam et al., 2014). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) with statements such as "[Name employee] adequately completes assigned duties." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .63.

**Control variables.** In line with other studies on the effects of flexible working practices (e.g., Leslie et al., 2012), we controlled for gender to ensure that findings are not confounded by the possibility that working from home is interpreted as a signal of lower work centrality for employees of a certain gender. We manipulated gender by using either a female or male name. We chose the names "Anne" and "Gregg" because these names evoke the predicted gender attributions (see Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Moreover, we controlled for participants' nationalities (0 = foreign, 1 = Dutch).

### 4.4.3    Results Study I

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 4.1. As can be derived from Table 4.1, none of our control variables were significantly correlated with our focal variables. Regarding our study variables, working from home was negatively correlated with perceived work centrality ($r = -.22$, $p = .007$) and perceived work centrality was positively correlated with perceived organizational commitment ($r = .43$, $p < .001$). Finally, both perceived work centrality and organizational commitment were positively related to supervisory performance ratings ($r = .19$, $p = .018$ and $r = .39$, $p < .001$, respectively). These findings provide preliminary support for our notion that perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment serially mediate between the employee's use of flexplace and supervisory performance ratings.

We used a stepwise approach in which we start with three regression analyses to test our serial mediation hypothesis (*H1*) and our moderation hypotheses (*H2* and *H3*) and end with our two full hypothesized models, which are essentially two moderated serial mediation models (*H4* and *H5*).

As a first step, we used Andrew Hayes' (2018) PROCESS model 6 to test our serial mediation model. The results showed that working from home was negatively related to perceived work centrality ($B = -0.31$, $p = .010$), perceived work centrality was positively related to perceived organizational commitment ($B = 0.48$, $p < .001$) and the perception of organizational commitment was positively related to supervisory performance ratings ($B = 0.43$, $p < .001$). In support of Hypothesis 1, we observed that the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($B = -0.06$) did not include zero with a 95% CI [$-0.132$, $-0.013$], indicating a significant indirect effect of working from home on supervisory performance ratings through perceptions of the employee's work centrality and organizational commitment. The results of our serial mediation analysis are presented in Table 4.2.

*Table 4.1 | Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study I variables*

| Study I Study Variables | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Schedule of employee[a] | 0.48 | 0.50 | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Perceived work centrality | 4.01 | 0.72 | −0.22** | (.58) | | | | | | |
| 3. Perceived organizational commitment | 4.29 | 0.81 | −0.10 | 0.43** | (.57) | | | | | |
| 4. Supervisory performance ratings | 4.58 | 0.93 | 0.12 | 0.19* | 0.39** | (.63) | | | | |
| 5. Employee parental status[b] | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.16* | 0.07 | | | | |
| 6. Employee gender[c] | 0.53 | 0.50 | −0.02 | 0.01 | 0.15 | 0.03 | 0.03 | | | |
| 7. Supervisor gender[c] | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.03 | −0.08 | −0.01 | −0.04 | | |
| 8. Supervisor nationality[d] | 0.84 | 0.37 | −0.09 | 0.10 | 0.03 | −0.09 | 0.00 | 0.17* | −0.07 | |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Parental status 0 = no child, 1 = children. [c]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [d]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. The reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal between parentheses.
* p < .05. ** p < .01.

*Table 4.2 | Study I: The indirect effect of schedule type on performance ratings*

| Independent variables | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE | B | SE | B | SE |
| *Study I* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | −0.305* | 0.116 | −0.006 | 0.123 | −0.168 | 0.145 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.482*** | 0.086 | 0.035 | 0.112 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.426*** | 0.098 |
| Constant | 4.023*** | 0.163 | 2.302*** | 0.386 | 2.929*** | 0.508 |
| Employee gender[b] | −0.015 | 0.117 | 0.255* | 0.122 | −0.016 | 0.146 |
| Supervisor nationality[c] | 0.162 | 0.160 | −0.093 | 0.167 | −0.266 | 0.196 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Employee gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
**p < .05. *** p < .001.

As a second step, we tested our two moderation hypotheses using Andrew Hayes' (2018) PROCESS model 1. The results of our first moderation hypothesis (*H2*) indicated that the regression coefficient for the interaction between working from home and the parental status of the employee was not significant in predicting perceptions of work centrality ($B = -0.06$, $p = .805$). This result does not lend support to *H2*. With regard to the second moderation hypothesis (*H3*), however, we found that the gender of the supervisor significantly moderated the effect of working from home on perceived work centrality ($B = 0.53$, $p = .023$). More specifically, the results showed that when the supervisor was a man, the perception of the employee's work centrality was significantly lower ($p < .001$) in the working from home condition ($M = 3.67$) compared to the working at the office condition ($M = 4.23$). There was no significant difference in perceptions of work centrality, however, when the supervisor was a woman ($p = .850$). That is, the employee's work centrality was perceived equally in both conditions ($M = 4.05$ for working at the office and $M = 4.02$ for working from home). A visual representation of these results is shown in Figure 4.2.
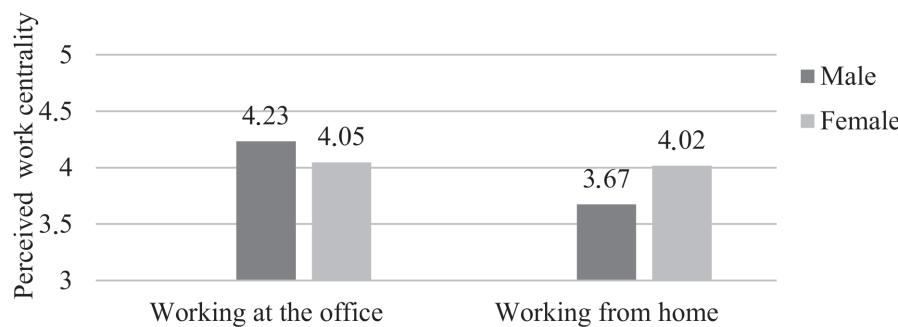
*Figure 4.2 | Study I: Interaction of supervisor gender with employee schedule type in predicting perceived work centrality*

Note. The values on the y-axis refer to the mean and ±1 SD scores for perceived work centrality

The last step involved examining our two moderated serial mediation hypotheses, *H4* and *H5*. These models were tested holistically using Andrew Hayes' (2018) model 83. First, looking at *H4*, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($B = -0.12$) included zero, 95% CI [$-0.118$, $0.088$], indicating that the indirect effect of the employee's use of flexplace on supervisory performance ratings was not moderated by the parental status of the employee. *H4* was therefore not supported, which is consistent with the lack of support for *H2*. The result of the moderating role of employee parental status are depicted in Table 4.3.

*Table 4.3 | Study I: The moderating role of employee parental status*

| Independent variables | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | SE | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study I* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | −0.276 | 0.165 | −0.006 | 0.123 | −0.168 | 0.145 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.482*** | 0.086 | 0.035 | 0.112 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.426*** | 0.098 |
| Employee parental status[b] (W) | 0.090 | 0.161 | | | | |
| X × W interaction | −0.058 | 0.233 | | | | |
| Constant | 3.981*** | 0.180 | 2.302*** | 0.386 | 2.929*** | 0.508 |
| Employee gender[c] | −0.016 | 0.118 | 0.255* | 0.122 | −0.016 | 0.146 |
| Supervisor nationality[d] | 0.159 | 0.161 | −0.093 | 0.167 | −0.266 | 0.196 |

Note. [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Employee parental status 0 = no child, 1 = children. [c]Employee gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [d]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
**p < .05. *** p < .001.

Examining our second moderated serial mediation hypothesis (*H5*), we found that the bias-corrected confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($B = 0.11$) did not include zero, 95% CI [$0.012$, $0.261$]. Thus, in support of *H5*, the indirect effect of the employee's use of flexplace on

supervisory performance ratings through perceived work centrality and organizational commitment was moderated by the gender of the supervisor. When the supervisor was a man, the indirect effect was estimated at $B = -0.12$ and the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, 95% CI [−0.236, −0.034]. In contrast, when it concerned a female supervisor, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval included zero, 95% CI [−0.071, 0.068], indicating a non-significant indirect effect ($B = -0.01$). These results are presented in Table 4.4.

*Table 4.4 | Study I: The moderating role of supervisor gender*

| Independent variables | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | SE | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study I* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | −0.559** | 0.161 | −0.013 | 0.124 | −0.16 | 0.146 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.482*** | 0.086 | 0.031 | 0.112 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.429*** | 0.099 |
| Supervisor gender[b] (W) | −0.186 | 0.159 | | | | |
| X × W interaction | 0.528* | 0.230 | | | | |
| Constant | 4.084*** | 0.185 | 2.318*** | 0.388 | 2.901*** | 0.511 |
| Employee gender[b] | −0.009 | 0.116 | 0.251* | 0.122 | −0.011 | 0.146 |
| Supervisor nationality[c] | 0.183 | 0.161 | −0.111 | 0.170 | −0.241 | 0.200 |

*Note*. [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
*p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

### 4.4.4    Discussion Study I

The aim of this first study was to examine factors indicating *why* and *when* working from home can bring about negative effects, in terms of supervisory performance ratings. We found that perceived work centrality and perceived organizational commitment elucidate the negative effects of working from home on supervisory ratings of job performance. Importantly, we found that this effect was stronger for *only* male supervisors. Our results suggest that working from home signals to male supervisors—not female supervisors—that the employee has lower work centrality. In other words, only male supervisors give lower performance ratings to employees who work from home on a regular basis because they view those employees as having lower work centrality compared with those who always work at the office. We did not find support for an impact of the employee's parental status on the indirect effect of working from home on performance ratings.

To provide a convergence of evidence (Jiang & Johnson, 2018) regarding the processes and boundary conditions that underlie the negative effects of working from home for employees, we conducted Study II to test our full theoretical model among supervisors who are actually responsible for evaluating the performance of their employees. Moreover, the question

remains whether supervisors' own working from home habit influences supervisors' perceptions of employees who use flexplace. With our Study I sample (i.e., university students) we were not able to test this, yet in our second study among professional supervisors we sought to examine this question. Our first aim is test all the hypotheses put forward in the front end of this paper but this time with a sample of respondents employed as supervisors. The second aim is to explore the effect of the supervisor's own working from home pattern on the relationship between the employee's use of flexplace and job performance ratings given by the supervisor.

## 4.5    Study II

### 4.5.1    Participants and Procedure

For this second study we recruited 320 participants ($M_{age}$ = 41.6 years; 94.7% Dutch; 55.1% men) through PanelClix, which is a large and diverse online panel situated in The Netherlands. We specifically targeted participants holding a management position (i.e., supervisors). Of these 320 supervisors, 36 were excluded from the analysis since they filled out the questionnaire in less than three minutes. This was chosen as a cut-off point based on a pilot study among 10 participants to assess how long it would take to read and answer the questions. The final sample consists of 284 supervisors. A total of 27.4% had undertaken vocational education, and 24.6% achieved a master's degree. Furthermore, the majority (62.3%) indicated that they worked in the private sector. Additionally, 44.8% of the supervisors indicated that they never worked from home and 28.2% reported working from home one day a week.

Similar to Study I, participants were asked to assume the role of a managing partner at GlobeXL consultancy. They were randomly assigned to one of eight profiles of an employee working at their company and were asked to fill out a survey, which measured our study variables and participants' demographics (i.e., age, gender, marital status and nationality).

### 4.5.2    Manipulation and Measures

**Employee schedule type, parental status and gender manipulations.** Similar to Study I, we randomly presented participants with one of eight employees, based on a 2 (schedule type: flexible or standard) x 2 (parental status: children or no children) x 2 (employee gender: Anne or Gregg) design. Moreover, we presented the participant with the same objective performance chart used in Study I (see Yam et al., 2014).

**Perceived work centrality.** We asked participants to rate the employee's work centrality with the same six items as in Study I (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; Paullay et al., 1994; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .60 in this study.

**Perceived organizational commitment**. Supervisors' perceptions of the employee's organizational commitment was measured with the commitment items of Study I (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Meyer et al., 1993; $\alpha = .62$; $1 = strongly\ disagree$ to $7 = strongly\ agree$).

**Supervisory performance ratings.** Participants were requested to rate their employees' job performance using the same three-item Job Performance scale as in Study I (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1989; $\alpha = .82$; $1 = strongly\ disagree$ to $7 = strongly\ agree$).

**Supervisor working from home pattern.** We asked participants to indicate how often they work from home and categorized their answers into $0 = never$, $1 = 1$ day a week or more.

**Control variables.** Similar to Study I, we treated the employee gender manipulation as a control variable ($0 = male$, $1 = female$). We also controlled for participants' own parental status ($0 = no\ children$, $1 = one\ or\ more\ children$) and nationality ($0 = foreign$, $1 = Dutch$).

### 4.5.3    Results Study II

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 4.5. Similar to Study I, we did not find significant correlations between our control variables and study variables. As can be derived from Table 4.5, use of flexplace was negatively but not significantly correlated with perceived work centrality ($r = -.06$, $p = .351$) and perceived work centrality was positively correlated with perceived organizational commitment ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). Moreover, both perceived work centrality and organizational commitment were positively related to supervisory performance ratings ($r = .40$, $p < .001$ and $r = .57$, $p < .001$, respectively).

Similar to Study I, we used a stepwise approach to test our hypotheses, using Andrew Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro. We started with testing our serial mediation model (*H1*) and our three moderation models (*H2*, *H3* and *H6*). This was followed by examination of our three moderated serial mediation models (*H4*, *H5* and *H7*). Replicating Study I as a first step, we tested our mediation model using PROCESS model 6. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($B = -0.03$) included zero with a 95% CI [$-0.106$, $0.036$], indicating that the indirect effect of flexplace use on supervisory performance ratings through perceptions of the employee's organizational commitment and work centrality was not significant. Unlike our finding in Study I, this result does not lend support to *H1*. An overview of our mediation analysis results is presented in Table 4.6.

*Table 4.5 | Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study II variables*

| Study II Study Variables | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Schedule of employee[a] | 0.51 | 0.50 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Perceived work centrality | 4.08 | 0.78 | –0.06 | (.60) | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Perceived organizational commitment | 4.41 | 1.06 | –0.03 | 0.51** | (.62) | | | | | | | |
| 4. Supervisory performance ratings | 4.51 | 1.18 | 0.06 | 0.40** | 0.57** | (.82) | | | | | | |
| 5. Employee parental status[b] | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 0.07 | –0.05 | –0.09 | | | | | | |
| 6. Employee gender[c] | 0.50 | 0.50 | –0.01 | 0.07 | 0.04 | –0.01 | –0.01 | | | | | |
| 7. Supervisor working from home pattern[d] | 0.56 | 0.50 | –0.07 | 0.08 | 0.11 | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.01 | | | | |
| 8. Supervisor gender[c] | 0.47 | 0.50 | –0.08 | –0.05 | –0.04 | –0.03 | 0.04 | –0.02 | –0.04 | | | |
| 9. Supervisor parental status[b] | 0.52 | 0.50 | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.09 | –0.04 | 0.04 | 0.10 | –0.13* | | |
| 10. Supervisor nationality[e] | 0.95 | 0.22 | 0.02 | –0.01 | –0.03 | –0.01 | 0.02 | 0.02 | –0.08 | –0.09 | –0.10 | |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Parental status 0 = no child, 1 = children. [c]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [d]Participant working from home pattern: 0 = never, 1 = 1 day or more. [e]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. The reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal between parentheses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

*Table 4.6 | Study II: the indirect effect of schedule type on performance ratings*

| Independent variables | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE | B | SE | B | SE |
| *Study II* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | –0.087 | 0.093 | –0.021 | 0.109 | 0.184 | 0.115 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.689*** | 0.070 | 0.224** | 0.086 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.549*** | 0.063 |
| Constant | 4.082*** | 0.221 | 1.560*** | 0.384 | 1.024* | 0.417 |
| Employee gender[b] | 0.098 | 0.093 | 0.008 | 0.108 | –0.087 | 0.115 |
| Supervisor nationality[c] | –0.036 | 0.209 | –0.052 | 0.243 | 0.065 | 0.257 |
| Supervisor parental status[d] | 0.048 | 0.094 | 0.190 | 0.109 | 0.070 | 0.116 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Employee gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [d]Supervisor parental status: 0 = no child, 1 = children.
** $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

As a next step, we tested our three moderation models (*H2*, *H3* and *H6*) using PROCESS model 1. Contrary to our findings of Study I, the results regarding *H2* indicated that the effect of working from home on perceptions of work centrality was conditional on the parental status of the employee, indicated by a significant interaction between the two factors, $B = 0.57$, $p = .002$. The results illustrated that supervisors perceived the work centrality of employees who were parents equally in both conditions ($M = 4.03$ for working at the office and $M = 4.23$ for working from home, $p = .129$). In contrast, when the employee did not have children, supervisors' perceptions of the employee's work centrality differed significantly across the working from home and working at the office scenario ($p = .004$). In fact, the perception of the employee's work centrality was lower in the flexplace

condition ($M$ = 3.84) compared to the office condition ($M$ = 4.22). These results are opposite to what we proposed in *H2*. A visual presentation of this result is depicted in Figure 4.3.
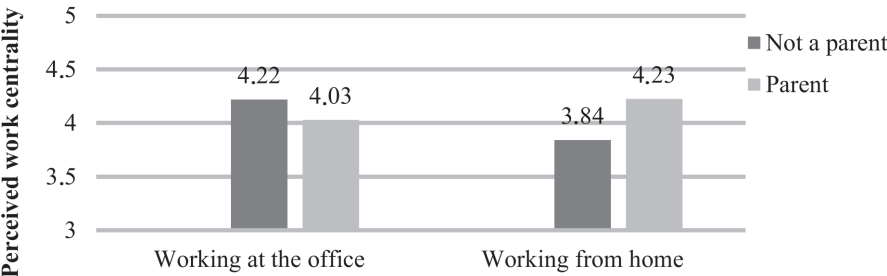


*Figure 4.3 | Study II: Interaction of employee parental status with employee schedule type in predicting perceived work centrality*

Note. The values on the y-axis refer to the mean and ±1 SD scores for perceived work centrality

Test of our second moderation hypothesis (*H3*) indicated that the interaction between use of flexplace and the supervisor's gender was not significant ($B$ = 0.27, $p$ = .157). While we found support for this hypothesis in Study I, we did not replicate this result in the second study. Our final moderation hypothesis proposed an interaction between use of flexplace and the supervisor's own tendency to work from home in influencing perceptions of the employee's work centrality. Results indicated that the regression coefficient for the interaction between the two variables was not significant ($B$ = 0.11, $p$ = .543), which does not lend support to *H6*.

As a third step, we examined our three moderated serial mediation models in line with *H4*, *H5* and *H7*, using Andrew Hayes' (2018) model 83. Starting with *H4*, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($B$ = 0.22) did not include zero, 95% CI [0.076, 0.386]. That is, in line with the moderation results regarding *H2*, the indirect effect of the employee's use of flexplace on supervisory performance ratings through perceived work centrality and organizational commitment was moderated by the employee's parental status. We found that for parents, the indirect effect was estimated at $B$ = 0. 07 and the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval included zero, 95% CI [−0.025, 0.187]. When the employee was not a parent, however, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, 95% CI [−0.252, −0.050], demonstrating a significant indirect effect ($B$ = 0.14). In other words, differences in perceptions of employees' performance was found *only* for employees without children. These results are opposed to our expectations as postulated in *H4*. Examining our second moderation hypothesis (*H5*) as a next step, we found that the bias-corrected confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($B$ = 0.10) included zero, 95% CI [−0.039, 0.251], resulting in the rejection of *H6* regarding the influence of the supervisor's gender. Finally, we did not find support for *H7* regarding the influence of the super-

visor's own working from home pattern, as the bias-corrected confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($B = 0.04$) included zero, 95% CI [−0.099, 0.186]. Hence, the indirect effect was not dependent on the characteristics of the supervisor. The results from our conditional process modelling are depicted in Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9.

*Table 4.7 | Study II: The moderating role of employee parental status*

| | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent variables | *B* | SE | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study II* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | −0.377** | 0.130 | −0.021 | 0.109 | 0.184 | 0.115 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.689*** | 0.070 | 0.224** | 0.086 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.549*** | 0.063 |
| Employee parental status[b] (W) | −0.189 | 0.132 | | | | |
| X × W interaction | −0.574** | 0.184 | | | | |
| Constant | 4.168*** | 0.227 | 1.560*** | 0.384 | 1.024* | 0.417 |
| Employee gender[c] | 0.100 | 0.091 | 0.008 | 0.108 | −0.087 | 0.115 |
| Supervisor nationality[d] | −0.014 | 0.206 | −0.052 | 0.243 | 0.065 | 0.257 |
| Supervisor parental status[b] | 0.026 | 0.093 | 0.190 | 0.109 | 0.070 | 0.116 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Parental status 0 = no child, 1 = children. [c]Employee gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [d]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
**$p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

*Table 4.8 | Study II: The moderating role of supervisor gender*

| | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent variables | *B* | SE | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study II* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | −0.219 | 0.129 | −0.021 | 0.109 | 0.184 | 0.115 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.689*** | 0.070 | 0.224** | 0.086 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.549*** | 0.063 |
| Supervisor gender[b] (W) | −0.218 | 0.133 | | | | |
| X × W interaction | 0.267 | 0.188 | | | | |
| Constant | 4.180*** | 0.234 | 1.560*** | 0.384 | 1.024* | 0.417 |
| Employee gender[b] | 0.101 | 0.093 | 0.008 | 0.108 | −0.087 | 0.115 |
| Supervisor nationality[c] | −0.024 | 0.211 | −0.052 | 0.243 | 0.065 | 0.257 |
| Supervisor parental status[d] | 0.048 | 0.095 | 0.190 | 0.109 | 0.070 | 0.116 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [d]Supervisor parental status: 0 = no child, 1 = children.
**$p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

*Table 4.9 | Study II: The moderating role of supervisor working from home pattern*

| Independent variables | Perceived work centrality (M1) | | Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | Supervisory performance ratings (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | SE | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study II* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | –0.143 | 0.140 | –0.021 | 0.109 | 0.184 | 0.115 |
| Perceived work centrality (M1) | | | 0.689*** | 0.070 | 0.224** | 0.086 |
| Perceived organizational commitment (M2) | | | | | 0.549*** | 0.063 |
| Supervisor working from home pattern[b] (W) | 0.047 | 0.136 | | | | |
| X × W interaction | 0.115 | 0.188 | | | | |
| Constant | 4.046*** | 0.239 | 1.560*** | 0.384 | 1.024* | 0.417 |
| Employee gender[c] | 0.097 | 0.093 | 0.008 | 0.108 | –0.087 | 0.115 |
| Supervisor nationality[d] | –0.019 | 0.210 | –0.052 | 0.243 | 0.065 | 0.257 |
| Supervisor parental status[e] | 0.034 | 0.094 | 0.190 | 0.109 | 0.070 | 0.116 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Supervisor working from home pattern: 0 = never work from home, 1 = 1 day a week or more. [c]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [d]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [e]Supervisor parental status: 0 = no child, 1 = children.
**p < .05. *** p < .001.

## 4.5.4   Additional Analyses

In Study II, we did not find support for any moderation involving the characteristics of the supervisor. As a supplemental investigation, we tested a three-way interaction between the gender of the supervisor and his or her working from home pattern. We used Andrew Hayes' (2018) model 3 to test a model that included a three-way interaction additionally when predicting perceptions of work centrality. Interestingly, the results of this model illustrated that the lower-order interactions were significant. Both the supervisor's gender and working from home pattern significantly moderated the effect of the employee's use of flexplace on perceptions of the employee's work centrality ($B = 0.76$, $p = .008$ and $B = 0.53$, $p = .041$ respectively), in support of *H3* and *H6*. In addition, the three-way interaction between the employee's schedule, the supervisor's gender and the supervisor's working from home pattern was significant in predicting perceptions of work centrality ($B = -0.84$, $p = .026$). Specifically, we found that perceptions of work centrality of employees who worked from home were different for supervisors without a working from home pattern ($B = 0.75$, $p = .008$) and did not change when supervisors indicated to have a working from home habit themselves ($B = -0.08$, $p = .730$). Specifically, the results illustrated that *only* the perceptions of *male* supervisors who have the tendency to never work from home are affected by the use of flexplace by their subordinates. The indirect effect for this subgroup was estimated at $B = -0.52$ with a 95% CI of [–0.913, –0.136]. The results from these additional analyses are depicted in Tables 4.10 and 4.11.

*Table 4.10 | Study II: Results of conditional process modelling*

| Independent variables | Perceived workcentrality (M) | | Perceived organizational commitment (Y) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | SE | *B* | SE |
| *Study II* | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] (X) | –0.525** | 0.197 | –0.021 | 0.109 |
| Perceived work centrality (M) | | | 0.689*** | 0.070 |
| Supervisor gender[b] (W) | –0.549** | 0.209 | | |
| Supervisor working from home pattern[c] (Z) | –0.240 | 0.193 | | |
| X × W interaction | 0.755** | 0.208 | | |
| X × Z interaction | 0.532* | 0.259 | | |
| W × Z interaction | 0.557* | 0.270 | | |
| X × W × Z interaction | –0.842* | 0.376 | | |
| Constant | 4.300*** | 0.260 | 1.560*** | 0.384 |
| Employee gender[b] | 0.087 | 0.093 | 0.008 | 0.108 |
| Supervisor nationality[d] | 0.024 | 0.211 | –0.052 | 0.243 |
| Supervisor parental status[e] | 0.022 | 0.095 | 0.190 | 0.109 |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Supervisor working from home pattern: 0 = never work from home, 1 = 1 day a week or more. [d]Supervisor nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [e]Supervisor parental status: 0 = no child, 1 = children.
**$p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

*Table 4.11 | Study II: Results of conditional indirect effects*

| Independent variable | Dependent variable | Mediator | First moderator (supervisor gender) | Second moderator (supervisor working from home pattern[b]) | Indirect effect | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Study II* | | | | | | |
| Schedule of employee[a] | Perceived organizational commitment | Perceived work centrality | Male | No | –0.525** | [–0.913;–0.136] |
| | | | Female | No | 0.230 | [–0.160; 0.620] |
| | | | Male | Yes | 0.008 | [–0.323; 0.339] |
| | | | Female | Yes | –0.079 | [–0.448; 0.289] |

*Note.* [a]Schedule of employee: 0 = standard, 1 = flexible. [b]Supervisor working from home pattern: 0 = never work from home, 1 = 1 day a week or more.
** $p < .01$.

## 4.5.5 Discussion Study II

Contrary to Study I, we did not find support for our basic premise that working from home results in poor supervisory performance ratings due to perceptions of lower work centrality. In this sample, it seems that working from home did not send a signal to supervisors that the employee has lower work centrality. However, this conclusion should be nuanced; the signal may be dependent on boundary conditions. We took into account the

characteristics of the supervisor as conditional factors and discovered that supervisors who are male and do not work from home themselves are more likely to perceive employees who work from home as having lower work centrality. We also modelled the employee's parental status as a conditional factor and found that employees *without* children are more likely to receive lower performance ratings when they work from home than employees who are parents. Hence, it appears that working from home is acceptable for parents only. This result was surprising as previous research found that supervisors deny employees with personal life responsibilities pay raises, promotions, and other career-related rewards (Glass, 2004; McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003). Yet an explanation for this finding might nonetheless be found in the history of flexible working practices. FWPs, including the ability to work from home, were introduced in many organizations to enable the careers of those with care responsibilities. Up until today, professionals living alone and without care responsibilities feel they do not receive equal treatments when it comes to flexible working practices. This was discovered in a recent qualitative study by Wilkinson and colleagues (2017). Participants in that study raised the issue that "only certain non-work roles and activities were considered to be legitimate reasons for pulling time and energy away from the workplace – primarily those related to care and family responsibilities" (p. 650).

## 4.6     General Discussion and Conclusion

Integrating signalling theory (Connelly, 2011; Spence, 1973) with key tenets from social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016) and SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we put forward an integrative model that examined the role of key characteristics of supervisors and employees in the process by which working from home may result in lower supervisory ratings of job performance through perceptions of the employee's work centrality and organizational commitment. We tested this model across two studies with different samples.

    In our first study, using a sample of students, we demonstrated that employees who choose to work from home subject themselves to negative perceptions about their work centrality and commitment to the organization, which results in receiving lower performance ratings from their supervisors. This negative effect was stronger when employees had a male supervisor. Our second study, using a sample of managers, did not replicate these findings. That is, working from home did not result in lower perceptions of work centrality for the employee and we did not observe gender differences on this point. However, we discovered that this effect was more complex and depended on supervisors' own working from home patterns. In the second study, differences between male and female supervisors were only found when taking into account supervisors' own tendencies to work from home. We demonstrated that the tendency to give lower job perfor-

mance ratings to employees who work from home on a regular bias (versus always work at the office) was most pronounced among male supervisors that never work from home themselves. Another key finding of our second study was the influence of the employee's parental status; working from home is more detrimental to one's performance ratings for employees without children than for parents.

The fact that we obtained different results across the two studies raises questions about whether and how sample characteristics may have impacted perceptions of the hypothetical employee described in the vignettes. It stands to reason that students are more likely to rely on stereotypes and the 'ideal worker' standard when evaluating an employee's performance, given that they lack experience with the flexplace practice in organizational settings. Perhaps they believe that employees who work from home are 'lazy' individuals who do not have a strong work ethic and do not give their all for the organization. In a way, our second study is in line with this notion because it shows that individuals' own working from home pattern influences their perceptions of employees who work from home. That being said, a recent meta-analysis concluded that work ethic endorsement (closely related to the 'ideal worker' standard) is higher in industry samples than student samples (Zabel, Biermeier-Hanson, Baltes, Early, & Shepard, 2017). Evidently, more research is needed to understand how perceptions of those who work from home differ across groups and generational cohorts (including the dominance of the 'ideal worker' standard).

### 4.6.1    Strengths and Implications for Research

Our study contributes to theory and research on flexible working by investigating the dark side of FWP use for employees. We have focused on flexplace as a flexible working practice because the number of employers that offer employees the possibility to work from home is rapidly increasing (Matos et al., 2016). In doing so, we complement previous research on the effects of FWPs, which has primarily focused on the negative effects of flextime as a practice (Leslie et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2014). Research on the effects of FWPs has put a premium on signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973). In this article, in developing our conceptual model, we also drew on signalling theory to enhance our understanding of *why* (mediators) FWPs lead to career penalties in the form of negative performance evaluations. We have identified supervisors' perceptions of the employee's work centrality as a key mechanism that explains why working from home may result in lower supervisory performance ratings. Our results suggest that the decision of an employee to work from home sends a signal to the supervisor that work is not central to their lives and they are not fully committed to the organization. Supervisors may then respond by 'penalizing' the employee with lower performance ratings. It should be noted, however, that working from home does not always send the same signal. Our second

study suggests that working from home only signals lower work centrality to supervisors if it concerns an employee without children. Parents who use the opportunity to work from home were not perceived as having lower work centrality and did not receive lower performance ratings. This is in line with recent research that dismisses the historical assumption that the ideal worker is an employee without family responsibilities; in fact, having children can increase employees' immersion in the work role (Dumas & Perry-Smith, 2018). In examining other moderators, we drew on social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016) and SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Based on an integration of these theories with signalling theory, we posited that the signal sent by an employee working from home depends on characteristics of not only the employee but also the supervisor. In line with social role theory, it seems that mostly male supervisors interpret working from home as a signal of lower work centrality. In addition, supervisors who work from home themselves appear more accepting of this habit, which is in line with arguments underpinning Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory that people tend to evaluate those who are similar to them more favourably. Jointly, our results contribute to an emerging body of research on boundary conditions for the effect of flexible working practices (Leslie et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2014) and explain *when* (moderators) use of flexplace leads to detrimental consequences for the employee.

### 4.6.2    Practical Implications

Our research holds two critical practical implications for organizations that offer a working from home policy and supervisors who evaluate the performance of employees who make use of this policy. First, an important message for organizations who offer FWPs is that working from home may potentially generate unfair employee performance ratings. Supervisors may have an 'ideal worker' bias, which can have negative consequences for the performance evaluations of their subordinates. Specifically, supervisors might assume that employees who use flexplace do not put work at first, are not committed to their work and thus perform less well. Importantly, the experimental vignettes in our studies emphasized that the company was supportive of flexible working and thus it seems that even in an organization with a supportive flexplace culture, there might be reprimands for those who work from home. Our finding that supervisors who work from home themselves are less biased confirms recent research indicating that supervisor support plays a critical role in the acceptance of flexible working practices (Lautsch, Kossek & Eaton, 2009). Hence, organizational support might not be sufficient to help reduce the negative effects of flexible working on employees' career success but needs to be supplemented by support at lower levels in the organization. We recommend that organizations develop and implement interventions targeted at supervisors who manage employees who work from home on a regular basis. Interventions should be primarily aimed at raising awareness of supervisors' potential

'ideal worker' biases. But organizations should also re-assess the design of evaluation systems to prevent that supervisors act on their potentially faulty perceptions of subordinates. Our study indicates that supervisory ratings of employees' job performance are prompted by supervisors' perceptions of how dedicated to work employees are. Employees who work from home are less visible to their supervisors and may be at risk of creating negative impressions regarding their approach to work. Hence, performance ratings systems should be as objective as possible.

Second, when organizations decide to offer employees the option to work from home, they need to raise awareness among all stakeholders that this practice has benefits for different groups of employees, not just for those with caregiving demands. Results from our second study showed that employees who do not have children and work from home regularly may receive unfair evaluations, probably because supervisors assume that these employees do not need flexibility since they do not have care responsibilities. However, supervisors should remain mindful that working from home has a myriad of other benefits and is not solely aimed at enabling employees to manage care responsibilities. Indeed, research indicates that on days that individuals work from home they experience more job-related positive affective well-being and less job-related negative affective well-being (Anderson, Kaplan, & Vega, 2015). Working from home has also been linked to less interruptions (Haddad, Lyons, & Chatterjee, 2009) and more flow (Peters & Wildenbeest, 2010), which are key predictors of employee and organizational productivity (Taris & Schreurs, 2009; Wright, Cropanzano & Bonnet, 2007). We suggest organizations to offer training sessions that emphasize the benefits of working from home (e.g., health and productivity benefits) for all groups of employees. Such sessions can reduce the likelihood that supervisors treat employees differently based on parental status and may also stimulate any employee to use flexplace without the fear of backlash from supervisors or co-workers.

### 4.6.3 Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations of our research should be noted. First, our manipulation of the employee's schedule type captured only the usage or non-usage of the policy (i.e., working from home two days a week versus never). We believe it would be a valuable research endeavour to use a more refined measure of working from home that allows for the *extent* of working from home to be taken into account. It is important to build on our research and gain specific insights regarding the relationship between the number of days an employee works from home and supervisors' perceptions of work-related outcomes. In our research we also did not specify whether the employee's schedule type was an ad hoc or a regular arrangement. Recent research suggests that the role of the supervisor in setting up formal and informal arrangements may influence their assessment of employee performance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). We recommend that future

research on the dark side of working from home examines both how the arrangement was set up (through a formal or informal process) and the supervisor's involvement in order to understand whether this influences supervisors' perceptions and evaluations of employees who work from home.

A second limitation concerns the manipulation of the employee's parental status. We did not distinguish among employees on the basis of number and age of children. Given that these factors may influence (perceptions of) caregiving demands, we recommend future work to use samples that comprise employees with differing care responsibilities and measure the number and age of children. Such studies could formally test whether working from home is considered more legitimate for parents due to their care responsibilities, which is the explanation we put forward for the somewhat surprising finding that parents are not 'penalized' when working from home. Perhaps more importantly, to gain further insights on how working from home sends a different signal for parents versus non-parents, we recommend that researchers measure respondents' ideas concerning employees' reasons for flexplace use. Researchers could, for instance, ask respondents to indicate whether they think the employee works from home for commuting, productivity or care reasons and examine whether these reasons exacerbate (or buffer) the relationships proposed in our conceptual model. After all, previous research has shown that flexible working for productivity reasons may facilitate career success (Leslie et al., 2012).

Third, we acknowledge the limitations concerning the methodology employed. We are aware that our focus on supervisors' perceptions and evaluations involves the risk of common method bias because all the study constructs were measured through self-reports (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, while the experimental design of our studies enabled us to establish causal inferences for the effects of working from home, it should be noted that the experimental vignette designs of both our studies may lack realism. We recommend future researchers to test our hypothesized model by employing supervisor-employee dyads to see whether our results also hold in field settings. Field settings also allow for more individuating information to be collected. In the current research, we have highlighted only a few of those factors. Hence, this could further nuance our results on the impact of working from home.

Finally, we focused on characteristics of the employee (i.e., parental status) and the supervisor (i.e., gender and working from home pattern) as boundary conditions for the negative effect of working from home on supervisory performance ratings. It would be interesting to also examine the interplay between flexplace and elements of the organizational culture or climate (e.g., transparency). For instance, it stands to reason that negative perceptions of those who work from home occasionally are less likely to develop in an open culture where all members of the organization have a good grasp of each other's tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, perceptions are likely to be influenced by the extent to which norms for flexplace use,

including those held by supervisors, are more or less congruent with flex-place policies. Our measure of the supervisor's own working from home pattern is a proxy for how supportive the supervisor is of flexplace use, but we recommend future researchers to explicitly assess the latter. All in all, we agree with Allen and colleagues (2015) that telework research should provide organizational context for a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of working from home. We acknowledge there may be limits to the generalizability of our findings, as the vignettes in the current work emphasized that the organization was supportive of flexible working.

# 5 | The Paradox of Being on the Glass Cliff: Why Do Women Accept Risky Leadership Positions?*

ABSTRACT

Recent evidence from glass cliff research suggests that women are more willing than men to accept risky leadership positions. Accepting a risky leadership position might challenge women's path towards a sustainable career because it decreases women's chance of attaining leadership jobs in the future. The purpose of this paper (based on three studies) is to reveal and resolve the apparent paradox that women are more risk averse than men yet end up in risky leadership positions. In Study I, risk attitudes of 125 participants were surveyed to understand gender differences in risk taking. In two experimental vignette studies, 119 university students (Study II) and 109 working adults (Study III) were offered a leadership position in either a risky or successful company and asked to rate their willingness to accept the job. Together, the results showed that although women are generally more risk averse than men, women who scored low on career self-efficacy were more likely to perceive a risky job as a promotional opportunity and were therefore more willing to accept such a job. These findings confirm that women's careers do not occur in a social vacuum but are rather shaped by external constraints. Moreover, these findings shed light on the role of personal career resources, such as career self-efficacy, in remaining persistent in career goals. Glass cliff research has focused almost exclusively on organizational decision makers. Our paper contributes to glass cliff theory by incorporating the perspective of job seekers and thereby understanding their decision making processes.

## 5.1   INTRODUCTION

Countless studies have been conducted over the past decades examining gender differences in leadership, including but not limited to differences regarding leadership style (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014), leadership performance ratings (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017) and leadership ascendancy (Wille, Wiernik, Vergauwe, Vrijdags, & Trbovic, 2018). While these studies underline the pronounced barriers to career progression that women face (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012) – often referred to as the *glass ceiling* or the *labyrinth of leadership* (Eagly & Carli, 2007) -, society has witnessed a rise of women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2017; ILO, 2015). However, archival research has found that the leadership positions occupied by women are often accompanied by a greater risk of failure (Cook & Glass, 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016; Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014; Ryan & Haslam, 2005a), a phenomenon that Ryan and Haslam (2005a, 2007) termed the *glass cliff*. The glass cliff phenomenon has been demonstrated in both business and political contexts (Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, & Haslam, 2014).

The evidence that women are more likely to find themselves in a risky leadership position than men is particularly intriguing given that a myriad of studies has shown there are gender differences with regard to risk taking, with women tending to be more risk averse than men (Charness & Gneezy, 2012; Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Eckel & Grossman, 2008; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007; Niessen & Ruenzi, 2007). It thus seems paradoxical that women are nonetheless more willing to accept risky leadership positions. We posit it is imperative to better understand the processes underlying women's career decision-making and their motives for taking on risky jobs. To date, research has investigated the glass cliff phenomenon through the lens of decision-makers who want to fill a precarious leadership position (Ryan & Haslam, 2005a; Ryan, Haslam, & Kulich, 2010). Mechanisms that could explain why women take the helm of a glass cliff position are left unexplored because the job seeker's perspective has not received adequate attention. We seek to help solve this puzzle.

The current paper reports on a multi-study investigation of gender differences in the willingness to accept a leadership position. Prior research suggests that when the job can be designated as precarious, women often feel they will be doomed and seen as the person who caused poor company performance. As Ryan and Haslam (2007) put it, "if and when that failure occurs, it is then women (rather than men) who must face the consequences and who are singled out for criticism and blame" (p. 550). Our studies aim to identify those factors that may explain when and why women are willing to accept precarious job positions. We relate riskiness of the job to willingness to accept the job. We then propose and test gender differences in this relationship. Importantly, our work builds on the notion that women may be more limited in their options for senior leadership positions than men.

To elucidate this notion, we draw on social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and the theory of circumscription and comprise (Gottfredson, 1981), which offer a basis for examining why women have to make compromises in career decision-making. We focus on perceptions of the job as a promotional opportunity and individuals' career self-efficacy as key variables in the career decision-making process of men and women to better understand "the road to the glass cliff" (see Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Identifying the mechanisms underlying women's career decision-making will assist companies in understanding why men and women respond differently to job opportunities presented to them, and our findings may assist practitioners in enhancing the probability of a successful woman-as-leader appointment.

## 5.2    Literature Review and Theoretical Development

The glass cliff literature (e.g., Ryan & Haslam, 2005a; Ryan et al., 2016) suggests that leadership positions offered to women often come with a certain amount of risk and can be viewed as risky jobs. A risky job entails a combination of various problematic features, such as lack of acknowledgment, lack of support, lack of information, inadequate resources, and short and insufficient time frames to complete the job (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich, & Atkins, 2007). These problems are particularly salient in poor performing companies. In line with this notion, studies on the glass cliff have conceptualized precarious leadership positions as positions in organizations that are struggling and in financial distress (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

Over the past fourteen years, glass cliff scholars have examined a range of processes that are possibly related to the appointment of women to risky leadership positions (for an overview, see Ryan et al., 2016). A key factor that has received frequent attention and empirical support in the glass cliff literature is selection bias, which implies that decision-makers preferentially select women as leaders in times of crisis (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011; Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka, & Aritzeta, 2012; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Hunt-Early, 2012; Rink, Ryan, & Stoker, 2013; Ryan et al., 2010). In trying to explain selection bias, scholars have drawn on implicit leadership theory as well as contingency theories of leadership (Ryan & Haslam, 2005b). In general, people's implicit theories of what is managerial and what it means to be a man are aligned, and the *think manager – think male effect* (Agars, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon,1989, Schein, 1973, 1975) is thus highly pronounced. That is, characteristics of a manager at a successful company are more strongly associated with stereotypically masculine traits (i.e., forceful, decisive, competitive) than with stereotypically feminine traits (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). However, leader prototypes are often specific to a particular context, as suggested by contingency theories of leadership. What it means to be a good leader is context dependent and might therefore be inherently different during times

of crisis. Importantly, stereotypically feminine traits (e.g., sympathetic, tactful; see Ryan et al., 2011) are especially in demand when dealing with a crisis, leading to the *think crisis – think female* effect (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

The potential role of selection bias has led scholars to approach the glass cliff phenomenon from the perspective of organizational decision-makers. Brown and colleagues (2011), for example, found evidence that the glass cliff occurs due to a strategic need for organizational change. In the same study, they also found that the appointment of women is conditional on decision-makers' characteristics. Moreover, Ryan and colleagues (2011) found that the nature of the crisis affects selection bias. While these studies can explain why recruiters are more likely to select female candidates for a leadership position during times of organizational crisis, they do not explain why women choose to take on risky leadership positions.

If we want to develop a better understanding of why women end up in precarious positions despite their risk-averse behaviours, it is imperative to shed light on the decisions of women themselves. However, the glass cliff literature has dedicated little attention to women's perspective of precarious leadership positions. In one of the few studies adopting the job seeker's perspective, Rink and colleagues (2012) offered all participants a hypothetical leadership position in a company in financial distress and manipulated the availability of social and financial resources across scenarios. Their findings showed that women were less inclined than men to accept a leadership position at a company in a financial crisis but only when social resources were unavailable. The authors concluded that women are reluctant to take on a leadership role when they know their appointment will not be supported by the employees of the company because women more so than men anticipate difficulties in gaining acceptance of employees. While this study identified factors that influence acceptance of jobs that are precarious, it did not shed light on how women evaluate positions during organizational crisis compared with positions in a successful company. In other words, mechanisms that could explain why women end up in glass cliff positions are still left unexplored.

It has been noted that women might preferentially choose to take on precarious leadership positions (Ryan & Haslam, 2007), yet this would contradict findings in the risk taking literature that women are more risk averse than men. Our understanding of the glass cliff phenomenon would be incomplete without incorporating the job seeker's perspective. The acceptance of a glass cliff appointment can be considered a risky career decision. Numerous studies on career decision-making and occupational choice (Baghai, Silva, Thell, & Vig, 2018; Brown & Matsa, 2016; Ye, 2014) have focused on riskiness of career options, risk preferences and risk behaviours, showing that risk status of the job influences occupational choice. From a risk taking perspective, the glass cliff phenomenon reveals an intriguing paradox; women are risk averse but choose risky leadership jobs. However, we concur with Ryan and colleagues (2016) that it may be "that cognitive dissonance leads risky leadership positions to become more

attractive once women discover that they are the main option that is open to them" (p. 451). That is, it stands to reason that women see the risk of the job they are offered, yet they are willing to accept it due to the limited number of promotional opportunities (i.e., leadership positions) they are offered throughout their career.

To understand why women are more likely to accept risky leadership positions compared to men, we draw on major theories in the field of career decision-making, namely the theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996) and social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000, 2002). These theories offer a comprehensive framework to understand differences in the career choice processes of both women and men. The theory of circumscription and compromise posits that compromises in personal interests might be required in response to external realities and constraints, such as unfair hiring practices, social barriers and lack of support, such that individuals have to accommodate their career preferences (Leung, 2008). We posit that men and women differ in their evaluation of a precarious leadership position as a promotional opportunity due to differences in their career progression, resulting in differences in their career decision-making processes. However, we also acknowledge the significant role of career self-efficacy in individuals' career decision-making (Lent et al., 1994, 2000, 2002), and we examine its role in men and women's evaluation and acceptance of a precarious leadership position. According to SCCT, self-efficacy influences the initiation and maintenance of career behaviours in response to barriers and difficulties. Those with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist and sustain their career behaviours in the absence of tangible external rewards, such as promotion into a leadership position. Jointly, these theories provide a thorough basis for examining why and when women make career decisions that, at least at first sight, involve high risk and may set them up for failure.

## 5.3   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

In what follows, we present a multi-study paper in which we examine the influence of risk status, gender, promotional opportunities and career self-efficacy on occupational choice. In the first study, we explore whether gender differences in risk attitudes also apply to career decision-making. Here, we evaluate risk attitudes to test whether and how gender relates to risk taking and risk perception, with a special focus on the domain of careers. In the second study, we manipulate the riskiness of the job and test how risk status influences participants' willingness to accept the job. Based on the theory of circumscription and compromise, we propose that women are more likely than men to accept risky leadership positions. In another experimental study, we test a comprehensive model that explains why, and under what conditions, women are more likely than men to accept risky job positions. This final study builds on the theoretical notion that occupational choice

is impacted by external barriers (i.e., lack of opportunity for promotion) as well as career self-efficacy, yet our examination is specifically focused on how these factors impact decision-making differently for men and women.

Our aim is to contribute to theory and research on the glass cliff and more generally to the career decision-making literature, in at least three ways. First, we test the glass cliff phenomenon through the lens of the job seeker who is an active participant in his or her own career. We compare female and male job seekers to better understand gender differences in the evaluation of precarious leadership positions. Second, we adopt a risk-taking perspective on the glass cliff phenomenon. As risk is a central tenet of any glass cliff position, it is imperative to examine whether individuals' risk taking tendencies relate to the career decisions they make. In doing so, we are among the first to offer an explanation for the apparent paradox that women are more risk averse than men but nonetheless are more willing to accept precarious leadership positions. We complement glass cliff theory by shedding light on the job seeker's perspective and the role of risk. Third, we examine the role that gender, perceptions of promotional opportunities and career self-efficacy play in individuals' career decision-making process. We integrate these key concepts and examine their interplay to elucidate the process by which individuals make important career decisions (i.e., regarding job acceptance).

## 5.4     Hypotheses Study I: Antecedents of Risk Attitudes

If we are to better understand women's selection into glass cliff appointments, attention needs to be paid to why women apply for and accept positions in organizations that are in a deteriorating state. Such decisions can be considered risky behaviour, and it is therefore of essence to review the large body of research examining the relationship between gender and risk behaviour. Despite inconsistent results on this relationship (see e.g., Booth, Cardona-Sosa, & Nolen, 2014; Iqbal, Sewon, & Baek, 2006), most studies have shown that women are more risk averse and less overconfident than men (Beckmann & Menkhoff, 2008; Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999; Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007). However, situation-based theories of risk taking would predict that different situations promote risk taking to varying degrees (Byrnes et al., 1999). Indeed, Weber and colleagues (2002) observed that degree of risk taking is highly domain specific, and thus scholars should assess risk taking in different content domains (e.g., financial and social).

Building on situation-based theories of risk taking, another category of risk taking theories posits that only certain people take risks in certain situations, thereby suggesting that gender differences in risk taking would vary by context (Byrnes et al., 1999). Studies that have distinguished among different content domains (Harris, Jenkins, & Glaser, 2006; Johnson, Wilke, & Weber, 2004; Weber et al., 2002) found that, across domains, women are

less likely than men to take risks, yet women's general tendency for risk aversion does not seem to apply to social decisions such as confronting coworkers or family members. Interestingly, the social domain also encompasses items on career-related risk taking (e.g., starting a new career in your mid-thirties) in revised versions of the domain-specific risk taking (DOSPERT) scale (Blais & Weber, 2006). Studies using this scale have confirmed that gender differences work out differently in the social domain compared to other domains (Zou & Scholer, 2016), with women often appearing *less* risk averse than men in this domain (Lozano et al., 2017). In line with these results, a study conducted by Maxfield and colleagues (2010) examined risk-taking among 661 female managers and found that women take risks in managerial settings rather than in the narrower financial arenas. Although it would be preliminary to draw conclusions about women's risk taking in the domain of careers on the basis of these results, they point at the possibility that decisions of women in career-related situations are not in line with the common stereotype that women are generally risk averse in their behaviours. It is the aim of our first study to examine this possibility, as we posit that career-related risk taking is at the heart of the glass cliff phenomenon.

High levels of risk taking do not necessarily reflect a greater preference for risk (i.e., a risk attitude) but instead can result from perceptions of the riskiness of a situation or choice (Weber et al., 2002). When trying to understand why risk taking is more or less common among women than men, it is therefore important to investigate risk perceptions. Prior work on risk behaviours suggests that variations in risk taking across domains can be accounted for by differences in perceptions of the benefits and risks of a particular situation (Blais & Weber, 2006; Weber et al., 2002). Differences in perceptual processes may thus explain any difference in men and women's risk taking behaviours. Indeed, results suggest that women perceive more risk in situations across domains, except for the social domain (Blais & Weber, 2006; Weber et al., 2002). Although no definite conclusions can be drawn based on these studies about women's risk perceptions and risk taking behaviours in the domain of career decision-making, the results seem to align with findings from glass cliff research, demonstrating it is women rather than men who hold risky leadership positions (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Hence, we expect gender differences in both risk perception and risk taking, with women perceiving more risk and thus being more risk averse across domains. Yet in the career domain, we propose that women perceive less risk and expect more benefits of risky behaviour than men.

*Hypothesis 1a:* Women are more risk averse than men across domains.

*Hypothesis 1b:* Women perceive more risk than men across domains.

*Hypothesis 2a:* Women take more risk than men in the career domain.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Women perceive less risk than men in the career domain.

### 5.4.1    Participants and Procedure Study I

Participants were approached via online social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook and asked to complete a survey containing demographic questions and several items evaluating risk attitudes. A total of 172 respondents in the Netherlands participated in this study, of which 125 participants opted to complete the questionnaire. Of the 125 candidates who participated in this study, 54 were students, 63 were employees, four were recently graduated and looking for a job, one was unemployed and three belonged to the 'other' category. Half of the participants were female. The age of the candidates ranged from 20 to 60 years, with a mean of 23 for students and a mean of 35 for employees. The vast majority (77%) of respondents was Dutch.

### 5.4.2    Measures

**Risk taking.** Risk taking was measured using the 30-item DOSPERT (Domain Specific Risk-Taking) scale (Blais & Weber, 2006). The DOSPERT scale assesses one's risk taking behaviour within five different domains: ethical, financial, health/safety, recreational, and social. Participants were presented with different scenarios and asked to indicate the likelihood of engaging in a certain activity and to indicate how risky each activity was to them. Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *extremely unlikely* to 7 = *extremely likely* for risk taking and 1 = *not at all risky* to 7 = *extremely risky* for perception of risk. Example items for each domain include: "Having an affair with a married man/woman" (ethical), "Betting a day's income at a high-stake poker game" (financial), "Driving a car without wearing a seat belt" (health/safety), "Bungee jumping off a tall bridge" (recreational), and "Admitting your tastes are different from those of a friend" (social). We adapted some of the items to improve applicability to a wider and international context. In addition, in line with the purpose of our study, we added a sixth domain, which focuses on career risk taking. We developed seven items for this domain: (1) "Accepting a leadership job at a company in distress," (2) "Accepting a high position job (director) at a company which has to downsize; you will be responsible for firing employees," (3) "Declining a job transfer to another department in the same firm," (4) "Accepting a job at a company in an industry which is unfamiliar to you," (5) "Accepting a leadership job at a very popular and successful firm," (6) "Accepting a big promotion at a company in distress in your twenties," and (7) "Accepting a big promotion at a company in distress in your forties".

   To test the validity of the scale that includes the newly proposed domain, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with three different measurement models. The first model distinguished between risk taking and risk perception on the one hand and the six content domains on the other hand, resulting in 12 latent factors. We compared this 12-factor

model with a model that compressed risk taking and risk perception into one factor and solely distinguished between financial, health, social, ethical, recreational and career as six latent factors. We also compared the 12-factor model to a two-factor model that distinguished between risk taking and risk perception as general factors. As the six-factor and two-factor models are nested in the 12-factor model, we compared the global model fit statistic ($\chi^2$) of the nested models. The results of the chi-square difference test revealed that the 12-factor model provided a better fit to the data than the six-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2(51) = 527.97$, $p < .001$) as well as the two-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2(65) = 1267.05$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) of the 12-factor model was lower than that of the six-factor model (5221.43 vs. 5647.40, respectively) and that of the two-factor model (5221.43 vs. 6358.48), which is in line with the chi-square difference tests. We conclude that the 12-factor model is the best-fitting and most parsimonious model. Furthermore, the CFA indicated that most items loaded significantly on their respective factor in the 12-factor model, with factor loadings above .30, and no cross-loadings were found (for an overview of the factor loadings of our items, see Table 5.1). Items that had a factor loading below .30 in both the two-factor model and 12-factor model were compared with the reliability of that item from a Cronbach's alpha analysis and were excluded if necessary. To remain consistent across all analyses, these items were also excluded from the general risk taking and risk perception scales. The excluded items are marked with an asterisk in Table 5.1

*Table 5.1 | Overview of items and results of the factor analysis*

*Study I*
Item Wording

| | Career risk taking | Career risk perception |
|---|---|---|
| Accepting a leadership job at a company in distress | 0.74[a] | 0.58[a] |
| Accepting a high position job (director) at a company which has to downsize; you will be responsible for firing employees | 0.76*** | 0.53*** |
| Declining a job transfer to another department in the same firm (R)* | 0.003 | 0.38*** |
| Accepting a job at a company in an industry which is unfamiliar to you | 0.52*** | 0.44*** |
| Accepting a leadership job at a very popular and successful firm | 0.58*** | 0.44*** |
| Accepting a big promotion at a company in distress in your twenties | 0.82*** | 0.56*** |
| Accepting a big promotion at a company in distress in your forties | 0.78*** | 0.51*** |
| | **Social risk taking** | **Social risk perception** |
| Admitting that your tastes are different from those of a friend | 0.49[a] | 0.49[a] |
| Disagreeing with an authority figure on a major issue | 0.66*** | 0.69*** |
| Choosing a career that you truly enjoy over a more secure one | 0.45*** | 0.68*** |
| Not speaking your mind about an unpopular issue in a meeting at work (R)* | −0.24* | 0.71*** |
| Moving to a city far away from your extended family | 0.49*** | 0.69*** |
| Starting a new career in your mid-thirties | 0.48*** | 0.64*** |
| | **Recreational risk taking** | **Recreational risk perception** |
| Going camping in the wilderness | 0.62[a] | 0.40[a] |
| Going down a ski run that is beyond your ability | 0.59*** | 0.49*** |
| Going rafting at high water in the spring | 0.74*** | 0.60*** |
| Taking a skydiving class | 0.81*** | 0.75*** |
| Bungee jumping off a tall bridge | 0.75*** | 0.77*** |
| Piloting a small plane | 0.68*** | 0.52*** |
| | **Health risk taking** | **Health risk perception** |
| Drinking heavily at a social function | 0.56[a] | 0.58[a] |
| Engaging in unprotected sex | 0.65 | 0.75 |
| Driving a car without wearing a seat belt | 0.46 | 0.46 |
| Riding a bicycle with a helmet (R)* | 0.06 | 0.14 |
| Walking home alone at night in an unsafe area of town | 0.52 | 0.42 |
| Sunbathing with sunscreen (R)* | 0.03 | 0.11 |
| | **Financial risk taking** | **Financial risk perception** |
| Betting a day's income at a soccer match | 0.93[a] | 0.90[a] |
| Investing 10% of your annual income in a moderate growth diversified fund | 0.36*** | 0.16 |
| Betting a day's income at a high-stake poker game | 0.74*** | 0.81*** |
| Investing 5% of your annual income in a very speculative stock | 0.30*** | 0.25** |
| Betting a day's income on the outcome of a sporting event | 0.94*** | 0.89*** |
| Investing 10% of your annual income in a new business venture | 0.43*** | 0.24** |
| | **Ethical risk taking** | **Ethical risk perception** |
| Taking some questionable deductions on your income tax return | 0.41[a] | 0.29[a] |
| Having an affair with a married man/woman | 0.48*** | 0.50* |
| Passing off somebody else's work as your own | 0.58*** | 0.53* |
| Revealing a friend's secret to someone else | 0.59*** | 0.68* |
| Leaving your young children alone at home while running an errand | 0.49*** | 0.69* |
| Not returning a wallet you found that contains $200 | 0.49*** | 0.56* |

*Note.* [a]To scale the factors, the unstandardized loading of the first item of each domain on its respective factor was fixed to 1.0. It is not tested for statistical significance. *Items with an asterisk were excluded from the analyses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The final subscales for general risk taking and risk perception as dimensions of the DOSPERT scale had high Cronbach's alphas of .87 and .86, respectively. The Cronbach's alphas of the career risk taking and career risk perception subscales were .85 and .70, respectively. The Cronbach's alphas of some of our other risk taking and risk perception subscales were somewhat lower than the cut-off value of .70 as suggested by some scholars (e.g., .62 and .60 for health risk taking and risk perception, respectively). However, Lance and colleagues (2006) argued there is no theoretical support for this cut-off value and "what constitutes adequate reliability will always be a judgment call" (p. 213). Importantly, we only used the overall risk taking and risk perception scales to test Hypothesis 1 and the subscales for the career domain to test Hypothesis 2, which showed adequate internal consistency.

### 5.4.3 Results Study I

An overview of the means and standard deviations of our study variables and the correlations can be found in Table 5.2 In order to simultaneously test for the effect of gender on both risk taking and risk perception, controlling for age, occupational status and nationality, a one-way MANCOVA was performed. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 5.3. Using Wilk's lambda, we found a significant effect of gender on risk perception and risk taking, $\Lambda = 0.92$, $F(4, 117) = 2.65$, $p = .037$. Separate ANOVA's revealed, in support of Hypothesis 1a, that women generally took less risk than men $F(1, 120) = 9.351$, $p = .003$, but they did not show significantly higher risk taking than men in the career domain ($p = .223$). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was not supported. Men and women did not differ in the level of risk they perceived in scenarios ($p = .217$ across domains; $p = .380$ for careers), resulting in the rejection of Hypothesis 1b and 2b.

*Table 5.2 | Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study 1 variables*

*Study 1*

| Study Variables | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender[a] | 0.50 | 0.50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age | 29.7 | 10.45 | -0.14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Occupational status[b] | 0.53 | 0.50 | -0.07 | 0.57** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Nationality[c] | 0.62 | 0.49 | 0.07 | -0.15 | -0.09 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. RT Ethical | 2.40 | 0.95 | 0.02 | -0.18* | -0.14 | 0.02 | (.66) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. RT Financial | 2.77 | 1.26 | -0.39** | -0.23** | -0.16 | -0.05 | 0.32** | (.83) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. RT Health | 3.40 | 1.36 | -0.06 | -0.31** | -0.13 | 0.03 | 0.60** | 0.32** | (.62) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. RT Career | 4.79 | 1.33 | -0.07 | -0.26** | -0.20* | 0.08 | 0.29** | 0.33** | 0.21* | (.85) | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. RT Recreational | 3.99 | 1.64 | -0.19* | -0.25** | -0.06 | 0.00 | 0.31** | 0.36* | 0.45** | 0.26** | (.85) | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. RT Social | 5.41 | 0.90 | 0.07 | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.04 | -0.02 | -0.04 | 0.05 | 0.30** | 0.15 | (.62) | | | | | | | | |
| 11. RP Ethical | 4.27 | 1.04 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.05 | -0.04 | -0.45* | -0.21* | -0.31* | -0.18* | -0.16 | 0.02 | (.71) | | | | | | | |
| 12. RP Financial | 4.94 | 1.00 | 0.08 | 0.10 | 0.10 | -0.06 | -0.22* | -0.48** | -0.29** | -0.24** | 0.27** | 0.09 | 0.32** | (.75) | | | | | | |
| 13. RP Health | 4.75 | 1.04 | 0.27** | 0.15 | 0.19* | -0.06 | -0.45* | -0.27** | -0.54** | -0.16 | 0.32** | 0.03 | 0.41** | 0.33** | (.60) | | | | | |
| 14. RP Career | 3.47 | 0.87 | 0.05 | 0.15 | 0.08 | -0.11 | -0.19* | -0.21* | -0.24** | -0.34** | 0.11 | -0.01 | 0.29** | 0.20* | 0.35** | (.70) | | | | |
| 15. RP Recreational | 3.94 | 1.10 | 0.04 | -0.28** | 0.20* | -0.03 | -0.38* | -0.25** | -0.40** | -0.15 | -0.55** | -0.06 | 0.39** | 0.32** | 0.46** | 0.28** | (.75) | | | |
| 16. RP Social | 2.84 | 0.98 | -0.06 | -0.05 | -0.02 | -0.12 | -0.02 | -0.07 | -0.06 | -0.10 | 0.02 | -0.33** | 0.15 | -0.02 | 0.26** | 0.41** | 0.24** | (.82) | | |
| 17. RT General | 3.77 | 0.79 | -0.20* | -0.35** | -0.20* | 0.01 | 0.64** | 0.65** | 0.67** | 0.66** | 0.74** | -0.31** | -0.34** | -0.41** | -0.45** | -0.30** | -0.50** | -0.02 | (.87) | |
| 18. RP General | 3.98 | 0.64 | 0.09 | 0.19* | 0.15 | -0.04 | -0.44* | -0.35** | -0.47** | -0.25** | -0.37** | -0.07 | 0.67** | 0.56** | 0.69** | 0.66** | 0.72** | 0.53** | -0.52** | (.86) |

*Note.* [a]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [b]Occupational status: 0 = student, 1= working. [c]Nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
The reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal between parentheses.
* p < .05. ** p < .01.

*Table 5.3 | Gender differences in risk taking and risk perception*

| | | | | Dependent Variables | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Study I* | General Risk Taking | | General Risk Perception | | Career Risk Taking | | Career Risk Perception | |
| Independent Variables | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Gender   Men (N = 62) | 3.93 | 0.77 | 3.98 | 0.59 | 4.88 | 1.34 | 3.51 | 0.99 |
|          Women (N = 63) | 3.61 | 0.79 | 4.09 | 0.70 | 4.70 | 1.33 | 3.65 | 0.84 |
| | F | $\eta^2 p$ | F | $\eta^2 p$ | F | $\eta^2 p$ | F | $\eta^2 p$ |
| | 9.35** | 0.07 | 1.90 | 0.02 | 1.50 | 0.01 | 1.51 | 0.01 |

*Note.* ** $p < .01$.

### 5.4.4    Discussion Study I

Given the inconclusive findings on the relation between gender and risk attitudes, this first study was conducted to better understand the antecedents of risk taking and risk perception, especially in relation to scenarios that apply to career situations. We found support for the notion that women are more risk averse than men in general. When we asked participants to rate their likelihood to engage in certain career-risky behaviours, we found that women were not different from men in how much risk they perceived or how willing they were to take risk in the career domain.

   These results are intriguing given findings related to the glass cliff (Ryan & Haslam, 2005a), which have shown that women are more likely than men to end up in risky leadership positions. In order to gain a better understanding of this paradox (i.e., females end up in risky leadership positions while being more risk averse than men in general and not different from men in career risk taking), we designed a second study. Here, the aim is to go beyond people's self-reports on their risk attitudes and instead put participants in a situation in which they are presented with a job opportunity within a company. We examine how the situation in which the company finds itself (successful times or in decline) influences participants' willingness to accept a job in the respective company. The goal of our follow-up study is to find support for the notion that men and women react differently to jobs that can be considered precarious and risky, as such differences in career decision-making could eventually account for why women often find themselves on a glass cliff.

5.5      HYPOTHESES STUDY II: GENDER AND RISKY JOB POSITIONS

Risky jobs are jobs in which resources such as support, information, acknowledgement, and time are lacking due to the company's poor performance (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, et al., 2007). When a company is not performing well, the image of the company will be negatively impacted and in turn, people will consider the company as a less attractive workplace. As the organization's image is a particularly strong predictor of job pursuit intention (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005), people will be hesitant to pursue job positions in poorly performing companies. Thus, it can be expected that riskiness of the job position negatively influences job seekers' willingness to accept the job.

   However, this association may be subject to gender differences as women face many career barriers (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Cardoso & Marques, 2008; McWhirter, 1997) and the pace of advancement continues to be slow and uneven for women (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009; Burke, 2009; EIGE, 2017; Greig, 2008; Vinnicombe, Doldor, & Turner, 2014). Accordingly, women have less access to leadership positions and may feel they "have to accommodate their occupational preferences so that their eventual choices are achievable in the real world" (Leung, 2008, p. 124). Gottfredson's (1981,1996) theory of circumscription and compromise would predict that women feel forced to settle for less preferred and less attractive positions, such as a leadership position in a risky company. Indeed, as previously mentioned and as Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010) have shown, we have mounting evidence that the majority of women (more than men) still find themselves in precarious job appointments. Thus, we expect that riskiness of job positions negatively influences one's willingness to accept the job but that women are more likely than men to accept risky job positions.

*Hypothesis 5:* Riskiness of the job is negatively related to willingness to accept the job.

*Hypothesis 6:* Gender moderates the relationship between riskiness of the job and willingness to accept the job, in such way that women are more willing to accept risky job positions than men.

5.5.1    Participants and Procedure

We recruited participants in the Netherlands via Facebook. A total of 119 respondents participated in this study, but we had to exclude 10 participants from our final sample due to a variety of reasons (e.g., finished the survey within one minute or perceived the disastrous scenario as successful and vice versa). The vast majority (57.1%) were Master's students, 32 were Bachelor's students (26.9%), four were recently graduated and looking for a job (3.4%), 13 were employed (10.9%), and two participants belonged to the 'other' category. The sample was gender balanced, with 60 women and 59

men. The age of the candidates ranged from 21 to 27 years, with a mean of 23 years. Descriptive statistics also revealed that participants came from 21 different countries; again, the majority was Dutch (63%).

We designed our study based on a previous experimental study conducted by Haslam and Ryan (2008). However, this study examines the perception of the job seeker instead of the decision-maker. Our study is an experimental vignette study that aims to discover how riskiness of the job relates to the willingness to accept the job and whether women are more likely than men to accept a risky job position. We operationalized riskiness of the job by manipulating the performance of the company. Although we agree with Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, and colleagues (2007) that "precariousness is not limited to leadership positions in poorly performing companies" (p. 272), we believe that risky jobs are strongly associated with poor performing companies. Moreover, by manipulating the performance of the company, we align with Haslam and Ryan's (2008) design. Informed by a pilot test, we developed two vignettes, which are short stories about hypothetical companies, allowing for the controlled manipulation of the riskiness of the job. All participants were presented with the same baseline vignette, in which a description was given of a vacancy for a consultancy job for a musical festival. Then, participants were given one of two versions of a scenario; the job opening was either in a successful company or in a company in decline. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Accordingly, the study had a 2 (festival performance: successful or crisis) × 2 (gender: man or woman) design. After reading the vignette, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, which assessed their perception of the festival's performance (as a manipulation check) and their willingness to accept the job (as dependent variable). In the last section of the questionnaire, participants were asked about their demographics (i.e., age, gender, occupational status, and nationality).

### 5.5.2    Measures

**Risk status of the job.** The manipulation of our independent variable (i.e., risk status of the job) consisted of vignettes indicating either a successful company or a company in crisis. We presented participants with a review in a newspaper article about the festival's performance. The caption of the review in one of the vignettes stood out as evidently positive: "*Bigger and better: Amsterdam rainbow festival's exceptional dynamic team makes attendance a must.*" The review also presented a table that showed rising numbers of young visitors, higher profits and the need for new staff. The other vignette clearly presented a different situation. Here, the review had a shocking headline: "*Smaller and disastrous: Amsterdam rainbow festival's downsizing leads to attendance deterioration.*" Moreover, the review presented a table showing a remarkable drop in young visitors that resulted in declining profits and the need for downsizing.

**Manipulation check.** In order to test whether the manipulation was effective such that participants perceived the two performance conditions differently, we asked participants to evaluate how successful was the company. We used five items derived from Morgenroth (2012); an example item is "The company is successful." Answers were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), and we found a Cronbach's alpha of .96 for this scale. A one-way ANOVA was conducted and revealed that the two conditions were rated significantly different from each other in terms of successfulness ($M = 4.78$ versus $M = 2.95$, $F(1, 107) = 170.43$, $p < .001$).

**Willingness to accept the job.** The dependent variable (i.e., willingness to accept the job) was measured by asking participants to evaluate the attractiveness of the company as well as their intentions toward the company. We used five items (e.g., "A job at this company is very appealing to me" and "I would accept a job offer from this company") derived from a previous study conducted by Highhouse *et al.* (2003). Answers were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree.* With a Cronbach's alpha of .93 the scale demonstrated high reliability.

**Control variable.** As we have a diverse sample, and risk taking may have different meaning across cultures (Blais & Weber, 2006), we controlled for nationality in the analyses described below.

### 5.5.3   Results Study II

An overview of the means and standard deviations for each study variable as well as the correlations can be found in Table 5.4. As can be seen, we found a significant correlation between the riskiness of the job and one's willingness to accept the job ($r = -.41$, $p < .001$). Moreover, we found a significant negative correlation between nationality and willingness to accept the job ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$). This finding indicates that foreign students are more willing to accept a job than Dutch students.

*Table 5.4 | Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study II variables*

| Study II Study Variables | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender[a] | 0.48 | 0.50 | | | | |
| 2. Nationality[b] | 0.38 | 0.49 | −0.02 | | | |
| 3. Risk status of the job[c] | 0.48 | 0.50 | −0.10 | 0.06 | (.96) | |
| 4. Willingness to accept the job | 3.06 | 0.92 | 0.15 | −0.21* | −0.41** | (.93) |

*Note.* [a]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [b]Nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [c]Risk status of the job: 0 = success, 1 = risky. The reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal between parentheses.
* p < .05. ** p < .01.

The purpose of Study II was to assess the extent to which risk status of the job has an effect on willingness to accept the job and whether the size of this effect depends on gender. Given our 2x2 design, we tested Hypotheses 5 and 6 using a two-way ANOVA. Results indicated a non-significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 104) = 1.29$, $p = .259$. There was, however, a significant main effect of riskiness of the job, $F(1, 104) = 20.85$, $p < .001$. Those in the success condition were more willing to accept the job ($M = 3.39$) than those in the risky job condition ($M = 2.67$), which supports Hypothesis 5. The influence of riskiness of the job on willingness to accept the job was conditional on gender, indicated by a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 104) = 4.06$, $p = .047$. Among those who read the successful company scenario, willingness to accept the job was significantly higher for women ($M = 3.65$) than for men ($M = 3.14$), $p = .023$. There was no effect of gender, however, when the scenario described a precarious company ($M = 2.60$ for women, $M = 2.75$ for men, $p = .533$). That is, higher riskiness of the job was associated with reduced willingness to accept the job for both men and women, which is in contrast to what we proposed in Hypothesis 6. A visual presentation of our results is shown in Figure 5.1.
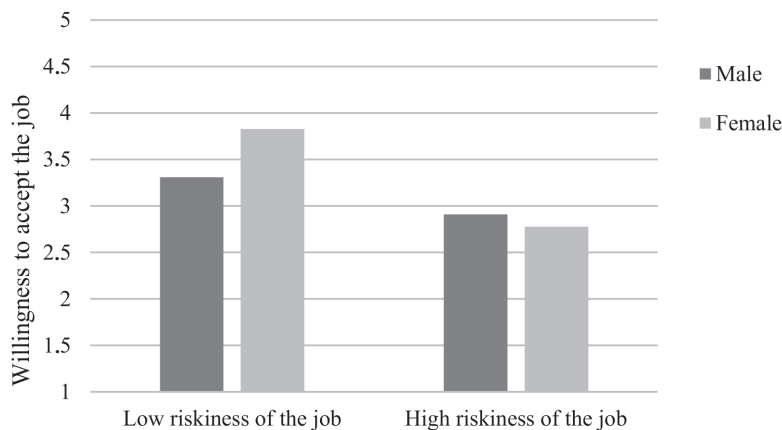


*Figure 5.1 | Study II: Interaction of gender with riskiness of the job in predicting willingness to accept the job*

### 5.5.4    Discussion Study II

The aim of this second study was to examine whether risk status of a job influences the willingness to accept the job differently depending on gender. We found support for our hypothesis that riskiness of the job lowers people's willingness to accept the job. Gender significantly moderated this relationship yet in such a way that riskiness of the job was more strongly associated with reduced willingness to accept the job for women than for men, which was contrary to what we hypothesized. We did not find support for our notion that women are more willing than men to accept a risky job.

This finding is not in line with Ryan and Haslam's (2005a) conclusion based on archival data that women are more likely than men to end up in risky job positions. In our first study, we found that women consider themselves more risk averse than men do, even when it concerns career decisions, which is supported by our second study. However, women often find themselves on a glass cliff, and a common explanation put forward for this phenomenon is that they are more accepting of risky jobs than men. Our results so far challenge this assumption, and it remains unknown when and why women are more willing than men to accept precarious jobs positions. Hence, what can explain the apparent relationship between gender and the acceptance of precarious job positions? In order to answer this question, we have designed another experimental vignette study. This third study also aims to address some of the limitations of our second study.

The sample of the second study consisted of relatively young partici-pants, with an average age of 23, who had very little working experience. Even though the company choice in the vignettes was specifically targeted at young adults, this group may have little personal experience with a competitive job market. Nevertheless, female graduates are shown to have a significantly slower transition to their first job compared to men due to unequal labor market opportunities (see Mills & Präg, 2014 for a study conducted across 29 European countries). As this gender inequality with regard to career progress is vivid from an early life stage, we believe young adults are a worthy sample to include in studies on the glass cliff and career decision-making in general. That being said, we acknowledge that the sample's (lack of) familiarity with the glass cliff phenomenon is a limitation of our second study. The nature of our sample might have created an overly conservative test of our gender hypothesis. We therefore aim to conduct a third study using a sample of working adults.

Another limitation of our second study that we aim to address is that our manipulation check measured participants' perception of the compa-ny's performance (poor or successful) and did not focus on the risk status of the job. Even though jobs are perceived as risky due to a company's insta-bility in times of crisis, precarious jobs are not exclusively associated with poorly performing companies (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, et al., 2007). In the third study, we will therefore incorporate a measure of perceived leadership risk associated with the job as an additional manipulation check.

The procedures and methods used in Study III are similar to those used in the previously described study. However, the third study builds on the second study by incorporating variables that may help explain why women are more or less accepting of risky jobs. Specifically, we examine beliefs about the job being a promotional opportunity as a mediator in the relationship between risk status of the job and willingness to accept the job. Moreover, we propose that gender moderates the relationship between risk status of the job and promotional opportunity beliefs in such a way that women are more likely than men to consider a risky job a promotional opportunity. Finally, we also examine to what extent men's and women's

career self-efficacy plays a role in shaping these beliefs. We elaborate on these propositions in the sections below.

### 5.6 HYPOTHESES STUDY III: WHY AND WHEN WOMEN ACCEPT RISKY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

As in Study II, we will examine whether riskiness of the job has a negative relationship with willingness to accept the job. However, in this study we will go one step further and look at promotional opportunity belief as a mediator in this relationship. An opportunity for a higher rank position in an organization is normally perceived as a positive turn in one's career. However, if career advancement is available at a precarious organization, it may result in a conflicting state of mind (i.e., there is an opportunity for advancement, however, at a precarious company). Therefore, we believe that the risk status of the job influences the perception of the job as a promotional opportunity. If the job position is perceived as a risky career strategy rather than an opportunity for advancement, the job is less likely to be seen as a promotional opportunity. In turn, a risky job is less likely to be accepted by a job seeker. Indeed, Ferris and colleagues (2003) argue that taking on a position within a precarious organization is a risky career strategy. Thus, we argue that people's evaluation of whether the job is a promotional opportunity for them explains their willingness to accept the job.

*Hypothesis 7*: Perception of the leadership position as a promotional opportunity mediates between riskiness of the job and willingness to accept the job.

Barriers to advancement are recognized as prominent factors influencing career opportunities (Arbona, 1990; Astin, 1984; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Farmer, 1976; Lent et al., 1994). According to Swanson and colleagues (1996), barriers to career progression are defined as "external conditions or internal states that make career progress difficult" (p. 236). Mulcahy and Linehan (2014) posited that women are faced with structural career barriers, such as "a lack of opportunity for women, a lack of knowledge about those opportunities that do exist (as a result of exclusion from networks to which males belong) and the board of directors systematically biasing their appointment practices against women" (p. 10). Indeed, numerous studies demonstrated that men are more likely than women to be selected for leadership positions as they receive promotions at quicker rates than women, also referred to as the 'glass escalator' effect (Maume, 1999; Williams, 1992). Gender stereotypes often prevent the acceptance of women for leadership positions. The majority of individuals prefer male supervisors over female leaders (Ng & Pine, 2003; Powell & Butterfield, 2015a [only when they showed a preference]; Simon & Landis, 1989) and male executives tend to question the effectiveness of women as leaders (Sczesny, 2003). Thus, the

*think manager – think male* phenomenon, where women are believed to lack the skills necessary for successful leadership, has led to men having more promotional opportunities than women do.

Because women are more likely than men to encounter career barriers (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Cardoso & Marques, 2008; Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; McWhirter, 1997), it stands to reason that they feel forced to step outside a "safe" career zone and enter precarious job positions. In fact, recent research has indicated a relation between career barriers and accepting precarious job positions (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014). Women's lack of career opportunities, especially when it comes to obtaining leadership positions, may lead them to being more willing to accept risky jobs compared to men, as it allows them to show their management and leadership skills and effectiveness in a leadership position. As Ryan, Haslam, and Postmes (2007) noted, a myriad of women believe that they are "more likely to accept risky and precarious leadership positions because they had less opportunity than their male counterparts" (p. 190). Thus, even though the job position entails a high degree of risk, at the same time it offers an opportunity that women may perceive as advantageous and beneficial to their careers. In contrast, men can expect to be presented with numerous leadership positions throughout their career, and they can therefore decide to be risk averse and pass on precarious leadership positions when they are offered to them. Accordingly, we hypothesize that women are more likely than men to view a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity.

*Hypothesis 8:* Gender moderates the relationship between riskiness of the job and promotional opportunity perception in such a way that women are more likely than men to view a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity.

If the perception of the job as a promotional opportunity is indeed explaining the effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job, as we proposed, then the prior hypothesis implies that gender should also influence the strength of the indirect effect of risk status of the job onto willingness to accept the job. We therefore propose that the process by which riskiness of the job reduces willingness to accept the job is conditional on gender, in such a way that women are more likely than men to view a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity and are therefore more willing than men to accept the job.

*Hypothesis 9:* Gender moderates the indirect effect of riskiness of the job on willingness to accept the job through promotional opportunity.

As previously hypothesized, we expect men and women to differ in their perception of a leadership position as a promotional opportunity, and thus in their eventual career decision (i.e., willingness to accept the job). However, career decisions are greatly influenced by one's self-efficacy for

career decision-making (Bandura, 1986). Career self-efficacy can be defined as the perception of one's ability to perform career behaviours with regard to career development (Anderson and Betz, 2001). Numerous studies have shown that career self-efficacy influences one's career projection and development (Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Lease, 2006; Lent et al., 2005). These studies are anchored in SCCT, which is a theory based on Bandura's notion of self-efficacy. SCCT puts a premium on self-efficacy as an influential factor that determines whether individuals pursue certain career behaviours in the face of obstacles and difficulties. Those with a high level of self-efficacy are more likely to be persistent in the pursuit of their career goals despite a lack of tangible external rewards, such as promotion into a leadership position. If we apply these theoretical propositions to the situation of women, we can expect to find that women with different levels of self-efficacy make different decisions with regard to their careers.

Perhaps more importantly, career self-efficacy may influence career decisions differently for men and women. When individuals have low or weak expectations of themselves in the career domain, this can be classified as an internal barrier that is manifested in career-related behaviours (Hacket & Betz, 1981). However, the influence of one's self-efficacy on career-related behaviours is likely to depend on external barriers because it is the combination of internal barriers and external barriers that influences career progress (Harmon, 1977). As women face discrimination when seeking to obtain leadership positions (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014) and men are often 'escalated' into leadership positions (Williams, 1992), the external barriers are higher for women than for men. Due to differing levels of external barriers, we expect that the influence of self-efficacy plays out differently for men and women. Thus, we posit that career self-efficacy interacts with gender in ultimately influencing one's career decisions.

Specifically, we propose that it is in particular low self-efficacious women who will perceive a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity. Those women face both high internal barriers (due to their low self-efficacy) and high external barriers because they are more heavily confronted with career advancement barriers. This combination of high internal and external barriers may influence their perception of a leadership position as a promotional opportunity in such a way that they will perceive almost any leadership position as a promotional opportunity, even if this position is accompanied by high risk. In contrast, men with low career self-efficacy may still anticipate numerous leadership opportunities (because they face lower external barriers), which prompts them to perceive risky leadership positions as an unwise career move and step away, instead aiming for leadership positions in successful organizations. In contrast to low self-efficacious women, women with a high level of career self-efficacy do not struggle with a lack of career confidence and tend to view themselves as suited for leadership positions. Even though they may have to overcome external barriers, their belief that they will be successful in the business world may help them to be persistent in their goals and urges

them to obtain leadership positions in successful organizations. Thus, we hypothesize that career self-efficacy influences one's perception of a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity differently for women and men.

*Hypothesis 10:* The moderating effect of gender on the relationship between riskiness of the job and perception of the job as a promotional opportunity is dependent on the level of career self-efficacy.

In sum, we propose that women are more likely than men to view a risky job as a promotional opportunity. Thus, we expect that risk status of the job influences willingness to accept the job differently for men and women. Moreover, we propose that the tendency to view jobs in precarious organizations as promotional opportunities, despite their risky nature, is most pronounced among women with low career self-efficacy. Figure 5.2 presents our moderated mediation model.
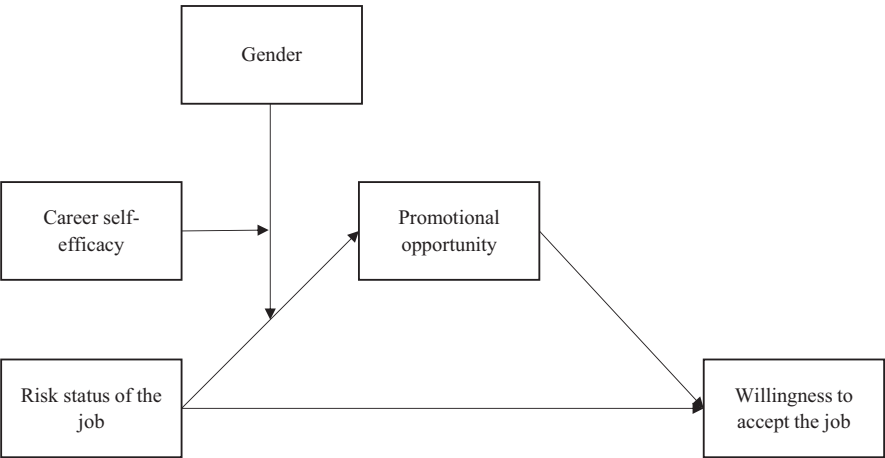


*Figure 5.2 | Study III: Visual representation of the moderated mediation model.*

### 5.6.1    Participants and Procedure

We recruited participants in the Netherlands through e-mail, alumni addresses and via LinkedIn. We had to exclude six participants from our initial sample because they were students. Our final sample consisted of 103 employees, of which 43 were women and 60 were men. The vast majority (97.1%) were employed and three participants belonged to the 'other' category. Age of the candidates ranged from 30 to 60 years, with a mean of 42 years. Participants had 17 different nationalities, with the majority being Dutch (69%). Similar to study II, an attractive vacancy was presented to participants in a baseline vignette. This time, the job opening concerned a leadership position in a young consultancy firm. Our experimental

vignettes, which were again pilot tested, manipulated the riskiness of the job by describing the performance of the consultancy firm over the past years as either successful or deteriorating. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two versions of the vignette. To ensure an equal sample of men and women, a gender quota was set to each vignette. Thus, this study has a 2 (company performance: successful or crisis) × 2 (gender: man or woman) design. After reading the vignette, participants were asked to fill out a survey, which incorporated two manipulation checks and assessed their willingness to accept the job. Moreover, we measured perceptions of promotional opportunity and career self-efficacy in the survey. Finally, we also asked participants about their demographics (i.e., age, gender, and nationality).

### 5.6.2   Measures

**Risk status of the job.** As in our second study, we manipulated the risk status of the job by presenting participants with a vacancy in either a successful company or a company in a state of crisis. One of the vignettes read that a young consultancy firm, called New Generation Consultancy, was recognized as a high performance organization in the newspaper, substantiated with a graph illustrating the company's high profits in comparison with those of its competitors in the market. The other vignette depicted a radically different scenario, in which New Generation Consultancy suffered from a shocking decline in performance after downsizing. The newspaper article also presented a graph depicting the company's low profits, especially in comparison to other companies in the consultancy industry.

**Manipulation check.** We used the scale by Morgenroth (2012) ($\alpha = .95$) to conduct a first manipulation check on our independent variable (i.e., riskiness of the job). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the two conditions were perceived significantly different from each other in terms of successfulness of the company ($M = 5.38$ versus $M = 2.36$, $F(1, 101) = 184.36$, $p < .001$). For a second manipulation check, we developed a six-item measure of perceptions of leadership challenges ($\alpha = .77$), which focused more directly on the actual riskiness of the leadership position. An example item is "The leadership position involves high risk." The items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.* A one-way ANOVA revealed that the leadership challenges of the job were perceived significantly different from each other across the two conditions ($M = 4.97$ versus $M = 5.51$, $F(1, 87) = 8.55$, $p = .004$).

**Willingness to accept the job.** Our dependent variable (i.e., willingness to accept the job) was measured in a similar way as in the second study, using items from Highhouse and colleagues (2003) ($\alpha = .91$). To measure perceptions of promotional opportunity, a number of items were created based on the studies conducted by Curry and colleagues (1986) as well as DeConick and Bachman (1994). An example item is "I consider a leadership position at this company to be a great promotional opportunity for

me." Answers were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, and we found a Cronbach's alpha of .86 for this scale.

**Self-efficacy.** We measured participants' self-efficacy beliefs regarding career decisions using the WAMS (Women As Managers Scale), developed by Peters and colleagues (1974). We selected five items (α = .83) and slightly modified the items to refer to one's own perception of self-efficacy. For instance, the item "Women are not ambitious enough to be successful in the business world" was changed to "I am ambitious enough to be successful in the business world". Answers were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Control variable.** To remain consistent across our multiple studies, we controlled for nationality in subsequent analyses.

### 5.6.3    Results Study III

Table 5.5 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlational matrix for the variables in Study III. Replicating our result from Study II, willingness to accept the job was negatively correlated with risk status of the job ($r = -.35$, $p < .001$). Promotional opportunity beliefs were correlated with willingness to accept the job ($r = .79$, $p < .001$) and risk status of the job ($r = -.30$, $p = .002$), offering preliminary support for our notion that promotional opportunity mediates between risk status of the job and willingness to accept the job.

*Table 5.5 | Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study III variables*

| *Study III* Study Variables | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender[a] | 0.42 | 0.50 | | | | | | |
| 2. Nationality[b] | 0.69 | 0.47 | –0.16 | | | | | |
| 3. Risk status of the job[c] | 0.50 | 0.50 | –0.07 | 0.01 | (.95) | | | |
| 4. Willingness to accept the job | 3.19 | 0.87 | 0.10 | –0.08 | –0.35** | (.91) | | |
| 5. Career self-efficacy | 5.44 | 0.95 | –0.19 | 0.25* | 0.11 | –0.05 | (.86) | |
| 6. Promotional opportunity | 3.36 | 0.83 | 0.08 | –0.05 | –0.30** | 0.79** | –0.08 | (.83) |

*Note.* [a]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [b]Nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch. [c]Risk status of the job: 0 = success, 1 = risky. The reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal between parentheses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

In order to understand why women find themselves on a glass cliff despite their risk-averse nature, this study examines factors that may explain women's willingness to consider and accept risky job positions. We used a stepwise approach by starting with two two-way ANOVAs that test for the effects of our manipulation on willingness to accept the job and promotional opportunity beliefs. This was followed by two regression analyses to test our mediation and moderated mediation hypotheses, using Andrew Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro. We end with our full hypothesized model, which is

essentially a moderated mediation model with a three-way interaction. This model was tested holistically, again using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS.

Replicating Study II as a first step, we used a two-way ANOVA to assess the extent to which risk status of the job has an effect on willingness to accept the job and whether the size of this effect depends on gender. Similar to Study II, the results indicated a non-significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 98) = 0.51$, $p = .475$. There was, however, a significant main effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job, $F(1, 98) = 12.84$, $p = .001$. Those in the success condition were more willing to accept the job ($M = 3.49$) than those in the risky condition ($M = 2.89$). The interaction between the two factors was not significant, $F(1, 98) = 0.01$, $p = .929$, indicating that the relation between risk status of the job and willingness to accept the job was not dependent on gender.

The next step was to examine whether risk status of the job has an effect on perception of the leadership position as a promotional opportunity, and whether the size of this effect is dependent on gender. A two-way ANOVA indicated a non-significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 98) = 0.27$, $p = .607$, whereas risk status of the job was found to have a significant main effect on perception of the job as a promotional opportunity, $F(1, 98) = 8.43$, $p = .005$. Participants in the success condition were more likely to see the position as a promotional opportunity ($M = 3.61$) than those in the risky condition ($M = 3.11$). The relation between risk status of the job and perception of the job as a promotional opportunity was not dependent on gender, $F(1, 98) = 0.62$, $p = .434$. The non-significance of this interaction led to the rejection of Hypothesis 8.

The third step was to test our mediation hypothesis, using Andrew Hayes' (2013) PROCESS model 4. We found that riskiness of the job was negatively related to the perception of promotional opportunity (B = $-0.49$, $p = .002$) and the perception of promotional opportunity was positively related to willingness to accept the job (B = $0.79$, $p < .001$). The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect (ab = $-0.39$) did not include zero, 95% CI [$-0.651$, $-0.147$], indicating a significant indirect effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job through perceptions of promotional opportunity, in support of Hypothesis 7. As a fourth step, we tested our moderated mediation hypothesis using Andrew Hayes' (2013) PROCESS model 7. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation ($a_1b_3 = 0.20$) included zero, 95% CI [$-0.286$, $0.681$], illustrating that the indirect effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job through promotional opportunity was not moderated by gender. This result does not lend support to Hypothesis 9.

The last step involved testing our moderated mediation model including a three-way interaction between self-efficacy, gender and risk status of the job. This model was tested holistically using model 11 of Andrew Hayes' (2013) PROCESS. Table 5.6 depicts our results from conditional process modeling. In this moderated mediation model, we found that gender significantly moderated the effect of risk status of the job on percep-

tion of the job as a promotional opportunity (B = 5.20, $p$ = .012). Moreover, the three-way interaction between risk status of the job and gender and career self-efficacy was significant in predicting perceptions of promotional opportunity (B = −0.91, $p$ = .017). In other words, women were less likely than men to lower their expectations of the job (in terms of promotional opportunity) as riskiness of the job increased, and this tendency was strongest among those women who scored low on self-efficacy.

*Table 5.6 | Results of conditional process modeling*

| *Study III* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Promotional opportunity (M) | | Willingness to accept the job (Y) | |
| Study Variables | B | SE | B | SE |
| Risk status of the job[a] (X) | −3.64** | 1.37 | −0.21 | 0.11 |
| Promotional opportunity (M) | | | 0.79*** | 0.07 |
| Career self-efficacy (Z) | −0.21 | 0.14 | | |
| Gender[b] (W) | −1.25 | 1.12 | | |
| XxZ interaction | 0.54* | 0.24 | | |
| XxW interaction | 5.20* | 2.04 | | |
| WxZ interaction | 0.22 | 0.21 | | |
| XxZxW | −0.91* | 0.38 | | |
| Constant | 4.83*** | 0.82 | 0.70* | 0.27 |
| Nationality[c] (control) | −0.15 | 0.18 | −0.08 | 0.11 |

*Note.* [a]Risk status of the job: 0 = success, 1 = risky. [b]Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. [c]Nationality: 0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Furthermore, results indicated that self-efficacy interacted with gender in influencing one's willingness to accept a leadership position. That is, we found that the indirect effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job was different for men and women at different values of self-efficacy. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the conditional indirect effect did not include zero for men with low (−1 SD) self-efficacy (90% CI [−1.345, −0.552]) and for women with high (+1 SD) self-efficacy (90% CI [−1.131, −0.085]), indicating that the negative effect of riskiness of the job on willingness to accept the job was significant for this subgroup. In other words, men with low self-efficacy and self-efficacious women are risk averse toward precarious leadership positions. In contrast, for women with low (−1 SD) self-efficacy the indirect effect was estimated at −0.069 with a 90% CI of [−0.442, 0.364] and for men with high (+1 SD) self-efficacy the indirect effect was estimated at −0.134 with a 90% CI of [−0.558, 0.296]. As these bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals included zero, it suggests that both women with low self-efficacy and self-efficacious men are as willing to accept a precarious job position as they are willing to accept a successful job position. This pattern of findings is largely in line with Hypothesis 10. The results of our conditional indirect effects are shown in Table 5.7.

*Table 5.7 | Results of conditional indirect effects*

| Study III | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent variable | Dependent variable | Mediator | First moderator (gender) | Second moderator (career self-efficacy) | Indirect effect | 90% CI |
| Risk status of the joba | Willingness to accept the job | Promotional opportunity | Male | Low | –0.95** | [–1.345; –0.552] |
| | | | Female | Low | –0.07 | [–0.442;  0.364] |
| | | | Male | High | –0.62 | [–0.558;  0.296] |
| | | | Female | High | –0.62* | [–1.131; –0.085] |

*Note.* ªRisk status of the job: 0 = success, 1 = risky.
* p < .05. ** p < .01

## 5.6.4    Discussion Study III

In this third study, we wanted to examine the extent to which risk status of the job has an effect on willingness to accept the job and whether the size of this effect depends on gender. More importantly, we wanted to test whether promotional opportunity belief would mediate the relationship between risk status of the job and willingness to accept to job. Additionally, we wanted to examine whether the moderating effect of gender was dependent on career self-efficacy.

Looking into the underlying mechanism, we have found that perceived promotional opportunity explains the effect of risk status of the job on willingness to accept the job. This indirect effect was impacted by the interaction between gender and career self-efficacy. When it comes to understanding why and when women accept risky leadership positions, our results from the third study show that only women with a low level of self-efficacy are as willing to accept a precarious position as they are willing to accept a job position in a successful company, which is explained by our finding that these women view both the high and low risk leadership positions as equally attractive, in terms of promotional opportunities. Self-efficacious women, however, perceive the leadership positions at the two different companies as unequal when it comes to promotional opportunities. That is, they believe that a precarious leadership position offers fewer promotional opportunities than a successful leadership position and are therefore unwilling to accept this position.

These results support the argument of Betz and Hackett (1981) that "if individuals lack expectations of personal efficacy in one or more career-related behavioural domains, behaviours critical to effective and satisfying choices, plans, and achievements are less likely to be initiated and even if initiated less likely to be sustained when obstacles or negative experiences are encountered" (p. 329), which is also in line with propositions from social cognitive career theory. Indeed, women with low self-efficacy viewed both the high and low risk leadership positions as equally attractive, meaning that they were less likely to pass on a risky leadership position and aim for

a leadership position in a successful company instead. We have argued that taking on a leadership position in a company in crisis is a decision that may negatively affect one's career progression. It follows from our final study that low self-efficacy in women prevents them from making smart choices when they are confronted with obstacles in trying to climb the corporate ladder; they tend to accept any available leadership position, even if it is accompanied by high risk.

## 5.7    General Discussion and Conclusion

Taken together, the results from the above studies enrich us with new insights with regard to Ryan and Haslam's (2005a) studies concerning the glass cliff. With few exceptions (Rink et al., 2012), previous glass cliff studies have looked exclusively into decision-makers' preferences for leadership appointments (at either a successful or precarious company). In contrast, our paper examines the glass cliff phenomenon from a job seeker point of view in order to better understand why women, who are often typified as more risk averse compared to men, are more likely to end up in risky leadership positions. In doing so, we have drawn on two major career theories, namely Gottfredson's (1981, 1996) theory of circumscription and compromise and Lent and colleagues' (1994, 2000, 2002) social cognitive career theory. Building on the large body of research that has documented the career obstacles and constraints faced by women in the workplace (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Cardoso & Marques, 2008; Kanter, 1977; Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; McWhirter, 1997), these theories offer a basis for investigating how and why women have to make compromises and need to accommodate their preferences in career decision-making in response to such external realities.

In this paper we focused on women's reasoning underlying the glass cliff phenomenon and the type of women who are willing to accept precarious leadership positions. Our first study confirms prior research, which found that in general women are more risk averse than men. Going beyond prior research, we also investigated risk taking in the career domain, to gain a better understanding of career risk attitudes as it relates to gender. Despite finding no statistically significant differences in career risk attitudes between men and women, results from our experimental vignette studies suggested otherwise. In the second study, we found that both men and women were more willing to accept a low risk job than a high risk job, but women were more risk averse in their decisions than men. The third study indicated that perception of the job as a promotional opportunity accounts for why higher riskiness of the job is associated with reduced willingness to accept the job. In this third study, differences between men and women were only found when taking into account their levels of self-efficacy. We found that the tendency to consider a leadership position in an organization

in crisis as a promotional opportunity, despite its risky nature, was most pronounced among women with low career self-efficacy.

An explanation for this finding lies in the external career barriers that women still face. Women do not get the chance to climb the ladder of authority in an organization as much or as often as the opposite sex (Maume, 1999; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). According to Gottfredson's (1996) theory, this external reality forces women to make decisions that compromises compatibility with their interests. We showed that women with low self-efficacy were more likely than men with low self-efficacy to accept a risky leadership position because they considered this position a promotional opportunity. Moreover, our results suggest that self-efficacious women are less prone to accommodate their career preferences and goals when confronted with external barriers. In SCCT terms, self-efficacy beliefs might shape goal setting and hereby influence women's persistence in career building, even when the external reality does not offer many promising prospects.

### 5.7.1 Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of our studies is that we have relied exclusively on self-reports. Future research could rely on other-ratings, for instance to evaluate people's risk-taking behaviours in several domains. The small sample sizes of our studies are also a limitation. Future research should include larger sample sizes to advance tests of our comprehensive model. We also recommend scholars to extend our conceptual model of the third study with other factors that could underlie women's acceptance of risky jobs, such as curiosity and exploration (Kashdan, Bose, & Fincham, 2004), the need to belong (Leary, Kelly, Cottrell, & Schreindorfer, 2013) or need for achievement (Heckert et al., 1999). Another limitation of our study is that recently published work has critiqued the DOSPERT scale for being skewed toward measuring masculine risk (see Morgenroth, Fine, Ryan, & Genat, 2017). We recommend further studies looking into gender differences in risk taking to adopt a more gender-neutral risk taking scale.

We found a somewhat surprising result regarding the career decision-making of self-efficacious men, who were as likely to accept a job in the risky condition as in the success condition. Literature on self-efficacy has shown that self-efficacious individuals set goals that are more challenging for themselves (Bandura, 1993). As our results show that self-efficacious women step away from risky leadership positions, it might be that high levels of self-efficacy promote engagement in a risky leadership position only for men. Thus, career self-efficacy seems to influence occupational choices differently for men and women. Prior research has demonstrated that men are more confident than women about their leadership capabilities (McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002), hence an explanation for our finding might be that men with a high level of career self-efficacy accept risky leadership positions because of their optimism about becoming

successful leaders (Gibson & Lawrence, 2010). While our study aimed to uncover the decision-making processes of women in particular, we recommend future researchers to also focus on the mechanisms (e.g., confidence, need for challenges) underlying men's career decision-making to better understand why self-efficacious men are willing to accept risky job positions. This is especially interesting as they are less likely to end up in glass cliff positions due to the *think crisis – think female* paradigm in organizational decision-makers.

Interestingly, we did not find significant differences in the level of career self-efficacy of men and women. Our study cannot shed light on predictors of career self-efficacy, yet we encourage future scholars to examine individual differences regarding this concept. Our study indicates that it is in particular women who score low on career self-efficacy who end up in precarious leadership positions. It would be a fruitful endeavour for research on the glass cliff to identify factors that explain why some women are less self-efficacious than men. Women's experiences throughout their career may be an influential factor in that women who are not satisfied with their career progression and have experienced many setbacks become less efficacious such that they are more willing to accept any kind of promotional opportunity, even when high risks are involved.

Another limitation of our study is that we made the assumption that the acceptance of a precarious leadership position is an unwise career choice, yet we do not know whether women are perhaps satisfied being put in a precarious job position. Evidently, the glass cliff phenomenon is highly complex and our research is only a first step in uncovering the mechanisms that account for why women accept risky leadership positions. We recommend future scholars to conduct qualitative research to gain a better understanding of why women opt for a risky leadership position, how they experience this job and how they reflect on it afterwards. As women may initiate a successful turnaround of the organization, future research may benefit strongly from a longitudinal approach to the study of the glass cliff phenomenon.

Finally, we acknowledge that the experimental design of our studies may lack realism. More specifically, we cannot be certain that the evaluation of the job as risky influences occupational choice in the real world in a similar way as in our studies. Thus, the external validity of our findings may be limited. However, it should be noted that our sample for study III consisted of workers who are familiar with soliciting jobs and career challenges. Moreover, the design of our studies allowed us to investigate psychological mechanisms underlying individuals' career decision-making that may not be easily examined in real-life situations due to confounding variables that cannot be controlled (Evans *et al.*, 2015).

## 5.7.2   Theoretical and Practical Implications

We believe glass cliff theory is incomplete without the perspective of the job seeker and consideration of risk attitudes and behaviours. Our paper contributes to glass cliff theory by taking the perspective of the (female) job seeker into consideration rather than focusing on the organizational decision-maker. Moreover, this paper adopts a risk-taking perspective on the glass cliff phenomenon and is among the first to offer an explanation for the apparent paradox that women are more risk averse than men but nonetheless are more willing to accept risky leadership positions. We shed new light on the glass cliff phenomenon by investigating psychological factors that explain women's tendency to accept precarious leadership positions. In doing so, we have drawn on theoretical notions from Gottfredson' theory of circumscription and compromise (1981, 1996) and from social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 2002), to explicate on the one hand that women are active participants in their own careers but on the other hand that women's career choices do not occur in a social vacuum but rather are shaped by external constraints related to hiring processes, promotional decisions and performance evaluations. Thus, our paper builds on and goes beyond previous statements that women accept risky leadership positions because those are the only career advancement options that are open to them (see Mano-Negrin & Sheaffer, 2004; Ryan, Haslam, & Postmes, 2007).

By gaining an understanding of women's career decision-making processes, practitioners may enhance the probability of a successful woman-as-leader appointment. In our paper, we argue that one's willingness to accept a risky leadership position is influenced by one's perception of the leadership position as a promotional opportunity, which in turn is affected by one's gender and level of career self-efficacy. We have shown support for the notion that women with a low level of self-efficacy perceive a risky leadership position as a promotional opportunity, in turn accepting the position, more so than men with a low level of self-efficacy. Perhaps more importantly, our findings imply that organizations in crisis looking for female candidates for their leadership positions are likely to end up hiring low self-efficacious women rather than confident women who believe they can be successful in the business world. According to Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, and colleagues (2007), often once women are appointed, they lack official support, leaving them feeling isolated in the organization. When newly appointed women have a low level of self-efficacy, it becomes all the more important to provide them with adequate organizational support, which will not only be key to their success but also to the organization's well-being. Ellemers (2014) also emphasized that organizations need to be mindful that relying on the stereotypically superior 'people skills' of female leaders, without offering them social resources, makes it more challenging for women than for men to succeed (Ellemers, 2014). On the basis of Rink and colleagues' (2012) study, we recommend to ensure that employees approve and appreciate the appointment of the new leader. Moreover, it is

imperative that other senior members of the organization acknowledge the power and authority of the new leader and support her in the challenges inherent to an organizational crisis. Formal mentoring programs can institutionalize the provision of such guidance and assistance by senior leaders.

Furthermore, we have shown that attractiveness of an organization, which is positively related to job acceptance (Chapman et al., 2005; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003) depends on whether its job positions are perceived as promotional opportunities by job seekers. Our results suggest that organizations in decline are less attractive to job seekers. To attract and retain talented and experienced leaders, these organizations need to improve the attractiveness of their leadership positions and ensure that job seekers do not perceive positions in these organizations as inferior to other available positions. Organizations in crisis should market their leadership positions in such a way that any job seeker is encouraged to view these positions as promotional opportunities. For instance, organizations can emphasize the possibilities that the job entails for developing leadership and management skills as well as in terms of offering prospects for future promotions.

Finally, we believe it is critical that organizations facing a crisis strive to recruit the best person for the job, irrespective of gender. In line with the recommendation of Powell and Butterfield (2015b), we advise organizations and decision-makers to adopt practices that foster "debiasing" of decisions regarding promotions to top management. For example, human resource departments can provide trainings regarding decision-making that raise awareness about the possibility of biased judgments related to gender and leadership. Such trainings could be held in the form of a lecture, seminar, or perhaps more engaging, such as a game. In fact, findings from an experimental field study, conducted by Sellier and colleagues (2019), suggest that game-based training interventions can reduce biased decision-making by approximately one-third. Organizations are recommended to use such interventions as an attempt to alter the *think crisis – think female* mindset of decision-makers.

# 6 | Discussion

The main aim of my dissertation has been to provide an understanding of how individuals together with their surrounding stakeholders can build and manage sustainable careers. From an individual perspective, I have studied how the person influences career sustainability through contemporary career choices, moving from the decision to be self-employed in Chapter 2, to the choice to work from home in chapters 3 and 4. In addition, I have investigated how personal factors, such as demographics and career resources can impact the sustainability of careers. In chapters 4 and 5, for instance, I shed light on the influence of parental status and gender on sustainable careers. In addition, the last empirical chapter (5) has examined how career self-efficacy, as a personal career resource, can help individuals in crafting a sustainable career.

At the contextual level, my dissertation has examined how work and society can influence employees' career sustainability. For example, in Chapter 4, I shed light on supervisors' perceptions of those who work from home, and the consequences of those perceptions for employees' performance evaluations. In the final chapter on the glass cliff phenomenon, attention was paid to women's tendency to make a risky career move because of the societal barriers to career progression they still face. These chapters have demonstrated the necessity to study the interplay between the person and the context when investigating sustainable careers. Before I begin the in-depth discussion of the integration of the findings, I will first summarize the main results of each empirical study to address the research questions that were formulated in the introductory chapter of the dissertation. Hereafter, I will provide methodological reflections followed by practical implications for organizations, employees, and policy makers. I conclude with avenues for future research on sustainable careers.

## 6.1 Answers to Research Questions

In what comes next, I will briefly summarize the main findings of the empirical chapters to answer the research questions.

*Research Question 1: To what extent does the career sustainability of individuals who decide to be self-employed differ from those who decide to be organization-based employed?*

The first empirical study took a *person* approach and examined differences in the career sustainability between those who choose to be self-employed and those who choose organization-based employment, in order to understand how the path towards career sustainability varies among *employment relations*. Following previous research, we used health as a key indicator of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2018). We proposed that the resource environment of the self-employed is richer because they have greater flexibility in choosing their work schedule, compared to employees, contributing to a better health status. In particular, using multi-wave data (2001-2015) from the Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, we compared the self-employed with employees in terms of (a) differences in their health levels, (b) the disparity in their health status over time and (c) differences in the stability of their health over time.

   In line with our hypotheses, we found that because of their richer work environment, the self-employed had better health and showed more stability in their health than employees. Specifically, we found that the work environment of the self-employed was richer in the flextime resource (i.e., schedule flexibility), which increased experiences of work-family enrichment and alleviated experiences of work-family conflict, positively affecting their health. Remarkably, we did not find evidence for the growing disparity in health over time between the two groups. A possible explanation for this finding may be found in adaptation theory (Ritter et al., 2016), which posits that individuals adapt to stressors over time such that they eventually return to their baseline well-being levels. Jointly, the findings of Chapter 2 provided us with a better understanding of how the contemporary career decision to be independently employed influences career sustainability. In particular, the findings suggest that individuals who choose to be self-employed may be better equipped to craft a sustainable career because of the greater autonomy and schedule control they have.

*Research Question 2: How does the decision to work from home influence individuals' daily path towards sustainable careers?*

In Chapter 2, we examined how the contemporary career-related decision to belong to a certain occupational group has implications for the health indicator of career sustainability, on the long-term. Yet, contemporary career decisions can also be studied at a more micro level, such as choosing alternative work arrangements (i.e., *personalization*) within the (same) occupation. Furthermore, individuals' health experiences are likely to show fluctuations on the short-term (i.e., on a day-to-day basis).

   In Chapter 3, we took a *person* perspective and proposed an intraindividual model that examined the day-to-day effects (i.e., 10 workdays) of working from home on the health indicator of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2018). This chapter builds on recent research that recommends scholars to move away from a cross-sectional approach towards a more episodic approach for a better understanding of the implications of working

from home (Allen et al., 2015; Anderson et al., 2015; Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019; Maertz & Boyar, 2011; Vega et al., 2015).

Consistent with our hypotheses, we observed that on days when employees work from home they experience their work as less demanding (i.e., less time pressure), so that employees are left with more resources to actively participate in the family role (i.e., less work-family conflict). Moreover, we found that on days when employees experience heightened levels of work-family conflict, they become vulnerable to further resource loss such that individuals feel more emotionally exhausted and less engaged in their work the next morning. Finally, the results indicated that individuals wake up with negative emotions about the organization they work for when work has interfered with their family life the previous workday. In the least, these findings suggest that the contemporary career-related decision to work from home has beneficial consequences for employees' work-home interface and well-being on a daily level.

Moreover, these results suggest that individuals' experiences of career sustainability fluctuate on a day-to-day basis because of their work-home interface. Apparently, individuals' career sustainability benefits more from working from home days than office days, because they experience less conflict between the work and home domain. Thus, we could argue that individuals' daily decision to either work from home or at the office has crucial implications for the sustainability of their careers.

*Research Question 3a: What are the implications of working from home for supervisory performance ratings?*

Taking a person-centred approach, Chapter 3 extensively discussed the relationship between the choice to work from home, and the health indicator of career sustainability. In Chapter 4, we put forward a model that examined the implications of the choice to work from home for employees' perceived performance to understand how *work* (i.e., supervisors) as a contextual factor influences the productivity proxy of sustainable careers. Building on the growing stream of research on the negative effects of flexible working practices (Leslie et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2014; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008), we argued that working from home can stand in the way of objective performance ratings. In concordance with signalling theory (Spence, 1973), we observed that working from home sends a signal of low work centrality and organizational commitment. Supervisors may then "penalize" employees who choose to work from home by giving them lower performance ratings.

*Research Question 3b: To what extent does parenthood influence the relationship between working from home and supervisory performance ratings?*

In addition to examining the process by which working from home results in low supervisory performance ratings, we identified employees' parental status as an important boundary condition for the negative effects. Building

on previous research that shows that parents are viewed more unfavourably when it comes to work attitudes because of care responsibility (Leslie et al., 2013; Fuegen et al., 2004), we expected parents who choose to work from home to receive lower performance ratings than employees without children who work from home. Contrary to our expectations, the results indicated that the negative effects of working from home particularly prevail for employees without children. This finding might be explained by the fact that childless employees are perceived as not having legitimate reasons (e.g., related to care) to work outside of the office (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Moreover, we demonstrated that the tendency to penalize employees who work flexibly was most pronounced among male supervisors who never work from home themselves.

Overall, the findings of this chapter illustrate that the decision to work from home may have detrimental consequences for employees' performance ratings and therefore career sustainability, but that these effects are complex and contingent on characteristics of both the supervisor and the employee. Finally, it is important to note that the obtained results were not entirely consistent across the two samples (i.e., students and professional workers), and thus caution is warranted when drawing conclusions.

*Research Question 4a: To what extent do external barriers (i.e., lack of promotional opportunities) explain women's willingness to make a risky career move, in terms of accepting a risky leadership position?*

*Research Question 4b: How do personal resources, such as career self-efficacy, influence women's career decision to accept a risky leadership position?*

Chapter 4 supplemented the person-centred perspective of chapters 2 and 3, by showing that the context (i.e., supervisor) plays an important role in fostering career sustainability, such that employees' career decisions need to be supported by supervisors. That is, there needs to be a clear alignment between the employee and the organization (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). Yet, contextual factors can also affect sustainable careers by creating boundaries to individuals' decision making (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015). To this end, in Chapter 5, we discussed the role of contextual factors deriving from *society* on women's career decision-making and eventually their career sustainability. We explored how societal norms influence career decisions, in particular the decision to accept a leadership position in an organization that is in crisis (i.e., a glass cliff position). Research on the glass cliff has focused almost exclusively on decision makers who need to fill a glass cliff position. We therefore incorporated the perspective of job seekers to elucidate the processes underlying individuals' career decisions and their motives for making a risky career move.

We proposed that societal norms that elevate men as natural managers and leaders (think manager, think male) explain why and how women are more likely than men to accept risky leadership positions. First, building

on previous research that has shown a link between career barriers and accepting precarious job positions (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014) we argued that women's lack of career advancement opportunities may lead them to perceive any leadership position as a promotional opportunity (even risky ones), which increases their tendency to accept a risky leadership position. Second, we posited that it is particularly women with low self-efficacy who accept risky leadership positions because they are confronted with both high internal barriers (i.e., low self-efficacy) and high external barriers.

The findings were largely in line with our hypotheses. We found that the decision to accept a risky leadership position was most pronounced among women with low career self-efficacy, because they perceive any leadership position as a promotional opportunity, even if it is comes with great risks. In fact, we found that women with high levels of self-efficacy step away from precarious leadership positions, because they believe such positions offer fewer promotional opportunities than leadership positions in successful organizations. These findings clearly illustrate the impact of both the context and person dimension as proposed by De Vos and colleagues (2018) on the career sustainability of women. That is, while external barriers (i.e., context) push women to make compromises and accept a risky leadership positions, self-efficacy (i.e., a personal resource) helps women to persist and step away from such risky positions.

## 6.2 Integration of Findings and Theoretical Contributions

In the preceding sections, I provided a brief summary of the main findings of each empirical chapter. In what comes next, I will reflect on how these chapters build on each other and contribute to the development of the theoretical framework of sustainable careers (De Vos et al., 2018).

### 6.2.1 Flexible Working Practices and Sustainable Careers

Jointly, the findings of chapters 2, 3 and 4 suggest that flexible working, referring to both schedule and workplace flexibility can simultaneously promote sustainable careers because of greater well-being and create challenges for sustainability because of detrimental performance ratings. Specifically, chapters 2 and 3 illustrate a dual or perhaps paradoxical process of working from home: although working from home benefits individuals' well-being and thus assists individuals in achieving sustainability in terms of remaining healthy, telework may hinder the path towards a sustainable career when it comes to productivity. Put differently, there appears to be a trade-off between the career sustainability indicators (this is a point that will receive more attention in the future research section of my dissertation, i.e., in 6.3.1).

The differing results across the two chapters of my dissertation are very much dependent on the alternative theoretical perspectives that were

taken across the chapters. In Chapter 3, we drew on the resource (drain) perspective in work-family spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) to build an argument as to why working from home days benefit individuals' work-home interface and consequently work-related well-being. In the subsequent chapter on the consequences of working from home, however, we built on signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973) to hypothesize that working from home might send a signal of low commitment to the supervisor. Thus, while from a resource perspective working from home holds the potential to assist individuals in building a sustainable career, from a signalling perspective it can harm individuals because the supervisor might interpret working from home as a signal of low work centrality. These findings are in line with the conflicting opinions in the literature regarding the consequences of flexible working practices for sustainable careers.

Similar to the findings in this dissertation, the benefits of teleworking seem to be mostly related to well-being, while the negative consequences are often associated with career-related outcomes, such as career potential (Allen et al., 2015). In terms of the consequences of flexible working for employee well-being, meta-analytical studies have shown that working from home has a work stress and exhaustion reducing potential (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012). When it comes to career-related outcomes, however, studies show that flexible working practices relate to fewer opportunities for promotion (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008) and lower performance ratings (Yam et al., 2014). For instance, Yam and colleagues (2014) showed that employees who choose a flexible work schedule and arrive at the office late in the morning (10am) receive lower supervisory performance ratings than those who arrive early (7am).

The conflicting findings in the literature combined with the findings in my dissertation challenge the boundaryless and protean career perspectives, and specifically, the associated belief that careers are makeable regardless of employers' values, expectations and preferences (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012). In fact, an integration of the findings of chapters 3 and 4 underscores the importance of an alignment between individual preferences and organizational support for sustainable careers. This is consistent with the traditional model of Person-Organization (P-O) fit (Kristof, 1996), which refers to the compatibility between the employee and organization by identifying on the one hand the characteristics of the organization (e.g., norms) and on the other hand the characteristics of the employee (e.g., attitudes). In essence, the model suggests that the extent of fit between the organization and the person depends on the degree of value congruence between the two parties (Kristof, 1996).

Researchers have used the P-O fit model to predict numerous employee and organizational outcomes (Kim, Aryee, Loi, & Kim, 2013; Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007). Kim and colleagues (2014), for instance, found that individuals who experience high levels of P-O fit are more satisfied with their job, show more commitment to the organization, perform better in their

job and demonstrate more organizational citizenship behaviours towards the organization they work for. Considering the impact that P-O fit has on employees' well-being and work behaviour, I believe that the P-O fit model can inform sustainable careers and has the potential to further advance the sustainable careers framework. For example, researchers can study how employees' perception of their fit with the organization they work for relates to the key indicators of career sustainability; that is, health, productivity and happiness (De Vos et al., 2018). Moreover, considering that work environments and organizations transform continuously (e.g., new ways of working), it would be interesting to examine the process by which P-O fit changes over time and influences sustainable careers in the long run.

## 6.2.2    The Career Sustainability of Minority Groups

Little is known about the career sustainability of individuals from disadvantaged groups (De Vos et al., 2018; Van der Heijden et al., 2020). Together, the findings of chapters 4 and 5 suggest that employees without children compared to parents and women, more so than men, may have a harder time in crafting sustainable careers, in terms of employability (i.e., the productivity indicator of sustainable careers; De Vos et al., 2018). These results challenge existing work that shows that non-parents have better chances for career progression than parents (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Straub, Vinkenburg, & van Kleef, 2019) and build on previous research that suggests that women face more career obstacles on their pathway towards career advancement than men (Ryan et al., 2007; Doldor & Vinnicombe, 2015). In the following section, I will review these papers and outline how my findings relate to those in previous work.

In terms of differences in the career progress (i.e., productivity indicator of career sustainability) of parents and employees without children, previous research suggests that parents' career sustainability may suffer because they do not match the image of the ideal worker, who should lend work their full dedication while someone else bears their caring responsibilities (Blair-Loy, 2003; Reid, 2015; Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). Heilman and Okimoto (2008), for example, demonstrated that parenthood (in particular for women) can impede career progress because parents are perceived as being less committed to their job than childless workers. Moreover, Straub and colleagues (2019) showed that parents who choose to customize their careers in a flexible way (i.e., decelerated pace, less workload, work anytime/anywhere and choose a role with less responsibility), receive lower performance evaluations than non-parents. The findings of my dissertation, however, suggest that it is the non-parents who are more critically evaluated, when it comes to career progress.

Specifically, the results of Chapter 4 suggest that childless employees more than parents are confronted with contextual challenges; such that childless employees receive less supervisory support (in terms of lower supervisory performance ratings) when they decide to work from home.

An explanation for these findings might be found in the historical design of flexible working practices. Flexible working practices were primarily designed to enable the careers of employees with family responsibilities. Considering that employees without children have few care responsibilities, supervisors may assume that these individuals do not require job flexibility. Thus, I would argue that perceptions about the legitimacy of individuals' private life plays a crucial role and can help explain why, when it comes to the uptake of flexible working practices, non-parents are more disadvantaged in terms of career sustainability than parents. Indeed, as alluded to in Chapter 4, this point has recently been picked up in a qualitative study by Wilkinson and colleagues (2017). Childless employees in that study indicated that they felt unable to request flexible working because their private life activities (e.g., sports) were not considered to be legitimate reasons to leave work. Specifically, participants reported that legitimate reasons to pull time away from the workplace were mainly related to family and care responsibilities.

To conclude, I believe that our finding that employees without children are more negatively affected in terms of career progress, when they work flexibly, highlights that the ideal worker ideology may not always apply as an explanation. Thus, I believe that in order to better understand the inconsistent findings related to parenthood and career sustainability, it is imperative to look at the relationship from alternative theoretical angles and perspectives (e.g., private life legitimacy).

Chapter 5 builds on Chapter 4, by providing additional insights into the direction of the interplay between person and context. That is, while Chapter 4 shows how the context (i.e., supervisor) reacts to the choice (i.e., working from home) of individuals from minority groups, Chapter 5 illustrates how individuals from minority groups react (i.e., accepting a leadership position) to contextual factors (i.e., career barriers because of societal norms). In line with the theory of compromise and circumscription (Gotfredson, 1996) the results of Chapter 5 indicate that in response to a lack of promotional opportunities, women, more than men, make career compromises, in terms of accepting a glass cliff position (i.e., risky leadership position). This finding confirms previous research that suggests that glass cliff positions may be perceived as golden career opportunities for women because they believe such positions can help them attain executive positions that would normally be out of their reach (Ryan et al., 2007).

Yet, this is not to say that all women accept a glass cliff position. Consistent with social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994, 2000, 2002) that explains how self-efficacy determines whether individuals persist their career goals in response to barriers, the findings of Chapter 5 showed that women with high levels of career self-efficacy stepped away from risky leadership positions. Similar to the results of this dissertation, previous research has shown the importance of the self-efficacy resource in constructing a sustainable career (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Kelly, Strauss, Arnold, & Stride, 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013; Mishra & McDonald, 2017).

For instance, Abele and Spurk (2009) found that career self-efficacy predicts career satisfaction and a higher salary, which relate to the happiness and productivity indicators of sustainable careers, respectively (De Vos et al., 2018). In my dissertation, I show that career self-efficacy is related to remaining persistent in career goals. Put differently, self-efficacy helps women to avoid making a risky career move (i.e., accepting a risky leadership position). This is in line with the reasoning of De Vos and colleagues (2018) that high levels of career adaptability (e.g., confidence and self-esteem) can help people to successfully solve career-related problems; that is, step away from a risky leadership position even when faced with many career-related barriers.

In sum, these findings highlight the importance of incorporating a job seeker perspective when studying the glass cliff phenomenon. Previous glass cliff research has predominantly focused on decision-makers who want to fill a precarious leadership position (Ryan and Haslam, 2005a; Ryan et al., 2010). Such a perspective neglects the role of the job seeker in responding to contextual challenges and thus fails to provide us with an insight into the role of individuals in safeguarding their career. Thus, I would argue that if we want to gain a better understanding of how minority members are affected when it comes to the sustainability of their careers, it is imperative to study both external and internal factors; that is, career progress barriers and personality traits, respectively.

Moreover, integrating my findings with previous research that has examined what happens to women after they take the helm of a risky leadership position suggests that such positions can be expected to hinder rather than foster women's career sustainability. Previous research suggests that leaders of companies in organizational distress have a lower chance to be selected for leadership positions in the future (Ferris, Jagannathan, & Pritchard, 2003) and thus "the precariousness of glass cliffs manifests itself an increased incidence of career trauma" (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 453). If we speculate based on the glass cliff study, we could then argue that although taking the helm of a risky leadership position might seem like a sustainable decision in the short-term (an opportunity for a promotion), it might ultimately challenge women's career sustainability because it jeopardizes their employability in the future. Future research should examine this assumption and investigate how accepting a glass cliff position affects women's productivity, health and happiness on the long-term.

Taken together, the findings from chapters 4 and 5 jointly contribute to the career sustainability literature by showing that the career paths of minority groups members are not similar to those of majority groups, because of external (chapters 4 & 5) and internal barriers (Chapter 5). Thus, I would argue that if we are to better understand how the career sustainability of minority members is affected, we should unravel their decision-making processes and investigate how other stakeholders react to their decisions.

6.3      SUSTAINABLE CAREERS: FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

The topic of career sustainability has been "the underlying ideology of careers research for many years" (Lawrence, Hall & Arthur, 2015, p. 432). Yet, scholars have only begun to examine what makes careers (non)sustainable, by putting forward specific indicators, such as, health, happiness and productivity (De Vos et al., 2018). My aim has been to contribute to this stream of research by investigating the influence of personal choices and contextual challenges on health and productivity. However, much remains to be explored. Based on the findings of my dissertation, I present two main future research avenues that are intended to inspire scholars who wish to advance research on sustainable careers.

6.3.1    Trade-off between Career Sustainability Indicators

The findings in my dissertation suggest that there might be a trade-off between the indicators; working from home is good for health but detrimental for performance ratings. However, if we are to examine the overall sustainability of individuals' careers, we should perhaps not consider these indicators in isolation. I agree with De Vos and colleagues (2018) that for a better conceptualization of sustainable careers we need to study the different indicators in tandem and investigate any potential interplay and trade-off between the indicators.

   The results of my dissertation remind us of how many questions are yet to be explored. For instance, which proxy (i.e., health, productivity) plays the biggest role in experiencing career sustainability? Should all the indicators be optimal at the same time for sustainable careers to be crafted? I believe these questions can be best answered by employing qualitative research methodologies. For instance, interviews with employees could help unravel which indicator has the greatest influence on individuals' experiences of career sustainability. Existing career sustainability research provides some guidance. Drawing on interviews with management consultants, Chudzikowski and colleagues (2019) show that for sustainable careers to be built all indicators are not required to be high at all times. For instance, although job turnover because of a toxic workplace might lead to temporary unsustainability (i.e., reduced productivity), it could eventually lead to greater sustainability when the person leaves an unhealthy work environment and is happier and more productive in a new job. I recommend future research on career sustainability to follow the lead of Chudzikowski et al. and design qualitative studies aimed at enhancing our understanding of any tensions and possible interplays between the career sustainability indicators.

6.3.2    A Diversity Perspective to Sustainable Careers

The findings of my dissertation suggest that the career paths of minority group members are not similar to those of majority groups. Specifically, in

the current dissertation, I shed light on the career sustainability of parents and women. However, there are several other minority members that deserve attention when it comes to analysing the sustainability of their careers. For instance, although we know that black employees and older employees have fewer chances for career progress (EEOC, 2015; UNECE, 2018) it is unclear how the sustainability of their career is affected. It would be a fruitful avenue for future research to investigate how these groups are affected in relation to the research questions of my dissertation. For example, it would be interesting to examine whether the glass cliff phenomenon can be extended from gender to ethnic minorities. Building on glass cliff theory, scholars could investigate whether black employees are more likely than white employees to accept the helm of a risky leadership position, because they are offered less career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, signalling theory and the ideal worker concept could be used to examine psychological mechanisms that help elucidate why older workers receive less opportunities for career progress. For example, age might send a signal of psychological and physical fitness that may not entirely match the image of the ideal worker who can be fully dedicated to the job.

Overall, I believe that a diversity perspective to career sustainability is imperative to further address how employees from minority groups are affected by different contextual elements outside of their control.

## 6.4 Methodological Reflections

As with every thesis, this dissertation has a number of methodological limitations that should be addressed. Since the limitations of each study were discussed elaborately in each empirical chapter, the following section will focus on the overarching issues.

A first issue relates to the selected samples in this dissertation and their implications regarding the generalizability of findings. Similar to most psychological research, the samples in this dissertation consist of people from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Arnett, 2008; Rad, Martingano, Ginges, 2018). For instance, the findings of the working-from-home study in Chapter 3 might not completely extrapolate to other than WEIRD individuals as research suggests that the ability to work from home is tied to education, race and class, in that people of colour and those with a high school diploma are more restricted than white people and workers with advanced education to work from home (BLS, 2019). Such differences highlight the importance of conducting research among diverse populations to see whether our results hold beyond WEIRD samples. Another sampling aspect that might affect the generalizability of findings is the national context. Particularly, the Australian-based sample used in Chapter 2 raises the question whether and how culture may have affected the proposed relationships in our model.

For instance, it could be that Australians' relatively short-term orientation (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), makes self-employment a less stressful occupational choice, which might overestimate the positive effect of self-employment on health. A cross-cultural approach to sustainable careers is therefore recommended to study the extent to which the national context influences careers, and the sustainability thereof, in more detail.

Another limitation concerns the way in which we measured the study variables in this dissertation. The used data across the studies are almost exclusively based on self-report measures, potentially increasing the chance of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). However, following the advice of Podsakoff and colleagues (2012), the study participants in this dissertation were guaranteed anonymity and were assured that there are no correct or wrong answers to minimize the risk that individuals provide socially acceptable responses. Another way in which we tried to reduce common method bias, is by employing a longitudinal design (i.e., Chapter 3), where the independent variable and dependent variables were measured across different questionnaires at different moments in time. Future research is advised to design such studies and to collect data from different sources such as colleagues, supervisors and household members.

Finally, the results of this dissertation might have been affected by self-selection bias and non-response bias. For instance, (with an exception of the first study of Chapter 4), the data for chapters 2 and 4 were collected from individuals who have selected themselves to participate in a panel. However, even though the panel sample might suffer from self-selection bias, the final study samples used in chapters 2 and 4 were composed using equal distributions among demographics, such as age, gender and nationality, in order to construct samples which are representative of the study population. Moreover, the findings of chapters 3 and 5 might have been affected by non-response bias because of the convenience sampling methods that were employed. This might have been especially the case for Chapter 3, as dropouts over time are relatively common in longitudinal studies (De Leuw & Lugtig, 2015). Yet, by designing our experience sampling study in a way that promotes participants' commitment and maintains their motivation, we attempted to maximize the response rate and therefore minimize the non-response bias. In particular, we developed a relationship with the participants by sending out multiple reminders on a daily basis and by distributing raffle prizes (e.g., book and cinema vouchers). Moreover, considering that experience sampling is time and resource intensive, we kept the surveys relatively short (i.e., 5 minutes per survey). These strategies turned out to be successful as no participant dropped out and we obtained responses with an average of 9.4 days per individual out of 10 working days.

## 6.5    PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In what comes next, I will describe how the findings of my dissertation can be translated into practical implications for employees, organizations and policy-makers. First, my dissertation has provided insights that help employees understand the two-sided implications of flexible working practices for sustainable careers. That is, employees should become aware that working from home could help them in building a sustainable career when it comes to health because it reduces experiences of time pressure and at the same time hinder their career sustainability path because it may send a signal of low commitment. Thus, while employees are recommended to schedule working from home days in their weekly calendar to safeguard their health, they are advised to employ strategies focused on mitigating the negative perceptions associated with working from home.

One strategy that may help overcome the perception of low organizational commitment is for employees to schedule their working from home days around the needs of other organizational stakeholders. In fact, previous research has shown that successful teleworkers (e.g., high performers) plan their working from home days when it is most convenient for supervisors, colleagues and external stakeholders, such as clients (Greer & Payne, 2014). Another strategy that can be used to overcome the negative perceptions associated with teleworking, and especially that of work centrality, is for employees to demonstrate their output. For example, on days when employees work from home, they could send what has been achieved during that day to their supervisor. Employees are advised to make an extended effort to be extra productive on working from home days, as research has shown that flexible working practices result in career premiums, when supervisors believe an employee makes use of such practices for productivity reasons (Leslie et al., 2012).

Second, the findings of my dissertation indicate that organizations and especially supervisors play a critical role in supporting individuals' career sustainability. As suggested in this dissertation, supervisors can hinder the career sustainability of employees who work from home because of potential ideal worker biases. Organizations are recommended to take proactive measures to reduce biases and the negative perceptions that are associated with flexible working practices. Specifically, Personnel or Human Resources staff should offer compulsory trainings to supervisors who manage teleworking employees. While these sessions should be predominantly focused on raising awareness about the stigmas associated with working from home, it is equally important to promote the benefits of the practice.

One way to demonstrate the benefits is to share flexible working success stories, and present examples of high performing and engaged teleworkers. However, organizations should bear in mind that successful teleworking requires a shift in organizational culture (Putnam, Meyers, & Gailliard, 2014) and that changing perceptions may not be realized through trainings alone but requires the involvement of key organizational players. A recent study

based on ten cross-sector flexible working case studies identified sponsor-ship from senior leaders and executives as vital for creating a supportive telework culture (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019). With this argument in mind, leaders could act as role-models of flexible working themselves to show supervisors that work dedication and organi-zational commitment while working flexibly is possible.

Another practical solution would be for supervisors and their employees to design a Flexplan, with the aim to increase transparency about the conse-quences of working from home. In the Flexplan, both the supervisor and the employee can make clear agreements about the employee's working from home behaviours. One of the concerns that is often raised by supervisors who manage teleworkers is that employees are less reachable (Greer & Payne, 2014). This concern can be overcome by establishing clear rules in the Flexplan regarding the hours during which the employee is expected to be accessible on working from home days. However, both parties need to remain mindful that the Flexplan is merely a tool to create greater transpar-ency and help minimize the negative assumptions associated with working from home, but that for flexible working to really succeed there needs to be a strong element of trust between the employer and employee (Roach, 2016).

Finally, the findings of my dissertation have implications for policy-makers. Flexible working policies, such as working from home, were primarily introduced to enable the careers of working mothers. While certainly impor-tant for parents, a pitfall of such a label is that it solely emphasizes the benefit of enabling employees to manage care responsibilities and thereby neglects its benefits for the career sustainability of all individuals. Indeed, the find-ings of my dissertation suggest that working from home jeopardizes the career sustainability of individuals without children. Thus, policy-makers are strongly recommended to re-evaluate and review the purpose and defini-tion of flexible working policies by promoting a wider understanding of the benefits of flexible working practices.

Similar to the findings in this dissertation, research has shown that working from home is positively associated with work-related well-being, such as flow and positive affect (Anderson et al., 2015, Peters & Wildenbeest, 2010). Governmental actors are recommended to promote these overall bene-fits of flexible working for sustainable careers. The UK, for example, recently launched a Flexible Working Task Force across governmental departments, employer groups and employee representative groups to highlight the benefits of flexible working practices for sustainable careers, in terms of productivity, satisfaction and engagement. I believe that such campaigns can help raise awareness about the stigma around flexible working practices and normalize the uptake of such practices for all employees.

## 6.6　Concluding Note

My goal has been to provide an understanding of how individuals together with their surrounding stakeholders can craft sustainable careers. At the individual-level, I have shown that contemporary career decisions have the potential to promote sustainable careers. However, crafting a sustainable career requires more than agentic behaviours, such as career decision-making. For instance, we have learned that contemporary career decisions (e.g., working from home) can only foster sustainability if supervisors support individuals' decisions. Moreover, my dissertation has shown that challenges to building a sustainable career are not equal for all and that building a sustainable career requires individuals to be self-efficacious and respond smartly to external challenges (e.g., declining a risky leadership position even if confronted with career progression barriers). All in all, my dissertation stresses the necessity of researching the interplay between the person and the context when analysing sustainable careers. I hope my work inspires scholars to examine the topic of career sustainability in more detail.

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# Summary

Managing a sustainable career in the contemporary world of work: Personal choices and contextual challenges

More than one-third of our lifetime is dedicated to work. Considering that work plays such a prominent role in our lives, many of us are concerned about making the right career decisions and choosing career paths that can make us happy and successful, and thus are sustainable. This concern is especially salient in the contemporary world of work where we have an endless number of career paths to follow. However, as much as we want to, sustainable careers cannot be crafted by simply making the right career decisions. Our careers are continuously affected by less controllable aspects originating from various contexts. Think, for instance, of the influence of societal changes, the organization we work for or our family members on our careers. Hence, it is important to examine how the person together with other contextual stakeholders can influence sustainable careers. In this dissertation, I undertake four empirical studies that shed light on how *personal choices* and *contextual challenges* impact sustainable careers.

The first empirical chapter takes a *person*-centred approach and examines how an individual's choice to engage in self-employment impacts the sustainability of their career. Using 15 years of data, this study compares the career sustainability of those who decide to engage in self-employment with that of wage workers. Here, career sustainability is conceptualized in terms of health. The findings indicate that, because of their greater schedule flexibility, the self-employed experience greater health levels and their health status shows less variability over time. Together, these results suggest that the self-employed are better equipped to build a sustainable career over time and that if we are to better understand what makes careers sustainable it is imperative to compare contemporary and traditional employment relations.

Chapter 3 also sheds light on the *person* and reports on a study that focuses on employees' decision to work from home. However, while Chapter 2 examines how individuals' choices affect their career on the long-term, Chapter 3 employs experience sampling methodology to investigate how daily career decisions, in terms of working from home or at the office, affect individuals' sustainability every day. A total of 34 professional workers filled out three daily surveys for two consecutive weeks. Our results show that on days when employees work from home they experience less time pressure, and less conflict between the work and home domain, leading to greater levels of work-related well-being the next morning. These findings suggest that individuals' daily decision to work from home can foster sustainable careers.

While Chapter 3 sheds light on the consequences of the working from home practice for health, Chapter 4 explores how the practice relates to perceived performance ratings. In doing so, this chapter builds on Chapter 3 by investigating the interplay between the person and the context. This study explores how contextual players, such as supervisors, respond to individuals' decision to work from home. Results from two experimental vignette studies among 149 university students and 320 supervisors indicate that employees who decide to work from home regularly, receive lower performance ratings because supervisors perceive their work centrality and organizational commitment as lower. Moreover, the findings show that this is particularly so for employees without children who work from home. This study contributes to the career sustainability literature by investigating the role of supervisors on individuals' career sustainability and by showing that the path towards a sustainable career differs across parents and non-parents.

Similar to Chapter 4, Chapter 5 looks at the interplay between the *person* and the *context*. This study investigates how women respond to societal norms and external barriers (e.g., lack of promotional opportunities) in terms of accepting a risky leadership position. In two experimental vignettes, 119 university students and 109 professional workers were offered a leadership position in either a company in decline or a successful company. The findings of this empirical chapter show that women with low career self-efficacy are more likely to accept a risky leadership position, because they perceive the job as a promotional opportunity. Accepting a glass cliff position might jeopardize women's path towards a sustainable career, because risky leadership appointments decrease the chance of attaining leadership jobs in the future. This empirical study shows that the path towards a sustainable career is different across social groups because of contextual challenges, but it also indicates that the person plays an active role. That is, while societal norms can create challenges for women's careers, personal resources, such as career self-efficacy, can help women to remain persistent in their career goals (i.e., step away from a risky leadership position).

In sum, my dissertation provides an understanding of what makes careers more or less sustainable. Based on the findings of my dissertation it can be concluded that contemporary work forms, such as working from home, have the potential to promote sustainable careers but only if supervisors support individuals' decisions. Hence, it is imperative that future research on sustainable careers investigates how both individuals and their surrounding stakeholders can impact the sustainability of careers. Moreover, my results emphasize the need of taking a diversity perspective to sustainable careers as some individuals, such as non-parents and women, may face greater challenges in crafting a sustainable career. All in all, the findings of my dissertation are of value to individuals who are concerned with managing a sustainable career and to organizations and policy-makers facing the challenge of promoting career sustainability.

# Samenvatting (Dutch Summary)

Op weg naar duurzame loopbanen in de nieuwe wereld van het werk: Individuele keuzes en contextuele uitdagingen

Meer dan een derde van ons leven staat in het teken van werk. Omdat werk een prominente rol speelt in ons leven, maken velen van ons zich zorgen over het maken van de juiste carrièrebeslissingen en het kiezen van carrièrepaden die ons gelukkig en succesvol kunnen maken, en dus duurzaam zijn. Dit is vooral tegenwoordig van belang; we hebben namelijk een eindeloos aantal carrièrepaden te volgen. Maar hoe graag we ook willen, duurzame carrières kunnen niet worden gevormd door simpelweg de juiste loopbaanbeslissingen te nemen. Onze loopbanen worden voortdurend beïnvloed door minder controleerbare aspecten die voortkomen uit verschillende contexten. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan de invloed van maatschappelijke veranderingen, de organisatie waar we voor werken of onze familieleden op onze carrière. Daarom is het belangrijk om te onderzoeken hoe het individu samen met andere belanghebbenden en partijen een duurzame carrière vorm kan geven. De vier empirische studies van dit proefschrift onderzoeken hoe persoonlijke keuzes en contextuele uitdagingen de duurzaamheid van carrières beïnvloeden.

Het eerste empirische hoofdstuk gaat uit van een persoonsgerichte benadering en onderzoekt hoe de keuze van een individu om zelfstandig ondernemer te worden de duurzaamheid van zijn of haar carrière beïnvloedt. Op basis van longitudinale data (15 jaar) vergelijkt deze studie de duurzaamheid van de loopbaan van zelfstandige ondernemers en personen in loondienst. De gezondheid van een persoon wordt hier als maatstaf gebruikt voor een duurzame carrière. We vinden dat zelfstandige ondernemers, door meer flexibiliteit in hun werktijden, gezonder zijn en dat hun gezondheidstoestand stabieler is over de jaren. Deze resultaten suggereren dat zelfstandigen beter in staat zijn om een duurzame carrière op te bouwen en dat het van belang is om verschillende groepen werknemers te bestuderen om meer inzicht te verkrijgen in duurzame loopbanen.

Hoofdstuk 3 richt zich ook op de persoon en bestudeert de beslissing van werknemers om thuis te werken. Echter, terwijl in hoofdstuk 2 wordt onderzocht hoe de keuzes van individuen hun carrière op de lange termijn beïnvloeden, wordt in hoofdstuk 3 *experience sampling methodology* gebruikt om te onderzoeken hoe dagelijkse carrièrebeslissingen, op het gebied van thuiswerken, duurzame loopbanen dagelijks beïnvloeden. In totaal hebben 34 werknemers deelgenomen aan de studie en gedurende twee opeenvolgende weken drie keer daags een enquête ingevuld. De resultaten laten zien dat werknemers op dagen dat ze thuis werken minder tijdsdruk en werk-familie-conflict ervaren, wat de volgende ochtend resulteert in een

hoger niveau van werkgerelateerd welzijn. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat de dagelijkse beslissing om thuis te werken een duurzame carrière kan bevorderen.

Terwijl hoofdstuk 3 de gevolgen van thuiswerken voor de gezondheid bestudeert, onderzoekt hoofdstuk 4 de consequenties voor hoe leidinggevenden de prestaties van hun werknemers beoordelen. Daarbij bouwt dit hoofdstuk voort op hoofdstuk 3 door de wisselwerking tussen de persoon en de context te onderzoeken. In dit empirische hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht hoe contextuele belanghebbenden, zoals leidinggevenden, reageren op de beslissing van werknemers om thuis te werken. De resultaten van twee experimentele vignetstudies onder 149 universiteitsstudenten en 320 leidinggevenden geven aan dat werknemers die besluiten om regelmatig thuis te werken lagere prestatiewaarderingen krijgen omdat leidinggevenden hun werkcentraliteit en organisatorische betrokkenheid als lager ervaren. Bovendien blijkt uit de bevindingen dat dit met name geldt voor werknemers zonder kinderen die thuiswerken. Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan de literatuur over duurzame loopbanen door de rol van leidinggevenden te onderzoeken en aan te tonen dat de weg naar een duurzame loopbaan verschilt tussen ouders en niet-ouders.

Net als in hoofdstuk 4 wordt in hoofdstuk 5 gekeken naar de interactie tussen de persoon en de context. Deze studie onderzoekt hoe vrouwen reageren op maatschappelijke normen en externe barrières (bijvoorbeeld een gebrek aan promotiekansen) als het gaat om het accepteren van een risicovolle leiderschapspositie (*glass cliff*-positie). In twee experimentele vignetstudies werd aan 119 universiteitsstudenten en 109 werknemers een leiderschapspositie aangeboden binnen een succesvol en een niet-succesvol bedrijf. De bevindingen van dit empirische hoofdstuk laten zien dat vrouwen met een lage zelfeffectiviteit voor hun carrière meer geneigd zijn om een risicovolle leiderschapspositie te accepteren, omdat ze de positie als een promotiekans zien. Het accepteren van een *glass cliff*-positie kan het pad van vrouwen naar een duurzame carrière in gevaar brengen, omdat risicovolle leiderschapsfuncties de kans op het bereiken van leiderschapsbanen in de toekomst verkleinen. Deze empirische studie toont aan dat de weg naar een duurzame carrière anders is voor verschillende sociale groepen vanwege de contextuele uitdagingen, maar het geeft ook aan dat de persoon een belangrijke rol speelt. Dat wil zeggen, terwijl maatschappelijke normen uitdagingen kunnen creëren voor de carrière van vrouwen, kunnen persoonlijke hulpbronnen, zoals zelfeffectiviteit in de carrière, vrouwen helpen om volhardend te blijven in hun carrièredoelen (namelijk afstand nemen van een risicovolle leiderschapspositie).

Kortom, mijn proefschrift geeft inzicht in wat een carrière duurzaam maakt. Op basis van de bevindingen van mijn proefschrift kan worden geconcludeerd dat hedendaagse werkvormen, zoals thuiswerken, duurzame carrières kunnen bevorderen, maar alleen als leidinggevenden de beslissingen van individuen ondersteunen. Daarom is het noodzakelijk dat in toekomstig onderzoek naar duurzame carrières wordt onderzocht

hoe zowel individuen als hun omgeving de duurzaamheid van carrières kunnen beïnvloeden. Bovendien benadrukken mijn resultaten de noodzaak om een diversiteitsperspectief te hanteren voor duurzame carrières, aangezien sommige individuen, zoals niet-ouders en vrouwen, voor grotere uitdagingen kunnen komen te staan bij het bouwen van een duurzame carrière. Al met al zijn de bevindingen van mijn proefschrift van waarde voor werknemers die zich bezighouden met het managen van een duurzame carrière en voor organisaties en beleidsmakers die voor de uitdaging staan om duurzame loopbanen te bevorderen.

# Riassunto (Italian Summary)

## Carriere sostenibili nel mondo del lavoro contemporaneo: Scelte personali e sfide contestuali

Più di un terzo della nostra vita lo dedichiamo al lavoro. Considerando che il lavoro gioca un ruolo cosi' preminente nelle nostre vite, molti di noi cercano di prendere le decisioni e compiere le scelte professionali migliori, nella speranza di trovare serenità e successo, e dunque una carriera sostenibile. Tale ricerca è particolarmente cruciale nel mondo del lavoro contemporaneo, che offre un'infinità di possibili percorsi professionali da seguire. Eppure, per quanto lo vogliamo, compiere le giuste scelte professionali non è sufficiente per costruirsi una carriera sostenibile. Le nostre carriere sono costantemente influenzate da aspetti poco controllabili originati da contesti diversi. Si pensi, ad esempio, al ruolo che il cambiamento sociale, la struttura per la quale lavoriamo, o i nostri familiari, giocano nelle nostre carriere. E' quindi importante esaminare come l'individuo, assieme agli altri attori di rilievo, possa influenzare la sostenibilità della carriera. In questa tesi, ho preso in considerazione quattro studi empirici che fanno luce su come le *scelte personali* e i *cambiamenti contestuali* abbiano un impatto sulla sostenibilità della carriera.

Il primo capitolo utilizza un approccio incentrato sulla persona ed esamina in che maniera la scelta personale di dedicarsi al lavoro autonomo influenzi la sostenibilità della propria carriera. Utilizzando 15 anni di dati, questo studio paragona la sostenibilità della carriera di chi decide di approcciare il lavoro autonomo con quella di chi sceglie invece il lavoro dipendente. In questo studio, la carriera sostenibile viene concettualizzata in termini di salute. I risultati indicano che, grazie alla maggiore flessibilità dell'orario lavorativo, i lavoratori autonomi mostrano livelli di salute più elevati ed il loro stato di salute riporta meno variabilità nel tempo. Nell'insieme, tali risultati dimostrano come i lavoratori autonomi siano più preparati per costruirsi una carriera sostenibile nel corso del tempo e che, se vogliamo meglio comprendere che cosa renda tale una carriera sostenibile, è necessario paragonare le relazioni lavorative contemporanee con quelle tradizionali.

Il terzo capitolo mantiene l'attenzione sulla persona, in questo caso attraverso uno studio che si concentra sulla decisione dei lavoratori di lavorare da casa. Sebbene il secondo capitolo esamini come le scelte individuali abbiano un'influenza sulla carriera nel lungo termine, il terzo capitolo utilizza *experience sampling methodology* per investigare come le decisioni professionali quotidiane, precisamente il lavorare o meno da casa, abbiano un impatto sulla qualità della vita di ogni giorno. Un totale di 34 professionisti ha completato tre questionari su base quotidiana, per due settimane

consecutive. I nostri risultati mostrano che gli impiegati che lavorano da casa riportano livelli di pressione lavorativa più bassi, meno conflitti tra la sfera di dominio casalinga e quella lavorativa, il che conduce dunque a livelli più alti di benessere lavorativo il giorno seguente. Tali risultati suggeriscono che le decisioni individuali di lavorare da casa possono facilitare il raggiungimento di una carriera sostenibile.

Mentre il terzo capitolo fa luce sulle conseguenze in termini di salute che derivano dal lavorare da casa, il quarto capitolo esplora come lavorare da casa influenzi la valutazione della prestazione lavorativa, investigando l'interrelazione tra l'individuo ed il contesto. Questo studio esplora come attori contestuali, in questo caso i supervisori, reagiscono alla decisione di lavorare da casa di un individuo. I risultati di due studi di *experimental vignettes* condotti su 149 studenti universitari e 320 supervisori indicano che gli impiegati che decidono di lavorare regolarmente da casa ricevono valutazioni più basse sulla loro prestazione, in quanto i supervisori percepiscono il loro impegno nella centralità e organizzazione del lavoro come minore. Inoltre, i risultati dimostrano come questo fenomeno sia ancora più intenso per i lavoratori senza figli che scelgono di lavorare da casa. Questo studio contribuisce alla letteratura sulle carriere sostenibili, investigando il ruolo dei supervisori sulla sostenibilità della carriera e dimostrando che il percorso verso il raggiungimento di una carriera sostenibile differisce nel caso in cui l'individuo abbia figli o meno.

Similmente al quarto capitolo, il quinto capitolo studia l'interrelazione fra la *persona* e il *contesto*. Questo studio analizza la maniera in cui le donne rispondono alle norme societarie e alle barriere esterne (ad esempio la mancanza di opportunità di promozione) in termini di accettazione di una posizione di *leadership* rischiosa (i.e., una posizione *glass cliff*). In due studi di *experimental vignettes*, a 119 studenti universitari e 109 lavoratori professionali sono state offerte posizioni di *leadership* in un'azienda in declino o in una di successo. I risultati di questo capitolo mostrano che le donne con basso livello di *career self-efficacy* sono più propense ad accettare una posizione di *leadership* rischiosa, poiché percepiscono tale opzione come un'opportunità di promozione. Accettare una posizione da *glass cliff* potrebbe avere un'influenza negativa per il raggiungimento di una carriera sostenibile, poiché essere in posizioni di *leadership* rischiose potrebbe diminuire le possibilità di ottenere posizioni di *leadership* in futuro. Questo studio mostra che il percorso verso una carriera sostenibile differisce attraverso diversi gruppi sociali a causa delle sfide contestuali, ma indica anche come l'individuo possa giocare un ruolo attivo. Infatti, mentre le norme sociali possono presentare ostacoli per le carriere delle donne, risorse personali, quali *career self-efficacy*, possono aiutare le donne a rimanere persistenti nei propri obiettivi di carriera (e quindi, ad evitare posizioni di *leadership* rischiose).

In sintesi, la mia tesi di dottorato fornisce una migliore comprensione di cosa renda le carriere più o meno sostenibili. Sulla base dei risultati della presente tesi si può quindi concludere che forme contemporanee di lavoro, come il lavoro da casa, hanno il potenziale per promuovere

carriere sostenibili ma solo se i supervisori supportano le decisioni individuali. Quindi, è necessario che la ricerca futura sulle carriere sostenibili indaghi come sia gli individui che i soggetti interessati che li circondano possano avere un impatto sulla sostenibilità della carriera. Inoltre, i miei risultati enfatizzano la necessità di assumere prospettive diverse alle carriere sostenibili dato che alcuni individui, come individui senza figli e di sesso femminile, potrebbero incontrare maggiori difficoltà nel costruirsi una carriera sostenibile. Nel complesso, i risultati della presente tesi rivestono un ruolo di speciale importanza per individui propensi a gestire la propria carriera in modo sostenibile e per organizzazioni e *policy-makers* intenti a promuovere carriere sostenibili.

# Kholase (Farsi Summary)

مدیریت یک حرفه شغلی پایدار در دنیای معاصر کار: انتخاب های شخصی و چالش های زمینه ای

بیش از یک سوم زندگی ما وقف کار کردن می شود. با در نظر گرفتن اینکه کار نقش برجسته و مهمی در زندگی ایفا می کند، بسیاری از ما نگران این هستیم که تصمیمهای شغلی درستی بگیریم و آن مسیرهای شغلی را انتخاب کنیم که سبب رضایت و موفقیت ما می شوند و در نتیجه، پایدار هستند. این نگرانی خصوصاً در دنیای حرفه ای امروز که مسیرهای شغلی بی پایانی روبه روی ماست، بیشتر نمایان است. با این حال، هر چقدر هم که ما خواستار آن باشیم، حرفه های پایدار فقط با یک تصمیمگیری شغلی درست و به جا ایجاد نمی شوند. حرفه ما به طور پیوسته تحت تاثیر مسائلی قرار دارد که کمتر قابل کنترل هستند و از موقعیت های مختلف و متنوع ناشی می شوند. برای مثال، به تأثیری که تغییرات اجتماعی، سازمانی که برایش کار می کنیم یا اعضای خانواده مان بر شغل ما دارند، فکر کنید. از این رو، بررسی اینکه چطور یک شخص به همراه سایر ذینفعان وابسته به این موضوع می توانند بر مشاغل اثر بگذارند، حائز اهمیت است. در این پایان نامه، من چهار پژوهش تجربی را که چگونگی اثرگذاری انتخاب های شخصی و چالش های وابسته بر مشاغل پایدار را توضیح می دهند، بررسی می کنم.

اولین فصل تجربی پایان نامه رویکردی مبتنی بر شخص دارد و تحلیل می کند که چگونه یک شخص با انتخاب شغل آزاد برای خود، بر پایداری حرفه اش اثر می گذارد. با استفاده از داده های بدست آمده در طی ۱۵ سال، این پژوهش پایداری حرفه ای افرادی که شغل آزاد را انتخاب می کنند را با حقوق بگیران مقایسه می کند. در اینجا پایداری حرفه ای بر حسب بهداشت و سلامت مفهوم سازی شده است. یافته ها نشان می دهند که افرادی که شغل آزاد دارند، به علت برنامه زمانی انعطاف پذیرترشان، سطح سلامت و بهداشت بالاتری را تجربه می کنند و وضعیت سلامتی آنها با گذر زمان کمتر تغییر می کند. متفقاً، این نتایج بر این موضوع دلالت دارد که افرادی که شغل آزاد دارند، با گذشت زمان بهتر می توانند یک حرفه پایدار برای خود ایجاد کنند، و اگر ما می خواهیم بهتر این موضوع را درک کنیم که چه چیزی یک شغل را پایدار میکند، الزامی است که روابط اشتغال مدرن و سنتی را با هم مقایسه کنیم.

فصل ۳ نیز شخص را کانون توجه قرار داده و در مورد تحقیقی گزارش می دهد که بر تصمیم کارمند در مورد کار کردن در خانه تمرکز می کند. با این وجود، در حالیکه فصل ۲ به تاثیر انتخاب های اشخاص بر حرفه شان می پردازد، فصل ۳ از متد نمونه گیری تجربه استفاده می کند تا بررسی کند که چگونه تصمیمات حرفه ای روزمره در رابطه با کار کردن در خانه یا در اداره، بر پایداری اشخاص در هر روز اثر می گذارد. تعداد ۳۴ کارگر حرفه ای سه فرم نظرخواهی روزانه را به مدت دو هفته پیاپی پر کردند. نتایج نشان می دهد که در روزهایی که کارمندان در خانه کار می کنند، فشار محدودیت زمانی را کمتر احساس می کنند و تعارض کمتری بین محل کار و خانه تجربه می کنند که به سطح بالاتری از رفاه کاری در صبح روز بعد می انجامد. این یافته ها حاکی از آن است که تصمیم گیری روزانه افراد مبنی بر کار کردن در خانه سبب ترویج و توسعه مشاغل پایدار می شود.

در حالیکه فصل ۳ بر پیامدهای شیوه کار کردن در خانه بر تندرستی و سلامت می پردازد، فصل ۴ درباره ارتباط بین این شیوه با ضریب عملکرد درک شده تحقیق می کند. به این ترتیب، این فصل با بررسی اثر متقابل شخص و موقعیت ، فصل ۳ را تکمیل می کند. این پژوهش درباره این موضوع تحقیق می کند که چگونه بازیگران زمینه ای، مانند ناظران، به تصمیم افراد در رابطه با کار کردن در خانه واکنش نشان می دهند. نتایج حاصل از دو پژوهش تجربی با سناریوی فرضی در بین ۱۴۹ دانشجو و ۳۲۰ ناظر نشان می دهد که کارمندانی که تصمیم می گیرند مرتبا در خانه کار کنند، ضریب عملکرد پایین تری دریافت می کنند، به این دلیل که ناظران تمرکز کاری و تعهد سازمانی آنان را پایین تر تشخیص می دهند. علاوه بر این، یافته نشان می دهد که این مورد به خصوص برای کارمندانی که فرزند ندارند و در خانه کار می کنند، اتفاق می افتد. این پژوهش، با تحقیق درباره نقش ناظران در پایداری شغلی افراد و با نشان دادن این موضوع که مسیر بدست آوردن یک حرفه پایدار برای والدین و کسانی که فرزند ندارند متفاوت است، به منابع علمی پایداری شغلی کمک و مشارکت می نماید.

مشابه فصل ۴، فصل ۵ به اثر متقابل شخص و موقعیت می پردازد. این پژوهش بررسی می کند که چگونه زنان به هنجارهای اجتماعی و موانع بیرونی ( مانند عدم وجود فرصت های ارتقا شغلی) در خصوص قبول یک پست مدیریتی ریسک دار، واکنش نشان می دهند. در دو پژوهش عملی با سناریوی فرضی، به ۱۱۹ دانشجوی دانشگاه و ۱۰۹ کارگر حرفه ای، یک پست مدیریتی در یک شرکت در حال رکود یا یک شرکت موفق پیشنهاد شد. یافته های این فصل نشان می دهد که زنانی که دارای خودکارآمدی شغلی پایین تری هستند،

بیشتر احتمال دارد که یک پست مدیریتی ریسک دار را بپذیرند، زیرا آنها این شغل را به عنوان یک شانس در جهت ارتقای شغلی می بینند. قبول یک پست صخره شیشه ای ممکن است مسیر زنان به سوی یک شغل پایدار را به خطر بیندازد، به این دلیل که انتصابات مدیریتی ریسک دار، شانس احراز شغل های مدیریتی در آینده را کاهش می دهد. این پژوهش تجربی بیان می کند که نه تنها مسیر بدست آوردن حرفه پایدار برای گروه های اجتماعی مختلف به دلیل وجود چالش های زمینه ای متفاوت است، بلکه نشان می دهد که شخص نقش فعالی در این مورد ایفا می کند. به عبارت دیگر، در حالیکه هنجارهای اجتماعی می تواند چالش هایی برای مشاغل زنان ایجاد کند، تدابیر و ابتکارهای شخصی، مانند خودکارآمدی شغلی می تواند به زنان کمک کند تا برای رسیدن به اهداف شغلی شان ثابت قدم باشند (مانند دوری کردن از یک پست مدیریتی ریسک دار).

در مجموع، پایان نامه من، برداشتی از عواملی که کم و بیش سبب پایدار شدن مشاغل می شوند را فراهم می کند. بر اساس یافته های پایان نامه من، می توان اینطور نتیجه گرفت که شکل های کار کردن امروزی، مثل کار کردن در خانه، پتانسیل توسعه و ترویج مشاغل پایدار را دارند، تنها اگر ناظران از تصمیم افراد در اینباره حمایت کنند. بنابراین، لازم است که پژوهش آتی در زمینه مشاغل پایدار درباره این موضوع تحقیق کند که چگونه اشخاص و ذینفعان اطرافشان می توانند بر پایداری مشاغل تاثیر بگذارند. علاوه بر این، نتایج من بر این نیاز تاکید دارد که باید دیدگاه متفاوتی به مشاغل پایدار برای بعضی اشخاص، مثل کسانی که فرزند ندارند و زنان در نظر گرفته شود، زیرا این افراد با چالش های بیشتری برای داشتن یک حرفه پایدار مواجه هستند. روی هم رفته، نتایج پایان نامه من برای افرادی که به پیش برد یک حرفه پایدار اهمیت می دهند و برای سازمان ها و سیاست گذارانی که با چالش ترویج پایداری شغلی مواجه هستند، ارزشمند است.

# Curriculum vitae

Maral Darouei (born in Shiraz on November 20, 1991) wrote her PhD dissertation on sustainable careers at the Department of Business Studies at Leiden University. Her empirical chapter on the glass cliff phenomenon got published and won the Outstanding Paper Award at Career Development International for the Emerald Literati Awards for Excellence 2019. Darouei has also won the Best Paper Award for the Human Resource Management Track at the European Academy of Management Conference in Lisbon for her paper on flexible working and supervisory performance ratings. Besides presenting her research, Maral enjoys playing an active role in conferences. For instance, she held the role of discussant for a special session at the International Congress of Applied Psychology. During her PhD, Darouei seized the opportunity to work at different universities around the world. She spent three months as a visiting scholar at Cranfield University, School of Management and one month at National University of Singapore, Business School.

Besides doing research, Maral has been an active member of the teaching, business, and PhD community. She taught seminars for People in Organizations, Negotiation and Mediation, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation, supervised bachelor theses while obtaining the University Teaching Qualification certificate. Moreover, Maral worked with HEINEKEN as a research consultant for one year on a project aimed at shaping a responsible drinking culture within student fraternities. Finally, Darouei has been an active member of many PhD networks, such as THRIVE PhD Academy, Faculty PhD Committee and the Work and Organizational Psychology PhD Dissertation Committee.

Prior to her PhD, Maral Darouei graduated Cum Laude from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University obtaining a master's in Human Resource Management. She earned a bachelor's degree in International Business Administration at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. During her bachelor studies she also spent time abroad, and attended the State University of New York at Buffalo (USA).

In the range of books published by the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of Leiden Law School, Leiden University, the following titles were published in 2019 and 2020:

MI-316  R. Zandvliet, *Trade, Investment and Labour: Interactions in International Law,* (diss. Leiden), Amsterdam: Ipskamp Printing 2019

MI-317  M. de Jong-de Kruijf, *Legitimiteit en rechtswaarborgen bij gesloten plaatsingen van kinderen. De externe rechtspositie van kinderen in gesloten jeugdhulp bezien vanuit kinder- en mensenrechten,* (diss. Leiden), Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2019, ISBN 978 94 6290 600 6

MI-318  R.J.W. van Eijk, *Web Privacy Measurement in Real-Time Bidding Systems. A Graph-Based Approach to RTB system classification*, Amsterdam: Ipskamp Printing 2018, ISBN 978 94 028 1323 4

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