



Conflict, facilitation, and individual coping styles across the work and family domains

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationships between four general coping styles, work and family conflict, and work and family facilitation in a simultaneous equations framework

Design/methodology/approach – Data from the MIDUS study were analyzed using two-staged least squares regression to incorporate the reciprocity between the work and family domains into the model. Hypotheses about direct action, advice seeking, positive thinking, and cognitive reappraisal as they affect work family (W-F) and family-work (F-W) conflict were tested. The impact of the coping styles on work and family facilitation has not been studied before and was also included.

Findings – The efficacy of individual coping styles on conflict and the relationships between coping and facilitation were not uniform and varied depending on the source domain. Positive thinking was associated with higher W-F and F-W facilitation. Direct-action was associated with lower F-W conflict and higher F-W facilitation. Reappraisal and advice seeking were associated with higher F-W conflict, but advice-seeking was related to higher W-F facilitation. As expected, significant reciprocal effects for conflict were found; both W-F and F-W conflict are significant predictors of F-W and W-F conflict, respectively. And, an increase in F-W conflict was predicted to have twice the impact of factors increasing W-F conflict. W-F facilitation was significant in predicting levels of F-W facilitation; F-W facilitation did not influence levels of W-F facilitation.

Originality/value – The paper suggests the family domain should be the target for problem-focused coping strategies, most likely because greater control can be exercised at home. Practical suggestions to help employees identify strategies to lower conflict and raise facilitation, thus promoting balance, are discussed.

Keywords Family, Conflict management, Facilitation, Sociology of work, Behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Work-family balance, defined as low levels of work-family conflict in combination with high levels of work-family facilitation (Frone, 2002) has spurred an emerging body of literature. While work-family conflict continues to be an increasing challenge for organizations and those they employ (Bellavia and Frone, 2005), the possibility exists that participation in both the work and home domain can enhance an individual's overall performance (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

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Facilitation makes separate contributions to predicted work and non-work outcomes, over and above the effects of conflict (Ayree *et al.*, 2005; Grzywacz and Butler, 2005; Van Steenbergen *et al.* (2007)). The challenge remaining for researchers is to identify the unique antecedents, moderators, and outcomes that influence conflict and facilitation while incorporating directionality by modeling the relationships in a simultaneous framework (Frone, 2002). Through these efforts, we can establish a better understanding of work and family balance.

If better time-management, family-friendly organizations, and flexible working benefits were the solution to maintaining work-life balance, research in the field would have tapered off long ago. Instead, work-life conflict is probably higher now than it was 20 years ago (Siegel *et al.*, 2005). Researchers are now recognizing the critical role of the *individual* in managing conflict and, possibly, enabling facilitation.

The absence of research on coping and work-family conflict has been cited in several comprehensive reviews of the literature (Bellavia and Frone, 2005; Eby *et al.*, 2005; Frone, 2002). Thus far, the emphasis has primarily been on social/spousal support and the availability of employer-centered solutions (Eby *et al.*, 2005; Lapierre and Allen, 2006). Research has fallen woefully short in assessing the coping efficacy of individual efforts outside of a narrow range. No research to date has considered how individual coping styles might relate to work-family facilitation, something this study does in particular.

We explore the relationships between four general coping styles, work and family conflict, and work and family facilitation in a simultaneous equations framework (which allows us to incorporate reciprocal effects between domains). Our goal is to determine whether individual coping styles function similarly in the work and family domain. In addition, we seek to understand work and family facilitation and to investigate whether the coping styles that influence conflict have a similar effect on facilitation. Should certain coping styles be related to lower conflict and higher facilitation, it would suggest individuals adopting those coping styles would find life more in balance. A review of relevant literature and the development of our hypotheses will follow.

Literature review

Work-family research is commonly grounded in the theories of role stress and interrole conflict (Eby *et al.*, 2005). Work and/or family stressors threaten one's ability to function effectively in the other domain and create conflict. Researchers generally accept that conflict is bi-directional and takes on various forms across the domains. Stress-related outcomes such as depression (Frone *et al.*, 1992), burnout (Haar, 2006) and alcohol use (Grunberg *et al.*, 1998), as well as work-related outcomes such as absenteeism, satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions (Boyar *et al.*, 2003; Hammer and Grandley, 2003) are examples of the deleterious consequences of work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC).

There is a broad and populous expectation that companies, in order to remain competitive in the market for labor, should address conflict through fundamental changes in work policies, job design, and family support. Research to date has not found family-friendly work environments sufficient to eliminate the adverse effects of WFC or promote work-family facilitation (WFF). A variety of organizational and contextual variables influence the presence and use of employer family-friendly

benefits. Employees must perceive sufficient managerial, organizational, and family support to make use of work-family benefit options (Lapierre and Allen, 2006; Thompson *et al.*, 2004). Many employees are discouraged from using family-friendly arrangements by direct supervisors or the managerial climate (Allen, 2001). Competitive pressures and contextual constraints can effectively neutralize family-friendly policies and increase (rather than decrease) conflict (Bellavia and Frone, 2005).

In more than one study, counterintuitive relationships between job design and conflict have been found. Lapierre and Allen (2006) found the actual use of flextime and telework to be associated with higher (not lower) levels of family interference with work. Andreassi and Thompson (2007) found job autonomy to be associated with higher levels of FWC using a large national sample. These conclusions are consistent with the fact that levels of reported WFC have not fallen over time (Bellavia and Frone, 2005; Frone, 2002; Siegel *et al.*, 2005); nor have the levels of experienced stress for working individuals. The impact on employee well-being is clear.

Employees face a more expansive divide between what is required to sustain success at work and peace within the family. Even those employed by organizations offering family-friendly benefits must draw on their own resources to manage competing demands. More research examining individual traits, behavioral patterns, and personal resources is needed. The individual and the efficacy of individual coping styles is the central focus of this paper. We seek to understand the relationship between coping styles and the individual's use of resources to manage conflict as well as the acquisition of resources that enable facilitation.

Coping (secondary appraisal)

According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1998, 2001), when stress levels rise, individuals expend resources to manage the distress. The amount of resources available and established behavioral patterns tend to result in coping styles, characterized by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as problem-solving and emotion-focused. Coping, also termed secondary appraisal, refers to the attempts made to manage or eliminate distress. The efficacy of a given coping effort can only be judged against an individual's psychological or physical outcomes. Neither category of coping (problem or emotion-focused) is inherently good or bad. And, while individuals often exhibit a preference for one style of coping, other styles can and are used from time to time.

There is some evidence that individuals using problem-focused coping to manage work stress experience better personal and organizational outcomes than persons using emotion-focused strategies (Bhagat *et al.*, 1995; Rotondo and Perrewé, 2000). Recent research has also shown that people often employ both methods to cope with a given stress event, and some coping patterns facilitate (and inhibit) other patterns (Dewe, 2003). Indeed, both forms of coping may be necessary when responding to chronic stress, such as that created by ongoing WFC (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Coping and work-family/family-work conflict

There are many unanswered questions about individual coping styles and conflict (both WFC and FWC): What styles of coping are efficacious? Do effective coping styles differ based on the source-domain of the conflict (work versus family)? Does effective

coping depend on the form of the conflict (for example, time-based or strain-based)? The complexity of work and family interface would, on the surface, argue against a simple “more coping is better” hypothesis.

In our study, we consider two forms of emotion-focused coping: cognitive reappraisal and positive thinking. Reappraisal refers to an attempt to reduce feelings of stress by changing the way a situation is viewed or lowering expectations for outcomes. Positive thinking represents expectations for positive outcomes or cognitive attempts to find the good in a bad situation. Two forms of problem-focused coping are also included: direct action and advice seeking. Direct action implies self-reliance and perseverance such that the individual is motivated to change things for the better or do that which is necessary to solve a problem. It involves working harder, more efficiently, or more effectively by problem management. Advice seeking is a manifestation of social support where one seeks advice, help, or input from others before acting or solving problems.

These forms of coping are purposely broad and not specific to any particular stressor. We expect all four forms to have some relationship with work and family conflict. The results of prior research suggest domain-specific differences may exist.

Prior coping and conflict studies

Support from the spouse and from social relationships has been the most popular theme in the coping and conflict literature (Beatty, 1996; Carlson and Perrewe, 1999; Eby *et al.*, 2005; Greenglass, 1993; Lapierre and Allen, 2006; Matsui *et al.*, 1995; Rosenbaum and Cohen, 1999). This is problematic because the availability of supportive relationships fails to capture the full range of coping options, limiting our knowledge of how individual coping differences may affect the work and family interface.

The scant research on individual coping and conflict that exists suggests a two-sided problem with a one-sided solution – individuals and families accommodate work demands rather than work accommodating family (Lapierre and Allen, 2006; Lo *et al.*, 2003; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Rotondo *et al.*, 2003). Rotondo *et al.* (2003) examined the effects of problem and emotion-focused coping on various types of WFC and FWC using a sample of working individuals across a variety of organizations. Their results indicated that respondents using problem-focused coping efforts in the family domain reported significantly lower time and strain-based family to work conflict levels. Lapierre and Allen (2006) found an individual’s tendency to use problem-focused coping with stress to be associated with lower strain-based FWC, but not time-based FWC. Both Rotondo *et al.* (2003) and Lapierre and Allen (2006) found problem-focused attempts to target stressors in the work domain did not reduce any form of reported WFC. Haar (2006) actually found direct-action coping to be associated with higher WFC and FWC. Taken together, the results are somewhat surprising and run contrary to the typical prescriptive message given to the public.

Supporting the proposition that coping strategies are not bilaterally effective, Lo *et al.* (2003) found women unable or unwilling use positive coping strategies with their job. Lo *et al.* (2003) also emphasized the relative ineffective nature of the coping strategies used by the women as defined by the potential for physical, psychological, or relationship harm. Matsui *et al.* (1995) found family-role redefinition (but not work-role redefinition) to be an effective method of reducing family-to-work spill-over using a

sample of working females in Japan. Finally, Baltes and Heydens-Gahir (2003) found WFC and FWC were reduced through different behavioral patterns (similar to coping).

The few studies examining coping and conflict are not without conceptual, methodological and/or sample limitations (Eby *et al.*, 2005; Bellavia and Frone, 2005). Lo *et al.* (2003) used in-depth interviews, the sample size was relative small ($n = 50$) and it is comprised of working female professionals in Hong Kong. Matsui *et al.* (1995) sampled working females in Japan to study the buffering effects of spousal support. In a more recent study, Haar (2006) used a sample of government workers from New Zealand to test the moderating role of coping styles on the conflict-burnout relationship. Each of these studies sampled individuals from different countries and cultures, and our understanding of the relationships between culture, coping and conflict is nascent, at best.

Baltes and Heydens-Gahir (2003) examined the role of selection, optimization, and compensation behaviors in relation to work and family conflict. The results point to the value of prioritizing and optimal use of available resources in reducing stressors that can lead to conflict. Their study, however, did not consider the various forms of work and family conflict (e.g. time, strain, behavior) and examined behavioral pattern variables that are conceptually different from coping as it is understood in the stress-response framework.

Lapierre and Allen (2006) and Rotondo *et al.* (2003) did not have substantially large sample sizes, although they captured a range of occupations and industries. The use of a broad-based, representative sample of working individuals in the USA may reveal more insightful information. This is the approach followed by Grzywacz and his colleagues, and a main contribution of this study.

Hypotheses

We agree with those who speculate that work and family domains are not equally permeable (Boyar *et al.*, 2003; Frone *et al.*, 1992; Lapierre and Allen, 2006); greater control can be exercised at home. In the two of three studies testing the relationship, direct action was effective in lowering FWC but not WFC (Lapierre and Allen, 2006; Rotondo *et al.*, 2003). At best, we can expect any efficacy stemming from direct action to be present in the family domain, but not the work domain.

Advice seeking (social-support activated) is expected to be associated with lower WFC and FWC. The presence of a supportive supervisor and a family-friendly environment is known to reduce the presence of WFC (Allen, 2001; Eby *et al.*, 2005); and help seeking has been found to be related to lower FWC (Rotondo *et al.*, 2003).

The only two studies including positive thinking (Haar, 2006; Rotondo *et al.* 2003) found no relationship between this coping style and conflict. Despite the lack of prior results, we can only expect positive thinking to be associated with lower conflict levels. Positive affectivity and optimism are associated with a host of desirable personal and work outcomes. Use of a larger sample may reveal a relationship not found in earlier research.

Finally, cognitive reappraisal is predicted to be associated with higher WFC and FWC. It is possible to explain how a cognitive reappraisal strategy might lower conflict. An example might be the family that lowers its expectations for the amount of housework that can be done, deciding that time spent cleaning is not well spent. Unfortunately, prior research does not support this position (Haar, 2006; Rotondo *et al.*,

2003). Cognitive reappraisal seems to be translating as resignation or giving up, similar to escape or avoidance coping. Thus:

- H1. Individuals using direct action will report lower family-to-work conflict (FWC) levels. (Direct action is not expected to influence work-to-family conflict (WFC) levels.)
- H2. Individuals using advice seeking will report lower work-to-family (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC) levels.
- H3. Individuals using positive thinking will report lower work-to-family (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC) levels.
- H4. Individuals using cognitive reappraisal will report higher work-to-family and family-to-work conflict levels.

Work-family and family-work facilitation

Scholars now recognize that participation in both work and family appears to have an enhancing, positive effect on the other domain (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Frone, 2002). Skills and experiences gained through work involvement can enhance functioning in the family domain (work-family facilitation – WFF). Similarly, techniques acquired managing family demands can improve performance at work (family-work facilitation – FWF). The positive interaction between work and family results from not only improved skills, but additional resources, better moods and better psychological health as well for those individuals engaged in work and family activities (Hanson *et al.*, 2006; Grzywacz and Butler, 2005; Witt and Carlson, 2006; Van Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007).

Our understanding of this positive effect is somewhat complicated by the use of various constructs – enrichment, facilitation, and positive spill-over – each conceptualized in a slightly different way. Regardless of the label, results of several studies suggest that the factors and processes influencing conflict are not the same as those influencing facilitation (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Grzywacz and Butler, 2005; Hanson *et al.*, 2006; Van Steenbergen *et al.* 2007; Witt and Carlson, 2006). The relationships between facilitation and outcomes are also different from the effects of conflict (Wayne *et al.*, 2004; Van Steenbergen *et al.* 2007; Witt and Carlson, 2006). Facilitation is focused on potential enhanced performance across domains, and from a management perspective, better performance is a desired outcome. Thus, we explore facilitation in this study.

We investigate whether the tendency to use a specific style of coping has any relationship with WFF or FWF. From a theoretical standpoint, it makes sense that various individual and contextual factors would affect facilitation, and an individual's coping style is strongly influenced by individual characteristics. As well, contextual factors and potential resource gains may prompt some coping behaviors and not others.

A number of situational or contextual factors have been linked to facilitation and positive spill-over. For example, Grzywacz and Butler (2005) found jobs with greater decision latitude, variety, and complexity to enable WFF. Work environments that provide greater resources seem to generate facilitation (Van Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007; Voydanoff, 2004). To mobilize these job resources and generate facilitation, one needs to take action or prompt others to take action. It would follow that individuals who

cope through direct action and advice seeking would experience greater WFF and FWF. Both of those coping styles require the individual to tap into resources available in the environment (work or family domain), and the gains may then transfer into the other domain.

Personality traits, such as Type A behavior, locus of control, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, negative affectivity, openness to experience, agreeableness have all been found to correlate with conflict or with facilitation and positive spill-over. Of those studies, however, only internal locus of control (Andreassi and Thompson, 2007) and extraversion (Wayne *et al.*, 2004) have been found to be associated with higher positive spill-over or facilitation. The dispositional sense of control over one's environment and extensive social interaction might be manifest in the tendency to rely on direct action and/or advice seeking coping styles.

The level of overall family emotional (or affectual) support has also been associated with facilitation and positive spill-over (Hanson *et al.*, 2006; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). Feeling positive about the participation in multiple life roles is likely to depend on family support for the involvement. Emotional support and the perceived value of being engaged in multiple roles should enable the individual to maximize the potential for facilitation just as those factors might provide a buffer against conflict. It is logical to connect the use of positive thinking as a coping strategy to facilitation (in both directions) (The authors thank the anonymous review who made this suggestion).

Finally, to the extent one tries to avoid managing conflict or copes through cognitive reappraisal (resignation), opportunities for capturing the benefits of facilitation might well be lost. If cognitive reappraisal as a coping style is related to higher conflict between work and family domains (as we hypothesize), the associated stress and strain would draw down resources. The individual may not have the time, ability or perspective to acquire new resources or experience facilitation in action.

- H5.* Individuals using direct action or advice seeking will report higher levels of facilitation (WFF and FWF).
- H6.* Individuals using positive thinking will report higher levels of facilitation (WFF and FWF).
- H7.* Individuals using cognitive reappraisal will report lower levels of facilitation (WFF and FWF).

In sum, this study closes several gaps in the work-family literature. We will examine the relationships between individual coping styles and conflict (both WFC and FWC) to determine if the stress-reducing properties of coping have a similar impact on conflict levels. We also incorporate facilitation (WFF and FWF) into the analysis to determine whether coping styles are related to higher facilitation.

We test our propositions using a broad sample of individuals representing various education levels and occupational backgrounds, effectively eliminating the impact of specific organizational policies, cultures, or benefits. The use of larger samples is something specifically called for in work-family research.

In addition, our analysis allows us to incorporate the feedback or reciprocal effects between work and family into the model. The relationships between WFC and FWC regularly yield positive and significant bivariate correlations in the literature. The reciprocity effects tested in structural equation models, however, have led to inconsistent

results. For example, Carlson and Kacmar (2000) found both work to family and family to work relationships to be positive and significant. Boyar *et al.* (2003) found the hypothesized path from work to family conflict was significant while the path from family to work conflict was insignificant. It is possible the inconsistent findings are sampling artifacts, reflections of the data structure, or limitations of the analysis.

The general consensus is that WFC and FWC are, at some level, reciprocal, or simultaneously determined (Frone, 2002). When an individual experiences a marked increase in the factors that influence WFC, there should be a corresponding rise in FWC. If conflict (facilitation) crosses over from one domain to another then, from a statistical perspective, they are mutually dependent or endogenous variables. One must approach the problem of hypothesis testing from a structural perspective, using structural equation modeling, or, as we present in this paper, the method of two-stage least squares regression. These methods allow one to model the simultaneous relationships among the variables for a better understanding of the true interrelationships among the variables of interest. Based on past research, we expect both conflict and facilitation to have reciprocal, feedback effects between the work and family domains. WFC is predicted to influence levels of FWC and vice versa. The same applies to WFF and FWF.

What follows is a description of our sample and measures. We then present our results and discuss their implications for managers and employees.

Sample and measures

The data used for this study were collected as part of the *National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS)* through support provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Midlife Development (Brim *et al.*, 1995). Respondents sampled are representative of the general US population of non-institutionalized persons aged 25-74 with access to a telephone. Through rigorous sampling techniques, the sample matches the US population on age, sex, race, and education. Respondents first participated in a telephone interview and then completed two self-administered questionnaires. (See <http://midmac.med.harvard.edu/research.html#tchrpt> for additional details.)

The items used in this study were a small portion of the total items collected, and the coping items were separated from the conflict and facilitation measures by a large section of questions unrelated to this study. In this study, the final sample size obtained was 1,312.

Control variables

The use of two-stage least squares regression requires the selection of a number of control variables, some of which were needed to identify the equations estimated. Gender and education level (classified with range from less than high school to hold a terminal degree) were included in all equations. Extraversion and neuroticism were added as controls because both have been found to influence perceptions of conflict and facilitation (Grzywacz and Butler, 2005; Wayne *et al.*, 2004). These traits were measured using adjective-based items from various personality scales (Lachman and Weaver, 1997). Extraversion was the mean of ten adjectives (e.g. outgoing, talkative, adventurous, active; $\alpha = 0.85$) and neuroticism was measured with four adjectives (e.g. moody, worrying, $\alpha = 0.74$).

To allow for factors contributing to WFC or WFF, we included four items summed to measure perceived work overload (too many demands, not enough time to get things done, too many interruptions, no control over your time), hours spent at work, hours spent commuting, and nights away from home. For FWC and FWF, we included 4 items summed to measure perceived family overload (parallel to work overload), number of children, number of children under 18, number of hours spent on chores at home, number of hours spent by the partner on chores at home, and the employment status of the partner (employed, not employed).

Independent variables

The coping variables were all measured with multiple-item sub-scales using response anchors that indicated how well the item statement described the respondent. Direct action items (five) assessed if the individual could be described as ascribing to the belief “where there’s a will, there’s a way;” doing whatever was possible to change a bad situation for the better; getting things done even when feeling overloaded; persevering to solve problems; and not giving up even when things get tough ($\alpha = 0.77$). Advice seeking was measured by three items representing how much the individual could be described as liking to get advice from others before making decisions; talking things over with someone when upset; and preferring to make decisions without the input from others (reverse coded) ($\alpha = 0.70$). Positive thinking statements (four) described the individual as taking something meaningful away from a difficult situation; finding a different way of looking at things when faced with a bad situation; finding a bright side to a situation when it seems to be going wrong; and finding something positive in even the worst situations ($\alpha = 0.78$). Cognitive reappraisal items (five) would describe the individual as lowering expectations when expectations were not being met; avoiding disappointments by not setting goals too high; feeling relieved when letting go of some responsibilities; reminding yourself that you cannot do everything; and when unable to get the outcome desired, assuming goals must be unrealistic ($\alpha = 0.63$).

Dependent variables

Work-family conflict was measured with four items and respondents were asked to indicate how often they had experienced each in the past year:

- (1) Your job reduces the effort you can give to activities at home.
- (2) Stress at work makes you irritable at home.
- (3) Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home.
- (4) Job worries or problems distract you when you are at home ($\alpha = .81$).

Family-work conflict was measured with four items on the same response anchors. Items were:

- (1) Responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can give to your job.
- (2) Personal or family worries and problems distract you when you are at work.
- (3) Activities and chores at home prevent you from getting the amount of sleep you need to do your job well.
- (4) Stress at home makes you irritable at work ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Work-family facilitation was measured with four items on the same response anchors used to measure conflict:

- (1) The things you do at work help you deal with personal and practical issues at home.
- (2) The things you do at work make you a more interesting person at home.
- (3) Having a good day on your job makes you a better companion when you get home.
- (4) The skills you use on your job are useful for the things you have to do at home ($\alpha = 0.73$).

Family-work facilitation was measured with four items:

- (1) Talking with someone at home helps you deal with problems at work.
- (2) Providing for what is needed at home makes you work harder at your job.
- (3) The love and respect you get at home makes you feel confident about yourself at work.
- (4) Your home life helps you relax and feel ready for the next day's work ($\alpha = .70$).

The MIDUS data set has been used extensively in research on health and well-being. The coping items were based on work by Brandstädter and Renner (1990) who studied how coping styles (goal pursuit, tenacity, and adaptability) change with age. The coping scales were recently validated by Wrosch *et al.* (2000)[1]. The conflict and facilitation scales have also been used successfully in prior research. All have acceptable construct, divergent, and predictive validity (see Grzywacz *et al.*, 2002; Grzywacz and Butler, 2005; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). Internal consistency estimates are reported above in the description of the scales.

Methods

To understand the determinants of WFC and FWC within a regression framework, an equation with work-family or family-work conflict as the dependent variable and a set of explanatory variables would be specified and estimated. Because of the endogenous relationship between WFC and FWC (Frone, 2002), estimating the equations, using ordinary least squares would result in inconsistent and biased coefficient estimates (Greene, 2004). We use a method that estimates simultaneous equations using classical regression models based on instrumental variable estimation: Two-Stage Least Squares (2SLS). This method was applied to both the conflict and facilitation equation systems.

The domain specific equations for conflict and facilitation use exclusion restrictions to identify each equation. Our conflict analysis estimated the following two-equation system of simultaneous equations:

$$\text{WFC} = f(\text{constant, gender, education, domain specific stressors, coping styles, FWC}) + u \quad (1)$$

$$\text{FWC} = f(\text{constant, gender, education, domain specific stressors, copingstyles, WFC}) + v \quad (2)$$

The dependent variables are the domain conflict measures. To control for and estimate the reciprocal effects from one domain to the other the WFC variable is included as an explanatory variable in the FWC equation and vice versa. The facilitation system (WFF and FWF) was specified in a similar fashion.

The method used to identify the equations is to exclude from each equation as many variables (less one) as equations. There are two equations in our system and so there must be (at least) one variable which appears in equation (1) but not in equation (2) (and vice versa). For instance, the number of children is considered to be a family domain factor and appears in the family domain equations (FWC and FWF) but not in the work domain equations (WFC and WFF). On the other hand, a variable labeled “perceived overload at work” does not appear in the family domain equations, but is in the work domain equations. The results of our analyses are described in detail below.

Results

Table I presents the bivariate correlations among the variables in this study as well as the mean and standard deviation for each variable. WFC and FWC were significantly and positively correlated ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$), as were WFF and FWF ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). FWC was positively correlated with WFF ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively correlated with FWF ($r < -0.08$, $p < 0.05$).

Positive thinking correlated strongly with direct action ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$). Among the other coping scales, there were modest, but significant, correlations. We next conducted the two-stage least squares regression analyses to test the hypotheses.

Work and family conflict and coping styles

The first analysis tested *H1*, *H2*, *H3*, *H4* by estimating a system of two equations (one equation for WFC and one for FWC as the dependent variables). The results are reported in Table II and are interpreted just as one would interpret any regression results. As would be expected, education level, work overload, and hours spent at work are positively associated with WFC at significant levels. Extraversion was significantly associated with lower WFC while neuroticism was related to higher WFC. Education levels and overload at home were associated with higher FWC levels while age and a partner who was not employed were associated with lower FWC levels. Neuroticism was significantly associated with higher FWC. These relationships were not central to this paper, but they are consistent with existing research which helps to validate both the measures and methods used.

The first two hypotheses centered on the problem-focused coping styles of direct action and advice seeking. *H1* predicted that direct action would be associated with lower FWC levels. *H2* predicted that advice seeking would be associated with lower conflict (both WFC and FWC). Direct action was found to be associated with significantly lower levels of FWC ($p < 0.02$), and as predicted, direct action was not significantly related to WFC in this sample. This is consistent with prior research findings (Haar, 2006; Lapierre and Allen, 2006; Rotondo *et al.*, 2003). Advice seeking had no relationship with WFC. Contrary to our expectations, advice seeking was associated with significantly higher levels of family-work conflict ($p < 0.001$). Thus, *H1* was supported and *H2* was not supported.

H3 predicted positive thinking would be associated with lower conflict. Positive thinking was not significantly associated with WFC or FWC. *H3* received no support.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1. WFC	10.7	2.73	1																						
2. FWC	8.41	2.42	0.47	1																					
3. WFF	11.49	2.8	0.01	0.13	1																				
4. FWF	13.73	2.91	0.01	-0.1	0.33	1																			
5. Age (years)	43.83	10.9	-0.1	-0.2	0.05	-0	1																		
6. Education ^a	0.39	0.12	0.06	0.12	0.01	0.05	1																		
7. Gender ^b	-0.1	0.06	0.06	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	1																	
8. Hours at work	44.51	15.5	0.29	0.1	0.08	0.1	-0.1	0.02	-0.4	1															
9. Commuting (mins.)	37.92	44.8	0.1	0.05	-0	-0.1	-0.1	0.04	-0.1	0.11	1														
10. Nights away	14.44	38.8	0.09	0.05	0.02	0.03	-0.1	0.01	-0.2	0.22	0.18	1													
11. Partner employed ^c	0.76	-0.1	-0	0.02	-0	-0.2	0.08	0.18	-0.1	-0	-0.1	1													
12. Number of children	2.3	1.54	-0	-0	0.02	-0	0.43	-0.1	0.03	-0	-0.1	-0.1	1												
13. Children under 18 ^d	0.5	0.07	0.19	-0.1	-0	-0.4	-0.1	-0	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.14	1											
14. Chores (hrs)	11.08	9.42	-0.1	0.07	0	-0.1	-0	-0.1	0.42	-0.2	-0.1	-0	0.12	0.08	0.07	1									
15. Partner chores (hrs)	13.91	12.9	0.09	0	-0	0.11	0.05	-0.1	-0.4	0.22	0.08	0.1	-0.4	0.08	0.09	-0.1	1								
16. Home overload	11.29	2.49	0.51	0.28	-0	-0.1	-0.1	0.12	0.05	0.17	0.05	0.02	-0	-0.1	0.06	-0	0.01	1							
17. Work overload	10.73	2.61	0.37	0.47	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	0.02	0.18	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.09	0.3	0.22	-0.1	0.4	1						
18. Extraversion	3.19	0.57	-0.2	-0.1	0.2	0.27	-0	0	0.05	-0	-0.1	-0	0.04	0.02	-0	0.03	-0	-0.1	-0.1	1					
19. Neuroticism	2.21	0.65	0.34	0.29	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.12	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02	-0.1	0.07	0.05	-0.1	0.23	0.23	-0.2	1				
20. Cognitive Reappraisal	11.12	2.74	0.11	0.15	-0	-0.1	0.05	-0.1	0.16	-0.1	-0	0.04	-0	0.02	-0	0.12	-0.1	0.06	0.11	-0.1	0.23	1			
21. Positive thinking	12.5	2.41	-0.2	-0.1	0.24	0.32	0.05	0.06	-0	0.04	-0	-0.1	-0	0.05	-0	0.03	0.03	-0.1	-0.1	0.42	-0.4	-0.1	1		
22. Direct action	16.24	2.66	-0.2	-0.2	0.17	0.26	0.08	0.09	-0.1	0.05	-0	-0.1	-0	0.03	-0.1	0.01	0.05	-0.1	-0.1	0.41	-0.3	-0.2	0.59	1	
23. Advice seeking	8.2	2.02	-0	0.08	0.12	0.13	-0	0.13	0.08	-0.1	-0	-0	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0	0.01	0.01	0.15	-0.1	0.06	0.16	0.06	1

Notes: ^a Education is a categorical variable ranging from 2 (Junior High) to 12 (Ph.D. or other professional degree); ^b Females are coded 1, males coded 0; ^c Partner employed (Yes = 1, No = 0); ^d Children under 18 (Yes = 1, No = 0); correlations larger than |0.054| are significant at $p < 0.05$; correlations larger than |0.07| are significant at $p < 0.01$; WFC = Work-family conflict; FWC = Family-work conflict; WFF = Family-work facilitation; FWF = Family-work facilitation (N=1,312)

Table I. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables

Variable	Estimate	P-value	Estimate	<i>p</i> -value
	<i>Work-family conflict</i>		<i>Work-family facilitation</i>	
(Intercept)	0.386	0.641	3.762	0.003
Age	0.008	0.085	0.016	0.011
Education	0.068	0.003	0.124	0.0001
Extraversion	- 0.431	0.0001	0.454	0.005
Neuroticism	0.610	0.0001	- 0.039	0.384
Gender	- 0.194	0.065	0.664	0.0001
Work overload	0.340	0.0001	- 0.049	0.061
Hours at work	0.030	0.0001	0.020	0.0001
Hours commute	0.002	0.091	0.001	0.419
Nights away	0.001	0.281	0.002	0.209
Cognitive reappraisal	0.016	0.235	- 0.017	0.274
Positive thinking	0.008	0.405	0.159	0.002
Direct action	0.007	0.400	- 0.01	0.395
Advice seeking	- 0.024	0.212	0.076	0.031
Family-work conflict	0.490	0.0001		
Family-work facilitation			0.138	0.165
	<i>Family-work conflict</i>		<i>Family-work facilitation</i>	
(Intercept)	3.171	0.0001	4.362	0.012
Age	- 0.032	0.0001	- 0.03	0.002
Education	0.052	0.017	- 0.07	0.054
Extraversion	- 0.075	0.261	0.337	0.046
Neuroticism	0.408	0.0001	0.336	0.008
Gender	- 0.121	0.280	- 0.227	0.151
Overload at home	0.310	0.0001	- 0.154	0.0001
Children (all)	0.054	0.111	0.049	0.221
Children (under18)	- 0.015	0.461	- 0.085	0.335
Chores (Hrs)	0.003	0.325	- 0.005	0.303
Partner chores (Hours)	- 0.001	0.431	0.023	0.001
Partner employed	- 0.299	0.015	- 0.001	0.498
Cognitive reappraisal	0.051	0.007	- 0.014	0.315
Positive thinking	0.004	0.441	0.114	0.035
Direct action	- 0.054	0.019	0.082	0.014
Advice seeking	0.087	0.001	0.060	0.087
Work-family conflict	0.181	0.001		
Work-family facilitation			0.669	0.002

Table II.
Standardized results of two-stage least squares regression for work-family conflict, work-family facilitation, family-work conflict, and family-work facilitation

Note: Estimates are standardized coefficients. *p*-values are for one-tailed tests

Finally, *H4* stated cognitive reappraisal would be associated with higher conflict. The reappraisal-WFC relationship was not significant. However, the FWC equation resulted in a parameter estimate for reappraisal that was positive and significant at the $p < 0.0075$ level. *H4* received partial support, suggesting reappraisal is not an effective coping style. We also note cognitive reappraisal was positively correlated with advice seeking (see Table I), also found to be associated with higher FWC.

Significance of conflict reciprocity

Both WFC and FWC were positively and significantly related to the other form of conflict ($p < 0.001$ in both cases). In terms of magnitude, increases in FWC had a much

more pronounced impact on WFC than WFC had on FWC. Higher levels of WFC were positively related to FWC, but with less than one-half of the magnitude ($\beta = 0.18$ versus $\beta = 0.49$ respectively). These results are consistent with our basic proposition that the family is more flexible than work (Frone *et al.*, 1992) in the sense that it can “absorb” negative spill-over more effectively than work can. Our results are also consistent with Carlson and Kacmar (2000) who found significant paths in both directions (WFC to FWC and FWC to WFC). The implication is that conflict research must employ models that explicitly allow WFC and FWC to be simultaneously determined (see Frone, 2002 for more discussion).

Work and family facilitation and coping styles

The second component of our study tested WFF and FWF in a systems framework to explore how the coping styles relate to facilitation. Table II reports the standardized results of the analysis. Among our demographic and work variables, age, education level, and hours at work were associated with greater WFF levels. Females also reported higher WFF, consistent with past research (Van Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007). Higher levels of WFF were found among those high in extraversion and low in neuroticism. With FWF, age, education levels, and overload at home significantly reduced facilitation levels. The hours one’s partner spent on chores significantly increased FWF. Interestingly, both extraversion and neuroticism were significantly associated with higher family-work facilitation.

H5 predicted higher levels of facilitation (WFF and FWF) for persons who adopt direct action and advice seeking coping styles. Our expectations were partially supported. Direct action coping was unrelated to WFF; however, direct action was associated with higher reported levels of family-work facilitation ($p < 0.014$). (This is of particular interest given that direct action was also associated with lower FWC.) Advice seeking was associated with higher WFF ($p < 0.03$), but it was not associated with FWF. Thus, *H5* received partial support.

H6 predicted positive thinking would be related to increased facilitation and was fully supported. Higher levels of WFF were reported by those who used positive thinking as a coping style ($p < 0.002$). Positive thinking and FWF were positively and significantly related as well ($p < 0.035$).

Finally, we predicted that cognitive reappraisal would be associated with lower levels of facilitation. In both domains, facilitation was not significantly related to cognitive reappraisal. Therefore, *H7* was not supported.

Significance of facilitation reciprocity

High levels of WFF increased FWF ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.002$). However, FWF was not statistically related to WFF in the other equation. Thus, unlike the reciprocal relationship between WFC and FWC found in this sample, facilitation appears to spill-over from work to family, but not from family to work. It is interesting to note that the relative magnitudes of the spill-over coefficients in the conflict and facilitation equations are reversed: For the conflict regressions the family domain seems to be the more important source of overall conflict, while for facilitation it is the work domain that seems to deliver most of the benefit.

Discussion and conclusions

In recognition of the fact that participation in both work and family roles yields positive as well as negative outcomes in the other life domain, the concept of work-life balance has entered our vocabulary. To achieve work-life balance, conflict should be low and facilitation (and positive spill-over, etc.) should be high. Any factors reducing conflict or raising facilitation are by definition contributing to long-run well being of both organizations and individuals. No one questions the practical or moral reasons driving the research and public attention to work and family conflict, facilitation, and balance.

Work and family research has focused on the determinants, the outcomes, and the measurement of WFC/FWC, as well as the moderating and buffering effects of various situational or contextual factors (Bellavia and Frone, 2005; Eby *et al.*, 2005). Research has fallen short in its focus on individual coping and the work-family interface. Work-centered solutions (such as flextime, telecommuting, or job autonomy) are problematic at best. These benefits are not universally available or effective in addressing conflict. Individuals often rely on their own personal resources and typically fall into preferred behavioral patterns to cope with work and family conflict. This study was focused on improving our understanding of an individual's coping style across the work and family domains.

The present study

We sought to examine general coping styles and reported levels of conflict and facilitation. In particular, we tested the influence of direct action, advice seeking, positive thinking, and cognitive reappraisal on both conflict and facilitation levels. In doing so, we allowed the bi-directional relationships (FIW \rightarrow WIF and WIF \rightarrow FIW as well as FWF \rightarrow WFF and WFF \rightarrow FWF) to be determined endogenously so that the reciprocal effects were captured in the analysis. The procedure allowed us to test our hypotheses while accounting for the feedback effects between the work and family domains, something absent from a number of earlier studies. We used data gathered as part of a large effort to study well-being among a large sample representative of the general U.S. population characteristics. The sample characteristics and size liberate our analysis from concerns about the generalizability of the findings or the influence of any particular organizational environment.

Our results suggest several interesting relationships between coping and conflict and between coping and facilitation. The forms of coping seem to operate differently depending on the domain. And, none of the coping styles was associated with lower levels of WFC.

Conflict, facilitation and emotion-focused coping

The emotion-focused coping forms tested, positive thinking and cognitive reappraisal, do not appear to have much influence on WFC or FWC. Positive thinking had no relationship to conflict, but it was found to increase WFF and FWF. Finding no relationships between positive thinking and WFC or FWC is noteworthy given that two earlier studies also found no relationship (Haar, 2006; Rotondo *et al.*, 2003). This is the first study we know of to look at positive thinking and facilitation. Taken together, these results suggest positive thinking may have a role in achieving work-family balance. Positive thinking may not lower conflict, but it may increase facilitation and positive spill-over.

It is interesting to consider the items used to measure positive thinking, which characterize this style as finding something meaningful, positive, or bright when faced with difficult situations. In the work-family context, one could imagine an individual facing high work demands that are interfering with family responsibilities. If that individual was disposed to use positive thinking under stress, the meaningful or positive aspects attributed to the difficult situation could very well bring direct benefit to the family domain. This makes intuitive sense as well, given that people often see work as something they do for the betterment of their family. The results are also consistent with the Conservation of Resources model, which postulates that resources must be invested to gain additional resources (Hobfoll, 2001). A worker who must put in long hours of overtime to meet work goals may perceive the challenge as a means to earn overtime pay, which can then be used to benefit the family. Thus, positive thinking may not help conflict but it might increase facilitation.

Cognitive reappraisal tended to raise FWC levels, but demonstrated no significant relationships to WFC, WFF or FWF. This result is somewhat consistent with existing research pointing to the ineffective role cognitive reappraisal (or resignation) often has in reducing stress. It suggests that cognitive reappraisal (measured here as lowering one's expectations when goals are not met or adopting the belief one cannot do everything) is a mental form of giving up, resigning one's self to the current situation as it is. The lack of personal control and sense of helplessness likely to be associated with this style of coping makes individuals engaged in cognitive reappraisal susceptible to a variety of negative outcomes – higher FWC being just one. A corollary effect could be the inability to access the positive benefits of participation in work and family. Perhaps the use of cognitive reappraisal is a signal for someone with a life seriously out of balance. If so, targeted interventions either at work or within community structures that focus on eliminating counterproductive thinking patterns would be worthwhile.

Conflict, facilitation, and problem-focused coping

Consistent with much of the existing research, problem-focused coping did not help alleviate WFC. Direct action and advice seeking may be useful for reducing certain forms of work stress (e.g. role ambiguity). However, our results do not indicate that problem-solving approaches or behavioral-based efforts are effective when directed at conflict in the work domain.

Direct action was associated with lower FWC. Haar (2006) cautions that this approach leads quickly to burnout and may only yield short-run benefits at the expense of long run well-being. We agree this conclusion cannot be ruled out. However, direct action was also associated with higher FWF. By reducing FWC and increasing FWF, direct action may be an effective coping style when employed in the family domain. To fully understand this, we need a better understanding of the relationship between conflict, facilitation, and balance.

Perhaps more difficult to explain is the unexpected relationship found in this study between advice seeking and higher levels of FWC. One possible explanation may lie in the nature of the measure, which asked about the preference for seeking advice, input, and help from others in solving problems or making decisions. These actions may be qualitatively different from asking for and receiving help in meeting family demands. And, the coping scales represent general styles of dealing with

stress, and were not specifically framed within a work-family context. Advice seeking may be effective in reducing stress in other areas of life, just not for work and family conflict.

Another possibility may be that those outside work do not have sufficient perspective and experience to give good advice about managing problems at work resulting from significant family demands. Advice seeking was positively correlated with cognitive reappraisal (found to increase FWC). In a recent study examining social support with same-career couples, Halbesleben and Rotondo (2007) found that the similarity of experiences and ability to provide meaningful, instrumental support yielded a host of benefits to same-career couples and their organizations. Given that most families do not include two people working at the same organization or in the same career, advice seeking may compound conflict due to the dissimilarity of perspectives among family and friend advisors. Emotional support may be present, but instrumental support might not.

Supporting this explanation is the fact that advice seeking was also associated with higher levels of WFF. One who involves co-workers or managers in the problem solving process at work by seeking advice may realize WFF through the attitude and mood of the individual when leaving work and returning home. Co-workers have a more homogeneous perspective on the work environment because they share similar experiences in a given context. Alternatively, co-workers may be in a better position to point out potential resources one can acquire in that environment which can then facilitate performance in the family domain.

Conflict, facilitation, and reciprocity

Consistent with prior research, we found positive and significant reciprocity effects between WFC and FWC. Simply stated, an individual's level of reported WFC is determined, in part, by his or her level of FWC (and vice versa). This relationship extends beyond the bivariate correlation between WFC and FWC. Our results points to the importance of conducting research on work and family conflict using analytical methods that allows the parameter estimates to be simultaneously determined within a system of equations. Structural equation modeling or two-stage least squares regression (as was used here) can capture the nature of the reciprocity between the two variables.

What we learn from examining the standardized coefficients on WFC-FWC system is noteworthy. Imagine two events that independently increase their domain-specific conflict levels by the same amount. For example, the hours spent on chores at home increases, resulting in an increase in FWC. At the same time, business travel increases leading to more nights spent away from home and an increase in WFC. Our results show that WFC and FWC are not independent of one another. Thus, any single event or shock to one side of the system will lead to a corresponding increase in conflict from the other direction. More important, events that lead to an increase in FWC have twice the impact of events that increase WFC. Said differently, events that increase FWC have greater backlash than events that increase WFC. When work demands increase, the family can change, adapt, and absorb the resulting conflict more readily than work adapts to family.

It is within the family domain where direct action coping seems to be effective. When we consider the results of the reciprocity on conflict across domains, behaviors

or strategies that reduce FWC become even more important. Individuals who do not make use of a more active, problem-focused coping style at home or, worse, who use reappraisal or advice seeking are compounding the amount of conflict experienced. From another perspective, individuals who can adopt better coping styles at home will be much better off, even if nothing is done to cope within the work environment. We acknowledge that the cross-sectional nature of the data do not allow us to draw causal inferences. The relationships, though, have interesting implications regardless of causality.

Where work and family facilitation is concerned, we found that WFF was an important contributor to the level of reported FWF. The same was not true in the opposite direction. Stated more directly, the family benefits from participation in work, but work does not necessarily benefit from involvement in family. And, while the family domain may have the potential to create the greatest level of overall disturbance (higher conflict in both directions), it is the family that benefits most from the positive or enhancing aspects of participation in work. Whether the facilitation offsets the conflict, and thus ameliorates the potential adverse outcomes from high conflict, remains an unanswered question for future research.

Implications for practice

Frone (2002) defines work-life balance as low levels of conflict and high levels of facilitation. In practice as in research, the focus has been almost exclusively on conflict, its causes, measures and outcomes. Good, prescriptive suggestions about how to reduce conflict, backed up by research, are still somewhat elusive. Yet, it is that question employees and managers want answered. Why are we not making progress? We believe the problem is due, in part, to two factors: first, the lack of research focusing on the individual and how coping resources are acquired and used; second, the tendency to focus on the “work-side of the equation.”

Only a handful of conflict studies have explicitly included coping within a stress-response framework. We know of none that have examined coping and facilitation. From the scant results including ours, there are some surprisingly consistent conclusions. For example, positive thinking does not seem to reduce WFC or FWC. Direct-action, problem-focused coping does not appear to be effective in reducing WFC. This is counter-intuitive and seems out of sync with our action-oriented society. However, it is essential to remember that people may have exercised their most powerful direct action strategy when making the decision about how they structure their life and what kind of work they select (something neglected in the research).

On the other hand, direct action was found to reduce FWC and increase FWF. Individuals have the greatest decision control at home, making the environment more amenable to successful direct-action coping. And, reducing FWC yields greater benefit than reducing WFC (due to the feedback effects). Unfortunately, suggesting that employees look to their family to solve conflict between work and family would make management seem rather calloused and insensitive. It is in management’s best interest, though, to provide support or resources to encourage this very approach.

From a practical standpoint, top management will often endorse interventions that are framed positively much quicker than those framed negatively. Programs that help

“employees improve functioning or performance at home” would be a more appealing investment than programs helping employees “manage conflict created by work’s interference with family.” While employers might recognize the reality of conflict, they are not keen on emphasizing that point with employees. Programs or activities that promote enrichment, positive spill-over, and facilitation, focused on creating or maximizing available resources and benefits, might indeed yield the desired results. Allowing co-workers and colleagues to help each other identify ways in which work can enhance performance in the family domain seems like a logical starting point. Such communication and sharing may also reveal effective direct-action strategies that could be adopted and used at home.

This type of approach is consistent with our data in terms of the relationships between conflict, facilitation, help seeking, direct action, positive thinking, and reappraisal. Managers and co-workers who understand the nuances of the organizational environment may be a better resource to help employees find balance than persons outside the organization. Of course, such an approach raises a host of philosophical and ethical questions about the relationship between employer and employee. Indeed, we would be hard pressed to give examples of companies who have sought to address work and family problems by turning them upside-down and sideways with any success. The lack of success with strategies used thus far, however, would point toward the need for a new approach.

Conclusions and future directions

Although this study is useful to address some of the gaps in work-family research, the trade-off between large sample size, number of questionnaire items, and the sophistication of the measures is apparent here. It would have been desirable to have more comprehensive measures conflict that include its various forms. After these data were collected, new measures of positive spill-over, enrichment, and facilitation were developed and validated. Using a more refined measure of facilitation would be a valuable future contribution. With those limitations known up front, we sought to use these data to address specific questions that would be difficult if not impossible to answer with other samples. The nature of the sample provides an excellent starting point for understanding the general work and family interface, absent from the geographic, demographic, or organizational influences that can bias smaller samples. This data set also allowed us to employ a methodology where the reciprocal nature of work and family could be modeled into a system of equations that produces regression results. We believe research in this area too often ignores the dynamic of the interface. By doing so, we are failing to recognize that both conflict and facilitation are part of one system that includes work and family. If pulled apart and studied separately, the conclusions drawn from the data will almost certainly fail to hold up when applied in practice.

Several suggestions for future research have already been discussed. Clearly more research is needed to explore the role of positive thinking and direct action in promoting work-life balance and how they operate in the different domains. Along similar lines, particular research attention should be devoted to understanding why emotion-focused and problem-focused coping do not function effectively in reducing WFC. More broad-based, longitudinal research is needed to arrive at a better understanding of the causal and feedback effects operating at the

work and family interface. Perhaps most important, research into the short-run and long-run health and well-being implications of coping styles, conflict, and facilitation is needed.

Managers and human resource professionals can incorporate our results into the structures being used by their organizations to address work and family conflict. We see potential for new forms of programs and activities that are not currently offered. An individual manager can adapt our results into his or her own environment, helping to improve the work-life balance of employees. By looking at the problem through a new lens, both the employee and the organization can benefit.

Note

1. Wrosch *et al.* established construct, divergent and convergent validity for direct action, cognitive reappraisal, and positive thinking. Advice seeking was not used in their study. We calculated the internal consistency (coefficient alpha) for advice seeking and reported it with the description of the scale.

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Further reading

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