

2005). The consequences of WFC were found to be more closely correlated with well-being for mothers than for fathers. Bianchi and Milkie (2010) found that having a spouse who is not employed helped only men's but not women's careers.

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) noted that men and women's time allocation in the home (although more similar now than in the past) is still very different, especially in families with children. In spite of the increase in the involvement of fathers in the home, mothers were found to be far more involved with child-care than were fathers. Another observation was one of gender inequality in paid work outcomes: women, and mothers in particular, continued to experience difficulties moving upwards in the labour market, and also, to suffer a *wage penalty*².

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) noted that in a much higher proportion of households in the 21st century all adults were employed and were therefore less easily able to meet family demands. Blair-Loy (2003) found that many occupations required total engrossment in the job and that this created problems for individuals who wanted to spend time with their children. Expectations of parental involvement were also found to be increasing, especially among well-educated parents. Hence, there are increasing pressures in both work and family domains.

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) also noted that most often, WFC was seen as arising from job conditions and was assessed as a dependent variable, whose antecedents researchers would attempt to elucidate. They also found a larger body of literature on WIF, but as regards FIW, they found that clear antecedents for FIW were having young or disabled children or a pre-schooler with a difficult temperament. FIW affected job performance and was more pronounced for women.

² A 'wage penalty' refers to the phenomenon of earning less pay for equal work.

2.11.4 Problem-focused coping, family satisfaction and well-being

As regards problem-focused coping and family satisfaction, Pinguart and Silbereisen (2008) found no direct association. They hypothesised that perhaps well-being in the family domain depends more on internal family relationships and support than on individual coping strategies.

Rantanen et al. (2011) found, contrary to expectations, that problem-focused coping strategies were not beneficial in alleviating the detrimental effects of WIF or FIW on well-being. They suggest that this is because this strategy has been found not to work well in uncontrollable situations, of which WFC may be an example.

2.11.5 Avoidance-focused coping, job satisfaction and work engagement



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Rantanen et al. (2011) also found that avoidance coping strategies correlated with better family satisfaction in the short term, but not with work engagement. They hypothesised that this might be because avoiding relates to less severe consequences at home than at work. They warn that avoidance has been shown to likely have detrimental consequences in the long term (Suls & Fletcher, 1985). More specifically, Rantanen et al. (2011) found that in a situation of high FIW, those who more often used avoidance coping seemed to be more family satisfied than those who less often used avoidance coping. (In a low FIW situation, avoidance coping made no difference.) They argue that in a situation of high FIW, there are usually high home demands and in such a situation, trying to be a perfect parent by performing every single duty may be a less beneficial strategy than minimising pressures at home by avoiding some tasks (or by delegating them to others). This would work better at home, where individuals may feel they have more control than at work.

In sum, Rantanen et al. (2011) suggest that a combination of different coping strategies, flexibly employed at the personal, family and organisational levels would work best to alleviate WFC. They note that the individual's capacity to interpret a challenging situation, for example to decide whether or not it is controllable, is very important, as is the ability to select and employ the most appropriate coping strategy for the specific situation. They suggest that information about coping should therefore be disseminated to employees.

2.12 Role construction and boundary management

Ergeneli et al. (2010) argue that as society perceives women's family roles as more important than their work roles, working women who are performing both work and family roles simultaneously may experience guilt when they feel they are not performing their family roles adequately. They attest that gender role theory holds that women, more than men, see the family role as part of their social role identity.

Cheung (2010) discusses how women leaders are able to redefine their internal concepts of the roles of mother and worker to make them more compatible than how they might be seen by a larger society, but concedes that it was much easier for them once they were in positions of leadership and had more control over their work schedules. Juxtaposed with this, however, Schieman, Whitestone and Van Gundy (2006) argued that higher work status may bring increased levels of stress because some aspects of work which are often considered resources, such as job authority, do not always reduce WFC.

Marks and MacDermid (cited in Bulger, 2007) investigated role construction and boundary management and posited that not all individuals experience strain when juggling multiple roles. They suggest that the way individuals construct their roles together with differences in their ability and willingness to treat boundaries between family and work in a flexible manner might explain the positive and negative outcomes of attempts to balance multiple roles.

2.13 Cultural considerations with regard to WFC

Research into WFC has been conducted in many different countries – Bellavia and Frone’s (2005) meta-analysis counted 37 different countries on all six inhabited continents. However, Bianchi and Milkie’s (2010) overview attests that there is little research that explicitly compares different cultures. An exception was a study by Wharton and Blair-Loy (2006) which focused on the hours worked for the same company by professionals in London, Hong Kong and the USA. This study found that workers in Hong Kong (the less individualistic culture) experienced many obligations to the extended family and greater levels of WFC. These workers more strongly articulated a need for reduced working hours than did the Western workers.

Roehling, Jarvis and Swope (2005) in a study in the USA found that among Hispanics there was a greater difference between the genders in ‘spill-over’ between the work and family domains than among blacks or whites, and attribute this to what they say is the Hispanics’ stronger traditional gender ideology, work and family roles that are less gender egalitarian, and what might be thought of as some degree of a cultural clash due to the Hispanics’ relatively recent entry into the USA’s labour market. Hispanic mothers were found to have the highest levels of WFC.

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) note the need to study the ways in which processes in the family and work domains vary across cultures.

2.14 WFC and a life-course perspective

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) suggest that there are periods in life when more WFC should be expected, for example when there are young children at home and all adults are in the labour force. Where older children are concerned, the incompatibility of work schedules with school

schedules, such as holiday periods, makes arranging for care emotionally taxing and labour intensive.

There may also be cohort changes in ideals about how the work and family domains should intersect (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). For example, younger cohorts of finance executives, in a study by Blair-Loy (2001), were found to experience less WFC than older cohorts, partly because they outsourced some domestic responsibilities.

2.15 Criticism of the vectors within earlier models of WFC

A study in 2011 by Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering and Semmer had findings contrary to the idea that the strongest outcomes for WIF would be in the family domain, and the strongest outcomes for FIW would be in the work domain, i.e. contrary to the cross-relationship hypothesis of researchers such as Ford, Heinen, and Langkamer (2007), and Frone (2003). Amstad et al. (2011) found that for both WIF and FIW, the strongest relationship was with domain-unspecific items, like life satisfaction, health problems, psychological strain, somatic/physical complaints, depression and substance use. Secondary to that were consequences related to the antecedent domain, for example work-related consequences (e.g. work related strain and absenteeism) for WIF and family-related consequences (e.g. family related strain and marital dissatisfaction) for FIW, and then consequences related to the other domain.

Echoing these findings to some degree, Rantanen et al. (2011) found that an individual's attribution process relates the conflict with the affective outcomes in the domain in which the conflict originates. WIF was more predictive of job dissatisfaction (an affective response) than FIW, and FIW was more predictive of family dissatisfaction than WFC. However, the construct of work engagement operated differently: FIW was more able to predict lower work engagement than WIF.

2.16 ‘Linked lives’ and WFC

Some research has investigated the influence of a partner’s WFC on an individual’s personal sense of well-being and work-life balance. Work-related stressors of the father negatively influenced the mother’s subjective experience of balancing work and family (Fagan & Press, 2008).

On the positive side, some partners were able to provide supports which ameliorated WFC. Practical supports included child-care, housework and emotional nourishment such as showing interest in the partner’s occupation and supporting their career moves (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham & Carruthers, 2006).

2.17 The depletion perspective, the facilitative perspective and an attempt to ‘rethink work family conflict’

Bagger, Li and Gutek (2008) call attention to the ‘facilitative perspective’ on managing both work and family responsibilities. This is in contrast to the ‘depletion perspective’, which holds that engagement in one domain may reduce resources available for other domains as an individual has a fixed pool of resources like energy and time. The facilitative perspective suggests that participation in the work and family domains may have positive consequences in both domains in that skills and resources generated in one domain may enrich experience in the other.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggest that engagement in one domain may facilitate performance in another domain, and argue that this can occur through the affective pathway, in other words, that the positive affect experienced in one domain may well improve the individual’s functioning in another domain.

A study by Gronlund and Oun (2010) on ‘rethinking work-family conflict’ theorised, *inter alia*, about the concept of role expansion – the hypothesis that the combination of dual roles in work and family is a source of well-being rather than stress – and that a high level of WFC is counterbalanced by high levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Gronlund and Oun (2010) attest that their research participants with high levels of demand from both work and home tend to experience both role conflict and role expansion, the latter being measured by indicators of life satisfaction and well-being. The role expansion hypothesis suggests that a role also brings privileges that are not accompanied by requests for performance and that feeling needed and appreciated in more than one context can raise self-esteem and make the individual feel more secure because successes and satisfaction in one role can counterbalance failures and problems in the other.

Gronlund and Oun (2010) concede, however, that the constructs, such as enrichment, produced by role expansion theory to describe positive work-family interactions among people with dual roles in work and family, have not in fact been related to the established concept of WFC and that measures of WFC are generally not included in these studies. Further, regarding antecedents, these studies typically focus on ‘resources’, e.g. workplace support and personality factors, while ignoring the ‘role demands’ focused on in research on WFC.

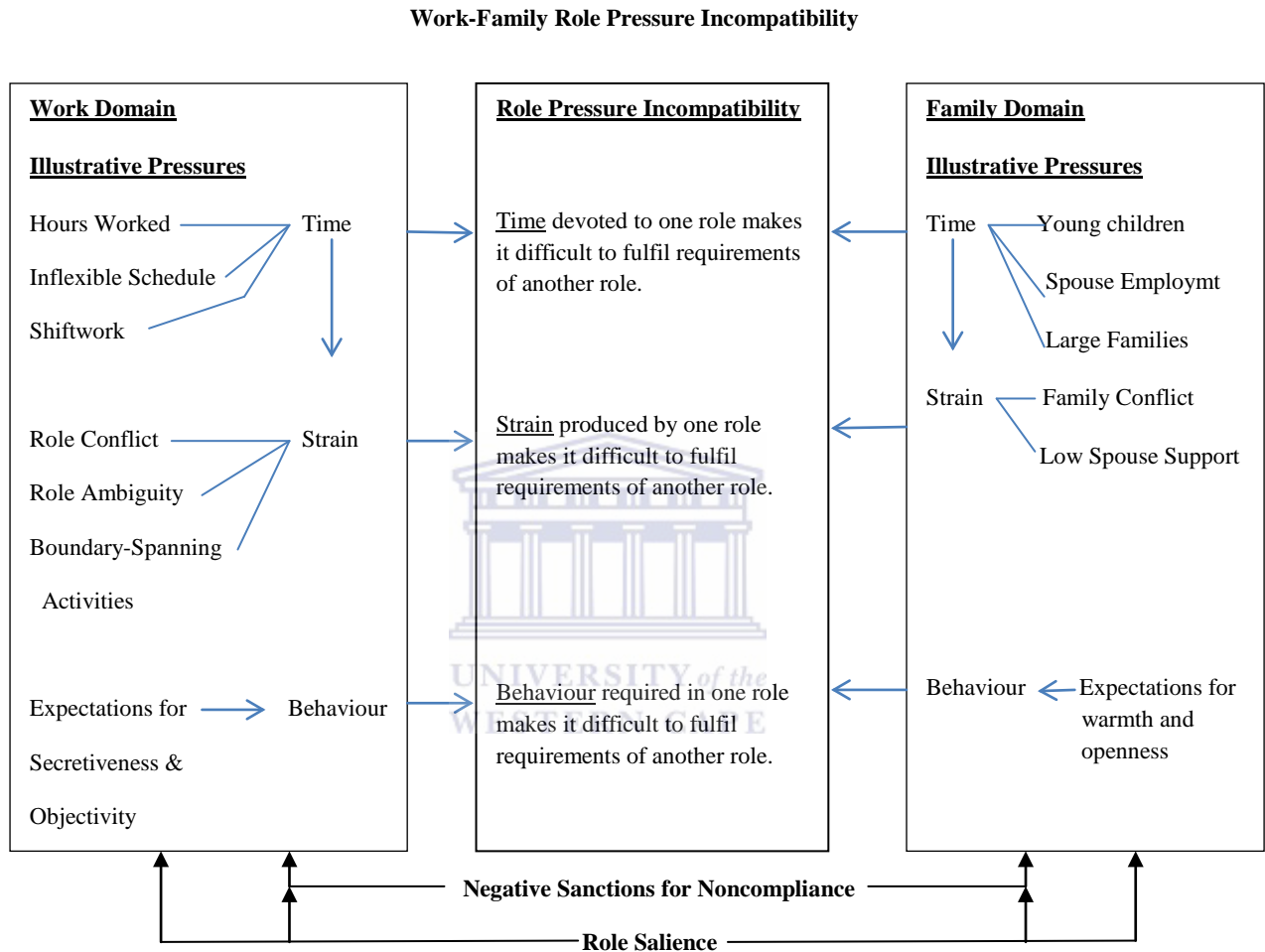
2.18 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is provided by the model of WFC proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) in their seminal article on WFC, *Sources of Conflict Between Work and Family Roles*, together with an extension from the work of Amstad et al. (2011).

2.18.1 Model

Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) model of the sources of WFC is shown below.

Figure 2.1 Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) model of the sources of WFC



It suggests that any factor within either the work role or the family role that impacts on a person's time-involvement, strain or behaviour as s/he functions within that role, can produce conflict between roles. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggest three principle groups of WFC:

- (1) time-based (2) strain-based and (3) behaviour-based, each operating from the work-domain to the family-domain or vice-versa.

