Do the Benefits of Family-to-Work Transitions Come at Too Great a Cost?

Dawn Carlson
Hankamer School of Business
Baylor University
One Bear Place 98013
Waco, TX 76798-8013
Dawn_Carlson@baylor.edu

K. Michele Kacmar
McCoy College of Business
Texas State University
601 University
San Marcos, TX 78666
mkacmar@txstate.edu

Suzanne Zivnuska
College of Business
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0031
szivnuska@gmail.com

Merideth Ferguson
Jon M. Huntsman School of Business
Utah State University
3555 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-3555
Merideth.ferguson@usu.edu

Abstract

This research examines the impact of role boundary management on the work-family interface, as well as on organizational (job embeddedness) and family (relationship tension) outcomes. First, we integrate conservation of resources theory with crossover theory, to build a theoretical model of work-family boundary management. Second, we extend prior work by exploring positive and negative paths through which boundary management affects work and family outcomes. Third, we incorporate spouse perceptions to create a dynamic, systems-perspective explanation of the work-family interface. Using a matched sample of 639 job incumbents and their spouses, we found that family-to-work boundary transitions was related to the job incumbents' work-to-family-conflict, work-to-family-enrichment, and job embeddedness as well as the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse. We also found that the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse mediated the relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and both work-to-family-conflict and work-to-family-enrichment. Finally, we found significant indirect effects between family-to-work boundary transitions and job embeddedness and relationship tension through both the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and the incumbent's work-family-conflict but not through work-family-enrichment. Thus, family-to-work boundary transitions offer some benefits to the organization by contributing to job embeddedness but they also come at a cost in that they are associated with work-family conflict and relationship tension. We discuss the study's implications for theory, research, and practice while suggesting new research directions.

Keywords: boundary management, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, relationship tension, job embeddedness

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In today's busy world, workers must constantly juggle the demands of both work and family. Individuals accomplish this, in part, by managing the boundaries between the work and family domains. Research in boundary management suggests that some individuals build distinct boundaries between work and family in an attempt to manage domain-relevant behavior and simplify their environment (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate 2000; Clark, 2000). However, even with distinct boundaries between domains, individuals still must transition between domains on a daily basis. Conservation of resources theory (COR) allows us to suggest that when individuals transition between roles, they lose resources that they are motivated to accrue and maintain (Hobfoll, 2001). One cost of this resource loss is thought to be greater work-family conflict (Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, & Bulger, 2010).

The goal of the research presented herein is to challenge the presumption of inevitably negative consequences resulting from transitioning between roles by also considering the potential positive consequences of boundary transitions. COR theory suggests that managing multiple roles may offer the potential to acquire and accumulate resources, rather than just depleting them (Voydanoff, 2001). Thus, we build and test a theoretical model with two paths -- positive and negative -- that allows us to simultaneously examine the relationship between boundary transitions and the accrual of resources represented by work-to-family enrichment (when the work domain improves the quality of life in the family domain, Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) along with the relationship between boundary transitions and the depletion of resources represented by work-to-family conflict (when the work domain is incompatible with the family domain in some respect, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In addition, we incorporate the more

distal impact of boundary transitions through the work-family interface on both organizational (job embeddedness) and family (relationship tension) outcomes.

Family-to-work boundary transitions occur in the family domain as job incumbent's transition out of family time to meet a work demand such as taking a work call or changing family plans to meet a work responsibility (Matthews et al., 2010). Although the worker is engaging in boundary transitions, the entire family may be affected by transition behaviors, especially when engaging in family-to-work boundary transitions, which is the focus of our study. Given the impact transitions have on the family, it also is important to understand the spouse's perception of the job incumbent's boundary management. To incorporate the spouses' perceptions into our model, we integrate crossover theory (Westman, 2001) with COR theory. Doing so allows us to capture how the common stressor of family-to-work boundary transition is mediated through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse (the strain produced in the spouse due to his/her perceptions of the job incumbent's boundary management) to affect the job incumbent's experience of conflict and enrichment and ultimately organizational and family outcomes.

Our research makes several contributions. First, most previous research on work and family boundaries addressed the stated preferences individuals have for boundaries between work and family. In contrast, we capture the frequency of behaviors individuals engage in to manage their role boundaries. Capturing the actual behaviors employed to manage boundaries and transition between roles rather than preferences is a recent idea (Matthews et al., 2010). This research builds on Matthews et al.'s work to explore how the *frequency* of engaging in these transition behaviors, and not just preferences, plays a role in the work-family interface from both a positive (i.e., work-family enrichment) and negative perspective (i.e., work-family conflict).

Second, this research expands the literature to consider consequences beyond the work-family interface, including spousal perceptions, organizational outcomes, and family outcomes. Job embeddedness, our organizational outcome, captures the extent to which employees feel closely attached to their organization. The family outcome of relationship tension from the perspective of both the job incumbent and spouse provides a well-rounded measure of the family domain. Finally, this research builds on a limited amount of research done on common stressors in the crossover literature by considering the common stressor of transitions and how it directly crosses over to impact the spouse and indirectly flow through the strain of the spouse to impact the job incumbent (Westman, 2001). Thus, this research, using theoretically derived constructs, builds connections between COR theory and crossover theory to offer a multifaceted model of the impact of boundary transitions.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Role boundary management suggests that people make multiple physical and psychological transitions every day as they cross the boundary between their work and family roles (Hall & Richter, 1988). These role boundaries are conceptual demarcations, which help individuals clarify the expectations associated with their various roles (Ashforth et al., 2000). Each time an individual moves from one role to another a transition across a role boundary occurs (Hall & Richter, 1988; Matthews et al., 2010). These transitions can be either physical, as when an employee leaves the family to go to work in the morning (termed "planned transitions"), or cognitive/psychological, as when an individual is physically in the family role but must transition mentally to the work role (termed "interposed transitions") (Hall & Richter, 1988; Matthews et al., 2010). Taken together, these two types of boundary transitions are the extent or "frequency with which domains come into contact with one another" (Matthews et al., 2010:

448). Matthews and colleagues (2010) argue that a more concrete understanding of the work-family interface is necessary to fully understand it and note that boundary transitions occur bi-directionally: both as employees transition from work to family and as employees transition from family to work. We add to this research stream by focusing directly on how individuals manage interposed family-to-work boundary transitions.

However, we seek to challenge this paradigm and extend theory in the boundary transition literature by using COR theory to examine how the frequency of transitioning from one domain to another can elicit a broader variety of responses than traditionally assumed. Thus, in order to explain and predict possible outcomes of interposed boundary transitions, we use COR theory to understand how individuals may lose, but also gain, resources through boundary transition frequency.

COR theory posits that resources are a critical element to the stress and motivational process (Hobfoll, 2001). The primary tenet of COR theory is that individuals make every effort to protect their own interests and achieve their goals by preventing resource loss or increasing resource gain. Hobfoll (2001) proposed that individuals are motivated to engage in behaviors that can help them preserve, protect, and rebuild resources. COR theory allows us to examine the impact of interposed boundary transitions on the simultaneous accumulation and depletion of resources.

Boundary Transitions and Conflict

Work-to-family conflict captures the conflict between the roles such that work is interfering with family (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). As people seek to manage opposing pressures from work and family, they must transition from one role to another. Transitioning between roles may come at a cost, as the interruptions of either role disrupt the

identity and maintenance process of that role (Ashforth et al., 2000). When individuals are engaged in a role, they enact a role identity complete with expectations and behaviors regarding that role. When that role is penetrated, or interrupted, by another role, an interposed transition has occurred. This imposition of work on family forces a shift to another role identity. From a COR theory perspective, the movement out of a domain removes resources from that domain thus providing fewer resources to carry out demands in that domain (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, when family-to-work boundary transitions require individuals to move out of the family domain and into the work domain, the movement reduces the resources available in the family domain and contributes to work-to-family conflict as work is now interfering with family. While domain transitions can expand beyond the family to the broader non-work domain we chose to focus on the family aspect as we were building on the work of Matthews et al. (2010) who originally developed the boundary transition construct and scale and found that family-to-work transitions were positively and significantly related to work-to-family conflict.

Hypothesis 1a: As family-to-work boundary transitions increase, work-to-family conflict increases.

Boundary Transitions and Enrichment

While some of the negative aspects of boundary transitions have been shown empirically (Matthews et al., 2010), what has yet to be explored is if the frequency of transitions from family-to-work also can have a positive impact on the work-family interface, resulting in work-to-family enrichment. Just as with work-family conflict, we focus specifically on the work-to-family direction of enrichment because it best captures the spillover of work into family. Work-to-family enrichment represents the extent to which individuals can apply resources gained in the

work domain to their family roles, thereby helping them be better family members (Carlson et al., 2006).

Applying COR theory to the boundary transition process suggests that family-to-work transitions may actually help the job incumbent attain resources, such as mood and attitudes, which contribute to greater work-family enrichment. COR theory helps to explain how resources can be used to make an individual more productive in another role (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2010). Transitioning from family to work may provide an opportunity for a work situation (such as emotional support from a supervisor) to build personal resources (such as positive mood and esteem). These personal resources can then be transferred (or spill over) for use in the family role, resulting in positive outcomes (such as positive attitude or being a better family member) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2010). Frone (2003) provides another example of this spillover effect, suggesting that involvement in the work domain may offer individuals a sense of meaning or purpose, which can foster enhanced energy and positive mood that affects roles in other domains such as with the family. Thus, the opportunity to transition from family to work may provide an opportunity to engage positively in the work realm, thereby building resources such as positive mood, capital, and development (Carlson et al., 2006) that enhance the individual's role as a family member.

In summary, family to work transitions may allow individuals to address work demands while primarily engaging in the family domain and provide a mechanism for the individual to manage and control the work-family boundary (Golden & Geisler, 2007). For example, an employee who receives a call from a co-worker while at home may be able to efficiently address the issue over the phone and postpone other work until later, thereby gaining schedule control,

which he or she can utilize as a resource to become a better family member. Thus, as transitions occur, the resources garnered may contribute to the attainment of work-to-family enrichment.

Hypothesis 1b: As family-to-work boundary transitions increase work-to-family enrichment increases.

Boundary Management Strain Transmitted to the Spouse

Next, we extend the theoretical foundations of COR theory by integrating crossover theory in order to capture the perspective of the partner. Crossover theory proposes that an individual's stresses and strains can cross over to affect a partner; in other words, these experiences can be contagious and spread from one person to another (Westman, 2001). One neglected area in the crossover literature is the empirical consideration of “common stressors” (Westman, 2001, p. 738). A common stressor is a stressor that has direct effects on both the job incumbent and the partner as well as an indirect crossover of the resultant strain from one to the other. Examples of the direct effects of common stressors on both relationship partners include the impact that job stressors have on distress for both the incumbent and his or her partner, the demands of business travel affecting job incumbent and spouse vigor, and shared life events contributing to depression in incumbents and spouses (Rook, Dooley, & Catalano, 1991; Westman, Etzion, & Chen, 2009; Westman & Vinokur, 1998). Further, common stressors can go beyond the crossover of main effects to also include indirect crossover effects. For example, previous research has demonstrated that the common stressor of financial strain directly affected depression in both the incumbent and partner, as well as indirectly as the partner's depression crossed over to the job incumbent (Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). Interestingly, even though COR and crossover theory represent two distinct theoretical streams, this same process of one person affecting another is explicitly addressed by COR theorists who have argued that many

stressors make resource demands simultaneously on incumbents and their spouses (Hobfoll & London, 1986).

Thus, in our model the job incumbent's family-to-work boundary transitions are a common stressor because the nature of the behavior makes it a shared life event and thus affects the spouse. Family-to-work boundary transitions include boundary management behaviors that a job incumbent chooses to engage in while residing in the family domain (e.g., check work e-mail, answer work calls, leave the family to go to work). Crossover theory and COR theory suggest that these boundary management behaviors may be a common stressor to the extent that the management of those transitions creates strain for the spouse. We capture this spousal outcome with the construct of boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse: the strain that the spouse experiences as a result of the incumbent's family-to-work boundary management behaviors.

Because the common stressor of family-to-work boundary transitions occur while the job incumbent is in the family domain, it is likely that these behaviors are observed by and affect family members. For example, if the job incumbent takes a work-related phone call, he or she is no longer engaged in the family; similarly, if the incumbent leaves home to go to work during family time, he or she will probably need to make his or her partner aware of the departure. The departure may further influence the partner in terms of the behaviors he or she may have to engage in depending on the role the job incumbent was playing (e.g., the partner may have to go shopping alone rather than with the incumbent as planned, or perhaps the partner will have to assume some unplanned childcare responsibilities).

An indirect effect of the common stressor of family-to-work boundary transitions may also occur such that the spouse's boundary management strain that stems from those transitions

may cross back over to the incumbent. In other words, the common stressor also may affect the job incumbent through the spouse as part of the crossover process (Westman, 2001). The spouse's experience of boundary management strain transmission may cross over to the incumbent insofar as it magnifies conflict and reduces enrichment. Again, this is consistent with the work on crossover that suggests that the strain on one individual may cross over and influence the partner (Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton, Roziner, 2004). As such, the incumbent's experience of work-family conflict and enrichment may be partially explained by the mediating role that the experienced strain of the spouse has on the job incumbent. In summary, the common stressor of role transition evokes strain, which crosses over to flow directly to the spouse and indirectly to the job incumbent to exacerbate conflict and degrade enrichment.

Hypothesis 2a: As family-to-work boundary transitions increase, the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse increases.

Hypothesis 2b: The family-to-work boundary transitions to work-to-family conflict relationship is partially mediated by the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse.

Hypothesis 2c: The family-to-work boundary transitions to work-to-family enrichment relationship is partially mediated by the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse.

Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness consists of the forces within and outside of the job (work and family issues) that keep people tied to their jobs and inhibit them from leaving (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton & Holtom, 2004). Forces that support job embeddedness include connections with other people on the job, alignment of goals

between person and organization, as well as the perceived cost of leaving (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006). For example, employees who are responsible for a spouse, child, or parent may be more embedded in their jobs, as they are less willing to leave an organization with good benefits than those who do not have similar responsibilities. In line with COR theory, embeddedness is believed to occur as a result of resource abundance and contributes to job performance and retention (Allen, 2006; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lee et al., 2004).

Given that embeddedness captures both work and family issues, it is likely influenced by the experiences of the work-family interface: work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. However, as others have noted (Mitchell et al., 2001), the exact nature of these relationships is theoretically debatable. For example, embeddedness might support efficiency, which in turn could mitigate conflict (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Alternatively, embeddedness could be associated with greater demands, thereby contributing to more conflict (Halbesleben, Harvey, & Bolino, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2010) through the loss of resources necessary to attend to those demands. Based on COR theory, we extend prior findings by exploring both the positive and negative paths that link the work-family interface to job embeddedness.

Applying COR theory to our model, we argue that family-to-work boundary transitions are likely to play both a positive and negative role in how embedded an individual is in his or her job, depending on the mediating work-family variable (conflict or enrichment). As already explained, when family-to-work boundary transitions occur, resource depletion ensues and work-to-family conflict may occur. This resource depletion and conflict may then reduce the amount of job embeddedness an individual experiences. We conjecture that this may occur because resource depletion and conflict may make interpersonal connections harder to maintain, and also

may represent a misalignment between individual and organizational goals. Furthermore, work-to-family conflict and job embeddedness, though related to both the work and family domains, both originate in the work domain. A meta-analysis of the work-to-family conflict literature found that conflict most strongly relates to work outcomes, not family outcomes. In other words, the effects of conflict are stronger on outcomes in the domain where the conflict originates (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011) although this idea is inconsistent with earlier research on work-family conflict that suggested a crossover effect (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). This phenomenon is termed a within-domain effect □ the tendency of the relationship between variables to be strongest when both variables originate in the same domain.

Similarly, when considering the more positive construct of work-to-family enrichment, if resources accumulate from family-to-work boundary transitions, enrichment may occur. Remembering that embeddedness is strengthened by both work and family forces, it makes sense that enrichment may contribute to enhanced job embeddedness; individuals perceive that combining work and family roles leads to enhanced family outcomes, so that individuals becomes less interested in leaving their job. As resources accumulate, the incumbent is better able to transfer them across domains to meet the demands of both work and family, resulting in the individual believing that work helps him or her be a better family member. This argument is consistent with research findings that when people experience work-to-family enrichment they attributed the enrichment to the originating domain – the work domain (Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, & Whitten, 2014).

Hypothesis 3a: Both the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family conflict mediate the relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and job embeddedness.

Hypothesis 3b: Both the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family enrichment mediate the relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and job embeddedness.

Relationship Tension

Relationship tension is the degree to which partners are annoyed or irritated by one another (Matthews, Del Priore, Acitelli, & Barnes-Farrell, 2006). Depending on how the job incumbent manages role transitions and how the subsequent boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse is experienced, relationship tension may be exacerbated or mitigated. Furthermore, because relationship tension is an outcome of the complex interplay between the behaviors and reactions of both incumbent and spouse, we believe it is important to capture it as a combination of both the job incumbent's and the spouse's perceptions to provide a more complete picture of the family domain.

Similar to the impact of role transitions on job embeddedness, we argue that there may be both a positive (enrichment) and negative (conflict) path to relationship tension. Examining the negative path first, COR theory leads us to reason that when individuals experience competing role demands between work and family it is likely to exacerbate perceptions of relationship tension. As resources are lost because of the family-to-work boundary transitions, conflict is experienced. The conflict based in resource depletion then leads to more relationship tension which results in stress on the partnership. A similar mediated relationship between job stress and relationship tension through work-family conflict has been found such that when a job incumbent experienced abusive supervision and subsequent work-family conflict, this crossed over to create tension between the job incumbent and spouse (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, & Whitten, 2011). Extrapolating this finding to the family domain leads us to think a similar

dynamic may exist between spouses. Previous research has shown that conflict in one partner directly affects his or her own relationship tension as well as crosses over to affect relationship tension for the other partner (Matthews et al., 2006). This finding supports the mediating role of the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse in our model such that when the common stressor of transitions creates spousal strain that exacerbates conflict, even more tension is likely to occur.

Turning our attention to the more positive path, we expect that enrichment may mitigate relationship tension. In line with COR theory, relationship tension is likely to be minimized when family-to-work boundary transitions result in resource accumulation. As resources accumulate, the incumbent experiences more enrichment. This enrichment may reduce the tension between partners. Further, the mediating role of the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse likely mitigates this path. While the transitions can lead to resource accumulation (and thus enrichment), the transitions may simultaneously increase boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse, which will take away, but not eliminate, the positive effects on relationship tension.

Hypothesis 4a: Both the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family conflict mediate the relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and relationship tension.

Hypothesis 4b: Both the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family enrichment mediate the relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and relationship tension.

METHOD

Sample

Our sample is composed of 639 married couples, seven of which were same sex couples. Our data were collected with the help of Survey Sampling International (SSI), an online data collection organization. SSI manages a database of respondents who have opted in and receive rewards for participating. In order to earn the rewards, SSI validates respondent data through built-in quality checks. In addition, potential respondents can be screened so that the survey reaches only qualified individuals. To capture married couples, we screened on marital status and both had to be employed full time. In order to deem a case as complete and earn a reward from SSI, both spouses had to complete a survey. To distinguish between the participants, we refer to the SSI respondent as the focal participant and to his or her spouse as the spouse.

The gender composition of the focal respondents was 239 (37%) male and 400 (63%) female and was essentially the opposite for their spouses (407 (64%) males and 232 (36%) females). The average age for the focal respondents was 44.9 years and 45.2 years for the spouses. The majority of both samples were Caucasian (530 (83%) focal respondents and 536 (84%) for spouses). On average the couples had 1.74 children and were married an average of 16 years.

Measures

The following scales were measured using a 5-point Likert scale anchored such that 5 is 'strongly agree' and 1 is 'strongly disagree.'

Family-to-work boundary transitions. The focal respondents completed Matthews et al.'s (2010) 3-item measure of family-to-work boundary transitions. A sample item is "I frequently go into work on the weekend to meet work responsibilities." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .84.

Work-to-family enrichment. The focal respondents completed Carlson et al.'s (2006) 9-item measure of work-to-family enrichment. A sample item is "My involvement in my work helps me acquire skills and this helps me to be a better family member." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .95.

Work-to-family conflict. The focal respondents completed Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams's (2000) 9-item measure of work-to-family conflict. A sample item is "My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .91.

Job embeddedness. The focal respondents completed Crossley, Bennett, Jex, and Burnfield's (2007) 6-item measure of job embeddedness. A sample item is "I feel attached to this organization." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .93.

Relationship tension. We used Matthew et al.'s (2006) 3-item measure of relationship tension. We asked both the focal respondent and the spouse to complete this scale and we included all six items in our measure to create a measure of combined relationship tension. A sample item is "I frequently feel irritated or resentful about things my spouse did or did not do." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .91.

Boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse. We developed and validated three items to measure the spouse's affective reaction to the incumbent's ability to manage the boundaries between work and family based on the steps suggested by Hinkin (1995). Our first step was to develop items that represented the construct definition. We generated a total of 12 items and then individually ranked them with respect to how well each mapped to the construct definition. For parsimony, we retained the three best fitting items. Using the retained items and an additional two "filler" items, we conducted a content adequacy study (Schriesheim, Powers, Scandura, Gardiner, & Lankau, 1993). We asked 65 undergraduates enrolled in a business

course (51% male; average age of 21.66 years; 88% Caucasian; 66% seniors) to rate, on a 1-5 scale, the degree to which each item mapped to the construct definition provided. The means for the three affect items were 4.58, 4.45, and 4.51. The means for the two “filler” items were 1.91 and 1.12. In addition, we pretested the content of these items using a sample of 119 nurses (89% female; average age 46 years; 100% married; average length of marriage was 17 years; 75% had children living at home) to ensure the items loaded on a single factor and produced an acceptable reliability. To do this we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring method and an oblimin rotation) using SPSS 21. Results confirmed our expectations by producing one factor with loadings of .84, .93, and .79, respectively. The Cronbach alpha for these items was .89. To ensure the current respondents reacted to the items similarly to our pretest sample, we performed the same analysis on the data for this study. Once again, a single factor resulted. The three factor loadings were .90, .97, and .86 and the Cronbach alpha for this scale was .93. The items include “It annoys me when my spouse doesn’t draw a line between work and family,” “I get frustrated when my spouse blurs the boundaries between work and family time,” and “I find it aggravating when my spouse lets work take priority over family.”

Control variables¹. We incorporated two control variables that may impact our dependent variables: gender of the focal respondents and the length of their marriage.

¹ Thanks to the helpful suggestions of anonymous reviewers, we also considered the control variables of number of hours job incumbents worked per week, number of hours spouses worked per week, and number of children. In each case, the control variable was not significantly related to the outcomes in the study and including the controls did not significantly change any of the relationships in the model.

Specifically, gender may influence the potential for crossover effects (Westman et al., 2004) whereas length of marriage often relates to family variables such as family satisfaction (Wright & Busby, 1997). Gender was coded as 1 for male and 2 for female. Length of marriage was measured in years.

Analytic Approach

We used LISREL 8.80 to test our hypotheses. We began by running a 6-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the factor structure and the discriminant validity of our scales. Next, we added paths to the measurement model to test the hypothesized model shown in Figure 1. To confirm that the hypothesized model was the best depiction of our data, we estimated and compared three alternative models.

Insert Figure 1 here

RESULTS

The correlations and descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study are shown in Table 1. As expected, the dependent variables, job embeddedness and relationship tension, were significantly correlated with family-to-work boundary transitions, work-to-family conflict, and work-to-family enrichment. With respect to our control variables, gender was significantly and negatively related to job embeddedness while length of marriage was significantly and negatively related to relationship tension.

Insert Table 1 here

To demonstrate the discriminant validity of our scales, we began by estimating a 6-factor measurement model in LISREL 8.80 using a covariance matrix as input and a maximum-likelihood estimation. The model fit the data (X^2 (561, $N = 639$) = 1992, $p < .01$; CFI .97; NFI .96; RMSEA .063) and all of the paths were significant. Next, we followed a discriminant validity procedure described by Fornell and Lackner (1981). Specifically, we calculated the square root of the average variance explained for each scale which represents the amount of variance accounted for by the items in the scale. This value, which we present on the diagonal in Table 1, must exceed the correlations in its row and column to demonstrate discriminant validity. As shown in Table 1, this condition is met for all of our scales, which provides evidence that the variance shared between any pair of constructs is less than the average variance explained by the items that compose the scales.

To test our hypotheses, we added paths to the measurement model to estimate the model shown in Figure 1. In addition, we added links from the two control variables, gender of the focal respondent and length of marriage, to both dependent variables. The hypothesized model fit the data (X^2 (633, $N = 639$) = 2203, $p < .01$; CFI .97; NFI .95; RMSEA .062). However, prior to accepting this model as the best fitting, we compared it to three alternative models.

The first alternative model added a path from boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse directly to relationship tension as the spouse's strain could impact feelings of relationship tension beyond just through conflict. This model also fit the data (X^2 (632, $N = 639$) = 2197, $p < .01$; CFI .97; NFI .95; RMSEA .062) and the added path was significant. In addition, the chi-square difference test between these models was significant (X^2_{diff} (1, $N = 639$) = 6, p

< .01) suggesting that the alternative model is superior to the hypothesized model and the path from boundary management strain transmission to relationship tension should be included.

Building on the accepted alternative model, we then added a path between family-to-work boundary transitions and job embeddedness to explore whether the relationship between these variables was fully or partially mediated. Once again, the model fit the data (χ^2 (631, $N = 639$) = 2178, $p < .01$; CFI .97; NFI .95; RMSEA .062) and the added path was significant. The chi-square difference test between the two alternative models was significant (χ^2_{diff} (1, $N = 639$) = 19, $p < .01$) suggesting that the second alternative model was superior to the first so the additional path of family-to-work boundary transitions to job embeddedness was included in the model.

Building on the second alternative model, in our final model we added a path from family-to-work boundary transitions and relationship tension to explore whether the relationship between these variables was fully or partially mediated. While this model fit the data (χ^2 (630, $N = 639$) = 2177, $p > .05$; CFI .97; NFI .95; RMSEA .062), the added path was not significant. In addition, the chi-square difference test between this model and the second alternative model was not significant (χ^2_{diff} (1, $N = 639$) = 1, $p > .05$). Based on these results, we accepted the second alternative model as the best fitting and used the results from that model to test our hypotheses.

Figure 2 illustrates the final model and presents the completely standardized path loadings. While not pictured in the model, the only control variable that was significant was the path between length of marriage and relationship tension ($-.07$, $p < .05$) which suggests that relationship tension is less in couples married longer (Carlson et al., 2011). Keeping with our theme that boundary transitioning may create both positive and negative effects in the work-life

domain, Hypotheses 1a and 1b predicted positive relationships between family-to-work boundary transitions and both work-to family enrichment and work-to-family conflict. As can be seen in Figure 2, both of these hypotheses were supported.

Insert Figure 2 here

Hypothesis 2a, which predicted a positive relationship between family-to-work boundary transitions and the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse, was supported.

Hypotheses 2b and 2c predicted partially mediated relationships from family-to-work boundary transitions to both work-to family conflict and work-to-family enrichment through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse. Both hypotheses were supported as the predicted indirect effects were significant (family-to-work boundary transitions → boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse → work-to family conflict .10, $p < .05$; family-to-work boundary transitions → boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse → work-to family enrichment -.05, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 3a predicted a negatively mediated path from family-to-work boundary transitions through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family conflict to job embeddedness. This prediction was supported as the total indirect effect for this path was significant (-.02, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 3b predicted a positively mediated path from family-to-work boundary transitions through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family enrichment to job embeddedness. This prediction was not supported as the total indirect effect for this path, while significant, was negative rather than positive (-.03, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 4a predicted a positively mediated path from family-to-work boundary transitions through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family conflict to relationship tension. This prediction was supported as the total indirect effect for this path was significant (.04, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 4b predicted a negatively mediated path from family-to-work boundary transitions through the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and work-to-family enrichment to relationship tension. This prediction was not supported as the total indirect effect for this path, while significant, was positive rather than negative (.01, $p < .05$).

Given that seven out of 639 couples in our sample were same sex couples, we re-analyzed the data to determine if there were any differences. We ran all the analysis using only the 632 heterosexual couples and found no significant differences from our findings with the complete data set.

DISCUSSION

This research examined how engagement in family-to-work boundary transitions is a double-edged sword in the work-family interface and the relation of work and family outcomes to that behavior. Specifically, we found that family-to-work boundary management transitions were associated with greater levels of work-family conflict and relationship tension and less job embeddedness. However, simultaneously those same transitions are associated with increases in work-to-family enrichment and job embeddedness and reductions in relationship tension. To provide a more complete picture we also considered the boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse as a mediator in this model. The family-to-work boundary transitions of the job incumbent contribute to greater experienced strain by the spouse, enhanced conflict, and reduced enrichment. Further, the mediated paths through both the boundary management strain

transmitted to the spouse and the incumbent's work-to-family-conflict, but not work-to-family enrichment, continued to our ultimate dependent variables, and associated with increased relationship tension and decreased job embeddedness. In summary, transitioning out of family time to do work has some benefits to the organization through more enrichment and embeddedness but it comes at a cost of much greater conflict and relationship tension at home.

Results from the alternative model tests suggested a direct path between boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse and relationship tension, which was not predicted. We conjecture that this direct effect from the spouse's strain transmission to relationship tension is most likely occurring because of the overall increased stress level. Further, when considering that the stress came from the boundary management transitions carried out by the job incumbent it is possible that the spouse attributes that common stressor to the job incumbents' actions which correlates with irritation in the relationship. Furthermore, felt strain and tension is also likely to cross over, or act as a contagion, to the incumbent (Westman, 2001), so that the incumbent also experiences more relationship tension. Put another way, if a spouse feels strain, that strain may increase the tension the other spouse experiences within the relationship. The strain itself also may directly relate to the incumbent's experience of tension within the relationship. Finally, the spouse's experience of relationship tension also may magnify the incumbent's experience of relationship tension. Thus, we would expect that the spouse's strain might influence his or her perceptions of the relationship, as well as crossing over to the incumbent's relationship experiences both directly and indirectly. This line of reasoning is consistent with previous research on strain crossover, which found that one partner's distress contributed to marital dissatisfaction for both partners in a dual career couple (Westman et al., 2004).

The second path added to the hypothesized model was the direct effect of family-to-work transitions on job embeddedness (Karatepe, 2013). This path was positive, suggesting that if employees engage in family-to-work transitions, the shifting of time and energy from the family domain to the work domain may result in them being more invested in their job. This effect is consistent with COR theory, such that the transitions generate resources that are of benefit to the work domain. Empirical investigation of this phenomenon, and its explanation, provides an interesting opportunity for future research.

This research provided a valuable contribution through the integration of theories to build the model of work-family boundary management. COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001) allowed us to show how boundary transitions affect individuals' experiences in a way that simultaneously diminishes and enhances resources. Further, by incorporating crossover theory (Westman, 2001) we were able to capture the role of the spouse in this model and incorporate the spouse's reactions to transitions by the job incumbent and the subsequent positive and negative outcomes.

A majority of the previous literature has examined the costs of transitioning between boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Desrochers, Hilton, & Larwood, 2005; Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996; Matthews et al., 2010). However, we expand on this idea of transitions to not only capture the costs (work-to-family conflict) that exist, but to simultaneously consider the benefits (work-to-family enrichment) that also may result from these boundary transitions. Further, we extend the idea of transitions through the work and family interface to consider work and family outcomes. The model suggests that family-to-work boundary transitions play a role in the experience of both work-to-family conflict and work-to-family enrichment simultaneously. However, it is important to note that the strength of the relationship to conflict is more than five times stronger than it is to enrichment. This pattern continued for the mediated path through

boundary management strain transmitted to the spouse as the path was twice as strong for conflict as for enrichment. In addition, the results for the total indirect effects were stronger for the negative side of the model as the predictions were supported for work-to-family conflict, but not for work-to-family enrichment. Thus, while we found that family-to-work transitions resulted in both positive and negative relationships, overall the negative effects prevailed.

Finally, we include the spouse's perceptions in our model therefore capturing a dynamic, systems-perspective of the work-family interface. The spouse's reaction to the job incumbent's family-to-work transitions played a significant role in the model. It was a mediator of family-to-work boundary transitions to both work-to-family enrichment as well as work-to-family conflict. In addition, it demonstrated a direct effect on relationship tension. Importantly, incorporating the spouse's perceptions answered a call for further research on common stressors in the boundary transition process that have yet to be considered (Westman, 2001). In the current model, if we had failed to consider the spouse, the indirect positive effect of transitions to outcomes would likely have held because the negative aspect from the spouse would not have been represented. Thus, our results demonstrate the importance of considering the spouse's perceptions when modeling the work-family interface. Even though there was a positive outcome for the job incumbent that occurred as a result of the transitions, the strength of the negative impact from the spouse through boundary management strain transmission overcame that positive outcome. The result was that neither hypothesized positive indirect effect from transition to an outcome that included the spouse was supported. Future research should continue to include the role of the spouse in examining transitions between the work and family domains.

Practical Implications

This research offers some practical implications for managers. When organizations ask employees to do work outside of work hours, the frequency of family-to-work boundary transitions is likely to increase. As such, the organization must be aware of both the costs and the benefits associated with these requests. For instance, organizations need to be aware that although transitions between boundaries may directly increase job embeddedness, when filtered through the family domain, the effects of transitions on employees and their personal relationships are negative. Given our findings that family-to-work boundary conditions indirectly heighten tension within the marital relationship and prior research findings that marital distress undermines workplace productivity (Forthofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley, & Kessler, 1996), it is critical for organizations to take intentional steps to ensure as little damage to the family as possible. One option may be for employees and managers to use discretion when requesting or encouraging these transitions (e.g., sending an email might be less disruptive than a phone call).

A second option may be for managers to carefully consider how often interruptions to family life occur. For example, managers might collect several messages over time and send them all at once rather than sending multiple messages. Managers also might consider alternatives to requesting such transitions at all. For example, it may be that the need for family-to-work transitions could be ameliorated by hiring temporary help, redistributing workloads, shifting deadlines, or re-prioritizing calendared items.

Finally, managers could leave the employee with the ultimate discretion about whether to transition at all. Doing so might provide more flexibility in work schedules and enhance feelings of control, as boundary management profiles vary widely among individuals (Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy & Huannum, 2012). For example, overwhelmed reactors may be more likely to engage

in these transitions than dividers. An excellent opportunity for future researchers may be to empirically investigate the impact that various boundary management profiles have on the effects of role transitions.

In addition to these practical suggestions for managers and their employees, this research may provide some policy implications for organizations as a whole. Specifically, organizational leaders should evaluate the necessity of employees making transitions from family to work during nonwork hours. Is it imperative that an employee come in on the weekend or respond to work emails in the evening? With the increasing use of advanced communication technology, employees often feel overworked (Galinsky, Kim, & Bond, 2001) and experience an increased workload (Chesley, 2010). Thus, some employees may experience pressure to get more done and do so by transitioning from family to work either through physically going into their workplace or by disengaging from the family to attend to work responsibilities through communication technology (i.e., laptop or cell phone) while in the family domain. With respect to the use of communication technology in family-to-work boundary transitions, Volkswagen is experimenting with using technology to discourage some forms of family-to-work boundary transitions by blocking employee access to its email servers during non-work hours (Size, 2011). It would behoove organizations to evaluate employee workload and the connectivity expectations they may be setting for their employees, and how the organization can capitalize on the benefits of transitions while limiting the harm to the employee's family.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

This research has a number of strengths. The data were collected from matched job incumbents and their spouses. This type of data minimizes issues of common method variance as well as provides a more complete picture of the work-family interface. Further, the sample

size was large, allowing us the opportunity to test a rather complex model. In addition, our model integrated two theories and linked together constructs that, although related, have not been tested together which both supports and extends the extant literature.

As with all research, there are limitations. The data were cross-sectional in nature and collected from an on-line survey company. However, in order to minimize concerns related to the use of cross-sectional data, we collected data from two different sources, pretested the survey, and assured our respondents of confidentiality and that there were no right or wrong answers (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Less & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, by using an on-line data collection service we were able to prescreen for certain characteristics as seen in our data description. Finally, we also conducted a number of quality control checks and compared the means in our study to those in prior research to ensure the validity of our data. Another limitation is that this research focuses only on the family and does not encompass home life beyond the family. Future research should examine boundary management transitions between the many domains of which individuals are a part. Further concerns with this type of data are the problems inherent in mediation and its interpretation. While we are aware that we cannot make causal inference and that other models may also be represented by the data, the data itself is novel and our model has strong theoretical foundations that provide merit despite these limitations. Future research may better address a mediated model by looking at the boundary management transitions people make on a daily level through an event study over time to better understand the specific transitions people make and how they impact the work-family interface. In addition, longitudinal data can more clearly address the causal order of the spillover and crossover processes. Further, future research could benefit by examining different family compositions (heterosexual vs. same sex) to determine if that factor plays a role in the work-

family dynamic. Finally, future research may want to continue to expand our understanding of the role of the spouse in the boundary transitions process. Given the impact of the common stressor (transitions) on both individuals in a dyad, future research could build on the crossover work of Westman (2001) and consider additional mediators in this model. For example, interpersonal factors such as coping strategies or preferences for boundary management as well as personal attributes such as personality or need for control may further enlighten the role of transitions on organizations and family alike. Organizational expectations for family-to-work transitions also may play a moderating role in the effect of those transitions on the work-family interface.

Conclusion

We are only beginning to understand how the boundary management process of transitioning from the family domain into the work domain plays out in the work-family interface. Our research demonstrates that while there is some benefit to the organization, transitions are generally costly to the individual, especially to the employee's relationship with a spouse. Further, the spouse plays a critical role in this process by diminishing any positive effects and exacerbating the negative ones. Thus, the experience of family-to-work transitions is a double-edged sword that comes at the cost of greater relationship tension and work-family conflict but also has the benefit of more job embeddedness.

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Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Family-to-Work Boundary Transitions	2.53	1.14	.80						
2. Boundary Management Strain Transmitted to the Spouse	2.81	1.10	0.33***	.91					
3. Work-to-Family Conflict	2.55	0.92	0.49***	0.43***	.71				
4. Work-to-Family Enrichment	3.39	0.85	0.08	-0.08*	-0.22***	.78			
5. Job Embeddedness	3.37	1.02	0.17***	-0.01	-0.11**	0.51***	.83		
6. Relationship Tension Combined	2.31	0.98	0.21***	0.36***	0.41***	-0.15***	-0.09*	.80	
7. Gender of Focal Respondent	n/a	n/a	-0.23***	-0.15***	-0.12**	-0.08	-0.09*	-0.04	
8. Length of Marriage	16.41	11.29	-0.03	-0.05	-0.08*	0.00	0.01	-0.09*	-0.03

Listwise N=639 married couples. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Gender coded male = 1 female = 2. Length of marriage in years. Values in bold on the diagonal are the square root of the average variance explained which must exceed all correlations in the row and column in which they appear to demonstrate discriminant validity (Fornell & Lackner, 1981).

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of boundary transitions with work and family outcomes.

Figure 2. Final model with completely standardized path loadings. The light box frames represent focal respondent data, the dark box frame represents spouse data, and the dashed box frame represents data from both spouses. N = 639 couples. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$