

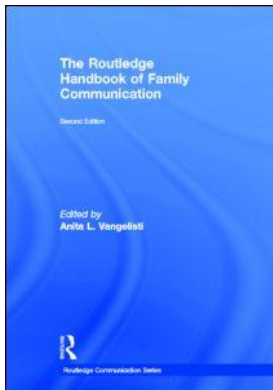
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Part VI
Communication and
Contemporary Family Issues

After the Workday Ends

How Jobs Impact Family Relationships

Shu-wen Wang and Rena L. Repetti

“The family is a haven in a heartless world.”

Attributed to Christopher Lasch, historian and author of *Haven in a heartless world: The family besieged* (1977)

“If you had a stressful day at work, it gets stressful when you get home, it gets stressful when you get to the kids or your husband. You know, things don’t work out right the whole evening. And then you’re not feeling well, then you have a headache and uh, you’re not eating, you’re not sleeping.”

Mother from Family 2, UCLA Center on Everyday Lives of Families (2002)

After the Workday Ends: How Jobs Impact the Family

There are probably no two other aspects of everyday life that come together with such regularity, yet complexity, as work and family. Dual income families with children are currently the predominant household composition in the U.S.A. (Bianchi & Raley, 2005), replacing the family structure of decades past in which husbands worked outside the home and wives worked inside the home. The traditional family structure, primarily the result of changes in American society following World War II, contributed to the notion of home as a haven, where working husbands retired from the stresses of the workday to the restorative domestic sphere nurtured by their wives. Demographic shifts to the typical American household are due primarily to women entering the paid workforce en masse, with the workforce today comprised of about 49 percent women and 51 percent men (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2003). The labor force participation rate of all women ages 25–54 has hovered around 75 percent since the 1990s (Pew Research Center, 2007), and 2007 statistics show that 71 percent of mothers with children under 18 worked outside the home, compared to just 47 percent in 1975 (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). As women’s roles have changed dramatically over the past several decades, men have also experienced an evolution in the family realm, with married and employed fathers increasing the time they spend on household labor and childcare from 100 to 150 minutes per day, between 1965 and 2003 (Hook, 2006). Clearly,

most individuals in contemporary American society will grapple first hand with the challenges involved with employment outside the home, maintaining a household, and attending to relationships with spouse, children, and extended family. Indeed, the intersection of work and home is a key issue for today's families.

Compounding the challenges of balancing employment and family is the fact that most workers feel burdened, pressured, and generally stressed by their jobs. Studies have shown that a large proportion of employed individuals report some stress at work, with 29 percent reporting feeling "quite a bit or extremely stressed at work" (Barsade, Wiesenfeld, & The Marlin Company, 1997). In fact, three-quarters of employees believe that workers today experience more job stress than a generation ago (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1997). Feelings of pressure and burden from occupations may be attributed, in part, to the fact that people are simply working more hours; the combined weekly work hours of dual-earner couples with children under the age of 18 has increased from 81 to 91 hours since the 1970s (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Protta, 2003). It is little wonder that jobs and families have been characterized as competing "greedy institutions" demanding commitment and resources (Coser, 1974) from individuals who have finite quantities of both. While the home was once popularly depicted as a safe haven to which working individuals could retreat and recuperate from job stress (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987), this conceptualization of the separate natures of occupational and home domains is no longer applicable to the experiences of today's families. As illustrated by the Mother from Family 2 at the start of this chapter, wellness in the workplace and wellness in the home are intertwined, and experiences on the job may impact the interpersonal dynamics of the family.

We focus this chapter on how characteristics of occupations and subjective experiences at work *spillover* and impact family interactions, relationships, and routines.¹ According to the spillover model, jobs are thought to impact the worker's cognitions, mood, and physiology, and carry over into the home by shaping the worker's subsequent interactions with family members. Research has documented that employment can influence individual health and well-being in multiple ways, and that job stress in particular can have a negative effect on health (e.g., cardiovascular outcomes [Schnall, Schwartz, Landsbergis, Warren, & Pickering, 1998], depression and anxiety [Melchior, et al., 2007]). This chapter focuses on occupational influences on *interpersonal* well-being in the context of the family. First, we address how the characteristics and requirements of positions, such as work schedule or level of job autonomy, impact the family. Next, we look at how subjective experiences and perceptions in the workplace, particularly job stress, influence family relationships, and highlight how different aspects of the family relational climate act as contextual moderators in shaping how work permeates the family. Last, we describe some key contemporary issues that the work–family field is grappling with and propose an agenda for future research.

Influence of Job Characteristics on Family Relationships

Jobs can differ in myriad ways—the income that they provide, the time they require, the schedules they impose, and the activities and tasks they involve all vary tremendously. Such occupational characteristics are related to important qualities of family relationships, such as the employee's marital stability and satisfaction, the routines followed at home, and the harshness as well as the closeness and warmth of family relationships. Jobs represent an investment of an individual's time and energy in return for resources, such as income and

status, which enhance family life. The evidence for how much family relationships benefit from occupational positions and the income they bring is seen in the negative repercussions of job loss and unemployment. Long-term unemployment can be associated with devastating outcomes for families. The data show increased risks of divorce and child abuse, with economic hardship acting as the primary mediator of the effects of unemployment on families (Christoffersen, 2000; Strom, 2003).

Of course one of the major trade-offs for the resources that jobs provide is a draining of some of the time that a spouse or parent can directly devote to the family. However, even though longer work hours are associated with greater family scheduling difficulties and perceptions of more work–family strain, there is no evidence for a linear association between more time at work and greater marital and family difficulties (Barnett, 2006). In a prospective longitudinal study of dual-earner families, the amount of time that both spouses devoted to paid positions was linked to their perceptions of marital quality, but the direction of effects depended on whether the individual worked more or fewer than the average number of hours. Among those working fewer hours than average, declines in work hours were associated with improvements in marital quality, whereas for those working more hours than average, increases in work hours were linked to marital improvements. The authors interpreted this pattern as indicating that marital relationships benefit when couples maximize whatever strategy suits them best for balancing occupations and family; as the work time “fit” improves, so does the marriage (Barnett, Gareis, & Brennan, 2009). The complexity of associations between time devoted to jobs and perceptions of family life was illustrated in survey data from a large representative sample of employed adults in the U.S.A. Those working longer hours were more likely to feel that their family life was enhanced by their occupational experiences, as well as being more likely to report that their jobs detracted from their involvement at home (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002). The scheduling of work time over the day appears to be much more important than the absolute number of hours devoted to a job, particularly for families with children living at home. Night, evening, and rotating shifts interfere with the time that couples and families spend together and disrupt family routines (Barnett, 2006). For instance, one of the most common family rituals, the family dinner, may be a rare event when a parent works a nonday shift (Presser, 2005). Unsurprisingly, marital dissatisfaction and disruption are higher when one member of a couple works at night (Barnett, 2006).

Many people willingly choose more time on the job in return for higher wages (Ruhm, 2005), and more work hours—even nonday shifts—can have benefits for families. In addition to financial rewards, research shows that mothers’ increased work hours are linked with greater father involvement in, and knowledge about, their children’s daily lives (Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999; Crouter & McHale, 1993). One reason mothers and fathers choose a nonstandard work schedule is because by “tag teaming” hours at their jobs, they maximize the amount of time that one parent is with the children (Bianchi & Raley, 2005). In fact, evidence indicates that when mothers work nonday shifts, fathers spend more time with their children and are more aware of their children’s activities (Barnett & Gareis, 2007; Staines & Pleck, 1983). A critical variable in understanding this work–family linkage is the degree of control that an individual can exert over the amount and scheduling of their work time; shift schedules are much less likely to have negative effects on family relationships when they are voluntarily chosen (Barnett, 2006; Staines & Pleck, 1983). Individual differences in control over scheduling extra hours at work may explain why the research literature has not found longer hours

linked in a uniformly positive or negative direction with marital and family relationship outcomes (Perry-Jenkins, 2005).

Another characteristic of jobs with relevance for family dynamics is the level of autonomy they afford, which is reflected in the amount of control the employee exerts over not only “when,” but also “where” and “how” work is accomplished. Job autonomy is tied up with other characteristics of an occupation, such as the degree of cognitive complexity involved in the tasks that are performed. Employees who see their positions as allowing autonomy and requiring a high level of skill report the belief that what they do at work contributes in a beneficial way to their behavior and activities at home. Those associations are not restricted to self-reported job characteristics; beliefs about the benefits of work experiences for family life are more likely to be reported by people employed in occupations that are objectively categorized as requiring greater intellectual capability and social skills (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005). According to Kohn and Schooler (1982), a parent’s child-rearing values and behavior are shaped by the level of self-direction he or she experiences at work (which is correlated with job autonomy and complexity). This idea has been supported by research showing that parents whose jobs involve greater autonomy and complexity impose less restrictive control (Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, Hiraga & Grove, 1994) and use more inductive reasoning with their children (Whitbeck et al., 1997). Their parenting is less authoritarian and harsh, and more warm and responsive (Greenberger et al., 1994; Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Whitbeck et al., 1997), and their home environments are characterized by more emotional support and intellectual stimulation (Cooksey, Menaghan, & Jekielek, 1997; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994).

The research discussed here suggests that occupations influence family relationships by enlarging some resources (e.g., financial), constricting others (e.g., time), and perhaps by socializing values and ways of relating to others. Of course jobs are not randomly distributed in society; the characteristics of a spouse’s or parent’s work life are inextricably tied to his or her level of education, skills, motivation, and numerous other personal qualities that impact family relationships, such as child rearing practices. In other words, the factors that select individuals into particular occupations can act as “third variables” that contribute to linkages between the characteristics of work and family. In short, the interplay between job characteristics and interpersonal processes in families is dynamic and complex.

Influence of Job Experiences and Perceptions on Family Relationships

The characteristics of jobs and the tasks and requirements they entail are usually beyond the influence of workers. However, what research has shown is that the *subjective* experience of the workplace and the perceptions employees have of their jobs can have just as much—if not more—of an impact on the employee, and subsequently, the family. After all, aspects of a position that frustrate one worker may be perfectly satisfactory to another, and day-to-day fluctuations in workplace experiences of the same individual can have short-term effects on the family environment. Here, we turn our attention to the subjective experiences and perceptions that individuals have on the job, and review how the “felt” qualities of work influence family relationships.

While most of this research has looked at the effects of job stress on the health and well-being of employees and their families, there is also a literature on *positive spillover*, where positive experiences in the workplace (e.g., satisfaction, support, and self-efficacy)

shape experiences in the home. For example, in one study, reports of more job satisfaction in the afternoon at work were associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction later that evening, an association that was mediated jointly by positive and negative effect (Heller & Watson, 2005). Models that include positive in addition to negative work–family spillover have been found to have added utility in depicting the associations between occupations and domestic life (Kinnunen, Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006), and a growing body of research on work–family facilitation has shown that various forms of facilitation (i.e., energy-based, time-based, economic, and psychological) have favorable effects for home performance, satisfaction, and commitment (van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). Thus, positive experiences in the occupational domain can have desirable effects on home life and family relationships.

This chapter focuses on the much more extensive literature on the effects that *job stressors* have on family interactions and relationships. However, we note that some of the research reviewed here infers an experience of stress at work from measures that could also be interpreted in the opposite direction. For example, if perceptions of a work environment as being unsupportive are correlated with more negative interactions with one's spouse, the same correlation could be interpreted to indicate that a more supportive environment is associated with fewer negative marital interactions. Thus, these job stress findings may also speak to how employment experiences can positively impact family life.

There is a large body of research investigating work–family conflict (also termed work–family interference) that looks generally at perceptions of interrole conflict between the two domains of work and family. A meta-analysis of work–family satisfaction and conflict (Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007) determined that job stress made the greatest unique contribution to the perception that employment interferes with family, above and beyond the effects of work hours and the level of involvement in one's position. As noted at the start of this chapter, most workers report some job stress and a significant amount report extreme job stress and burn-out. When asking how subjective experiences and perceptions of the workplace as stressful impact the family, it is important to distinguish between chronic job stress (i.e., perceiving one's job as highly demanding every day) and short-term daily job stressors (i.e., experiencing fluctuations in day-to-day job stress). We review research findings about both the chronic and the short-term effects of occupational stressors on the family.

Decrease in Engagement and Time Spent with Family

One of the main ways in which working a stressful job influences families is through its draining effect on an employee's energy and cognitive resources (Doumas, Margolin, & John, 2008). Studies have found that when workers regularly feel depleted by their jobs, they may be less likely to participate actively in family life. This decreased involvement in the family can take the form of simply knowing less about the activities of family members. In one study, both parents were less knowledgeable about their children's experiences, activities, and whereabouts when fathers were employed in more demanding jobs (i.e., long work hours, high role overload, and high job pressure) (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999), and another study found that fathers were less knowledgeable about their young adolescent children when fathers described greater negative spillover from work in their home life (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2006). The importance of adequate parental knowledge of children's experiences for effective monitoring has been widely documented

by studies demonstrating low levels of parental knowledge to be linked with negative child and adolescent outcomes (e.g., substance use and delinquency; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004). Across studies, the effect of job stress on parental knowledge was observed among fathers, but job stress was not associated with mothers' knowledge about their children (e.g., Bumpus et al., 1999; Bumpus et al., 2006; Crouter, et al., 1999). This difference may be due to the scripted nature of men and women's roles in the household, with the negative effects of occupational stress less likely to impact wives who are typically primarily responsible for childcare and maintaining the domestic sphere (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999).

Another form of decreased involvement linked with chronic job stress is spending less time with family members. Fathers reporting more work-to-family negative spillover were found to be less centrally involved in their children's experiences as measured by the percentage of children's time across all activities spent with fathers (Bumpus et al., 2006). And more time pressure on the job has been associated with less time allocated to parenting in a sample of employed mothers and fathers of five- to seven-year-olds (Greenberger, O'Neil, & Nagel, 1994). Likewise, greater work pressure has been linked with difficulties performing family roles such as spending time with spouse and completing household chores (Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992). In sum, these findings suggest that occupations experienced as highly demanding detract from a worker's ability to be fully engaged with and knowledgeable about family members. This stands in contrast with the literature reviewed earlier that indicated no across-the-board effects of the amount of time spent at work on family relationships, and highlights the importance of subjective employment experiences for relationship dynamics in the home.

When taking a close-up view of how *daily* job stressors impact families in the short-run, researchers have identified a *social withdrawal* response that seems consonant with the decreased knowledge and engagement described above for chronic job stress. For example, university employees were less likely to engage in social activities with their families on days they described experiencing high work-to-family conflict, even after controlling for the amount of time the employees spent at home (Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue, & Ilgen, 2007). In a sample of male air traffic controllers, a short-term increase in behavioral (i.e., distraction, unresponsiveness, and disinterest in social interaction) and emotional withdrawal (i.e., fewer expressions of anger and aggression) from spouse (Repetti, 1989) and children (Repetti, 1994) was detected on workdays characterized by greater subjective and objective workload (i.e., lower visibility and more air traffic volume). Results from another sample of dual-earner couples corroborated these findings; both husbands and wives reported greater behavioral withdrawal from spouses following socially stressful workdays, and wives also withdrew from their husbands on days of heavy workload (Story & Repetti, 2006). Less angry and more withdrawn behavior was also detected among husbands (but not among wives) in another daily diary study of dual-earner couples (Schulz et al., 2004). These daily report findings are consistent with naturalistic observations of working mothers' daily reunions at daycare with their preschool children over five consecutive weekdays; mothers were observed to be less talkative and affectionate with their children following days marked by greater workload or interpersonal stress (Repetti & Wood, 1997a). In sum, these accounts of daily social withdrawal in response to job stress may foreshadow the diminished knowledge and involvement in the family that is linked with chronic job stress.

Increase in Conflict and Tension in Family Relationships

On the flip side of a decrease in family engagement and time spent with family is an increase in social behavior that is more involved, angry, and conflictive. Working in a highly demanding job, marked by fast pace or a heavy workload, or being employed in a hostile or unsupportive work environment, can lead to feelings of irritability and anger that carry over from the workplace into the home. One effect of this negative mood spillover process is an increase in relationship conflict. For example, long work hours and high role overload were associated with more conflictive and less positive marital and parent–adolescent relationships (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001). Furthermore, findings from two studies suggest that parent–adolescent conflict links high job demands with negative youth outcomes. In one study, work pressure and feelings of work overload were associated with more conflict in the parent–adolescent relationship, which in turn predicted less well-being among offspring (Crouter et al., 1999). Another sample of dual-earner couples and their adolescent children found that greater father-adolescent conflict mediated the link between fathers' workload and adolescent problem behaviors (Galambos, Sears, Almeida, & Kolaric, 1995).

Evidence also suggests that working in an environment that is cold, unsupportive, or hostile can shape the quality of family interactions. For instance, in the air traffic controller study mentioned above, being part of a conflictive or unsupportive work team, as reported by the air traffic controllers and corroborated by their coworkers, was associated with more negative emotion (i.e., hostility, anger, and tension), and less positive emotion (i.e., closeness and warmth) during interactions with school-age children in the home (Repetti, 1994). In another study, both mothers' and fathers' interactions with their 12-month-old infants were rated as more negative and intrusive, and less positive (i.e., less responsive, stimulating, and reciprocal) if mothers reported a less cohesive and committed social climate at work three months prior (Costigan, Cox, & Cauce, 2003). In addition, the combination of a demanding job and low supervisor support has been associated with more frequent marital arguments (Hughes et al., 1992).

Negative mood spillover has also been detected on a short-term daily basis, whereby fluctuations in daily job stress covary with the quality of family interactions later that day. Negative emotions, such as anger and anxiety, have been found to carry over from work to home among employed parents (Judge & Ilies, 2004; Matjasko & Feldman, 2006). An increase in negative emotions following stressful and negatively arousing days on the job may be one of the mechanisms by which experiences at work impact dynamics in the home. For example, an early daily diary study observed an increased probability of spouse arguments on days in which husbands had an argument at work (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989). Additionally, Story and Repetti (2006) directly tested and found support for negative mood as a mediator of a linkage between workload and marital anger among the wives in a sample of dual-earner couples. Negative mood spillover has also been observed in parent interactions with children. Air traffic controllers reported expressing more anger and using more discipline with children on days of greater interpersonal stress at work (Repetti, 1994), and mothers who endorsed more depressive symptoms reported more aversive or impatient interactions with their preschool children following stressful workdays (Repetti & Wood, 1997a).

Individual Differences in Responses to Job Stress

It is interesting that research has uncovered two such different effects of job stress on family dynamics. Wouldn't a withdrawal from social interaction preclude opportunities

for negative engagement with family members? Likewise, workers who are angry and irritable in their exchanges with spouse and children could hardly be viewed as withdrawing from interactions. Some research points to individual differences in responses to job stress that moderate the effects of job stress on family interactions (Repetti & Saxbe, 2009). For example, in a study of dual-earner families conducted by the UCLA Center on Everyday Lives of Families (CELFL), we observed withdrawal and negative spillover responses in different groups of fathers. Families with school-age children were filmed as they went about their daily routines over the course of a week, and we selected 30 second clips at 10 minute intervals on the weeknights of observation in order to examine the social and emotional behavior of working parents. By focusing on the first hour that an employed parent spent with spouse and children after returning home from work, we were able to examine the immediate effects of job stress on family dynamics. Participants also completed a measure of trait neuroticism (that is, a dispositional tendency towards emotional instability; items measured proneness to feeling “anxious,” “helpless,” and “worthless”) and reported on job stressors on each day of observation. Results showed that job stress was correlated with social withdrawal (i.e., less behavioral involvement, less negative emotions) only among fathers who were *low* on trait neuroticism, whereas job stress was linked with negative engagement (i.e., more behavioral involvement, more negative emotions) among fathers who were *high* on trait neuroticism (Wang, Repetti, & Campos, 2011). These findings suggest that responses to job stress are patterned and multiply-determined, and that emotional well-being may be a critical factor in conditioning the effect of job stress on family relationships.

Implications of Daily Responses to Job Stress for the Family

Daily studies provide a window into how occupational experiences lead to subtle day-to-day adjustments in a worker’s social behavior with spouse and children that can accumulate over time to affect the overall quality of family relationships and functioning. An employee in a generally low-stress job may come home and respond irritably to, or withdraw from, her husband and children a few days a month on stressful workdays, without causing damage to her relationships; after all, families have been generally observed to be resilient in the face of significant life events and daily challenges (Patterson, 2002). However, an employee who is affected by a chronically stressful job may find that the subtle changes to her mood and behavior snowball over time to create a family context prone to conflict and low in feelings of cohesion and warmth. For instance, the effects of daily withdrawal may accumulate over time and damage family relationships (Repetti & Wood, 1997b), perhaps through decreasing time spent with, and knowledge about, spouse and child. Indeed, a longitudinal study of dual-earner couples caring for children and elderly parents found that social withdrawal predicted more depression and work–family conflict one year later (Neal & Hammer, 2009). Additionally, because job stress doesn’t only increase negative emotion behavior but also decreases positive emotion behavior, it appears that potentially protective or reparative processes may be removed from the family environment on a daily basis. Thus, daily withdrawal from family members or the daily carry over of negative moods on the job into the home can damage family relationships and impede family functioning over the long haul.

It may seem logical, then, to conclude that daily withdrawal and negative mood spillover have across-the-board negative implications for family well-being. However, social withdrawal on a short-term daily basis can be an adaptive short-term response to job stress, facilitating recovery from high levels of arousal while also shielding workers from family

interactions that may aggravate an already highly reactive state (Repetti, 1992). For example, in a sample of families with single working mothers, spending time alone was found to buffer the transmission of daily negative emotions from the mothers to their children (Larson & Gillman, 1999). In sum, research that zooms in for a closer look at daily work–family processes has identified daily responses to job stress that can have long-term implications for family relationships and well-being. In particular, while daily withdrawal responses may be adaptive in the short-term, they can also accumulate over time and negatively impact cohesion and closeness in the family.

The Role of the Family in Shaping the Impact of Job Stress on Family Relationships

Thus far, we have treated the effects of job stress on the family as being due to the experiences, behavior, and well-being of the worker. However, other members of a family also contribute to relationship dynamics and therefore, either directly (e.g., through their own behavior) or indirectly (e.g., through their contribution to the relationship climate), influence work–family spillover processes. Some studies have examined how the reactions of family members and the quality of family relationships shape the way that stress from work is carried over into the home. For example, preschool children were observed to display more positive behaviors in their reunion interactions with their mothers on days when their mothers spoke less or expressed less affection (Repetti & Wood, 1997a). Perhaps on those occasions, the children increased their efforts to engage their mothers (for example, by asking more questions). In a sample of dual-earner couples, individuals who reported higher levels of conflict at home were more reactive to daily job stress, showing more expressions of marital anger and more withdrawal behaviors (Story & Repetti, 2006). This finding suggests that an existing conflictive environment can exacerbate the effects of occupational stress.

The CELF observational study mentioned above offers some insight into the family context to which parents return after work. Campos and colleagues (2009) focused on the moment of reunion between working parents and family members who were already at home. Mothers, who typically returned home earlier than fathers, were often met with positive behaviors (e.g., affectionate actions or speech) and reports of information. Fathers also received positive behaviors; however, they were more likely than mothers to be ignored by family members already engaged in activities. Although this analysis did not look specifically at job stress, it does underscore that re-entry into home life after a day on the job does not take place in a vacuum. Perhaps a withdrawal response to a stressful day at work is facilitated by distracted and nonattentive family members.

Aspects of the marital relationship also appear to be relevant for modulating the effects of job experiences on family dynamics. For example, in one study, husbands who reported higher levels of marital satisfaction showed decreases in marital anger, whereas more maritally satisfied wives showed increases in marital anger, following days of high job stress (Schulz et al., 2004). It may be that these sex patterns are due to differences in how spouses support one another's recovery after a stressful workday. For instance, the decrease in anger expressions observed among the men in happy marriages may reflect a process of social withdrawal that was facilitated by their wives. Indeed, higher levels of emotional support from wives seemed to promote behavioral and emotional withdrawal in male air traffic controllers following stressful workdays (Repetti, 1989), and in another study, wives were much more likely than husbands to increase their housework efforts

on days their spouses reported greater job stress (Bolger et al., 1989). These instances of emotional and instrumental support by wives appear to provide husbands with the time, space, and empathic understanding that allow husbands the freedom to disengage from family interactions and responsibilities. It is interesting to note that in the Bolger et al. study, husbands were less likely than wives to complete additional household chores on days their spouses were stressed by work. It may be, then, that when employed wives returned home after a stressful workday, the demands of the household and the lack of support from husbands prevented a period of rest and recuperation, and instead contributed to increases in angry or irritable behavior. In the same vein, Schulz and colleagues suggested that perhaps it is this dynamic—high job stress coupled with unrelenting home demands and lack of spousal support—that makes more happily married wives (who may expect support from their husbands) more prone to anger expressions compared to less happily married wives (who may not expect support from their husbands).

An extensive body of research has examined the interdependencies and behavioral patterns that broadly characterize marital interactions, concluding that behavior in the marital relationship does not exist in a vacuum and instead is shaped by multiple factors, including the partner's experiences, expectations, and behavior (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Scholars have proposed that coping in couples is largely a dyadic process and have demonstrated that examining how couples cope together, in addition to studying individual coping, has great relevance for understanding relationship functioning and stability (Bodenmann, 2005). Aspects of an interaction or relationship are best conceptualized as resulting from the interactive and transactional effects of both partners' experiences, cognitions, and behavior. In particular, studies on marital support have shown that individuals are more likely to provide support to their spouses on days in which they themselves received support, and that individuals reporting greater relationship satisfaction are more likely to provide support on a daily basis (e.g., Iida, Seidman, Shrout, Fujita, & Bolger, 2008). Research on marital stress generation has also provided evidence regarding the transactional nature of support exchanges that are shaped by *how* support is solicited, provided, and received; for example, depressed wives were found to engage in negative support behavior with their husbands that contributed to greater marital stress (Davila, Bradbury, Cohan, & Tochluk, 1997). Perhaps the conflictive ways in which they initiated or responded to support prompted a mutual negative response from husbands. Indeed, marital research has identified a process of negative effect reciprocity in marital interactions, whereby negative behavior is returned with negative behavior (Kim, Capaldi, & Crosby, 2007).

The transactional nature of marital behavior applies when looking at the influence of job stress on marital relationships as well. Individuals may be influenced by job stress, both in their *provision* of support to a spouse, as well as the *receipt* of support from a spouse. For instance, an employed wife who has, herself, completed a highly demanding workday may be dealing with the residual effects of job stress in the form of negative mood or energy depletion, and may be ill equipped to respond to, and support the needs of, a spouse. Similarly, it may also be that some types of responses to job stress are more easily supported than others, impacting the likelihood that support will be received. For example, a worker who expresses irritability, anger, or impatience with a spouse may find himself less likely to elicit a supportive response compared to a worker who retreats and “needs space.” In sum, a supportive interaction between spouses is a multi-determined process that may be linked with job stress in different ways—both as a resource and mitigating factor in an employed person's recovery from job stress, as well as an outcome

that is shaped by the job stress experiences of both partners. The interactive effects of job stress on relationships, and in particular the role played by marital support processes, is a rich area for further investigation.

Contemporary Issues and Research Agenda

The conceptual and methodological challenges of research on the effects of occupations on the family continue to change with the shifting landscape of contemporary workers' jobs and family lives. In an age of virtual offices, flexible work schedules, long hours and overwork, and round-the-clock communication via the Internet and wireless communication, is it even possible to agree on the boundaries of a job? The notion of the workday taking place in a brick-and-mortar setting peopled by supervisors and coworkers, and contained between the hours of 8am and 5pm, may soon become a relic of the past.

Compounding this issue is the fact that there are myriad outcomes in the family domain that are relevant in the work–family field. Repetti (2005) has described the impact of jobs on health and well-being as reflecting a “cascade” of effects, with multiple intermediary steps linking job qualities and experiences with health and well-being endpoints. Selecting which outcomes are of interest in that “cascade” drastically changes the aspect or segment of work–family process that is studied, the scope of the question, and the time frame of the investigation. For example, examining how job stress impacts parent–child relationship closeness involves the selection of a distal outcome (i.e., relationship closeness) that lies farther downstream in the cascade of work–family effects. To study this question, the researcher must adjust the scope of the investigation to look at variables, such as parental well-being or parental monitoring, that lie *en route* to the relationship outcome, in order to understand how job stress ultimately detracts from parent–child relationship closeness. This type of investigation calls for a longitudinal design that takes place over months or years in order to measure these variables. On the other hand, a research study that looks at provision of social support following stressful days on the job entails a more proximal outcome (i.e., daily support provision) that requires an up-close investigation of intermediary processes such as short-term changes in mood or energy depletion. Daily diary or experience sampling methods would be more suitable for this scenario.

These conceptual issues point to the importance of appropriate measurement and methodology. The majority of the studies reviewed in this chapter rely on cross-sectional self-report methods that are influenced by reporter recall and social desirability biases. Furthermore, cross-sectional self-reports provide a single snapshot of complex and dynamic phenomena from which researchers sometimes try to derive an understanding of underlying processes. Daily diary studies, experience sampling methodology, and other approaches that take repeated measurements permit a more direct examination of process by analyzing change over time (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). In addition, very few of the studies reviewed here employ observational methods. Observations in naturalistic contexts (Repetti & Wood, 1997a; Wang et al., 2011) provide ecologically valid data on actual behavior and experiences, adding rich description to work–family research. We recommend that future work make use of integrated methods that incorporate naturalistic observation, diary reports, and traditional self-reports to permit a multidimensional and close-up view of work–family processes. Such an integrated approach holds promise in helping illuminate the mechanisms that bring about the differences detected at the “surface” via cross-sectional self-report methods.

Moreover, there is a great need for further study of the work–family experiences representative of the diverse range of families that comprise contemporary American society. The vast majority of published studies focus on the experiences of educated, middle-class, Caucasian couples who work standard schedules. We know much less about the experiences of single-parent, low-income, ethnic minority, and gay and lesbian families, or the experiences of families where parents are employed in jobs with non-standard schedules or shifts. Additionally, we need better data on the developmental trajectory of work–family processes as families progress through different life phases. For example, jobs are likely to impact couples with young children differently than couples with adolescent children or “empty-nesters” whose grown children have moved out of the home. In particular, the work–family experiences of older adults have become increasingly relevant given the aging of the American population and the fact that more individuals are delaying retirement and remaining in the paid labor force.

Last, we recognize that there is an incredible body of work on work–family associations and processes, but fear that these findings are not translated in ways that effectively enhance public understanding of work–family issues. The successful application of work–family research for public consumption is necessary to help support evidence-based initiatives for optimal workplace practices and healthy family functioning. We urge researchers to venture beyond academic circles in disseminating and discussing research findings, making use of accessible online resources such as the Sloan Work and Family Research Network, and engaging in dialogue with nonresearch professionals in the field.

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Note

- 1 We do not review research on how experiences in the family affect work life because the majority of studies in this area focus on work-to-family influences and an emphasis on family relationship outcomes is consistent with the theme of this volume.

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