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EXAMINING THE SUPERVISOR-SIMILARITY AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT
RELATIONSHIP: IS FAMILY-SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION A MEDIATOR?

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School for Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

by

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December 2015

For my grandfather, Leroy “Pete” Davis, Jr. who never hesitated to show me that I made him proud.

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This amazing achievement could not have been completed without the love and support of my wonderful husband, William. I am eternally grateful to you for reading my work, for listening to my gripes, and for being there when things got a little more complex than I had anticipated. I am grateful to my family and friends for cheering me on throughout the process and for helping me believe that I could finish strong. To Dr. Robinson, my advisor, your support and feedback was invaluable. Thank you for reminding me not to be so hard on myself, to slow down, and that it was not my mission to solve the problems of the world with my dissertation – only to graduate. Julie Henriquez, God knows that your continuous feedback was incredibly helpful and necessary. I cannot wait to return the favor. To the people that I work with on a daily basis at the Travis County Tax Office Information Technology (IT) department, thank you for putting up with my near-panic attacks and for celebrating with me when I reached new milestones. Finally, to the fine folks over at Bennu Coffee in Austin, TX – I spent countless hours in your coffee shop sucking up the free Wi-Fi while slowly nursing a latte and you never kicked me out. Thank you for your wonderful customer service. I give to you, all of you, my dissertation and I do so with a heart of gratitude and a sense of accomplishment. I look forward to the future with a smile.

To God be the glory for the things He has done.

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ABSTRACT

To say that interest in work-family conflict has increased is an understatement. With the number of dual-earner households increasing, the diversification of the workforce, and women quickly moving into industries that were once primarily male-dominated, the work-family literature is filled with various intonations of the concept. Drawing on insights from social identity and self-categorization theories, this dissertation examined how supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity might relate to the provision of family-supportive supervision and work-family conflict. 102 members of a professional organization dedicated to women who work in technology were surveyed to evaluate whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial and gender similarity would predict family-supportive supervision. Group differences in work-family conflict between those who were similar to supervisors and those who were dissimilar from supervisors were examined. Additionally, participants were asked about work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict in order to test for a hypothesized mediation effect of family-supportive-supervision on the supervisor-subordinate similarity and work-family conflict relationship. Results provided support for the hypothesized model of racial similarity that predicted family-supportive supervision. Additionally, family-supportive supervision partially mediated the negative relationship between supervisor-subordinate similarity and work-family conflict. Results are thoroughly reviewed, and implications are discussed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The growth of single-parent families, the prevalence of dual-earner households, and the desire for more flexibility at work has each contributed to a growing interest in issues related to work-family balance and work-family conflict. In the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Families and Living Arrangements survey, statisticians calculated that the percentage of households headed by single mothers had increased from 25% to 27% since 2007 while the percentage of single-father households had increased from 4% to 5% in that same time period (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013). While the number of single-parent households has, in fact, risen, there has also been a consistently upward trend of two-income families in the United States with the percentage of married couples in which both spouses work increasing from 44% in 1967 to 53% in 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The upsurge of individuals who fall into these categories implies that the ever-increasing focus on work-family balance and work-family conflict on behalf of individuals and organizations is warranted.

Work-family balance can be described as the "ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully" (Wheatley, 2012 p. 815). Often, successfully achieving work-family balance is impeded by the presence of role conflict in which family responsibilities conflict with work priorities and vice versa. This phenomenon is known as work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and it has a consistent negative correlation with work-family balance as increase in work-family conflict is linked to a decrease in work-family balance (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011).

In 2015, the research and advisory organization for human resources (HR) professionals, Workplace Trends, published a report about work flexibility that can provide insight into why

work-family balance is such a noteworthy topic. According to their study, companies are spending more money on programs designed to reduce work-family conflict with 53% of companies surveyed stating that they plan to increase the amount of money they spend on said programs in the year 2015. Additionally, the study results suggest that 50% of employers ranked workplace flexibility, defined as “the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks,” (Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin, & Pitt-Catsouphes, 2008 p. 152) as the most important benefit that employees desire while 75% of employees rank it as most important. Finally, the employers surveyed stated that they see several benefits to programs that allow for workplace flexibility and decrease work-family conflict including employee satisfaction (87%) and increased productivity (65%) (The 2015 Workplace Flexibility Study, 2015).

In addition to a heightened awareness of work-family concerns, the workforce is continuously diversifying, and a growing percentage of racial minorities and women in the workforce have led to an increase in workplace diversity interest. Currently, women make up approximately one half of the labor market while people of color make up approximately one-third with these numbers expected to increase significantly in the coming years (Toossi, 2013). Work-family balance issues have often been primarily assessed in the context of mostly heterosexual and dual-earning couples (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011). The literature has left out the experiences of couples who do not fit that mold, and the focus of the research has also failed to address the experiences of women and men of color (Kamenou, 2008), thereby demonstrating a lack of empirical findings that might describe differences faced by underrepresented groups.

In an attempt to analyze work-family research methods, Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, and Lambert (2007), conducted a comprehensive review of both the Organizational Behavior (OB) and Industrial-Organizational (IO) Psychology literatures. The authors discovered that the narrow research methodologies – ones that put mostly hetero-normative and dual-career parent couples at the center—have created disproportions in the work-family literature. The authors also confirmed that there are very few studies in the OB/IO field of work-family research that focus on varying concerns that may affect marginalized groups or groups that are not heterosexual and White.

With an increasingly dynamic labor market, and an amplified focus on work-family matters both on behalf of individuals and organizations, it is imperative that academic research in the field continues to generate information that is both theoretically and practically useful. Examining issues related to diversity in work-family balance and the varying work-family conflict experiences of underrepresented individuals is one way to begin producing essential empirical results. Researchers must expand the scope of the literature to address the existing limiting homogeneity in work-family research while simultaneously mending the diversity gap.

One area of interest that is important to the work-family conflict research is that of supervisor support. Supervisor support or supportive supervision is a construct that has been described behaviorally and conceptually in the literature (Paustian-Underdahl, Shanock, Rogelberg, W. Scott, Justice, & Altman, 2013). Behaviorally speaking, supervisor support is demonstrated when leaders “act friendly and considerate, are patient and helpful, show sympathy and support when someone is upset or anxious, listen to complaints or problems, and look out for others’ interests” (Yukl, 2002 p. 64). General supervisor support is related to perceived job autonomy and turnover intention (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2013), life satisfaction (Newman, Nielsen,

Smyth, & Hooke, 2015), perceived organizational support, work satisfaction, and job performance (Gillet, Colombat, Michinov, Pronost, & Fouquereau, 2013).

Supervisor support that is specific to employees' family needs is called family-supportive supervision (FSS), and it has been shown to play a significant role in subordinates' work-family conflict experiences (Kossek et al., 2011). Supervisors demonstrate FSS by showing emotional support such as asking about non-work issues or helping employees creatively solve problems when conflicts between work and non-work arise. This is likely to lead to a decrease in family demands interfering with work priorities and vice versa. When employees perceive family support on behalf of their organizations and leaders, they are less likely to experience work-family conflict (J. H. Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013). More specifically, research has demonstrated that FSS moderates the positive relationship between workload and work-family conflict (Goh, Ilies, & Wilson, 2015) thereby reinforcing how support on behalf of supervisors can alleviate some of the pressure that accompanies work-family conflict.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study considered the construct of work-family conflict (in terms of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict) in the context of FSS and examined how supervisor-subordinate dyad demography related to these concepts. In particular, the purpose of the study was to examine whether or not there was a difference in reported work-family conflict between employees who are similar to their supervisors in race or gender and those who are dissimilar to their supervisors in race and gender. Additionally, this study tested whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity could predict FSS provision (i.e., empathy regarding family situations) on behalf of supervisors. Finally, this study examined if FSS played a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor-subordinate similarity and lowered work-

family conflict. For the purpose of this study, supervisor-subordinate similarity was defined as supervisors who are similar to subordinates in race or gender identification. The following research questions were proposed:

1. Do individuals who share racial similarities with supervisors experience less work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC) than those who are racially dissimilar?
2. Do individuals who share gender similarities with supervisors experience less work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC) than those who are dissimilar?
3. Does supervisor-subordinate racial similarity predict FSS provision?
4. Does supervisor-subordinate gender similarity predict FSS provision?
5. Will the supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and work-family conflict relationship be buffered by the provision of FSS?
6. Will the supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and work-family conflict relationship be buffered by the provision of FSS?

Context of the Study

This study focused specifically on women working in the technology industry because there is a substantial benefit to increasing their numbers within that particular occupation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment and output in the technology sector are projected to grow exponentially in the next decade with an average annual rate increase of 6.1% compared to a 3.6% rate increase for broader industry (Csorny, 2013). One reason for this growth projection hinges on the fact that individual consumers and organizations are increasing their use of information technology (IT) services thus creating a high demand in the industry. By the year 2020, BLS experts expect that IT industry occupations will increase by 22%, indicating a faster than average growth rate. The technology industry is primarily male-

dominated, but technology organizations can make strides to diversify their current employee pools by hiring more women. If IT industry occupations continue to increase per BLS expectations, there will be more technology positions available than there are people to fill them (Csorny, 2013). Organizations can benefit by making themselves attractive to female recruits in order to fill these jobs.

A breakdown by sex and racial status from the BLS showed that women make up approximately 25.6% of all computer and mathematical occupations while Black or African American individuals make up 8.3%, Asian individuals represent 19.2%, and Hispanics make up 6.6% of the industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Several occupations fall under the broader IT category with some examples including computer and information research scientists, computer support specialists, programmers, and developers. This study assessed how the constructs of FSS, work-family conflict, and supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity interrelated for women who work in the IT sector and live in the southern United States region.

Study Contribution

This research contributes in important ways to the current body of literature and practice related to the industrial world. First, because there are few studies that focus on diversity in work-family issues, perceptions, and practices, this study could provide much-needed information about potential differences and similarities that might exist in the experiences of women of various races. Additionally, research has shown that organizations and supervisors who support efforts designed to reduce work-family conflict are more likely to ensure that subordinates will utilize those benefits (Smith & Gardner, 2007). This suggests that it is not enough for employers to initiate policies that are family-friendly, but it is important for supervisors to actively encourage and provide support that corresponds with said policies.

Studies such as this one have the potential to help organizations understand the predictors of FSS behaviors, which could be useful in policy development, training, and supervisor selection. This has implications for underrepresented populations in the workforce as well. Women, minorities, and minority women are generally less likely to have organizational leadership who represent them in term of gender and or racial makeup (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), minorities are underrepresented among managers and supervisors in the Computer and Information Systems industry with Black or African American individuals making up 6.3% of all management and Asians and Hispanics representing 11.6% and 4.9% of managers and supervisors, respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

If the provision of rewards such as FSS is based, in part, on shared gender or racial similarity, women, minorities, and minority women may be placed at a disadvantage in relation to their counterparts who might share demographic similarity with supervisors, and in turn, be privy to FSS provision. Studies such as this one will assess how this might impact the daily lives of employees who are underrepresented in their respective workforce. Finally, the desire from employees for work-family balance and flexibility implies organizations that are able to offer FSS and similar interventions will eventually become the organizations that recruit and retain a more productive and satisfied group of employees.

Theory Framing the Research

Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), and the principles of relational demography (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989) were used to structure this study as these frameworks best described why the observed research problem exists. According to SIT, when individuals self-identify, they do so

on the basis of salient characteristics that exist in comparison to a larger group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). There is a strong emotional attachment to the adopted self-identity, and in an effort to reduce uncertainty about their place in society, increase their own self-esteem, and enhance self-image group members work to advance the prominence of the group with which they identify (Reid & Hogg, 2005). Self-categorization is the cognitive experience that leads individuals to engage in group-normative behavior that enhances group status (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). The group normative behavior that individuals participate in leads to depersonalization, a phenomenon that occurs when individuals assume that all members of the group share the same characteristics, including their own (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Depersonalization is the pre-cursor to stereotyping wherein individuals adopt an “us versus them” attitude about non-members of the group, and assume that because someone is not in the same group as they are in, they fail to share commonalities (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Together, SIT and self-categorization theory are referred to as the social identity approach (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

The “us versus them” mentality that is developed during self-categorization is a by-product of the in-group versus out-group phenomenon. Essentially, individuals characterize those who are similar to them as being members of the in-group, while all dissimilar people are members of the out-group (Turner et al., 1979). Individuals in an in-group will enhance negative characteristics of out-group members while simultaneously promoting positive characteristics of in-group members due to the emotional attachment placed on being part of the group (Tajfel, 1981). Being that self-image is so closely tied to group membership, it is reasonable to expect that this group normative behavior will occur in various aspects of life including in work organizations.

While there are several shared characteristics that individuals can use to self-identify, in this study it was proposed that in-group members would self-identify partly on the basis of demographic characteristics such as race or gender as these are enduring, salient physiognomies. This self-identification would lead to self-categorization and group normative behavior that is intended to enhance the status of the in-group while lessening the position of an out-group. It was argued that one facet of group-normative behavior that will present itself among supervisors in organizations is the provision of FSS. General supervisor support is determined by several antecedents, one of which is relationship formation (Bagger & Li, 2014). Relationship formation is determined, in part, by shared similarity and liking (Bakar & McCann, 2014). That is, when supervisors and subordinates find shared commonalities and similarities, they are more likely to like each other which leads to the formation of relationships, and in turn, the provision of beneficial rewards like FSS. SIT and self-categorization was used to explain this occurrence.

Relational demography principles were used to bolster the SIT and self-categorization arguments for the examined hypotheses. Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) defined relational demography as “the comparative demographic characteristics of members of dyads or groups who are in a position to engage in regular interactions” (p. 403). Simply stated, relational demography is demographic differences between individuals that might impact the way they behave with one another in day-to-day engagements. There is evidence to support similarity-attraction in that individuals who are demographically similar to coworkers and supervisors in organizations are more likely to display work group cohesiveness, liking, and positive work group affect (Goldberg, Riordan, & Schaffer, 2010; Schaffer & Riordan, 2013).

The social identity approach is ideal for this study because the supervisor-subordinate similarity construct provides an opportunity to measure the in-group favorable bias phenomenon.

According to the social identity approach, individuals show favoritism and reward those who with whom they identify with (on the basis of a salient characteristic) while simultaneously disadvantaging those who they do not identify with (Turner et al., 1979). According to the social identity approach, supervisors will show in-group favoritism bias to subordinates who they identify with on the basis of some salient characteristic, such as race.

In this study, it was suggested that the social identity approach would underlie relational demography principles and that subordinates who shared race or gender identification with supervisors would report lower work-family conflict in part because supervisors engage in group normative behavior that enhances the status of group members who are like them. This group normative behavior would be demonstrated by FSS provision serving as a mediator between the supervisor-similarity and work-family conflict relationship as there is already a strong negative relationship between FSS and work-family conflict (Goh et al., 2015). Additionally, it was argued that racial or gender similarities between subordinates and supervisors would predict FSS provision because of the fact that the social identity approach posits that individuals would show favoritism to others who shared similarities with them.

Significance of the Study

Supervisor support and work-family conflict are constructs that have become important to organizations and individuals alike. Because supervisor family support has been shown to impact how and whether or not employees experience work-family conflict (Breugh & Frye, 2008), it is essential to research the determinants of FSS as well as whether or not there is implicit or explicit bias in terms of which employees receive this informal benefit. Employees who do not share the same gender or racial category as their supervisors may be placed at a disadvantage that leaves them prone to experience challenges related to work-family conflict.

Since statistics show that women and minority women are less likely to share the same gender or racial category as supervisors (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), studies such as the present are key in empirically determining how that bias might present itself.

FSS has a consistent negative relationship with work-family conflict (Straub, 2012) while work-family conflict is positively related to a number of adverse individual and organizational consequences such as poor marital and family relationships (MacEwen & Barling, 1994), burnout (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996) and turnover intentions (Săucan, Marhan, & Micle, 2014). FSS is largely beneficial in preventing negative outcomes related to work-family conflict. Additionally, FSS is key in determining the effectiveness and success of organizational work-family policies as individuals are less likely to use said policies when supervisors fail to demonstrate FSS behavior (Straub, 2012). General supervisor and organizational support have been shown to impact employee workplace creativity (Appu & Kumar Sia, 2015), burnout related to emotional exhaustion (Gibson, 2009), and subordinate performance (Beauregard & Henry, 2009) suggesting its substantial value to organizational productivity. In turn, studies that determine which factors lead to FSS provision and how this impacts individuals have essential implications for organizational policy and practice as well as academic theory.

Despite its theoretical and practical implications, research regarding the determinants of FSS is limited. There have been studies that linked gender and racial similarity between supervisors and subordinates to work outcomes such as FSS and subordinate performance ratings (Foley, Linnehan, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2006; Pulakos & Wexley, 1983). In terms of other determinants of FSS, there has been research that has given credence to the idea that FSS is provided to employees who seek out the informal reward from supervisors (Hanson, 2012). That

is, research has found a correlation between the provision of FSS and employees who are forthcoming with their desire for FSS provision.

Evidence that connects excessive work-family conflict with a number of negative outcomes for both individuals and organizations has been presented (S. E. Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002). For individuals, work-family conflict has been shown to impact performance, productivity (Beauregard & Henry, 2009), health (Jensen & Rundmo, 2015; Shockley & Allen, 2013), family relationships (Nomaguchi, 2012), and job and life satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Newman et al., 2015). In organizations, the persistence of employee work-family conflict means a decrease in productivity (S. E. Anderson et al., 2002), higher health care costs due to the effect on employee health (Jensen & Rundmo, 2015), and even intentional service sabotage (Wanwen Daixiaoyan Chenarnulf, 2014). These outcomes cost both time and money for individuals and organizations while simultaneously impacting families, spouses, and loved ones who often suffer as a result of continuous work-family conflict as well.

Tremendous consequences occur in the presence of sustained work-family conflict, and research results indicate that increased work-family conflict is related to increased performance self-esteem and vice-versa (Richter, Schraml, & Leineweber, 2015). That is, individuals who place personal value on their work accomplishments are more likely to experience work-family conflict, and those individuals who experience work-family conflict are more likely to place high value on their work accomplishments. This implies that certain individuals may be more susceptible to strain that occurs from work-family conflict.

Families and loved ones of individuals who experience work-family conflict are impacted by the stress it causes as well. Individuals with families and/or small children are likely to experience behavioral consequences of work-family conflict. Research has shown that there is a

negative relationship between WFC and parent-child interactive behavior (Cho & Allen, 2012). Interestingly, this relationship is moderated by feelings of guilt on behalf of parents. For parents who experience time and strain-based WFC, there is a higher likelihood that there will be reduced behavioral interaction with children including educational and recreational play; however the presence of strong feelings of guilt lessened this effect. Nonetheless, finding ways to alleviate WFC may help increase the amount of time parents can spend with children.

For individuals who are in the establishment life stage wherein they are newly married or in a child-rearing life stage, the presence of work-family conflict presents demonstrated challenges (Erickson, Martinengo, & Hill, 2010). Work-family conflict has been shown to predict cognitive difficulties, anxiety, and depression on a daily basis, which in turn, predict marital behavior between spouses along with withdrawal from family (MacEwen & Barling, 1994). For dual-earner parents of adolescents, work-family conflict has been related to poorer father-teen relationships for men (Crouter, Bumpas, Head, & McHale, 2001) while women experience more WFC when children are between the ages of 3 and 12 years old (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014).

In a study that specifically assessed the impact of work-family conflict on the marital satisfaction for African American couples, researchers found that an increase in work-family conflict was related to a decrease in marital satisfaction (St. Vil, 2014). For African American men and women in the study, marital satisfaction was based on differing levels of work-family conflict. Men were more satisfied in marriages wherein work-family conflict was lower while women were satisfied if work-family conflict was high as long as both spouses experienced it at a relatively equal interval. That is, for African American women, an increase in marital satisfaction was related to fairness in work-family conflict whereas men were more satisfied

when work-family conflict was diminished (St. Vil, 2014). This suggests a gender difference for this particular sample and implies that policy related to work-family conflict may need to accommodate differences in gender perception.

While work-family conflict consists of both FWC and WFC, these two constructs sometimes impact individual and organizational outcomes differently (Byron, 2005). The FWC category of work-family conflict has specific consequences for service organizations (Wanwen Daixiaoyan Chenarnulf, 2014). In a study that demonstrates these findings, researchers collected data from 132 employees working in a call center. Researchers found that employees, who were experiencing FWC, were more likely to engage in service sabotage via emotional exhaustion. That is, when employees were emotionally exhausted due to FWC, they were more likely to engage in negative service behavior to intentionally harm the organization (Wanwen Daixiaoyan Chenarnulf, 2014). For example, individuals who reported feeling strain associated with family responsibilities impacting effective work were more likely to engage in counterproductive negative behavior such as intentionally keeping a call-center customer on hold for a long period of time. This research suggests that work-family conflict does not only have dire consequences for individuals, but that organizations may be affected negatively as well.

Organizations that promote FSS will be more likely to alleviate consequences related to employee work-family conflict as family-supportive organizational environments have been shown to explain a significant portion of the variance in work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Allen, 2001). This study is significant in that it contributes largely to research surrounding the determinants of FSS and how supervisor-subordinate similarity might impact reports of work-family conflict and FSS provision. There are implications for organizational policy and practice related to supervisor training, work-family policies and

procedures, and diversity while the results of this study contribute to a growing body of academic knowledge regarding the topics.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are listed and operationally defined for the purpose of this study.

- **Family-Supportive Supervision** “refers to the empathy and actions provided by supervisors to help their subordinates achieve greater balance between their work and family responsibilities” (Greenhaus, Ziegert, & Allen, 2012 p. 266).
- **Work-Family Conflict** is “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 p. 77).
- **Supervisor-Subordinate Similarity** refers to the state of subordinates sharing the same racial or gender category as their supervisors as reported by subordinates

Summary and Organization of Report

Chapter 1 introduced the background of the study along with the context in which the study was completed, study contribution, theoretical framework, significance of the study, and operational definition of key terms used throughout the paper. Work-family issues have generated substantial interest due to the fact that the number of single parent and dual-earner households has increased combined with employee desire and organizational spending on programs directly related to work-family balance. Further, interest in the experiences of a multi-cultural labor force has increased as the workforce has diversified significantly. Women, who are increasing their presence in the technology sector, may face unique challenges related to work-

family conflict; therefore, this study was conducted with women who work in the technology industry.

Supervisors who provide family-supportive supervision (FSS) to employees are likely to help reduce the challenges associated with work-family conflict and increase employee perceptions of work-family balance. Work-family conflict has a consistent negative relationship with both FSS and work-family balance such that in the presence of FSS and or work-family balance, work-family conflict is decreased. This has implications for organizations and individuals alike who are determining methods for decreasing work-family conflict. Additionally, FSS is significant in ensuring the success of organizational work-family policies. One way to impact policy and practice in organizations is to evaluate what factors lead to FSS provision on behalf of supervisors.

In order to assess factors related to the determinants of FSS while also exploring the experiences of a multicultural workforce, this research evaluated FSS in the context of supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity. Since women and minorities tend to be underrepresented in the computer and technology industry, they may experience consequences related to in-group and out-group bias according to SIT and self-categorization theory. The principles of these theories contend that individuals self-identify based on similarities that they share with a larger group.

Individuals who share salient characteristics belong to an in-group while individuals who are dissimilar from them belong to the out-group. Once individuals have categorized into an in-group, they began engaging in-group normative behavior designed to reduce uncertainty about themselves in the larger context and increase self-esteem and self-worth. Group normative behavior can result in in-group favoritism bias, as individuals prefer to enhance the status of the

group with which they identify. This study argued that, for subordinates who shared racial or gender similarity with supervisors, there would be a greater likelihood that supervisors would provide FSS due to in-group favoritism bias. These individuals would also be less likely to experience work-family conflict than individuals who were dissimilar from supervisors.

The next chapter will provide the literature review section of this dissertation to further explain the existing research surrounding work-family conflict, FSS, supervisor-subordinate similarity outcomes, SIT, self-categorization, and relational demography. Following that, the Methodology chapter will provide a detailed report of how the study was conducted including the population sample selection, procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis plan. The Results chapter will discuss the results of the analysis while the Discussion chapter will provide implications, limitations, and a final conclusion for the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study was to examine reported work-family conflict for employees who are similar to supervisors in race or gender and employees who are dissimilar to supervisors in race or gender. Additionally, this study tested whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity could predict FSS provision on behalf of supervisors and whether or not FSS played a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity and lowered work-family conflict.

A review of work-family research, supervisor-subordinate relational demography, and FSS literatures yielded a wealth of information relevant to this study. Work-family conflict and FSS are defined and explored in depth throughout the literature review, and hypotheses related to the variables are stated at the end of each relevant section. A brief history of the conceptualization of work-family balance is presented followed by a discussion of work-family conflict and the connection between work-family balance and the work-family conflict construct. Supervisor-subordinate similarity and subsequent outcomes are discussed as well. In addition to reviewing the literature on the constructs in the study, a more in-depth discussion of the theories framing this research, social identity theory, self-categorization theory, and relational demography, is presented.

Work-Family Balance and Work-Family Conflict

Work-family balance (also known as *work-life balance*) has yet to be consistently defined in the literature despite the wealth of research conducted on the topic. Recently, it has been defined as the “ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully” (Wheatley, 2012 p. 815). Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) characterize work-family balance in their research by defining the term as the “accomplishment

of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (p. 458). Clark (2000), explicitly defines work-family balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751) while Carlson & Frone (2003), provide a conceptualization that is more closely aligned with the construct measurement in this study by contending that work-family balance is essentially the absence of work-family conflict combined with the presence of work-family enrichment. Fundamentally, work-family balance is measured by the indicators of an efficacious balance between both work and family roles (Clark, 2000) although there is still a lack of consensus regarding the definition and measurement of the construct (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

The work-family conflict construct is made up of the dimensions work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Work-to-family conflict (WFC), (also referred to as work-interference-with family), describes a phenomenon wherein the demands of work roles interfere with family or non-work obligations thereby clashing and causing conflict (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Spector, Allen, Poelmans, Lapierre, Cooper, O’Driscoll, Shima, 2007). The presence of WFC has been linked to fatigue, distress, job exhaustion, and dissatisfaction at work and in non-work environments (Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). Family interference with work or family-to-work conflict (FWC) describes the personal life interference with work dimension during which family or non-work obligations hamper work performance and causes strain or pressure (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Family interference with work has been linked to fatigue and low family satisfaction (Kinnunen, Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006) and has been found to predict aggression towards supervisors and colleagues (Liu et al., 2015).

Together, these constructs create the inter-role conflict known as work-family conflict that is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 p. 77). There is a consistent negative relationship between work-family conflict and work-family balance (Kossek et al., 2011). For the purpose of this research work-family conflict served as an umbrella term to refer to WFC and FWC, and was measured in terms of WFC and FWC.

Determinants and Consequences of Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict has its roots in conflict theory, and is understood to be a type of role conflict (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Role conflict as defined by Kahn et al.(1964) is defined as the “occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (p. 19). In the case of work-family conflict, prioritizing work responsibilities over family responsibilities or family over work has the potential to cause strain for individuals as the two roles are competing for attention, time, and behavior. Work-family conflict can be time based, strain-based, or behavior-based; therefore, work or family pressures that impact an individual’s time, strain, or behavior within a specific role will result in conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The concept of work-family conflict is split into two domains: FWC and WFC, and these two variables are thought to have an indirect reciprocal relationship. That is, they have a direct relationship with each other through other indirect variables such as role overload related to family or work (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). A large body of knowledge has examined the determinants and consequences of work-family conflict, and while expansive, the literature has produced mixed results (Byron, 2005). Work-specific variables that have been associated with work-family conflict include job stress (Syrek, Apostel, & Antoni, 2013), role overload, schedule

flexibility (Albertsen, Persson, Garde, & Rugulies, 2010), and support at work (Allen, 2001) while family-specific variables associated with this type of role conflict include non-work involvement, family support (Adams et al., 1996), spousal employment, and number of children living at home (Brett & Yogeve, 1988).

In a study that specifically examined the determinants of work-family conflict, Lambert, Minor, Wells, and Hogan (2015) collected 160 surveys from staff members in a private, maximum-security juvenile detention facility to measure work-family conflict, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of job. For this sample, researchers found that perceived dangerousness of job, role conflict, and role overload were all related to work-family conflict perceptions. That is, individuals who felt that they stood a good chance of being harmed at work were more likely to believe that their work and non-work roles conflicted. Further, individuals who reported role conflict, or that they received conflicting assignments and duties in their job role, were more likely to report higher work-family conflict. Finally, those staff members who felt that the amount of tasks they were responsible for was overwhelmingly high were likely to report higher work-family conflict as it related to role overload (Lambert, Minor, Wells, & Hogan, 2015). This study implies that perceived dangerousness of the job, role conflict, and role overload are determinants of work-family conflict for the sampled population.

Demographic variables have been shown to determine FWC and WFC, but only to a certain extent. Gender is not considered to be a strong predictor of conflict although it has been demonstrated that there is a small significant difference between how men and women experience conflict with men experiencing more WFC and women experiencing slightly more FWC (Byron, 2005). In terms of marital status, single women with children are more likely to experience FWC than single women without children, married men with or without, and married

women with children (Nomaguchi, 2012). A demonstrated instance of how demographic variables relate to work-family conflict lies in research by Huffman, Culbertson, Henning, and Goh (2013) that evaluated work-family conflict across the lifespan. Researchers collected data from two large samples (sample sizes 3,552 and 2,852, respectively) to explore how age is related to work-family conflict during different life stages. Individuals who are in the prime of their career typically experience the most work-family conflict, and this is likely to occur between the ages of 25 and 49. This group is also more likely to experience stringent job and family demands as they are typically starting families and raising children which all contributes to higher work-family conflict. The work-life balance and age demographic relationship is curvilinear with those who are younger or older experiencing less work-family conflict than individuals between the ages of 25 and 49 (Huffman et al., 2013). Examining how work, family, and demographic factors preclude work-family conflict is imperative in developing policy to decrease the amount of strain that occurs as a result.

The strain-related consequences of consistently experiencing work-family conflict have been well documented in the literature, with the effects of both FWC and WFC varying slightly (Ng & Feldman, 2014). Research has supported the fact that ever-present FWC is linked to an increase in turnover intentions (Săucan et al., 2014) along with a decrease in life satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lu, Kao, Chang, Wu, & Cooper, 2011). Predictably, affective commitment is positively related to work-family conflict such that employees with significant emotional attachment to their organizations are more likely to experience strain due to work priorities infringing on family responsibilities (Zhang, Griffeth, & Fried, 2012). Both WFC and FWC have been linked to other negative consequences for both individuals and organizations.

A recent study by Jensen and Rundmo (2015) examined the individual consequences of work-family conflict on the health outcomes of business travelers to determine if there were associations between work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, gastrointestinal problems, and musculoskeletal pain. The results of the study found that emotional exhaustion mediated the positive relationship between work-family conflict and health outcomes such as musculoskeletal pain and gastrointestinal disorders. Additional research shows that work-family conflict is linked to detrimental health consequences such as an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, yet this relationship is moderated by family-supportive supervision (Shockley & Allen, 2013). This has implications for individuals and organizations alike as employee health impacts unplanned absenteeism and productivity, (Johns, 2011) as well as organizational healthcare costs (Webster, 2006). This implies that alleviating work-family conflict with family-supportive supervision may make substantial differences in employee health and organization productivity.

In a study that demonstrates how work-family conflict impacts displaced aggression and emotional exhaustion, authors Liu et al. (2015) found evidence that suggests that FWC that occurs earlier in the day results in displaced aggression towards colleagues and family members as well as emotional exhaustion throughout the afternoon and evening. FSS behavior on behalf of supervisors buffered this relationship. For example, participants who reported that their family responsibilities impeded on their abilities to do a good job at work were also more likely to report that they often lashed out at colleagues and family members when they were angry regardless of who was at fault. Participants who experienced work-family conflict were also more likely to report that they felt emotionally drained by work. For participants who stated that supervisors were understanding when family obligations interfered with work, the relationships between conflict and emotional exhaustion and conflict and displaced aggression were

diminished. The research surrounding the consequences of work-family conflict suggests that reducing the frequency of occurrence would provide benefits for businesses and workers alike.

Support as a Means for Reducing Conflict

According to researchers who surveyed 100 employees about the benefits of work-family balance, there is a correlation between employee job satisfaction, job security, autonomy, and stress reduction with organizational interventions and policies meant to reduce work-family conflict (Chimote & Srivastava, 2013). Further, there is research that suggests that said policies result in improved employee attitudes, turnover intentions, employee commitment and perceptions of control over the work-life environment (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Failure to achieve work-family balance can be disadvantageous for employees and is related to increased stress and burnout, lack of concentration, and low alertness (S. E. Anderson et al., 2002; MacEwen & Barling, 1994). Behaviorally speaking, a lack of work-family balance also leads to reduced performance and increased absenteeism and turnover (S. E. Anderson et al., 2002; J. H. Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004).

For organizations, this means that adopting practices that reduce work-family conflict and in turn, increase work-family balance is vital to recruit and retain the best employees and meet organizational objectives. It is worth noting that there has been some research that suggests that organizations may not necessarily increase their bottom lines by simply implementing work-family balance policies; however, researchers maintain that reduced absenteeism and turnover, enhanced corporate image, and better recruiting is worth the implementation of work-family balance practices and can result in gains for the company (Bloom, Kretschmer, & Van Reenen, 2011). There are several way organizations can reduce work-family conflict including

implementing policy that supports employees and ensuring that supervisors provide essential support to subordinates (Breaugh & Frye, 2008).

There is a wealth of research that calls for reducing work-family conflict via social support with family, spousal, and strategic supervisor support being positively related to a reduction in conflict (Allen, 2001). In a study assessing how lack of reciprocity, lack of supervisor support, and work-family conflict affected emotional exhaustion, Tayfur (2013) collected data from physicians in public and private hospitals. The results of this study confirmed that the presence of supervisory support alleviated emotional exhaustion and a lack thereof was related to poor reciprocal relationships with patients and higher work-family conflict (Tayfur & Arslan, 2013). Finally, an additional study that attests to the power of supervisor support in the workplace found that while an increase in day-to-day perceived workload could predict work-family conflict, introducing family-supportive supervision into the equation negatively moderated this relationship (Goh et al., 2015). The research suggests that employees who are able to generate family support from supervisors will be less likely to experience strain related to work-family conflict.

Maintaining positive, quality relationships with supervisors is one way that employers can benefit from rewards like supervisor support in the workplace (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Ilies, 2009). There are several antecedents to forming mutually positive relationships with supervisors including the degree of mutual liking (S. J. Wayne & Green, 1993), extra-role behavior by employees, and leader member exchange (S. J. Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Typically, similarity plays a vast role in relationship formation, liking, and provision of support as well, with individuals who share similarities with supervisors such as personality, conscientiousness, and demographic characteristics more likely to benefit from role-conflict reducing family-

supportive supervisory behavior and job satisfaction (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Vecchio & Bullis, 2001). Overall, the literature suggests that employers who can implement work-family practices—particularly those that involve enhancing supervisor and social support—can benefit tremendously directly and indirectly while individuals who achieve work-family balance will reduce risks associated with work-family conflict.

Family-Supportive Supervision (FSS)

One of the specific ways in which organizations can help employees reduce work-family conflict is by providing family support via policy and practice to employees when it comes to work and familial responsibilities. Supervisors who show family support to employees are more likely to have subordinates who perceive high levels of work-family balance and in turn are privy to benefits associated with such (Bagger & Li, 2014; Breugh & Frye, 2008; Fiksenbaum, 2014). Supervisor family support has been assessed in the literature and shown to influence work-family conflict and work-family balance perceptions making employees more satisfied with their work lives and more likely to be engaged in the organization (Breugh & Frye, 2008; Fiksenbaum, 2014). Moreover, research has shown that family-specific constructs of supervisor support or FSS are more strongly related to work-family conflict than general supervisor support (Kossek et al., 2011).

Family-supportive supervision (FSS) can be described by specific behaviors exhibited on behalf of supervisors that are supportive of subordinates' family priorities (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2008). There are four types of behaviors that fall under the category of FSS including emotional support, instrumental support, role model behavior, and recognition of the importance of work-family issues (Straub, 2012). Emotional support relates to employee perceptions that they are receiving consideration regarding work-family issues such as

supervisors providing empathy or concern, while instrumental support is tangible and refers to the concrete tactics supervisors engage in order to help employees balance work and family. Role modeling behavior is the extent to which supervisors demonstrate their own work-family management, which provides an example for how employees should integrate work and family issues. The final type of FSS behavior is strategically recognizing the importance of work-family issues and deals with how supervisors work at a higher organizational level to strategically alleviate work-family conflict for subordinates (Straub, 2012). These behavior types encapsulate FSS in a conceptual manner, and categorize more figurative behaviors that make up FSS.

FSS can be formal (such as policies created by the organization and implemented through supervisors) or informal (such as showing empathy to an employee dealing with a difficult family issue). Concrete examples of FSS include supervisors encouraging subordinates to utilize organizational work-life balance policies and working to remove negative stereotypes associated with utilizing said policies or devoting time to family issues (Straub, 2012). According to Hammer et al., (2007) employee perceptions of FSS can be influenced by formal and informal policies in the organization, organizational climate, and supervisory supportive behavior. In examining the impact of alternative work arrangements and supervisor support on perceptions of work-family balance, researchers hypothesized that high levels of senior management, immediate, and superior support would lead to the ability to balance personal, work, and family needs (Julien, Somerville, & Culp, 2011). Using an extant data sample of 2,872 subjects from 57 different organizations, work-life conflict and support perceptions were measured using the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES). Results from the analysis showed support for all hypotheses regarding supervisor support and ability to balance both work and non-work

priorities implying that providing employees with support in the workplace helps alleviate role conflict.

A multi-level conceptual framework by Straub (2012) attempted to explain the antecedents of FSS behavior. It was discovered that there are individual-level factors that serve as antecedents or pre-cursors to supervisors engaging in FSS behavior (Straub, 2012). One notable factor is that of the manager's felt responsibility for engaging in supportive behavior. The researcher contended that when managers themselves have personally felt the constraints of work-family conflict, they are more likely to socially identify with employees who are also feeling those constraints. That identification leads them to be sympathetic, and in turn, influences a felt responsibility for engaging in supportive behavior. In addition to this felt responsibility, Straub's (2012) research contends that other antecedents for FSS behavior include social identity or group categorization (which is the basis for this study), and gender roles with researchers proposing that female managers are more likely to engage in FSS behavior as opposed to male managers (Straub, 2012). This framework suggests that managers and supervisors who can find a way to identify with employees, particularly in salient social categories such as gender, will be more apt to providing FSS.

In a noteworthy study by Foley, Linnehan, Greenhaus, and Weer (2006) assessing which subordinates were more likely to receive FSS from supervisors, researchers hypothesized that there would be a strong linkage between gender similarity and FSS, as well as a positive linkage between racial similarity and FSS. They used a sample of approximately 2500 employees from a variety of jobs and backgrounds. The majority of the sample was White (approximately 79%) while a small minority identified as Black or African American (approximately 11%) and another group identified as "Other" (approximately 21%). FSS was measured by using items on

a scale developed by the Families and Work Institute asking employees about their supervisors' supportive behavior. Results showed support for both hypotheses—there is, in fact, a positive relationship between both gender and racial similarities and FSS. Supervisors were more likely to provide family support to subordinates who were similar to them in both gender and race followed by those similar in either gender or race (Foley et al., 2006). These findings essentially exhibit how FSS can be impacted by shared, salient characteristics, specifically race and gender.

The aforementioned studies demonstrate how demographic dissimilarity may put individuals who are not similar to supervisors at risk of not receiving favorable outcomes such as FSS and in turn denying them the work-life balance benefits that accompany said support. In contrast, employees who are demographically similar to supervisors can be at an advantage to benefit both professionally and personally from FSS offered to them. Lack of FSS and the subsequent work-family conflict that can come from it can impact organizations negatively resulting in higher costs related to turnover and absenteeism as well as recruiting and image branding issues (S. E. Anderson et al., 2002; J. H. Wayne et al., 2004).

Carlson and Perrewé (1999) found that social support in the workplace mediates the stressor-conflict relationship in that it reduces the likelihood that situations that might otherwise be considered stressful would lead to work-family conflict. While supervisor-subordinate dissimilarity might not be considered a stressor in its own right, research has shown that there are disadvantages to being dissimilar from supervisors in the workplace (Lankau, Riordan, & Thomas, 2005; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002). In fact, the results of a study by (Ragins, 1997) suggested that for mentees who are in a diverse mentor-mentee dyads, there is an decreased likelihood that they will experience positive and beneficial outcomes such as peer acceptance

and career advancement. This suggests a practical value to implementing FSS practices in organizations as well as ensuring that all employees have equal provision of supportive policies.

Similarity and Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships

In this study, supervisor-subordinate similarity refers to the state of subordinates and supervisors sharing either the same racial or gender category. Throughout academic literature, supervisor-subordinate similarity has been classified by type with three recognized types of similarity recognized in research. Perceived supervisor-subordinate similarity relates to how similar the individuals in the dyad believe themselves to be. Perceptual congruence is how similar in behavior the individuals are, and actual similarity deals with existing similarities between supervisors and subordinates (Turban & Jones, 1988). The similarity type that most closely aligns with the definition of supervisor-subordinate similarity in this research is that of actual similarity. Supervisor-subordinate similarity and supervisor-subordinate dissimilarity (the state of being different from supervisors) has been shown to correlate with a number of work outcomes for both organizations and individuals including relationship quality (Kacmar, Harris, Carlson, & Zivnuska, 2009), perceived employee discrimination (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2008), recruitment outcomes (Roebken, 2010), and, notable to this study, the provision of FSS (Foley et al., 2006). This section will expand on the literature surrounding supervisor-subordinate similarity and relationship outcomes that impact individuals and organizations.

The quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships may influence the degree to which supervisors provide support to employees regarding family issues and other outcomes related to work-family balance (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2012). It is well documented that relationship quality in supervisor-subordinate dyads may be poorer for those subordinates who are different or dissimilar from their supervisors (Lankau, Riordan, & Thomas, 2005; Tsui, Porter, & Egan,

2002). Moreover, research exploring gender similarities and the influence on evaluations of applicants and job candidates found that female recruiters were more likely to view female candidates favorably and, in turn, rate them higher than male candidates suggesting that sex similarity has an influence on work-related outcomes (Graves & Powell, 1996).

A detailed example of how similarity impacts relationship quality lies in a study conducted by Vecchio and Bullis (2001). The researchers assessed gender, racial, and ethnic similarities of supervisor-subordinate dyads in the military and found moderate support for the association between demographic similarity and subordinate satisfaction. The lowest levels of satisfaction were expressed by white subordinates who were directly managed by a non-white supervisor (Vecchio & Bullis, 2001). This implies that demographic similarity can influence relationship quality within the supervisor-subordinate dyads. In addition to the aforementioned example, there are several other outcomes related to supervisor-subordinate similarity, or lack thereof.

Relational demography research has demonstrated that employees who are dissimilar to supervisors experience varied work outcomes compared to those who share similarities such as gender, age, national origin (Loi & Ngo, 2009), racial category (Avery, Volpone, McKay, King, & Wilson, 2012), and personality type (Cunningham, 2007) with their supervisors. Specifically, a study aiming to assess the relationship between supervisor-subordinate dyads that share similarities like gender and national origin and those dyads that are dissimilar in those categories found that dissimilar dyads had lower levels of leader-member exchange (LMX), lower levels of subordinate trust in the organization, and lower levels of in-role performance (Loi & Ngo, 2009). The study implies that similarity and dissimilarity within the dyads impact outcomes across various levels within the organization.

Supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity impacts how subordinates perceive discrimination in the workplace with perceived race-based discrimination being prevalent among Black and Hispanic employees; those effects are diminished when supervisors are part of the same racial category as subordinates (Avery et al., 2008). Further, racial category similarity influences perceptions of procedural justice and job satisfaction (Wesolowski & Mossholder, 1997) with research showing support for the idea that individuals working under supervisors who share the same demographic similarities as them being more likely to perceive fairness and demonstrate contentment with work. The implications for organizations are significant as perceived employment discrimination can lead to lawsuits that impact bottom line and reputation (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006).

One particular instance of how shared racial similarity impacts perception and reality for subordinates lies in research conducted by Grissom and Keiser (2011) about supervisor-subordinate racial similarity, employee job satisfaction, and turnover in the public sector. After compiling data from several different surveys assessing teacher work decisions, hiring statistics, salary, and staffing, researchers found data to support their hypotheses that teachers in the public sector would report lower job satisfaction levels when supervisors did not share the same racial category as them. Turnover was higher for teachers who were racially dissimilar from supervisors as well. Researchers also conducted an analysis between rate of supplementary pay (pay that is given at the discretion of principals for extracurricular work completed by teachers) and supervisor-subordinate racial similarity, and found that teachers who shared the same racial category as principals received up to \$500.00 more in supplemental pay per year than teachers in the same school who did not share the same racial category as principals. Racially dissimilar teachers tended to perceive more discrimination and less provision of informal rewards such as

administrative support, autonomy in the classroom, and general encouragement for a job well done (Grissom & Keiser, 2011).

Statement of Hypotheses

Given the literature review findings, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Subordinates who are racially similar to supervisors will report lower levels of work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC) than subordinates who are dissimilar to supervisors in terms of race.

Hypothesis 2: Subordinates who are similar to supervisors in gender will report lower levels of work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC) than subordinates who are dissimilar to supervisors in terms of gender.

Hypothesis 3: Supervisor-subordinate racial similarity will predict the likelihood that supervisors will provide FSS.

Hypothesis 4: Supervisor-subordinate gender similarity will predict the likelihood that supervisors will provide FSS.

Hypothesis 5: The variable FSS will mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and reduced work-family conflict. The following conditions will be met:

- a. There will be a positive relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and FSS.
- b. There will be a positive relationship between FSS and reduced work-family conflict as measured by FWC and WFC.
- c. There will be a positive relationship supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and reduced work-family conflict as measured by FWC and WFC.

Hypothesis 6: The variable FSS will mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and reduced work-family conflict. The following conditions will be met:

- a. There will be a positive relationship between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and FSS
- b. There will be a positive relationship FSS and reduced work-family conflict as measured by FWC and WFC.
- c. There will be a positive relationship between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and reduced work-family conflict as measured by FWC and WFC.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Identity Approach

Social identity theory (SIT) and the closely related self-categorization theory—collectively referred to as the social identity approach—combined with the principles of relational demography was employed to explain how supervisor-subordinate similarity can influence provision of FSS and in turn, work-family conflict. The social identity approach was ideal for this study because it was expected that supervisors would be more likely to identify with subordinates when supervisor-subordinate dyads were demographically similar thus making them members of the in-group. Due to in-group favoritism bias, supervisors would provide them with rewards resulting in the provision of FSS and reduced work-family conflict. It was offered that this would occur, due to group normative behavior that occurs as a result of self-identifying with a group category.

The concept of social identity can be described as a person's self-awareness and sense of belonging to a certain group combined with a substantial emotional attachment to that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group membership is defined by two or more people self-identifying in

the same way or sharing a sense of social identity defined by a larger collective group such as religious affiliation, race, gender, or organizational membership (Hogg & Reid, 2006). SIT posits that individuals will attempt to maintain a positive social identity and increase their self-esteem to ensure a sense of belonging to a specific group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals identify with an in-group and compare themselves against a relevant out-group in an attempt to maintain a favorable social identity and sense of self. Motivations for engaging in these categorizations have been studied, and research has shown that individuals align themselves with an in-group to increase self-esteem and reduce uncertainty about themselves within the overall social context (Mullin & Hogg, 1999).

Self-categorization theory is the other component of the social identity approach and explains the cognitive process of how individuals identify with groups and manifest behaviors based on one or more shared similarities (i.e., African-American males or little league football players) (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Self-categorization is the driver that causes our perceptions and feelings thus producing in-group normative behavior and accentuating in-group similarities (Hogg & Reid, 2006). For example, engineers who work at an organization primarily geared toward chemical engineering may self-categorize based on the fact that they are the technical component of the organization as opposed to the employees who do business administrative work. Although both technical (i.e., engineers) and business (i.e., administration) employees are essential to the organization's success, self-categorization based on shared similarities will cause individuals to engage in thought patterns that accentuate those group similarities (i.e., being mechanical and methodical) and produce consistent normative behavior (i.e., expressing displeasure at the idea of taking HR-required sensitivity training).

Uncertainty reduction and self-enhancement are the two primary motivators for self-categorization (Reid & Hogg, 2005). According to Tajfel (1979), self-enhancement occurs because “individuals prefer a positive to a negative self-image” (p. 185). This encourages them to enhance the image of themselves by enhancing that of the group with which they identify. Reid and Hogg (2005) describe the self-categorization process by explaining how individuals create prototypes, or sets of attributes, for social category representation. These sets of attributes include perceptions, behaviors, and feelings, and they are grouped in a way that maximizes category distinction by enhancing similarities of in-groups and differences of out-groups. Self-categorization occurs because individuals categorize themselves based on the way that a specific social categorization describes the behavior of other individuals and themselves (Reid & Hogg, 2005). Due to the discomfort associated with subjective uncertainty about one’s self-concept, individuals work to self-categorize in an effort to reduce the uncertainty.

Hogg and Reid (2006) explain that, after self-categorization occurs, people are no longer perceived as individuals but instead they assess themselves and others against an in-group or out-group prototype. This is known as depersonalization or stereotyping. When members of an in-group are depersonalized, the outcome is largely beneficial for them. Other in-group members find them more relatable and can identify more closely with them thus increasing the likelihood that they will receive preferential treatment. Further, in-group favoritism and bias ensures that those group members will receive both formal and informal rewards simply for being aligned with the in-group (Buttelmann & Böhm, 2014; Turner et al., 1979). Depersonalization for out-group members is disadvantageous and often leads to negative stereotyping. Out-group members are prescribed the same attributes and are perceived as being very similar to one another but very dissimilar to those in the in-group (Hogg, Fielding, & Darley, 2005). Typically, members of the

out-group are not privy to the formal and informal rewards bestowed upon members of the in-group and may be discriminated against due to their out-group status (Turner et al., 1979).

There has been an academic consensus that in-group and out-group categorizations are formed on the basis of the most salient social identity characteristics (Turner et al., 1979). That is, self-categorization depends on the level of importance an individual has placed on a given identity characteristic. In the case of racial and gender identification, individuals are more likely to place high importance on these characteristics in mixed or diverse atmospheres resulting in the likelihood that they will be used in conjunction with other components for self-categorization (Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978). The self-categorization process of the social identity approach adequately explains how supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity can evoke favorable bias and how relational demography can influence behaviors and attitudes in organizations thus impacting employee work-family conflict.

Relational Demography and Supervisor-Subordinate Dyads

Relational demography is linked to SIT in that uncertainty reduction and status enhancement, two primary motives of SIT, have been found to moderate the relationship between demographic similarity and affective reaction towards work groups as well as racial similarity and group cohesiveness (Goldberg et al., 2010). That implies that when individuals are demographically similar to group members, they are more likely to hold positive emotions toward and be more interconnected with the group. This relationship is moderated by uncertainty reduction, or the “motive that reflects a need for meaning, knowledge, and understanding of self and the social world” (Reid & Hogg, 2005). It is also moderated by a desire to enhance self-image or maintain a positive self-concept (e.g., Tajfel, 1979).

Research involving personal characteristics and the influence of demographics on the formation of positive supervisor-subordinate dyads is conflicting (Green, Anderson, & Shivers, 1996; Matkin & Barbuto, 2012). Studies have shown that women and minorities are less likely to form mentoring relationships with white men and that sex similarity of supervisor-subordinate dyads has an influence on subordinate performance ratings (Dreher & Cox Jr, 1996; Pulakos & Wexley, 1983). Other studies have shown that race and gender play a small role in positive relationship formation between supervisors and subordinates, but shared similarity regarding professional characteristics is more influential (Green et al., 1996). Additionally, it has been implied that perceived demographic dissimilarity impacts supervisor-subordinate dyads as this perception is linked to perceived deep-level dissimilarity such as different personality types, values, and attitudes (Cunningham, 2007).

Typically, subordinates in high-quality relationships with supervisors receive support and career advancement opportunities in exchange for the work they are doing (Chen et al., 2012; Dansereau Jr, Graen, & Haga, 1975). However, in past studies focusing on relational demographic differences between supervisor-subordinate dyads, results have shown that dissimilarity is associated with less support from supervisors, less developmental opportunities, and more role ambiguity (Jeanquart-Barone, 1996; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). In relational demography research, there has been an adoption of the notion that demographic similarities evoke a similarity-attraction paradigm thus causing those who are similar to each other to treat one another favorably and those who are dissimilar to one another to treat each other unfavorably (Tsui et al., 2002).

To demonstrate how relational demography and similarity-attraction presented itself in practice, Avery, Volpone, McKay, King, and Wilson (2012) studied supervisor-subordinate

demographic similarity and the impact it has on an employee's propensity to engage in withdrawal behavior such as tardiness, absenteeism, and intent to remain. Notable findings from this particular study indicated that supervisor similarity in racial group influenced employee withdrawal behavior with employees who shared racial categorization with supervisors demonstrating less tardiness, less absence, and higher intent to remain. Similar findings were discovered for employees whose supervisors belonged to the same gender category as them (Avery et al., 2012). Additional studies have bolstered this line of thinking in research showing that gender and racial demographic similarity have impacted satisfaction with one's supervisor (Vecchio & Bullis, 2001), extra-role behavior at work (Tsui et al., 2002), personal attraction on behalf of supervisors, and performance ratings (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989).

In a study assessing supervisor-subordinate dissimilarity and its relation to several work outcomes, researchers surveyed 1,059 participants and found support for the idea that racial dissimilarity in supervisor-subordinate dyads led to higher perceptions of exclusionary treatment on behalf of subordinates (Schaffer & Riordan, 2013). Individuals who were racially dissimilar also reported lower relationship quality with supervisors and less supervisor support. These findings suggest that employees and supervisors who are similar to them in demographic categories such as race and gender are more likely to engage in favorable behavior that can be beneficial for both organizations and each other.

Utilizing the social identity approach combined with relational demography to frame the variables presented in this research, it was suggested that supervisor-subordinate similarity influenced in-group and out-group categorization thereby impacting which members of each group received informal and formal rewards such as FSS. As proposed by self-categorization, individuals would search for factors (i.e., demographic similarity) in their environments to

provide evidence of their own identity in relation to that of the people around them (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In doing this, they would be driven to engage in in-group normative behavior that enhanced in-group similarities and resulted in in-group favoritism bias leading to the provision of rewards for in-group members (one of which is FSS). As a result of being a member of the in-group and receiving the favorable benefit of FSS, these subordinates would be more likely to perceive lower levels of work-family conflict. Because of the in-group favoritism shown to members of that category, it was suggested that out-group members would perceive less FSS from supervisors thus resulting in higher work-family conflict perceptions. With respect to the aforementioned theoretical framework and information presented regarding work-family conflict, supervisor-subordinate similarity, and FSS, the following conceptual model was proposed in Figure 2.1 to explain how these concepts related to one another.

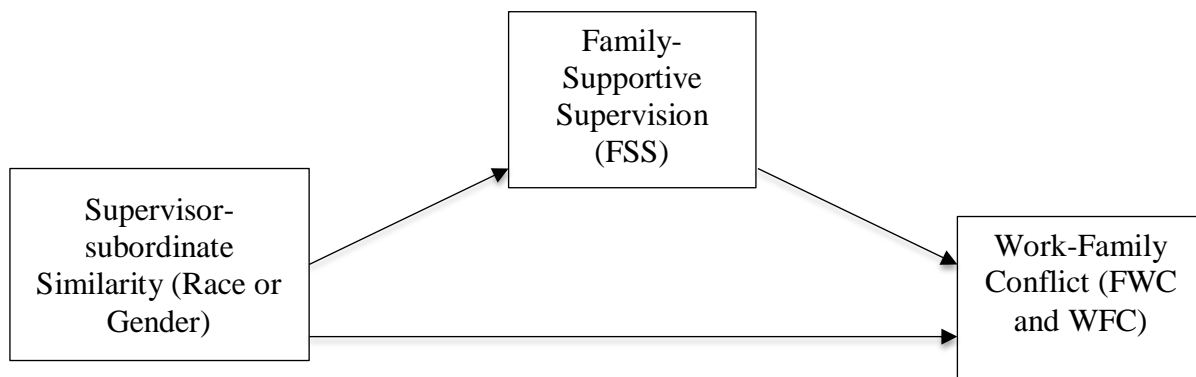


Figure 2.1: The proposed conceptual model

Limitations of the Literature Review

The literature review was comprehensive but not without limitations. This section will describe several limitations to the conducted literature review. At the time of the literature review there was a lack of academic consensus regarding the definition of work-family balance, gaps in research related to the determinants of FSS, and a lack of substantial research about how

supervisor-subordinate similarity relates FSS provision. The limitations in the literature review suggest that additional research surrounding these topics is warranted.

It has been noted that there is a lack of consensus about how to consistently define work-family balance in the academic literature surrounding the topic (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Work-family balance was used contextually in this research as a way to introduce readers to the challenges associated with work-family conflict; however, the lack of a consistently used conceptualization required the use of several definitions in order to effectively describe the construct. Because the definition of work-family balance is multi-faceted, there is a lack of general consensus regarding how to measure the construct as well with researchers discovering at least six different conceptualizations of work-family balance (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). This creates inconsistencies in the research and makes it difficult for researchers to provide the most accurate information.

In terms of the antecedents of FSS, there was only one study, at the time of the literature review, that provided a thorough framework for the construct (Straub, 2012). Gaps in research related to the determinants of FSS present both academic and practical challenges. First, FSS has been shown to help alleviate the challenges that may come from work-family conflict for both individuals and organizations including turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and health and well being. In order to provide empirically based solutions for issues related to work-family conflict in organizations, it is imperative to discover what antecedents determine the provision of FSS. This leaves room for additional research to be conducted on this topic.

Finally, there was a lack of substantial research related to supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity and FSS provision or behavior on behalf of supervisors at the time of the review. There was one study that was referenced numerous time throughout the review (Foley et

al., 2006) discussing how racial and gender similarity impacted FSS provision. The results of the study showed support for the hypotheses that supervisor-subordinate racial and gender similarity would result in the provision of FSS, yet there were no additional studies at the time of the review that sought to research this phenomenon in various settings or with different populations. Apart from the stated purpose of this dissertation, one of the goals of the research presented was to assess supervisor-subordinate similarity and FSS provision in a specific context (i.e., the technology industry) in order to contribute to the academic literature about this topic. Additional research opportunities are vast, and the lack of empirical studies about this topic provides an avenue for future research.

Summary

The review of literature produced substantial information about the constructs relevant to this study. Work-family conflict, FSS, and supervisor-subordinate similarity outcomes were explored at length and examples of how these variables present themselves and relate to one another were provided. Following this, the social identity approach was reviewed along with relational demography related to supervisor-subordinate dyads. A conceptual model was presented to display how the variables would be studied. The literature supported the proposed hypotheses in that there is a considerable amount of research that proposes that supervisor-subordinate similarity, FSS, and work-family conflict impacts both individual and organizational outcomes. Moreover, the literature supports the fact that additional research should be conducted on the topics related to the determinants of FSS provision and supervisor-subordinate similarity and the relationship to FSS provision. The following chapter outlines the methods used in this research and provides information about the sample population, procedures, measures, and data analysis plan.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to examine reported work-family conflict for employees who are similar to supervisors in race or gender and employees who are dissimilar to supervisors in race or gender. Additionally, this study purported to test whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity could predict FSS provision on behalf of supervisors and whether or not FSS played a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity and lowered work-family conflict. The Methodology section of this paper outlines the sample population recruitment, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

This cross-sectional correlational research was designed to compare group means as well as establish a correlation between the concepts being explored. The primary purpose of correlational research is to measure effects in the outcome variable based on knowledge of the predictor and mediation variables. The concepts that served as the predictor (independent) variables in the study are supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and supervisor-subordinate similarity in gender. Work-family conflict as measured by WFC and FWC served as the criterion (dependent) variable. FSS was proposed as the mediator variable in the study. Employees who were demographically similar to supervisors were compared to employees who are demographically dissimilar to supervisor on work-family conflict.

Population Sample

The target population for the study can be described as women who work full-time or part-time in the technology industry and live in the central region of a large, populous southern state located in the south central area of the United States. Approximately 30% of the technology industry in the region being observed is dominated by female employees with over 15,276

employees of the 50,920 total employees being women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Full-time job status is defined as an employee workload of a minimum of 35 hours per week while part-time job status is defined as an employee workload of 34 hours or less per week per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of full and part-time employees. The accessible population was the membership of a professional organization dedicated to connecting women who work in the technology industry and live in the observed region. The sample in the study was recruited from this organization. Because of this association, all participants worked full-time or part-time in the technology sector.

The group was identified through a personal colleague who is a member of the organization and was sharing information about membership with the researcher. The colleague provided the researcher with contact information for a board member who served as the organization's primary point of contact. Contact was established with this member of the organization's leadership board, via email, describing the study and explaining the desire to work with the organization to recruit members to participate in the research. The board member agreed to the study, but requested that a proposal describing the study be sent to all other board members. After submitting the proposal via email to the remaining board members, the board approved the proposal, and the sample recruitment began.

A non-probability convenience sample was derived from the organization's 150-member group with participation being strictly voluntary. Upon conducting a power analysis to determine what sample size would enhance the likelihood that the analysis found a meaningful effect, it was determined that the group comparisons required a total of 102 total participants while the regression analysis would require a total of 68 total participants in order to achieve a standard power of .80 (Cohen, 1992).

The participants were informed of the study by the initial point of contact – the organizational board member – that proceeded to contact them via email over a period of three weeks. The board member put a link to the study and a description of the research (generated by the researcher) on the organization’s social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn). Additionally, the board member obtained a list of active members from the organization’s membership database and sent a recruitment email (generated by the researcher) calling for voluntary participants.

Procedures

Prior to collecting data and securing participants, it was necessary to seek permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain and use data for the research (See IRB Approval in Appendix A). It is important to note that after IRB approval was gained, there was a slight change in the details of the study (the title), which required an amendment. Both the initial approval and the amendment are located in Appendix A. In order to secure the participants for the study, it was essential to establish rapport with a member of the organization’s leadership board, and present a proposal briefly describing the purpose of the study with a timeline for data collection to the board members at a monthly meeting. Once the board members approved the proposal, a data collection plan was implemented. An online survey link was disseminated in an email that described the study, and explained the principles of informed consent including voluntary status, the researcher’s contact information, and instructions for completing the instrument (See Appendix B for the Email and Social Media Request for Participants). It is fundamental to note that because this research presented no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involved no procedures for which having a signed informed consent was typically

required, the IRB waived the signed informed consent mandate for testing on human participants.

The web-based survey link was distributed to the professional organization's membership contact list, posted for members on both the organization's and the researcher's social media pages (i.e., Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook), marketed using quarter-flyers created by the researcher and handed out at meetings by both the researcher and the organizational leadership, and a link to the survey was prominently displayed on the organization's members-only website. Data was collected over a period of two weeks with the organization updated social media posts calling for participation multiple times per week throughout the length of the data collection timeframe. It is imperative to disclose that in order to incentivize the survey, participants had the opportunity to enter their name and email address into a drawing to win a \$25.00 Amazon gift card. This was optional, and participants completing the survey were asked whether or not they wanted to enter the drawing. Those who wanted to enter submitted their information in a proceeding question and those who chose not to enter were redirected to the end of the survey. Although the survey responses were confidential, participants who chose to enter their name and email address into the raffle ultimately had their responses linked to their identification. All responses were kept confidential in a password-protected spreadsheet.

Instrumentation

The instrument was distributed as an online survey using Qualtrics survey software. Survey items were entered into the software system, and Qualtrics generated a link. As participants completed the survey, their information was recorded into a database by the program, and responses were downloaded and added to a larger spreadsheet for data analysis purposes. The instrument used to collect data was the Supervisor Support and Work-Family

Conflict Model Questionnaire (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007). The researcher wrote demographic questions.

Family-Supportive Supervision (FSS)

The instrument that was used to collect data from participants and operationalize the variables in the study is a survey that was compiled from an existing measure assessing variables related to those presented. The variable FSS was measured using five items from Supervisor Support section of the Supervisor Support and Work-Family Conflict Model Questionnaire (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). After assessing other existing measures of FSS and work-family conflict, the Supervisor Support and Work-Family Conflict Model Questionnaire was chosen because the items on the scale best reflect the conceptualization of the constructs in a manner that aligns with the phenomena being explained in this research.

Cronbach's alpha for the FSS factor in the instrument indicated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$) which is above the recommended 0.70 cut-off value (Nunnally, 1978). Model fit statistics and loadings' magnitudes provided support for convergent validity indicating that measures of constructs that are supposed to be similar are in fact related (J. C. Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Additionally, Karatepe and Kilic (2007) maintain that pairwise confirmatory factor analyses provided evidence for discriminant validity indicating that there is sufficient distinction between unrelated constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Evidence for both convergent and discriminant validity imply a high degree of construct validity, which suggests that it is appropriate to make inferences regarding FSS from the results of the survey.

Survey developers provided permission for the survey to be disseminated for educational research; therefore, a copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix C. In total, five items from the Supervisor Support section of the questionnaire were used in the overall survey

instrument. All items were self-report, Likert scale-type questions measured on 5-points (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicated a higher degree of the construct being measured. In this case a high score indicated a higher occurrence of FSS.

Work-Family Conflict

As stated in the literature review, work-family conflict is made up of WFC and FWC (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). To measure these two dependent variables, the same instrument utilized to measure FSS was employed. WFC was measured using five items from the Work-Family Conflict section of Karatepe and Kilic's (2007) Supervisor Support and Work-Family Conflict Model Questionnaire ($\alpha = .84$) while FWC was measured using the five items listed under the Family-Work Conflict section of the questionnaire ($\alpha = .75$). All items are self-report, Likert scale-type questions measured on 5-points (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items corresponding to both FWC and WFC were summed and averaged in order to generate a composite score that represented each construct.

Supervisor-Subordinate Demographic Group

This construct was measured with two questions asking participants about whether or not they share demographic characteristics with their supervisors. Participants were asked if their supervisors shared the same racial category as them and if they shared the same gender category as them. Supervisor-subordinate racial similarity was coded as a binary variable (1 = supervisor same race and 2 = supervisor different race) and similarity in gender was also coded as a binary variable (1 = supervisor same gender and 2 = supervisor different gender). The demographic survey questions can be found Appendix D.

Industry, Gender, Location, and Family Status

In the current study, industry, gender, and location were treated as control variables. In order to assess the technology industry component of the sample, there was one demographic question on the survey asking participants which sector of the technology industry they worked in (i.e., web development, software development, technical support, etc....) along with an option for “Other” if their sector was not listed. Those who selected “Other” had to manually input their job title, and the researcher verified the industry. Gender and location were assessed with two separate questions, one asking the participants their gender and the other asking if the participant lived in the observed region. To examine the participants family or non-work life status, there was one “family status” demographic question that evaluated whether or not participants were single, married, parents, cohabitating, or serving as caretakers.

Data Analysis Strategy

Hypotheses 1 and 2, that subordinates who are similar to supervisors in race or gender will report lower levels of work-family conflict than subordinates who are dissimilar to supervisors in terms of race or gender were examined using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) method. The MANOVA is an appropriate statistical analysis when the purpose of research is to assess if mean differences exist on more than one continuous dependent variable by one or more discrete independent variables. Since this study assessed group differences in WFC and FWC for subordinates who are similar to supervisors and those who are dissimilar to supervisors, the MANOVA statistical method was ideal. For this research question, the continuous dependent variables are FWC and WFC; the independent variables have the following groups: Supervisor-Similarity vs. Supervisor-Dissimilarity.

MANOVA assesses whether mean differences among groups on a combination of dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance. The MANOVA creates a linear combination of the dependent variables to create a grand mean and assesses whether there are group differences on the set of dependent variables. The assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed and found to hold true. Normality assumes that the scores are normally distributed (bell shaped) and was assessed using the Kolmogorov Smirnov test. Homogeneity of variance assumes that both groups have equal error variances and was assessed using Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices.

Linear regression was employed to test hypotheses 3 and 4, that supervisor-subordinate similarity would predict FSS. Prior to running this analysis, the variables for supervisor-subordinate similarity were recoded into dummy variables (shared race/gender = 0, different race/gender = 1). To investigate the research question, regression analysis was conducted to assess whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity predicted FSS. Regression is an appropriate analysis when the goal of research is to assess the extent of a relationship between one dichotomous or interval predictor variables on an interval criterion variable (Ezekiel & Fox, 1959). In this case, the predictor variable is supervisor-subordinate similarity in either race or gender and the criterion variable is FSS. The regression equation, $y = b * x + c$ was used (where y = dependent variable, c = constant, b = regression coefficient and x = independent variable). Two regressions were run with supervisor-subordinate racial similarity being regressed on FSS followed by supervisor-subordinate similarity in gender. The tests were conducted independently.

An F-test assessed whether supervisor-subordinate similarity predicted FSS while R-squared was reported and used to determine how much variance in FSS could be explained by

each predictor separately. The t-test was used to determine the significance of the predictor and beta coefficients were used to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationships tested. Linearity, an assumption of linear regression, assumes a straight-line relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable and was assessed by examination of a scatter plot.

To examine hypotheses 5 and 6, that FSS mediated the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity and the dimensions of work-family conflict being assessed, a Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation analysis was used. Regression tests were run to predict WFC and FWC from supervisor-subordinate similarity in race. Next a test was run to predict FSS from similarity in race. Finally, a test was run to predict WFC and FWC from similarity in race and FSS. These regression tests were run a second time using supervisor-subordinate gender similarity as the predictor variable.

In the present study, FSS was proposed as a partial mediator in the negative relationship between supervisor-subordinate similarity and work-family conflict. Mediation theory purports that the mediator (*M*) variable is a transmitter that transfers the effect of a predictor variable (*X*) to an outcome variable (*Y*) in a linear sequence (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In essence, the predictor variable, *X* causes the indirect effect, *M* which then causes the outcome variable, *Y*. For complete mediation to be true, there are several steps that must be tested and shown to be true. This is known as the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007), and each step is listed below.

1. There must be a significant relationship between the predictor variable *X* and the outcome variable *Y*.
2. There must be a significant relationship between the predictor variable *X* and the mediating variable *M*.

3. There must be a significant relationship between the mediating variable M and the outcome variable Y when controlling for X .
4. The relationship between the predictor variable X and the outcome variable Y must be diminished when adjusting for the mediating variable M .

Here, it was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables (supervisor-subordinate racial and gender similarity) and both the proposed mediator variable (FSS) and the criterion variable (work-family conflict). It was further hypothesized that at least a partial mediation effect would be detected in order to explain the relationship between the predictor variables, supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and gender and the outcome variable, decreased work-family conflict. For the purpose of this study, partial mediation was sought as opposed to complete mediation. In order to establish partial mediation, it was only essential that the first three conditions were met (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). IBM SPSS was the statistical software employed to run all statistical analyses. A plugin, named PROCESS for SPSS was used to run the mediation regression analysis.

Summary

The Methodology chapter detailed the steps taken to recruit and obtain a sample, outlined the procedures used to complete the study, reviewed the instrument used for measurement, and detailed the data analysis plan. The sample was recruited from a professional affiliation for women who work in technology by establishing contact (through a personal colleague) with a member who served on the organization's leadership board. After drafting a proposal outlining the study and submitting it to the entire board, the organization gave approval to begin recruiting a sample. All participants were recruited via email, social media, and at organizational events with flyers and through word of mouth.

Karatepe and Kilic's (2007) Supervisor Support and Work-Family Conflict Model

Questionnaire was used to collect the data regarding FSS, WFC, and FWC, while demographic questions, provided by the researcher, assessed family status, industry, and supervisor-subordinate similarity. The data analysis strategy included several statistical analyses, the first being a MANOVA for group comparisons. The MANOVA was used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, that there would be a difference in reported work-family conflict for individuals who shared racial or gender similarities with supervisor as opposed to those who did not. Linear regression was used to test Hypotheses 3 and 4, that gender or racial similarity would predict reports of FSS provision, and mediation regression was used to test Hypotheses 5 and 6, that FSS would mediate the relationships between supervisor-subordinate gender or racial similarity and work-family conflict. The next chapter discusses the results of the data analysis at length and provides sample characteristics along with the results of each statistical test.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity, FSS, and work-family conflict for women who work in the technology industry. Specifically, the researcher was interested in whether or not there was a difference in work-family conflict for employees who were similar to their supervisors in race and gender; whether being similar to a supervisor in race and gender predicted FSS; and whether the relationship between similarity and work-family conflict was mediated by FSS. MANOVA was used to test for group differences, and regression analysis was conducted to examine prediction with complete data available for 102 participants ($N = 102$).

Prior to analysis the data was transformed for missing values by finding and replacing them with the series mean. 11 missing continuous variables were replaced. Composite scores for FSS, WFC, and FWC were generated by averaging scores across the items that represented each measure. Reliability estimates and inter-correlations for all study variables are presented below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Reliability Estimates and Inter-Correlations
($N = 102$)

		FSS	SSRACE	SSGEN	WFC	FWC
FSS	Pearson					
	Correlation	(.89)				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
RACESIM	Pearson					
	Correlation	-.384**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
GENSIM	Pearson					
	Correlation	.038	-.106			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.708	.290			
WFC	Pearson					
	Correlation	-.345**	.025	-.080	(.84)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.802	.422		

(Table 4.1 continued)

		FSS	SSRACE	SSGEN	WFC	FWC
FWC	Pearson Correlation	-.275**	-.137	-.138	.336**	(.75)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.169	.166	.000	

Internal Consistency Estimates reported along the diagonal, ** $p < 0.05$

Characteristics of the Sample

All members of the sample population for this study were females employed in the technology sector. Participants chose from a list of technology-related occupational categories including, but not limited to computer and information research, programmer, computer / technology support, and developer (See the full list of industry options in Appendix E). In addition to the stated choices, there was an “Other” option for participants who did not feel that their occupation fell under one of the provided categories. 35.5% of survey participants chose the “Other” category to describe their occupation. The researcher, to ensure that the position still fell under the broader “technology” industry category, evaluated each response. A graph displaying the sample’s occupational category selection is displayed in Figure 4.1.

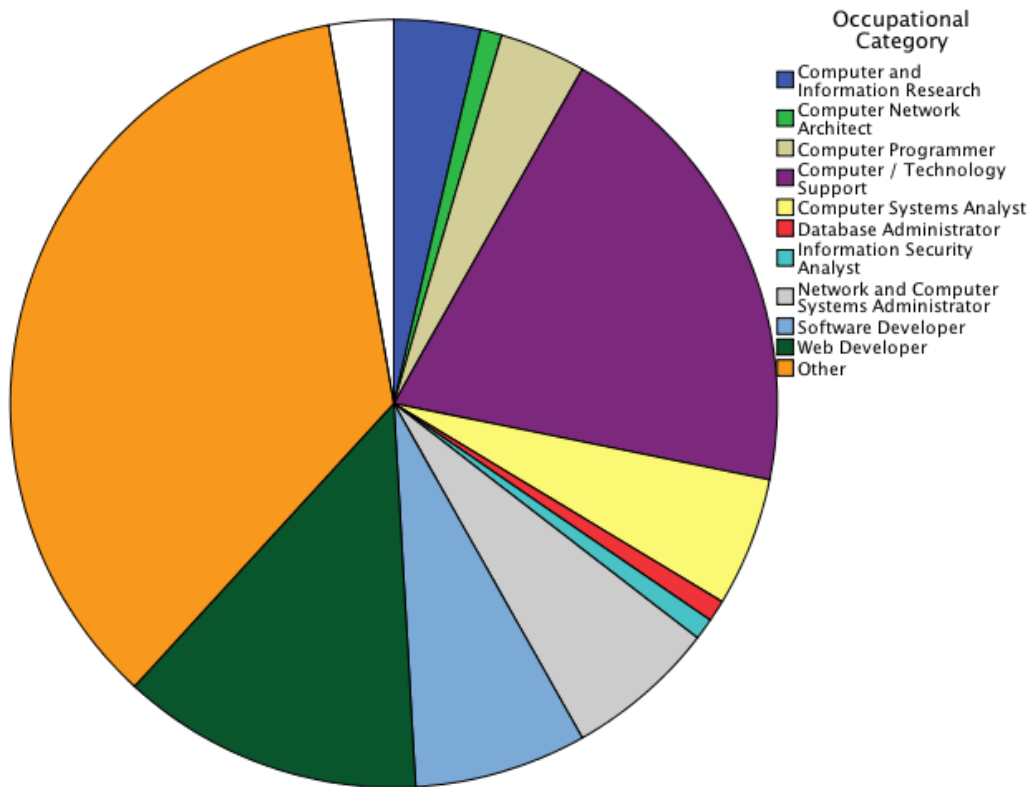


Figure 4.1 Occupational Category of Sample

With regard to family status, 25.5% of the sample indicated that they were married or cohabitating and taking care of at least one child while 32.7% were married or cohabitating without children. 0.9% of the sample was married or cohabitating while also serving as the primary caretaker of someone who was not their child. 30.9% of the sample population was single, and 8.2% were single and taking care of at least one child. 0.9% of the population assessed indicated that they were single and serving as the primary caretaker of someone who was not their child. Figure 4.2 displays the family status of the sample group.

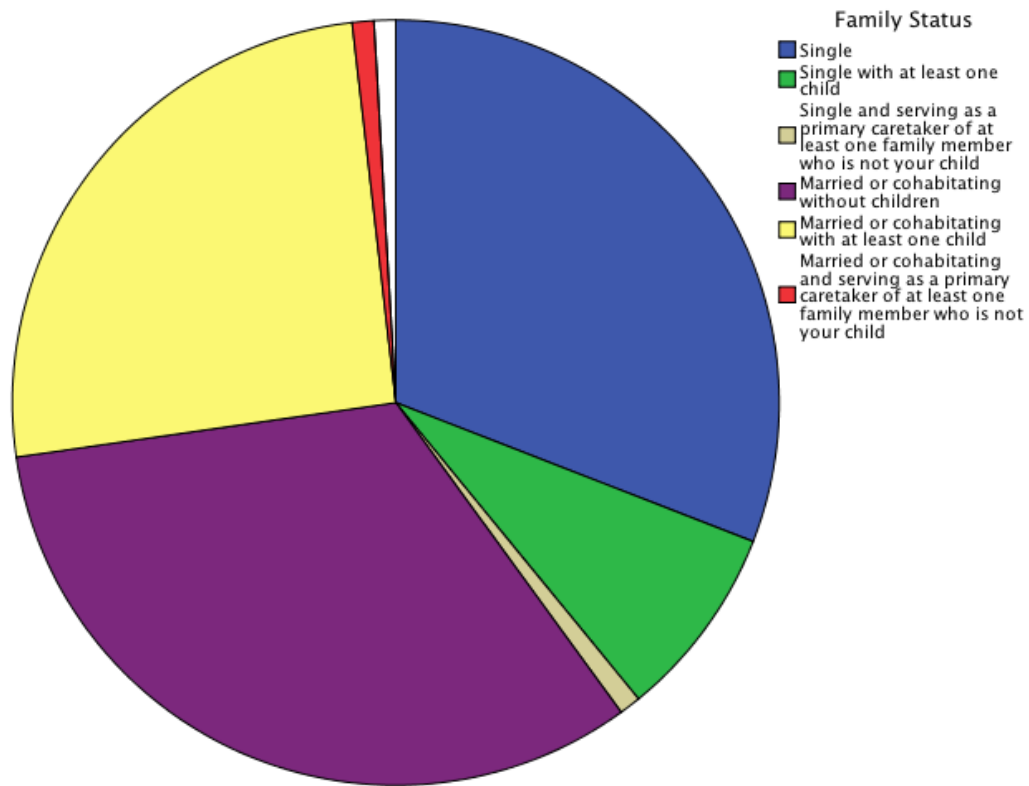


Figure 4.2 Family Status of the Sample

In terms of racial makeup and identification, the sample was majority White or Caucasian with 67.3% of the population choosing this racial category as the one that they identified with. 7.3% of the population self-identified as non-white Hispanic, and 11.8% of the sample population identified as Black or African-American. 2.1% of the sample population indicated that they identified as Asian, and <1% identified as Native American. 10.6% of survey participants declined to identify their racial category. A graph of the sample's racial identification answers is displayed in Figure 4.3.

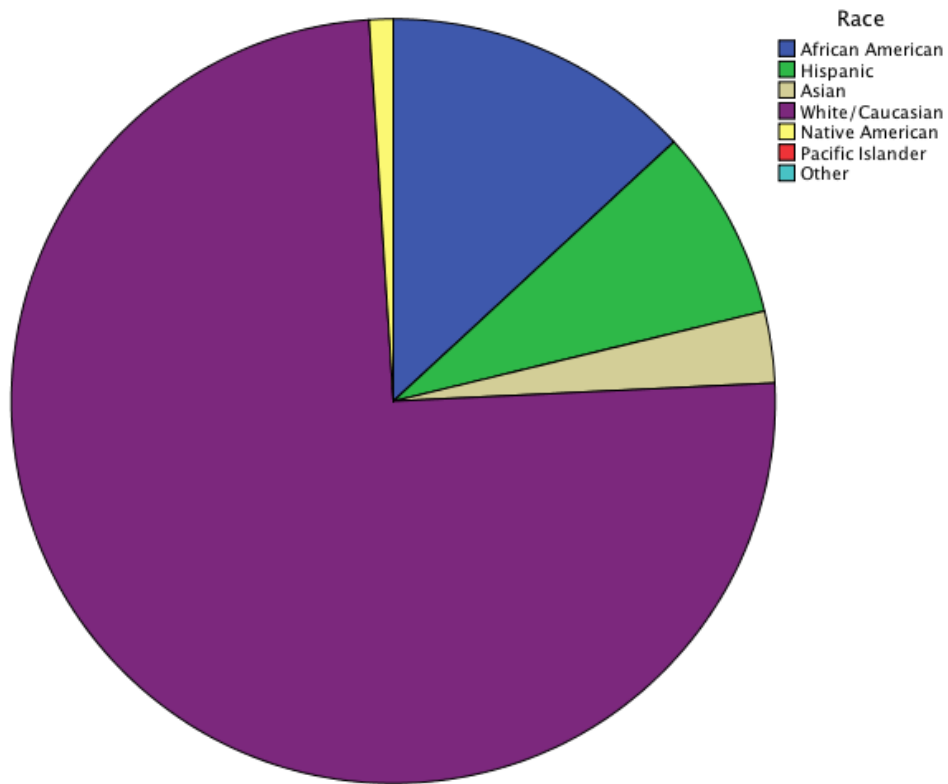


Figure 4.3 Racial Identification of Sample

To assess similarity to supervisors, participants simply answered a “yes or no” question when asked if their supervisors shared the same demographic category as them. 59.1% of the sample population indicated that they were similar to their supervisors in race while 33.6% were dissimilar in race. 43.6% were similar in gender while 49.1% were dissimilar or did not share the same gender as their supervisors. 8 participants or 7.3% of those who completed the survey left these questions blank. Frequency statistics for these categorical variables are presented below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Frequency Supervisor-Subordinate Racial and Gender Similarity
(N = 102)

	Frequency	Percent
Supervisor Same Race	65	59.1
Supervisor Different Race	37	33.6
Total	102	92.7
Missing System	8	7.3
Supervisor Same Gender	48	43.6
Supervisor Different Gender	54	49.1
Total	102	92.7
Missing System	8	7.3

Research Questions 1 and 2: Will Demographic Similarity Determine Work-Family Conflict?

Hypotheses 1 and 2, that subordinates who are similar to supervisors in race or gender, respectively, would report lower levels of work-family conflict than subordinates who are dissimilar to supervisors in race ($n_1 = 65$, $n_2 = 37$) or gender ($n_1 = 48$, $n_2 = 54$) were both found to be non-significant upon examining the overall multivariate tests of significance. MANOVA results revealed non-significance among the categories, similarity in race and dissimilarity in race on the dependent variable measures FWC and WFC (*Wilks* $\Lambda = .975$, $F(2, 99) = 1.244$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$, $p = .293$). Because there was no significant difference between the groups, no ANOVA or post-hoc analysis was deemed necessary or completed. The same MANOVA was conducted for the gender similarity and dissimilarity groups, and results proved to be non-significant as well (*Wilks* $\Lambda = .980$, $F(2, 99) = 1.030$, $\eta_p^2 = .020$, $p = .361$) therefore suggesting no evidence to support either hypothesis 1 or hypothesis 2. Table 4.3 presents means and standard deviations for FWC and WFC by gender and racial similarity and dissimilarity while Tables 4.4 and 4.5 present multivariate test results.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics: Group Comparisons
(N = 102)

Supervisor-Subordinate Similarity		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
WFC	Supervisor Same Race	2.6768	.95464	65
	Supervisor Different Race	2.7247	.86893	37
	Total	2.6942	.92040	102
FWC	Supervisor Same Race	2.3708	.76516	65
	Supervisor Different Race	2.1502	.78935	37
	Total	2.2908	.77746	102
WFC	Supervisor Same Gender	2.7722	.89097	48
	Supervisor Different Gender	2.6248	.94868	54
	Total	2.6942	.92040	102
FWC	Supervisor Same Gender	2.4042	.78941	48
	Supervisor Different Gender	2.1900	.75977	54
	Total	2.2908	.77746	102

Table 4.4: Multivariate Tests for Same Race Group Comparison
(N = 102)

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.923	592.869 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.923
	Wilks' Lambda	.077	592.869 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.923
	Hotelling's Trace	11.977	592.869 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.923
	Roy's Largest Root	11.977	592.869 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.923
RACESIM	Pillai's Trace	.025	1.244 ^b	2.000	99.000	.293	.025
	Wilks' Lambda	.975	1.244^b	2.000	99.000	.293	.025
	Hotelling's Trace	.025	1.244 ^b	2.000	99.000	.293	.025
	Roy's Largest Root	.025	1.244 ^b	2.000	99.000	.293	.025

Table 4.5: Multivariate Tests for Same Gender Group Comparison
(N = 102)

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.930	657.558 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.930
	Wilks' Lambda	.070	657.558 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.930
	Hotelling's Trace	13.284	657.558 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.930
	Roy's Largest Root	13.284	657.558 ^b	2.000	99.000	.000	.930
GENSIM	Pillai's Trace	.020	1.030 ^b	2.000	99.000	.361	.020
	Wilks' Lambda	.980	1.030^b	2.000	99.000	.361	.020
	Hotelling's Trace	.021	1.030 ^b	2.000	99.000	.361	.020
	Roy'sLargestRoot	.021	1.030 ^b	2.000	99.000	.361	.020

Research Questions 3 and 4: Will Demographic Similarity Predict FSS?

Hypotheses 3 and 4, that supervisor-subordinate racial similarity or gender would predict FSS, were tested using linear regression. Two regression analyses were run (one with gender similarity as the predictor and one with racial similarity as the predictor). For hypothesis 3, the initial regression results indicated an overall model of supervisor-subordinate racial similarity in which the variable predicted FSS ($R^2 = .147$, $R^2_{adj} = .139$, $F(1, 100) = 17.278$, $p < .001$). People who shared the same racial category as supervisors reported a FSS that is .6929 points higher than those who did not share the same racial category as supervisors ($y = 4.228 + (-.693 \times 0)$), and 14.7% of the variance in FSS is explained by supervisor-subordinate racial similarity.

For hypothesis 4, a second regression was run assessing supervisor similarity in gender, and that variable failed to predict FSS ($R^2 = .001$, $R^2_{adj} = -.009$, $F(1, 100) = .142$, $p = .708$). Interestingly, people who did not share a gender category with supervisors reported a FSS score that was .0654 points *higher* than those who shared the same gender group as supervisors. This suggests that, apart from the fact that there are other variables besides shared gender category that determine the likelihood of FSS provision; shared gender category could possibly decrease

the provision of FSS for this sample. A summary of the regression models is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Regression Model Summary
(N = 102)

	Supervisor Racial Similarity			Supervisor Gender Similarity		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
FSS	-.693*	.167	-.384*	.065	.174	.038
R^2		.147			.001	
F		17.278*			.142	
* $p < .001$						

Research Questions 5 and 6: Will FSS Mediate Supervisor-Subordinate Similarity and Work-Family Conflict?

Hypotheses 5 and 6, which tested for FSS mediation between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity or supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC) were assessed with Baron and Kinney's (1986) mediation analysis using a bootstrapping method. For hypothesis 5, the mediation analysis was run, and results indicated that while supervisor-subordinate racial similarity was a significant predictor of FSS ($b = -.6928$, $SE = .1667$, $p < .001$), and FSS was a significant predictor of WFC ($b = -.4121$, $SE = .1071$, $p < .001$) and FWC ($b = -.6928$, $SE = .1667$, $p < .001$), there was no significant relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and WFC ($b = -.2377$, $SE = .1933$, $p = .222$). There was a significant relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and FWC ($b = -.4571$, $SE = .1621$, $p = .006$). Sobel's test for an indirect effect of supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and FWC was significant ($b = .2365$, $SE = .0856$, $z = 2.7621$, $p = .006$). While FSS proved to at least partially mediate the relationship between supervisor-

subordinate racial similarity and FWC, the original hypothesis for this study was that FSS would mediate work-family conflict as measured by both FWC and WFC. Therefore, the hypothesis was only partially supported. Approximately 14.7% of the variance in FSS was accounted for by supervisor-subordinate racial similarity ($R^2 = .1473$). Together, the predictors (FSS and racial similarity) accounted for 13.1% of the variance in WFC ($R^2 = .1307$), and 14.4% of the variance in FWC ($R^2 = .1438$). Figures 4.4 and 4.5 below present these mediation models, coefficients, and p-values for each tested relationship.

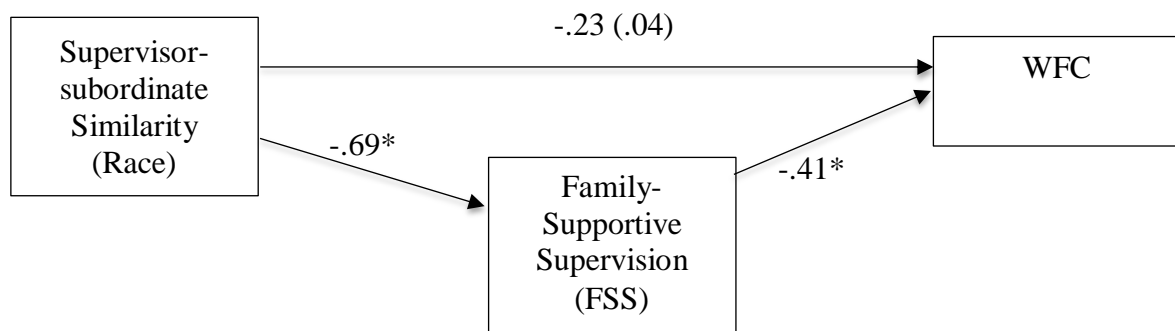


Figure 4.4: Racial Similarity and WFC FSS Mediation Model

The standardized regression coefficient between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and WFC, controlling for FSS is in parentheses. $*p < .05$

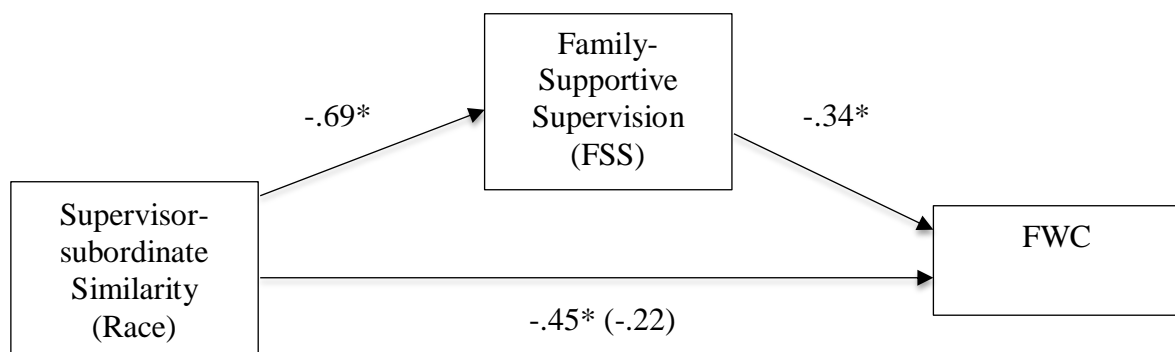


Figure 4.5: Racial Similarity and FWC FSS Mediation Model

The standardized regression coefficient between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and FWC, controlling for FSS is in parentheses. $*p < .05$

Hypothesis 6 was tested to establish FSS mediation between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and work-family conflict, and similar results were discovered. While supervisor-subordinate gender similarity failed to effectively predict FSS ($b = .0654$, $SE = .1738$, $p = .708$), there was a positive, significant relationship between FSS and WFC ($b = -.3589$, $SE = .0995$, $p < .001$) and FWC ($b = -.2398$, $SE = .0855$, $p = .006$). Because supervisor-subordinate gender similarity failed to predict FSS, the mediation test proved futile. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 present each mediation model that was tested, coefficients, and p-values for each tested relationship.

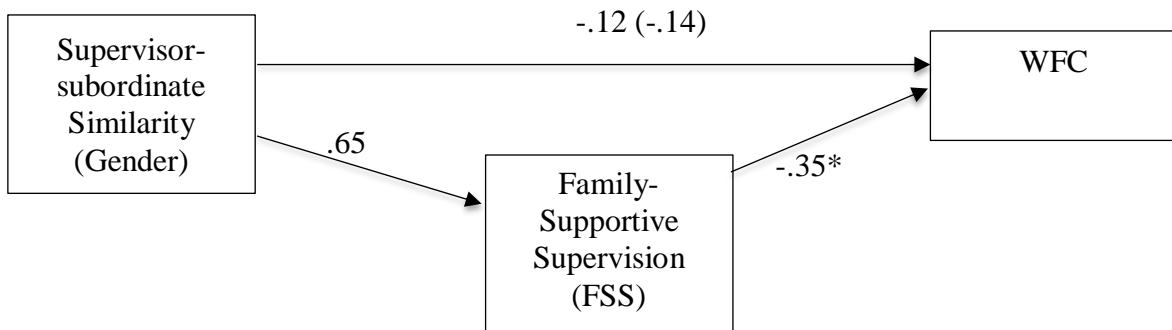


Figure 4.6: Gender Similarity and WFC FSS Mediation Model

The standardized regression coefficient between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and WFC, controlling for FSS is in parentheses. $*p < .05$

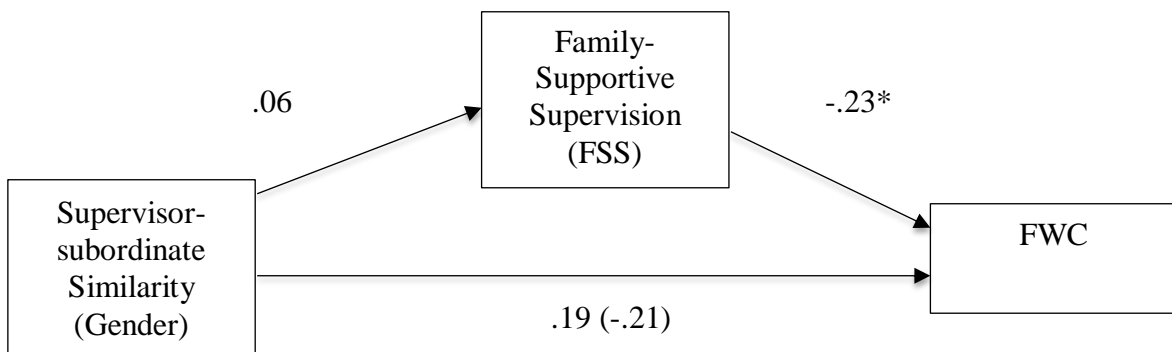


Figure 4.7: Gender Similarity and FWC FSS Mediation Model

The standardized regression coefficient between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and FWC, controlling for FSS is in parentheses. $*p < .05$

Summary

The Results chapter describes the sample characteristics and details each statistical test along with the results of each test. Each hypothesis test is arranged with the original research question and is followed by the testing results and tables. Hypotheses 1 and 2, that work-family conflict mean differences would exist between subordinates who shared racial or gender categories with supervisors and subordinates who did not, were both shown to be non-significant. Support was found for Hypothesis 3, that supervisor-subordinate racial similarity would predict FSS, while Hypothesis 4, that supervisor-subordinate gender similarity would predict FSS, was found to be non-significant. Finally, partial support was found for Hypothesis 5, that FSS would mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and work-family conflict. FSS did mediate the relationship between racial similarity and FWC, but did not mediate the relationship between racial similarity and WFC. There was no evidence found to support Hypothesis 5, that FSS would mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate gender similarity and work-family conflict. The Discussion chapter will deliberate the results as well as the implications of the findings and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity impacted work-family conflict and FSS. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine reported work-family conflict for employees who are similar to supervisors in race or gender and employees who are dissimilar to supervisors in race or gender. Additionally, this study tested whether or not supervisor-subordinate racial or gender similarity could predict FSS provision on behalf of supervisors and whether or not FSS played a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor-subordinate demographic similarity and lowered work-family conflict.

Drawing on insights from both social identity theory and self-categorization theory, it was argued that when supervisors self-categorize into a certain group, they are more likely to provide in-group favorable bias to subordinates who share their same group categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000). This bias results in the provision of rewards to in-group members while out-group members do not reap the benefits of reward provision. The reward that was examined in this study was FSS (and in turn, reduced work-family conflict) while supervisor-subordinate dyad similarity were evaluated to determine in-group (shared demographic similarity) or out-group (dissimilar demographic similarity) membership.

Relational demography was used to argue that employees who shared demographic similarities with supervisors were more likely to benefit or receive favorable outcomes at work (Loi & Ngo, 2009; Vecchio & Bullis, 2001). Therefore, employees who shared racial and/or gender demographic similarities with supervisors would be more likely to receive FSS, which would result in lower work-family conflict. The findings of this study are arranged such that significant results are discussed first, followed by all non-significant findings. Explanations of

the findings are presented followed by limitations of the study; implications related to theory, policy, and practice; and concluding final remarks.

Explanation of Significant Findings

After statistical analysis, results showed full support for one of the study hypotheses, that supervisor-subordinate racial similarity would predict FSS (hypothesis 3). Results showed partial support for hypothesis 5, that FSS would partially mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and work-family conflict (as measured by WFC and FWC). That is, FSS did partially mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and FWC, but failed to mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and WFC.

Research Question 3

The results demonstrated that employees who share racial categorization with supervisors are more likely to report FSS than employees who do not share the same racial group as supervisors. These findings align with earlier research that explored this topic and found similar results (Foley et al., 2006). The results also indicated that for employees who shared the same racial category as their supervisors and reported lower FWC, FSS accounted for a significant amount of variance. This is consistent with research that has shown that FSS reduces work-family conflict (Breugh & Frye, 2008; Fiksenbaum, 2014; Foley et al., 2006; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989) and demographic similarity between supervisors and subordinates increases FSS behavior (Foley et al., 2006; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989).

There are several speculative reasons why shared racial similarity resulted in higher reports of FSS provision. First, racial identity is highly salient and is thought to be necessary to move through the various stages of racial identification (Kim, 2012). Highly salient identity

characteristics are more likely to increase the awareness of group differences on behalf of individuals (Tajfel, 1981). When differences are more pronounced, in-group and out-group salience occurs leading to polarization and bias (Turner, 1991). In turn, this polarization has the potential to create conditions in which real or perceived distributive justice issues arise. For employees who share the same racial category as their supervisors, they may either perceive or experience greater FSS provision, which may, in part, be due to in-group favorable bias.

Another explanation for the positive relationship between racial similarity and FSS may lie in the fact that demographic similarity impacts supervisor-subordinate outcomes such as leader-member exchange quality, job satisfaction, commitment, and extra-role performances (Bakar & McCann, 2014). Additionally, recent research has found that demographic similarity influences trust development in teams and at work with teams that are less diverse more likely to trust one another (Wildman et al., 2012). Further, demographic similarity has been shown to impact recruiting and hiring decisions (Roebken, 2010). This demonstrates that for individuals who are demographically similar to supervisors, teams, and decision-makers, there are favorable work outcomes that arise. The fact that demographic similarity influences productive work behaviors such as taking on additional duties, trusting team members, and forming positive relationships could explain why individuals with supervisors who are similar to them in race report that their supervisors engage in behavior that is family-supportive. Supervisors could be attempting to reward extra-role behavior and trust with FSS or subordinates could be reciprocally engaging in extra-role behaviors and trust in part due to FSS provision.

Research Question 5

After evaluating the findings of hypothesis 5, that FSS would mediate the relationship between supervisor-subordinate racial similarity and work-family conflict, it was essential to

assess the logic of the original study hypothesis. Statistical testing showed support for an indirect effect on the relationship between shared racial similarity and FWC; however, the hypothesis was written in such a way that support for both dimensions of work-family conflict was necessary to report true significance and accurate findings. For this study, perhaps creating a composite score of work-family balance (averaging the scores across both FWC and WFC together for one score) as opposed to measuring the variable as two separate constructs may have helped to uncover clearer results. Additionally, measuring work-family conflict as one construct as opposed to separating it into WFC and FWC may have helped provide more insight into the partial mediation findings.

Explanation of Non-Significant Findings

Contrary to the expected results, the statistical analyses failed to show support for the remaining hypotheses. Hypotheses 1 and 2, which tested for group differences in WFC and FWC means between individuals who were demographically similar to supervisors and those who were demographically dissimilar from supervisors failed to provide significant findings. Hypothesis 4, which tested the possibility that gender similarity would predict FSS, was not significant, and finally, hypothesis 6, which proposed that FSS would mediate the relationship between gender similarity and work-family conflict, was not significant.

Research Questions 1 and 2

It appears that work-family conflict was not impacted by supervisor-subordinate similarity, and there are multiple potential reasons for this outcome. First, research shows that family-supportive organizational policies fully mediate the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict (Allen, 2001). Therefore, organizations that are family-supportive are more likely to foster a culture that results in work-family balance, and this

sometimes supersedes supervisory behavior. The relationship between FSS and work-family balance is stronger for employees in family-supportive organizations as well as those with supportive spouses. Spousal support and organizational support are just two of the reasons that supervisor-subordinate gender dissimilarity may not lead to an increase in work-family conflict via FSS provision (Greenhaus et al., 2012).

It is probable that supervisors who work in family-supportive cultures are more likely to provide FSS, and organizations are more likely to make provisions for those individuals with family conflict. It is also conceivable that supervisors who might not necessarily be family-supportive prove to be misfits in organizations with a strong family-supportive culture, and in turn, eventually migrate away from these organizations. This could diminish any work-family conflict differences that may otherwise occur between the groups.

Additionally, for employees who work in the IT sector, transformational leadership has been shown to moderate the negative relationship between time-pressure and work-family balance as well as that of time-pressure and exhaustion (Syrek et al., 2013). That is, when employees work in high-pressure jobs under supervisors who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors such as recognition, support, and empowerment, they are less likely to report feeling stressed out and having low levels of work-family balance. Transformational leadership could partially explain why employees who were not similar to their supervisors in race and gender did not report higher work-family conflict despite the fact that prior research has shown that similarity plays a role in positive work outcomes for subordinates (Kacmar et al., 2009).

Research Question 4

Gender similarity failed to predict FSS provision for individuals who reported that they shared the same gender category as supervisors. In fact, for this study, individuals who shared

the same gender category as supervisors reported lower FSS than those who did not, which is completely contradictory to what was hypothesized. One practical explanation for this finding could lie in the specific industry that served as the context for this study. Women who work in technology are the minority, and may face pressure from peers in regard to utilizing and encouraging family-supportive policies in an industry that is male-dominated.

Hekman and Foo (2014) conducted research that has shown that when women call attention to their gender by engaging in behavior such as promoting other women or helping others that are demographically similar to them, they are more likely to be devalued by their peers. They are also more likely to receive poor performance reviews from superiors regardless of the gender of their supervisor. On the contrary, when White men engage in diversity-promoting behavior such as mentoring or assisting women and minorities, peers and superiors view them favorably (Hekman & Foo, 2014). Given the fact that White men primarily dominate the technology industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), it is not illogical to assume that some women attempt to downplay their gender in an effort to fit in or be viewed as worthy of “joining the club.” Similarly, it is possible that men are rewarded formally and informally for engaging in diversity-promoting and family-supportive behavior.

Research Questions 5 and 6

FSS did not have an indirect effect on the relationship between shared similarity and work-family conflict, as the relationship between those two variables proved to be non-significant in this study. Sample bias could certainly play a role in the reason that results did not align with expected findings. The participants in the study all worked in the technology sector and were members of a professional organization. It could be argued that individuals who choose to join a professional organization are more career-focused and self-driven. Joining professional

associations is a specific type of networking behavior that has been linked to self-esteem, extraversion, and attitudes toward office politics (Forret & Dougherty, 2001). Networking is considered a career self-management strategy in that individuals who engage in professional networking are attempting to navigate their own personal career success (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Individuals who manage their own work and career success may also be more likely to manage their own outside lives and non-work success to create favorable outcomes for themselves. Further, having a social support system, like a professional association, has been shown to reduce stress associated with work-family conflict (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999), which could also affect findings.

Academic Implications

This study contributes formidably to the academic literature, and specifically, extends a large body of existing research supporting the fundamentals of SIT and self-categorization theory. SIT and self-categorization theory suggest that group similarities and differences will lead to in-group preference and that this bias could spill into individuals' work lives and non-work lives (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The fact that individuals who did not share racial similarity with supervisors were less likely to report that their supervisors engaged in FSS behavior could provide evidence that there is some bias at hand. However, as previously stated, there are several reasons that this effect could have been observed, and shared racial similarity only accounted for 14.7% of the variance in FSS behavior, which implies that there are likely several other variables accounting for FSS provision.

Although there was no support found for the mediation or group differences hypotheses, these possibilities should still continue to be explored. There may be several reasons that evidence was not found for these hypotheses. There was a strong relationship between racial

similarity and FSS, and, FSS predicted reduced FWC; therefore, there was a partial indirect effect. As the workplace continues to diversify, studying how group differences may or may not impact rewards provision becomes more essential. Research about the relationship between other supervisor-subordinate similarities such as SES or background with FSS might also provide more insight into why some employees may receive FSS while others may not. Future researchers should continue to assess differences and similarities and study concepts, like those presented in this research, in an effort to increase work-family balance initiatives and reduce problems associated with fairness of rewards distribution.

Policy Implications

Creating policy that addresses bias and supervisor support may help organizations compel supervisors to provide FSS to employees. Family-supportive organizations are more likely to have supervisors who are family-supportive as well, thus reducing work-family conflict (Allen, 2001). Assessing existing policies or employee perceptions related to family support and work-family balance would be beneficial for organizations. For organizations without existing policies, getting a clear picture of where employees stand may help them develop effective policy. Further, conducting research regarding the bottom line gains that could accompany implementing policies and interventions would be beneficial and may also help with leadership buy-in.

Policies that address conscious and unconscious bias in organizations may be helpful in helping to raise awareness and curb bias before issues arise with perceived discrimination. Bringing in a third-party firm to do an assessment on unconscious and conscious bias would help organizations create effective policy while objectively assessing current employees. One example of how in-group favoritism bias occurs in organizations is the practice of rewarding

employees for recommending friends for open job vacancies. While some organizations may see this as an ideal way to get candidates who fit the culture of the organization, this has the potential to create bias in the organization. Policies that reward existing employees after they have recommended (and hired) friends and personal connections create conditions in which in-group and out-group differences are stark. Therefore, it would be beneficial for organizations to assess these types of policies and make adjustments where necessary to reduce and or eliminate this type of bias.

Practice Implications

This study suggests that people in racially diverse supervisor-subordinate dyads may be put at a slight disadvantage in terms of receiving beneficial family support from supervisors. Because minorities are more likely to be in dyads wherein their supervisors are racially dissimilar to them (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), they may be more likely to experience the negative effects that occur due to a lack of FSS. There are several organizational interventions that are worth exploring to help alleviate potential in-group favoritism including training assessments, diversity training, and raising awareness.

Training supervisors on issues of bias, in-group favoritism, and diversity could be effective in raising awareness and changing behavior. Ensuring that supervisors provide support will help increase the likelihood that employees will utilize benefits designed to alleviate work-family conflict (Bagger & Li, 2014). In order to compel supervisors to be mindful of potential bias in providing family support, organizations can raise awareness through information campaigns, manuals and handbooks, along with coaching and mentoring. Pairing mentors and mentees on the basis of skill and work similarity may help both supervisors and subordinates work with individuals they might not normally work with, thus opening the doors of

communication regarding issues like FSS and work-family conflict. Additionally, addressing bias in the onboarding process or in the recruitment process may help organizations head the problem off earlier as opposed to waiting until an issue presents itself.

Areas for Future Research

The results of this study imply that female subordinates who do not share the same racial category as their supervisors are less likely to receive supervisor family support in the workplace. There are practical implications for these findings as well as areas that could be explored further in the academic literature. Assessing the antecedents of FSS and examining additional similarities outside of racial and gender category that may impact the FSS to work-family conflict relationship are just some of the ways that this topic could be expanded upon further from a research perspective. The research findings may help identify practical organizational interventions that, once implemented, may help alleviate some of the potential bias that occurs due to similarity attraction.

It is important to explore additional antecedents of FSS. For example, it is possible that FSS behaviors occur when supervisors have a heightened awareness of work-family conflict issues or operate in organizations that promote family support. Research that specifically outlines the antecedents of FSS could help develop policy that promotes this behavior in the workplace. In addition to assessing the determinants of FSS behavior on behalf of supervisors, studying the behavior of subordinates who receive FSS may be beneficial as well. In the section of this paper describing the explanation behind the findings, it was suggested that subordinates who engage in career self-management may be more likely to have work-family balance due to some behavior they engage in that helps them alleviate role conflict. These subordinates may be more likely to participate in extra-role behavior or may be more forthcoming in discussing their family or non-

work concerns with supervisors, which might lead to the provision of FSS. Exploring the potential reasons why some subordinates receive FSS would certainly provide more insight about the findings of this study as well as help frame future research surrounding the topic.

In addition to exploring other determinants of FSS, research should be conducted that examines other forms of similarity between supervisors and subordinates that impact work outcomes and work-family conflict and work-family balance perceptions. Although this research failed to determine that work-family conflict was impacted by gender similarity, there has been research that suggests that other forms of similarity within supervisor-subordinate dyads, such as common perspective, increase LMX relationship quality (Kacmar et al., 2009). Evaluating both surface-level (i.e., demographics) and deep-level (i.e., work ethic) similarities in relation to FSS and work-family conflict could provide additional insight about FSS provision and conflict between work and non-work responsibilities.

Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations and threats to internal and external validity. To begin, due to logistical considerations, the sample of participants was taken from an accessible population (the professional organization used in the study). Therefore, participants volunteered or self-selected into the study, which in turn, caused an external validity threat as the findings cannot be generalized outside of the survey participants (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963). Further, for group comparisons, the amount of members in each group was not equal, which causes a selection threat to internal validity and issues of statistical power. To achieve a standard power of .80 (Cohen, 1992), a power analysis revealed that groups should be split into 51 members each. While the total sample size did meet the recommended number of 102, the group sizes were not equal. This increases the probability of performing a type II error by decreasing

power. It is important to note that all other sample size requirements (i.e., requirements for running the regression analysis) were met.

In addition to sampling bias, measurement bias threatened the validity of the study as well. All measures used were self-report questions, which are more likely to cause inflated bias due to social desirability on behalf of participants (Arnold & Feldman, 1981). Additionally, the independent variables in this study were gender and race, which are relatively objective and less open to interpretation than other questions. Despite this, there are several reasons why self-report measures are essential and, often, the most effective way of collecting survey data in social sciences research (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In this research, it was imperative for individuals to evaluate their own work-family conflict perceptions as well as whether or not they felt their supervisor engaged in family-supportive behavior towards them. There was no other conceivable way of capturing this data outside of self-reports.

Another limitation of the study is the racial makeup of the participants. The majority of study participants were white, which is reflective of the professional organization used to gather data. Although there are women of color who participated in the study, this limits the generalizability to other groups (i.e., Native American women who only represented 1% of survey participants). Future researchers who choose to investigate this topic are encouraged to assess a more expansive and substantially diverse sample.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some of the findings in this study do align with research that implies that supervisor-subordinate similarity increases the likelihood that subordinates will receive family and general support from supervisors. Exploring the work-family conflict concept with a focus on how demographic differences and similarities interplay with the phenomenon is a research

avenue that has yet to be fully actualized, and this study is a step in providing an avenue for more diverse future research. A large demand for work-life flexibility combined with an ever-growing diverse workforce will guarantee that organizations choosing to implement and encourage the use of work-family balance policies while also providing FSS to employees will continue to retain productive individuals while reducing costs associated with absenteeism and turnover.

To further investigate this question in the future, exploring antecedents of FSS that can be implemented by organizations would be an important practical contribution. Additionally, researching this in a context that controls for threats to internal and external validity (i.e., using random sampling and ensuring a diverse sampling pool) might increase the generalizability efforts of the research. This research was a start in examining work-family conflict issues for women, and it is essential that additional research examines how gender and racial similarity impact the provision of family-supportive supervision that reduces work-family conflict.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Chela White-Ramsey
School of Human Resource Education/ Workforce Development

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: July 28, 2015

RE: IRB# E9426

TITLE: The Influence of Supervisor Subordinate Demographic Similarity on Family Supportive Supervision and Work-Life Balance Perceptions

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 7/28/2015

Approved X **Disapproved** _____

Approval Date: 7/28/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 7/27/2018

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2b

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** When emailing more than one recipient, make sure to use bcc.

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

APPENDIX A: Continued

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
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TO: Chela White-Ramsey
School of Human Resource Education/ Workforce Dev.

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: September 4, 2015

RE: IRB# E9426

TITLE: Examining the Supervisor Similarity and Work-Family Conflict Relationship: Is Family Supportive Supervision a Mediator?

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Modification

Brief Modification Description: Change title of study

Review date: 9/4/2015

Approved ☒ Disapproved ☐

Approval Date: 9/4/2015 Approval Expiration Date: 7/27/2018

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:**

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APPENDIX B: EMAIL AND SOCIAL MEDIA REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANTS

Email Subject Line: *Redacted Organization Name*, We Need Your Feedback: Participate in a Work-Life Balance Survey

Body of the Email:

As a woman who works in technology and lives in the *Redacted City, State* region, you have been invited to participate in a survey assessing work-life balance and supervisory support. Your confidential answers will go toward furthering a large body of research about the growing sector of technology dominated by women and eventually impacting policy that affects you in your work and home lives.

Please click on the link to take the **brief 5-10 minute survey**. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and those who complete the survey will be invited to submit their information for a \$25 Amazon Gift Card Raffle.

Survey Link: http://lsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_9vuuW4Ez5KlsCGx

The deadline for the completed survey and raffle participation is **September 13th**. In order to have your answers recorded and your information submitted in time for the drawing, please be sure to complete the survey by then.

Finally, an informed consent outlining the conditions of the survey research is attached for your review. Thank you in advance for your participation in this research. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact the researcher, **Chela White-Ramsey** at chela.white@gmail.com.

Social Media:

We need your feedback! Participate in a survey examining work-life balance trends for women in technology. By completing the survey you could enter a drawing to win a **\$25 Amazon Gift Card**! Help provide essential information that could impact policy changes that help diversify the technology sector. Thank you for your participation and support.

Survey Link: http://lsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_9vuuW4Ez5KlsCGx

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Supervisor Support and Work–family Conflict Model Questionnaire

Test Format:

Supervisor support, work–family conflict, family-work conflict, job performance, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions* are measured on five-point scales ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Job satisfaction is assessed on a five-point scale ranging from 5 (extremely satisfied) to 1 (extremely dissatisfied). Higher scores indicate a higher degree of the measured construct.

Source:

Karatepe, Osman M., & Kilic, Hasan. (2007). Relationships of supervisor support and conflicts in the work-family interface with the selected job outcomes of frontline employees. *Tourism Management*, Vol 28(1), 238-252. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2005.12.019, © 2007 by Elsevier. Reproduced by Permission of Elsevier.

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**For the purpose of this research only three of the six scales were used. The scales that were used are re-printed on the next page.*

Supervisor Support and Work–family Conflict Model Questionnaire

Supervisor support

- My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem.
- My supervisor is fair and does not show favoritism in responding to employees' personal or family needs.
- My supervisor accommodates me when I have family or personal business to take care of, for example, medical appointments, meeting with child's teacher, etc.
- My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work. I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues with my supervisor.
- My supervisor really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life.

Work–family conflict

- The demands of my work interfere with home, family, and social life.
- Because of my job, I cannot involve myself as much as I would like in maintaining close relations with my family, spouse, or friends.
- Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me. I often have to miss important family and social activities because of my job.
- There is a conflict between my job and the commitments and responsibilities I have to my family, spouse, or friends.

Family–work conflict

- The demands of my family, spouse, or friends interfere with work-related activities. I sometimes have to miss work so that family and social responsibilities are met.
- Things I want to do at work do not get done because of the demands of my family, spouse, or friends. My home and social life interfere with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime.
- My co-workers and peers at work dislike how often I am preoccupied with my family and social life.

APPENDIX D: SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What is your current family status?
2. Do you live in the *Redacted Observed* region?
3. Please indicate the occupational category that most closely encompasses your job by selecting an appropriate choice from the drop-down list.
4. What is your race?
5. Does your supervisor share the same racial category as you?
6. What is your gender?
7. Does your supervisor share the same gender category as you?

APPENDIX E: TECHNICAL INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN

Occupational Category	Percentage of Participants
Computer and Information Research	3.6%
Computer Network Architect	.9%
Computer Programmer	3.6%
Computer / Technology Support	20%
Computer Systems Analyst	5.5%
Database Administrator	3.6%
Information Security Analyst	.9%
Network and Computer Systems Administrator	6.4%
Software Developer	7.3%
Web Developer	12.7%
Other	35.5%

VITA

Chela White-Ramsey is a native of Morgan City, Louisiana, and received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Louisiana State University in 2007. Upon completion, she furthered her education at the University of West Florida where she received a Master's degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. She spent time working in the public sector for the Louisiana Office of Public Health before returning back to Louisiana State as a Huel Perkins Doctoral Fellow in 2012. It was here that she completed the necessary requirements to fulfill her lifelong dream of receiving a Ph.D. in Human Resource Education. Currently, Chela works in training technology in the IT department for Travis County and recently launched her own freelancing business wherein she writes resumes, cover letters, and builds LinkedIn profiles for jobseekers. She lives, works, and plays in Austin, TX with her husband, William.