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**Cross-Cultural Approaches to Work Family Conflict**

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INTRODUCTION

"Work and family – almost conflict in terms" *(An Australian woman)*

"Work and family: salt and pepper of life" *(A Taiwanese woman)*


"I work for my own personal well-being. I cannot waste my years of education" *(An*

*American woman)*

"My family is my priority; I do everything for them – I work like crazy so that they don't

have to go through the difficulties that I have gone through in life" *(A Chinese men)*


"My mother-in-law said when we had our first child, 'Do the tigers give their babies to the

elephants to get raised? Do the elephants ever give their babies to the lions to get raised?' I

thought 'Oh gosh, I better stay at home with my own kids'". *(An American woman; from*

*Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco, Lau, 2003)*

"My mother-in-law almost got fainted when I told her that I wanted to give my child to

daycare. She took it as the biggest insult to herself" *(A Turkish woman)*


Work-family conflict (WFC) is a common phenomenon of modern life in many

countries and cultural contexts. However, as the above quotations demonstrate, the

perception and prevalence of WFC, its antecedents and consequences tend to vary across

cultures. According to Russell and Bowman "global organizations have realized that there

is a need to understand variations in work/family issues from one country or region to

another, and what the key drivers of these variations are" (2000, p.124). Understanding

cultural differences in WFC is necessary not only for global organizations (e.g., MNCs),

but also for domestic organizations with a multicultural workforce. To effectively manage

diversity, these organizations seek to develop policies to balance work and family that are

sensitive to cultural differences. Studying the influence of culture on WFC will also help managers in non-Western contexts (e.g., emerging economies), who are in need of understanding the applicability of WFC models and policies that are developed in Western industrialized societies. Cross-cultural studies, therefore, will contribute to practice and policy development, and enhance theory building by introducing the boundary conditions (i.e., cultural contingencies) in conceptualizing the WFC phenomenon and arriving at a more universal knowledge (Gelfand & Knight, 2005).

This chapter aims at providing a review of the cross-cultural literature on WFC and offering propositions to be tested by future research. In the next section the role of culture in understanding WFC will be described and the conceptual model that will guide the review will be presented. This is followed by three sections: the first will focus on the conceptualization and prevalence of WFC across cultures, the second will be on the impact of culture on demands and support mechanisms, and the third will be on the moderating effect of culture in the relationship of WFC with its antecedents and consequences.

This chapter takes a 'cross-cultural', rather than an 'international' perspective to explain variations in WFC. The cross-cultural perspective is a subdivision of the international perspective with a specific emphasis on the extent to which and ways in which *cultural context* influences the observed phenomenon (cf. Holden, 2002). As such, a cross-cultural perspective specifically requires that the researcher provides a culture-based explanation for differences observed in international comparisons. The majority of research in WFC comprises of international comparisons (e.g., WFC in China vs. US, Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2000; see also, e.g., Spector, Allen, Poelmans, Cooper et al., 2005) or single country studies (e.g., WFC in Norway; Mikkelsen & Burke, 2004). In this type of research, differences or country-specific patterns are not explained particularly by

the cultural context (i.e., values, assumptions, norms, belief systems). The majority of research reviewed in this chapter has not included measures of cultural dimensions in their designs. An notable exception is the cross-cultural research project (i.e., Project 3535) currently underway that tests Frone, Yardley and Markle's (1997) integrative model of WFC in ten cultural contexts (i.e., US, Canada, Spain, Australia, the Arab sect of Israel, the Jewish sect of Israel, Indonesia, India, Taiwan, and Turkey)(Aycan, Ayman, Bardoel, Desai, Drach-Zahavy, Hammer, Huang, Korabik, Lero, Mawardi, Poelmans, Rajadhyaksha, Shafiro, Somech, 2004; Korabik, Lero, & Ayman, 2003). In this project, cultural dimensions including vertical and horizontal individualism vs. collectivism, monochronic vs. polychronic time orientation, gender-role egalitarianism , and coping approaches were assessed as predictors of variations in WFC and its relationship with the supports, demands, and outcomes in both work and family domains.

To fill the void in the literature in the systematic examination of the impact of culture on WFC, this chapter will offer propositions linking cultural dimensions to observed differences in the WFC process for future studies to test.

*The Role of Culture in Studying WFC*

One of the most frequently cited definitions of culture in cross-cultural research is that of Kluckhohn 'culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values' (1951, p. 86). This and other commonly used conceptualizations of culture place strong emphasis on values (e.g., what is important in life – work or family; achievement or harmony), assumptions and beliefs (e.g., what is WFC – a problem or an inevitable life experience), and norms (e.g., how should I behave as a woman or as a man

in my family) that distinguish one human group from another. In the majority of research, cross-cultural differences in values, assumptions, beliefs and norms are examined through cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism-collectivism). Although using cultural dimensions has a number of drawbacks (see, Kagitcibasi, 1994 for a review) it is convenient, because the dimensions show validity, they are at the right level between generality and detail, they establish a link among individual, group and societal level phenomena, and they are easy to communicate. The review of the literature suggests that cultural dimensions that are the most relevant in explaining variations in WFC include individualism-collectivism, gender egalitarianism, specificity-diffuseness, fatalism, paternalism, and performance orientation (see, Table 1 for definitions).

How does culture influence WFC? According to Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness, and Lyttle (1997) culture can be construed in two ways. The Type I hypothesis of culture treats it as the main effect; that is, culture is the main cause of the observed differences. Researchers adopting this perspective attribute mean-level differences in WFC to cultural variations. In the second approach, culture is treated as the moderator (Type II hypothesis). This approach acknowledges that constructs may be related in a non-uniform way across cultures. The model proposed in this chapter (Figure 1) is based on the working model of Project 3535. It depicts culture both as a main effect and a moderator. The direct links from culture to WFC, supports and demands in family and work domains suggest that the above-mentioned cultural values, assumptions, norms and belief systems directly influence the prevalence of WFC as well as the type and strength of demands and supports in work and family domains. The model also suggests that culture influences the strength of the relationship among WFC, its antecedents and consequences.

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Insert Table 1 and Figure 1 about here

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*Culture as the Main Effect Influencing WFC and its Antecedents*

Impact of culture on the experiences and prevalence of WFC. How is WFC construed in different cultural contexts (e.g., as a 'threat' or 'an opportunity for development')? How does culture influence the types of interrole conflict (e.g., 'job-parent' conflict is common in Israel, whereas 'job-spouse' conflict is common in Singapore)? What is the prevalence of WFC in different countries? How is the directionality of WFC influenced by the cultural context (e.g., work-to-family conflict is higher than family-to-work conflict in almost all countries, but there are cross-cultural variations in gender differences)? These are the questions that we seek to answer in this section.

There is research to suggest that WFC is construed in different ways across cultures. For example, the work and family domains are perceived to be *segmented* in the US, but *integrated* in China (Yang, 2005). Because of the perception of segmentation, work and family roles are considered to be incompatible, rather than congruent . Role incompatibility leads to experiences of *conflict* in the US, whereas role integration leads to experiences of *balance* in Hong Kong (Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco, & Lau, .2003). Conflict, when experienced, is perceived as a *threat* in the US, but as an *opportunity* for development in China (Yang et al., 2000). Finally, conflict is perceived to be *inevitable* in India vs. *preventable* in the UK (United Nations Report, 2000).

Asian cultures tend to perceive work and family as different but compatible life domains enriching and balancing one's life. WFC, if it occurs, is perceived as a natural life event presenting opportunities for personal development and maturation. This is contrasted with the Anglo-Saxon perception of WFC as being 'problematic', threatening to one's health and well-being, and preventable. Underlying the differences in approaching WFC

could be the cultural dimensions of specificity-diffuseness, tolerance for contradictions (i.e., dialectic thinking and Confucianism; cf. Peng & Nisbett, 1999), tolerance for conflict (vs. preference for harmony), and fatalism.

Thus, we propose that in cultures characterized by specificity, low tolerance for contradictions, high tolerance for conflict, or low fatalism, the work and family domains are perceived to be separate, incompatible, and conflicting. The conflict is believed to be threatening and therefore something that must be prevented. By contrast, in cultures characterized by diffuseness, high tolerance for contradictions, low tolerance for conflict (high regard for harmony), or high fatalism, the work and family domains are perceived to be integrated in the unity of life, compatible in harmony, and inevitable. The conflict is believed to be an opportunity for personal development and maturation and must be accepted.

Type of interrole conflict experienced by employees also varies across cultures (Aycan et al., 2004). For example, the roles of *employee and parent* are seen as conflicting in Israel, Singapore and India; the *employee and homemaker* roles are viewed as conflicting in the Arab sect of Israel, Singapore and India; the roles of *employee and spouse* are seen as conflicting in Singapore and India; and roles of *employee and social woman* (e.g., organizing and attending social events and functions) are viewed as conflicting in the Arab sect of Israel and Indonesia. The cross-cultural differences in the strength of various interrole conflicts could be a function of the salience of different roles in societies. For example, if the role of a woman in the Arab culture as a good housewife and a social woman is very strong, then it is more likely that the interrole conflict would be experienced between job and homemaker roles or between job and social woman roles. In summary, the job role conflicts with the social roles that are most salient in societies.

*Impact of culture on prevalence of WFC*. One of the major studies on work-family pressure was conducted by Spector, et al. (2005). Among the 18 countries participating in the study, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Portugal reported the highest work-family pressure, whereas Australia, UK, and the Ukraine reported the lowest. In another study comparing 8 European countries (Simon, Kümmerling, Hasselhorn, 2004), work interference with family conflict (WIF) was found to be higher than family interference with work (FIW) conflict in all countries. However, the WIF experienced by men was greater than that experienced by women in Italy, whereas the reverse was the case in the Netherlands. In a study comparing USA and China, Yang et al. (2000) reported that men experienced higher levels of WFC than women did in China, whereas a gender difference did not exist in the US sample.

There may be many reasons for such cross-cultural variations, including differences in demands and supports in work and family domains (e.g., number of work hours, availability of support mechanisms and work-life balance policies). However, when all things are assumed to be equal, it appears that WFC is experienced to a greater extent in countries that are going through a rapid and continuous transition both economically and culturally, compared to those going through a less radical and rapid transition. Similarly, at the individual level, it seems that WFC is more strongly felt by men or women, depending on the strength of transition in gender roles or strength of role expansion (cf. Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Thus, we would expect transitioning economies, especially those with traditional gender role stereotypes, to experience WFC to a greater extent than economically developed countries with egalitarian gender role stereotypes. Furthermore, individuals holding traditional gender role stereotypes and experiencing role expansion should be

more prone to suffer from WFC, compared to those holding egalitarian gender role stereotypes.

*Impact of culture on demands in work and family domains.* How does the cultural context influence the type and strength of demands in the work and family domains? Let us start from the demands in the work domain. Studies concur that experiences of role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, long working hours, schedule inflexibility, work-related travel, and job insecurity are demands of work that are associated with WFC. Of course, the extent to which they are experienced may depend on the cultural and the socio-economic context. Furthermore, their impact on WFC may also vary across cultures, which will be discussed in the section on 'culture-as-a-moderator' between demands and WFC.

In addition to the above, some work demands can be considered as culture-specific. For example, in collectivistic cultures maintaining harmony and avoiding conflicts in interpersonal relationships at work is an extra demand on employees (Ling & Powell, 2001). Unresolved conflicts and tension at work may constitute emotional labor that may spill over to the family domain as strain-based WFC.

In cultures valuing achievement, high performance and career advancement, employees are expected to feel more demands in their work role (e.g., the pressure to be a top performer), compared to those in cultures that de-emphasize competition, achievement and career ambition. In the former case, an ideal employee is defined as someone whose work is central to life, whereas in the latter case an ideal employee is someone who maintains harmony among work, family and leisure. Employees in cultures characterized as the latter are less likely to experience WFC. Therefore, compared to cultures characterized by low performance orientation, in cultures characterized by high

performance orientation, the pressure to be a top performer and advancement in career are expected to be among the most important work demands.

In some cultures (e.g., China) building interpersonal trust is crucial in business. In such cultures, good business requires attending frequently-occurring after-hour events, such as going out to dinner or karaoke bars with customers or business partners. In such cultures, off-work or after-hour activities to instill trust are included in work demands and these commitments pose a serious threat to work-life balance.

Finally, as a special case, women in managerial positions are more likely to experience WFC in cultures where attitudes towards women in managerial roles are negative, than those where women in authority positions are more easily accepted and appreciated. In the former case, dealing with the negative attitudes towards women managers constitutes an extra demand in the work domain for women in those positions.

Let us now turn to the influence of culture on the type and salience of demands in the family domain. So far, studies have shown that age and number of children, occupational status of the spouse or partner, and care of elder parents are the main demands in the family domain (cf. Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). In addition to these family demands, caring and maintaining harmonious relationships with the extended family members and live-in elders are among the most important demands for collectivistic societies. In such societies, multiple social roles, such as mother / father, daughter / son, daughter-in-law / son-in-law, neighbor, hostess in social events, wife / husband, are equally important. Perfection in all of these roles is demanded by the society. For example, offering ready-made or frozen meals to house guests is completely inappropriate in traditional societies like India, Turkey or Taiwan. A woman must prepare a rich set of food for the guests, herself, even though she is a high-status career woman or has a household helper. Thus, in collectivistic cultures, care of elderly family members

and maintaining harmonious and caring relationships with the extended family are among the most important demands in the family domain.

Another demand in collectivistic societies is the *life-long* care of children. When children are at the school age, their academic achievement is the primary responsibility of the family. Children's academic status at school is considered to be the reflection of their parents' success or failure. Often times, parents have to sit down with their children to do the homework together, rather than leaving this responsibility to the children to fulfill. When children grow up, parents are again involved in their lives to find an appropriate job and a mate to marry. In fact, children have to live with their parents until they get married and parents have to take care of them emotionally and financially. When children get married and have children of their own, parents are involved in care of the grandchildren. All in all, care of the offspring is a life-long commitment for parents who are involved in their children's lives at every age and stage. For working people this is a serious responsibility and a family demand. Therefore, in collectivistic cultures, care and guidance of children at every age and stage is among the most important family demands

.       *Impact of culture on support mechanisms in work and family domains.* The main support mechanisms at work that are cited in the literature include family-friendly organizational policies and practices and managerial support (Eby et al., 2005). In paternalistic cultures, managerial support includes manager's involvement in the nonwork lives of their employees. Aycan (2006) contends that managers in paternalistic cultures (i..e.., paternalistic leaders) give advice to their employees not only for work-related problems, but also for family-related problems. Often times, they are asked to act as a mediator in resolving family disputes. Thus, in paternalistic cultures, managerial guidance and involvement in the family matters of employees who need and require it is an important source of support in the work domain.

Organizational support for family issues reflects the attitudes and policies at the national level. Based on European countries, Evans (2000) proposes four different national models. In the Nordic model (Sweden, Denmark and Finland), family has the priority in society. There are not only well-developed public systems for childcare and eldercare, but also rules to allow flexibility at work. The second is the Continental model covering Germany, Austria and Netherlands. In this model, family is also considered to be a premier institution in society. Although state arrangements for childcare are less common in the Continental model than in the Nordic model, work-family reconciliation is facilitated by allowing part time work, extended parental leaves, and large-scale social security and pension systems. Both Austria and Germany have competitions for the family-friendly organization of the year. The insular model (UK and Ireland) places an emphasis on individual freedom with little interference from the State. Women's primary responsibility is at home and there are no systems for parental leave. In this system organizational support for work-family balance is limited. Finally, the Southern European model (Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain) emphasizes the role of the extended family as the primary support system to reconcile work and family. There are few public and organizational provisions to support work-family balance.

In summary, organizational policies and practices to enhance work-family balance are influenced by policies at the national level regarding the state's involvement in family care. In countries where care of the dependent family members is regarded as the shared responsibility between the family and the state, organizations are encouraged to make family-friendly arrangements. In countries where care of the family is completely left to the responsibility of the family members, organizational support mechanisms to work-family balance are not well-developed.

The most frequently discussed support mechanism in the family domain is the emotional and instrumental support from the spouse (Adams, King, & King, 1996). However, the type and the level of support in the family domain may vary cross-culturally. Let us begin with the role of spousal support in different cultural contexts. In cultures high on gender egalitarianism (House et al., 1999), support from the male spouse or partner is more likely than it is in cultures low on gender egalitarianism. Men who do housework in traditional cultures may be called names (e.g., 'light man') and looked down on as being weak and not manly. It is not unusual to observe a man washing dishes or changing diapers at home in the *absence* of family and friends (Aycan, 2004). Not only men, but also women adhere to traditional gender roles in cultures low on gender egalitarianism. Jost and Banaji's (1994) explains this phenomenon with the System Justification Theory which suggests that women are the primary supporters of traditional gender roles to justify the prevailing inequalities in the social system, which they feel powerless to change. Women who internalize the traditional gender roles feel guilty for not fulfilling their wifely and motherly duties. Therefore, in cultures characterized by traditional gender role stereotypes, support from the male spouse or partner is not sought by men, women, and the society at large. Thus, support from the male spouse or partner to women is more likely in cultures high, compared to low, on gender egalitarianism. Support from the female spouse or partner to the men is more likely in cultures low, compared to high, on gender egalitarianism.

Another important source of support is the extended family. In collectivistic countries (e.g., India, Turkey, Spain), extended family support is available to working parents (cf. Aycan & Eskin, 2005). Grandparents or aunties of working couples are involved in childcare or care of household responsibilities (esp., cooking for the family). Aycan (2004) found that emotional and instrumental support (esp. support to childcare)

received from the mother was more important than the spousal support for professional and managerial women in Turkey. As one of the quotations at the beginning of the chapter has illustrated, care of the grandchild is both pleasure and *duty* for grandparents in collectivistic countries. If grandchildren are sent to daycare centers, grandparents may get offended believing that they are not trusted. On the other hand, in individualistic cultures, privacy is a pivotal value (Ho & Chui, 1994) and involvement of third parties in family matters is not desirable. Therefore, in collectivistic cultures, extended family's involvement in care of children and management of the household is an important source of support in the family domain. By contrast, in individualistic cultures, extended family support to work-family balance is not as desirable and available as it is in collectivistic cultures.

Thanks to the close social ties in the community, working parents also benefit from the support of their neighbors in collectivistic cultures. Children may stay at the neighbor's house until the parents arrive at home; neighbors may cook for each other and share food. The support from the social network (i.e., family, friends, neighbors) is free but still comes with a cost. The cost is the obligation to reciprocate the favor. The support received especially from the extended family may turn into a demand in the family domain. When the extended family takes care of the children and household chores of working parents, they expect to be taken care of by them in their old age or when they get sick (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Thus, in collectivistic cultures, help received from neighbors and friends in care of children and management of the household is an important source of support in the family domain.

In addition to the support from the family and social networks, paid household help (e.g., cleaning ladies, nannies) is available and affordable in countries especially where there is large income disparity. Women from low income groups provide cheap labor to

those in high income groups. However, the quality of support received from paid helpers is not always high and this may create an extra strain on working parents. Nannies are women with low education and without the certification to qualify them to do the job. Nevertheless, they alleviate the family demands to some extent and help working families to maintain the work-life balance. Another source of support is the private tutors hired to help children with their school work or homework. As mentioned in the previous sections, attending to children's homework is one of the important demands for families in collectivistic cultures. In summary, in countries with high income disparity and low state-sponsored institutional support, commonly used sources of support are paid household helpers, including nannies, cleaning ladies, and private tutors.

*Culture as the Moderator of Relationships Between WFC and its Antecedents and Consequences*

Cultural values may influence the strength or the direction of the relationship between work-family conflict and its predictors and outcomes. It appears that culture moderates the relationship between WFC and its antecedents more strongly than it does the relationship between WFC and its consequences (e.g., Hill, Yang, Hawkins, Ferris, 2004; Spector et al., 2005). As discussed in the previous section, cultural context has a bearing on the prevalence and the type of demands and support mechanisms at work and family domains. However, the majority of research has failed to include these variables. Therefore, cross-cultural differences observed between WFC and its antecedents may be a methodological artifact caused by the Western bias in the selection of variables included in studies. Alternatively, it can be suggested that factors *causing* WFC are more likely to vary across cultures than the *outcomes* (e.g., psychological well being) associated with WFC.

Aryee, Fields, and Luk (1999) argue that within-domain psychological processes (e.g., the relationship among stressors, involvement, conflict, life satisfaction, depression) are universal. On the other hand, there are also some interesting cross-cultural variations. For example, number of children correlates positively with work-family pressure in Australia, Romania, Sweden and US, but negatively in Hong Kong; in some other countries (e.g., Columbia, Portugal, Spain) the correlation was nil (Spector et al., 2005). A similar variation was found in Hill and colleague's study (2004): the lowest correlation between the responsibility for children and FIW was found in the Eastern cultures (China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand), whereas the highest correlation was found in the US. The same pattern was replicated for the relationship between the eldercare responsibility and FIW.

Spector et al. (2005) found a significant relationship between the number of hours worked and work-family conflict among Anglos but not among collectivistic cultures (Chinese and Latins). The authors suggest that presumably Anglos view working extra hours as taking away from their families, which results in the feeling of guilt and conflict with family members. This may not be the case in China and Latin America, where employees and their families view working long hours as a sacrifice for the family (see also, Yang et al., 2000). Among other work-related demands, job workload, job travel, and job inflexibility increased WIF in 48-country comparison of IBM workers in Hill et al.'s (2004) study.

Another important research study, conducted by Yang et al. (2000), showed that family demands (spending less time at work) had a greater impact on WFC in the US than in China, whereas work demands (spending less time in family) had a greater impact on WFC in China than in the US. The authors suggested that the difference was mainly due to cultural differences regarding the value placed on family and work time. The authors

attributed the majority of the differences in the relationship between WFC and its antecedents to individualism and collectivism. However, more systematic and theory-driven research is needed to arrive at a firm conclusion.

What appears from the findings reviewed so far is that the cultural context influences the ways in which family and work demands are perceived and appraised in different societies. For example, if having children is perceived to be a 'choice' or 'burden' in life, childbearing responsibility aggravates WFC, compared to the situation where it is perceived to be a natural life event. Similarly, if eldercare is perceived to be a norm in society, it does not increase WFC, compared to the situation where it is perceived to be a choice or a burden. The appraisal process has a similar impact on the relationship between work demands and WFC. Time spent at work aggravates work-to-family conflict in cultures where the primary role of work is to satisfy individuals' personal needs (i.e., financial and psychological), compared to cultures where the primary role of work is to satisfy the family's needs.

In summary, cultural context moderates the relationship between demands in the family and work domains and WFC.  In cultures appraising demands in a positive way such as the 'norm' in society (e.g., eldercare), a 'natural event in life' (e.g., having children), or a 'voluntary sacrifice for the family' (e.g., working long hours), the impact of demands on WFC is expected to be lower than in cultures appraising demands in a negative way such as a 'burden' (e.g., eldercare), a 'choice' (e.g., having children), or a 'compromise' (e.g., working long hours).

The final topic of discussion is the moderating role of culture on the relationship between WFC and its consequences. WFC has been shown to relate to negative health and life outcomes, such as increase in depressive symptoms, increase in the use of alcohol and substance abuse, decrease in life, job satisfaction, and marital satisfaction, and increase in

the tendency to quit the job (Eby et al., 2005). However, there is evidence to suggest that cultural context is a moderator between WFC and its outcomes. In their 18-country comparison, Spector et al. (2005) found that work-family pressure was correlated negatively with mental and physical well-being in almost all countries. However, the magnitude of the correlations varied. The highest correlations between work-family pressure and mental well-being were obtained in Australia, Belgium, Mexico and Ukraine (ranging from -.37 to -.47), whereas the lowest correlations were obtained in Romania, Hong Kong, Brazil, Poland, and Spain (ranging from .03 to -.18). Similarly, the relationship of work-family pressure with the physical well-being varied across cultures: it was -.01 in the UK, but -.40 in Australia. In the same study, the relationship between work-family pressure and job satisfaction was also moderated by the cultural context. In half of the countries (e.g., Belgium, China, Poland, Portugal, SouthAfrica, UK) the correlation was near-zero, whereas in others it ranged from -.11 (Brazil) to -.29 (Ukraine). The authors have not provided an explanation for these differences. Indeed, it is difficult to speculate on the ways in which culture played a moderating role in these relationships without the direct assessment of the cultural values, norms, and assumptions. It is also possible that the coping mechanisms commonly may vary across cultures and this may account for the differences in the relationship between WFC and its outcomes.

In another large-scale comparative study, Hill and colleagues (2004) found that IBM employees in 48 countries experienced higher job satisfaction when there is work-family fit (i.e., the ability to integrate paid work and family life). Although, this finding appears to contradict that of Spector et al.'s (2005), the similarity of the relationship between work-family fit and job satisfaction across countries in Hill et al.'s study could be attributed the fact that participants were employees of the same organization.

Aryee, Fields and Luk (1999) found that life satisfaction of Hong Kong Chinese employees was influenced primarily by WIF while life satisfaction of American employees was influenced primarily by FIW. The authors explained this as the pivotal role that family played in Confucius societies. In such societies, the interference of work with family is seen as threatening to the family identity, whereas in individualistic countries, where people tend to identify with their work, the interference of family with work is seen as threatening to the self identity.

Aycan and Eskin (2005) found that in Turkey WIF, but not FIW, was associated with lower psychological well-being, lower satisfaction with parental role performance and marital satisfaction. They argue that because the family has a central importance in lives, the possibility of harming the family because of work responsibilities was more disturbing to Turkish dual-earner families, than the possibility of harming the work due to family responsibilities.

Wang, Lawler, Walumbwa and Shi (2004) investigated the moderating role of individualism and collectivism (measured at the individual level as idiocentrism and allocentrism) on the relationship between WFC and job withdrawal intention. Findings revealed that, contrary to expectations, there was no difference in the effect of WIF on job withdrawal intentions between the US and China. However, regardless of the country, WIF was associated with higher withdrawal intentions for idiocentric (individualistic), compared to allocentric (collectivistic) individuals. On the other hand, FIW intensified the withdrawal intentions for allocentric, rather than idiocentric individuals. They suggested that perhaps, because of their loyalty to family, allocentric individuals are likely to be motivated to fulfill the family responsibilities, even if it interferes with their work performance. However, they may feel obligated to continue work in order to ensure the

well-being of the family. This dilemma is likely to intensify the stress levels and lead the individuals to consider leaving their current jobs for a less demanding or more flexible work environment. Aryee, Luk, Leung, and Lo (1999) found that neither WIF nor FIW diminished family satisfaction in Hong Kong and Singapore, because work is perceived to be an activity that promotes family well-being (utilitarinistic familialism).

Finally, Aycan and Eskin (2005) introduced the concept of work-related guilt as another important outcome of WFC. In the WFC context, guilt arouses anxiety that occurs as a result of perceived failure to fulfill prescribed gender-roles (cf. Chapman, 1987; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). According to Staines' (1980) fixed-sum-of-scarce-resources theory, women's involvement in the work role may result in guilt regarding their performance as parents. Indeed, Aycan and Eskin (2005) found that women in Turkey experienced more employment-related guilt than men, and that guilt was more strongly associated with females' (not males') work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict.

In summary, we propose that the relationship between WFC and its outcomes varies across-cultures due to cross-cultural differences in the appraisal and coping mechanisms. Moreover, the magnitude of the impact of WFC on its outcomes depends on the ways in which WFC is perceived to harm the domain that is most important in societies. WIF is expected to be most strongly associated with negative well-being outcomes in cultures where family is the most important domain in life, whereas FIW is expected to be most strongly associated with negative well-being outcomes in cultures where work is the most important domain in life.

## Implications for Future Research and Practice

The aim of this chapter was to provide a theoretical framework and specific propositions linking cultural context to the WFC phenomenon. The framework suggests

that culture should be treated in two ways: first, as the main effect directly influencing WFC (its prevalence, type, direction) as well as the factors leading to WFC (i.e., the magnitude and type of demands and supports in work and family domains); second, as the moderator influencing the relationship of WFC with its antecedents and consequences.

The present review alludes to a number of tentative conclusions. First, cross-cultural differences in the appraisal and coping processes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980) seem to account for the differences in the prevalence of WFC as well as its impact on life outcomes (e.g., psychological well-being, job and marital satisfaction, turnover intention). For instance, when employees appraise WFC as a threat rather than an opportunity for development, they tend to experience greater WFC. Similarly, when WFC is appraised as a life event harming the family, which is perceived to be the most important element in life, it is associated with greater health-related problems than when it is appraised as a sacrifice for family. Therefore, one important area for future research is cross-cultural differences in appraisal and coping processes.

Second, the review suggests that there are emic or indigenous manifestations of some of the key constructs used in WFC research. For example, in collectivistic and high power distant cultures, managerial support may include a paternalistic approach, which can enhance work-family balance. As another example, work demands in collectivistic cultures include the pressure to maintain harmonious relationships and avoidance of interpersonal conflicts at work. The stress created by this tension at work can lead to strain-based WFC. Even the simple term 'family' may mean different things in different cultural contexts. Future research should examine the culture-specific or emic construals of demands and supports (i.e., what constitutes demand and support) in work and family domains.

Indigenous or emic perspectives allow us to unfold *variform universals* (i.e., general principles hold across cultures but the form or enactment of this principle varies; Bass 1997) and *variform functional universals* (i.e., the relationship between variables is always found but the magnitude or direction may change depending on the cultural context). As discussed by Gelfand, Erez and Aycan (2007), indigenous perspectives not only contribute to the development of more universal knowledge, but also help us to understand *our own culture and behavior*. Pruitt (2004) states that "… most cultural differences are relative, rather than absolute. In other words, people across the world are capable of behaving in almost any fashion, but their preferences for one kind of behavior over another differ from culture to culture.  Characteristics that are dominant in one culture tend to be recessive in another, and vice-versa…By studying other societies where these features are dominant, they can develop concepts and theories that will eventually be useful for understanding their own" (p. xii). Future cross-cultural research on WFC should invest more in emic or indigenous perspectives in order to provide a more universal science and to unearth recessive characteristics in other cultures.

Last but not least, this review will lend itself to a number of tentative implications for policy and practice. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, understanding cross-cultural differences in WFC has important implications for diversity management. First, organizations with culturally diverse workforce should pay close attention to the implications of their career planning for work-family balance. Employees who value the balance between work and family more than the advancement in their careers may view the promotion to a managerial position not necessarily in a positive light. For them, the promotion may even be demotivating as it is deemed to be an unnecessary compromise from the family. Second, the nature and extent of organizational and managerial support to work-life balance may be evaluated differently by employees, depending on their cultural

values. Those from collectivistic and high power distant cultures are more likely to expect organizational and managerial support and guidance in their private lives, whereas those from individualistic and egalitarian cultures would consider this as an invasion of their privacy. Managers should be trained to tailor-make their approaches in handling work-family problems of their diverse workforce. Organizational support systems or benefits and allowances can also be tailor-made to fit to different needs and expectations of the diverse workforce. A cafeteria approach could be adopted in benefits and allowances to support work-family balance to include various options to choose from, such as providing support to elderly family members, helping employees to find private tutors for their children, arranging for home-made meals to take home in the evening, and organizing visits or social events for the family members.

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Table 1. Cultural dimensions affecting the WFC and its relationship with its

antecedents and consequences.

| Cultural Dimension | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Collectivism (Hofstede, 1980) | The extent to which people place importance to extended families or clans, which protect them in exchange for loyalty. The 'in-group' – 'out-group' difference is salient. |
| Individualism (Hofstede, 1980) | The extent to which people perceive themselves as independent units separate from family and the social context and place importance to actualizing their self-interests. |
| Specificity (Trompenaars, 1993) | The degree to which private and business agendas are kept separated; clear, precise and detailed instructions are seen as assuring better compliance. |
| Diffuseness (Trompenaars, 1993) | The degree to which private and business agendas are interpenetrated; ambiguous and vague instructions are seen as allowing subtle and responsive interpretations. |
| Fatalism (Aycan, Kanungo, et al., 2000, p.198) | The extent to which people in an organization or society believes that it is not possible to control fully the outcomes of one's actions. |
| Paternalism (Aycan, 2006) | The extent to which people in authority in the society takes care of the subordinates in a manner that resembles a parent. The role of the superior is to provide guidance, nurturance, protection and care to the subordinates who, in turn, show loyalty and deference towards the superior. |
| Performance orientation (House et al., 1999) | The extent to which an organization of society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence. |
| Gender egalitarianism (House et al., 1999) | The extent to which equal opportunities are provided to males and females in society. |

# Figure 1. A Cross-Cultural Model of Culture & Work-Family Conflict
(based on Aycan et al., 2004 and Korabik et al., 2003)