

**WORK-LIFE OR WORK-WORK BENEFITS?  
THE PARADOX OF WORK-LIFE BENEFIT UTILIZATION**

A Thesis

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by

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## ABSTRACT

While traditional conceptions of work-life benefits assume that they produce positive employee outcomes, early evidence suggests this may not represent the whole story and that, in fact, undesirable results can also occur. Using data from a nationally representative population and structural equation modeling, I find that employees make varying attributions about management's intent to either control or support workers and that predominant attributions vary based on benefit type. The controlling or supportive attributions employees make then impacts the affective costs, such as worry or guilt, an employee experiences due to work-life benefit utilization. These linking mechanisms provide answers about why some work-life benefits engender positive results while others produce negative outcomes such as increased work-family conflict, counterproductive workplace behaviors, and intentions to turnover as well as decreased organizational citizenship behaviors. This study has important implications for both researchers and practitioners.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Work-Family Conflict (WFC)
2. Work Interference with Family (WIF)
3. Family Interference with Work (FIW)
4. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs)
5. Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors (CWBs)
6. Family Supportive Organization Perceptions (FSOP)
7. Gender Role Orientation (GRO)

# **WORK-LIFE OR WORK-WORK BENEFITS? THE PARADOX OF WORK-LIFE BENEFIT UTILIZATION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Work-life benefits have represented a critical component of organizations' human resources and recruiting strategies for a number of decades, but never have they garnered as much attention as they do now given the ongoing transformations in the workforce. As the proportion of dual-career couples attending to the demands of parenting and dependent elders (Casper & Bianchi, 2002) and the prominence of millennials who place greater value on leisure time than prior generations (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010) rises, organizations have continued to broaden the range of work-life benefits that they offer to their employees. Indeed, companies are increasingly positioning and offering work-life benefits as a key strategic tool with which organizations are able to attract and retain valuable employees (Society for Human Resource Management, 2014).

Underlying the investments made in work-life benefits is the deep-seeded assumption that these benefits not only help employers to attract talent, but also yield numerous other desirable outcomes. This assumption is reflected in the focus of scholarly research, which has examined the relationship between work-life benefits and positive outcomes such as increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Lambert, 2000), organizational commitment (Grover & Crocker, 1995) and job satisfaction (Butts, Casper, & Yang, 2012) and lower levels of work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; O'Driscoll et al., 2003) and turnover intentions (Grover & Crocker, 1995). It is also evident in the central role that work-life benefits play in identifying employers of choice as seen by the various outlets producing company rankings such as Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For" or Forbes' "The 25 Best Companies for Work-Life Balance".

While the popular assumption regarding the positive outcomes of work-life benefits has some merit, it is also likely incomplete. The predominance of the assumption that work-life benefits are associated with positive outcomes has come at the cost of overlooking the possibility that they may not always produce desirable outcomes. It has also meant that the mechanisms which facilitate the relationship between work-life benefits and positive employee and organizational outcomes have been largely unquestioned, thereby constraining the ability of researchers to examine the conditions under which benefits might be associated with mixed outcomes. Indeed, in the studies in which scholars have found that work-life benefits are related to increases rather than decreases in work-family conflict (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005; Brough, O'Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005), the findings could not be empirically explained because they were unexpected; that is, the researchers had not been prepared for the possibility of having to explain negative outcomes. Thus, the research designs did not include an assessment of the mechanisms that could have explained the unexpected negative results.

The notion that the utilization of work-life benefits may come at a cost for employees is well illustrated by quotes in the recent popular press such as the following: "These benefits are not being offered out of largess. It's done because organizations want employees to work 24/7. If you never have to leave to get your dry cleaning, to go to the gym, to eat or even go to bed, you can work all the time. They're golden handcuffs," (Tugend, 2014). Further supporting this notion, some sociological work has hinted at the possibility that employees can suffer career consequences as a result of using work-life benefits (Dau-Schmidt et al., 2009; Kalleberg & Reskin, 1995); fear of these consequences is often posed as the reason employees refuse to use these supports even when offered (Bailyn, 1993; Perlow, 1995). In addition, although not directly examining outcomes associated with work-life benefits, some research suggests that

female employees whose parental status is made salient suffer from negative evaluations such as being judged to be less competent (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008) and less valued and dependable (Halpert, Wilson, & Hickman 1993). Popular media outlets have recently questioned whether benefits such as reproductive benefits (e.g. female egg freezing, breastmilk delivery services, etc.) or on-site amenities are being offered not in an effort to support employees' needs so much as to eliminate obstacles which keep employees from working as much as possible (Almeling, Radin, & Richardson, 2014; Tugend, 2014). These examples support the possibility that the utilization of work-life benefits could present psychological- and career-related costs to employees. However, empirical research that examines this possibility is woefully lacking.

Therefore, the objective of this thesis is to understand why work-life benefits may sometimes produce positive effects while at other times result in negative and undesirable outcomes. I propose that the attributions employees make about management's intentions for work-life benefits and the affective costs of work-life benefit utilization are two potential mechanisms which can help clarify when work-life benefits may be associated with negative rather than positive outcomes. I focus on these mechanisms in particular as prior research has found that the attributions employees make about why management implements HR policies and practices are differentially associated with individual and unit outcomes (Nishii et al., 2008). Similarly, I expect that employees make attributions about management's intentions for work-life benefits which ultimately influence the way they experience and react to the benefits. In addition, researchers have often cited fear of career consequences as an impediment to workers' willingness to utilize work-life benefits (Bailyn, 1993; Perlow, 1995; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Kirby & Krone, 2002). When employees question management's intentions for work-life

benefits, it may simultaneously trigger negative affective reactions, such as worry or guilt, about how the use of these benefits will affect the employee's career and family; however there is a dearth of empirical support for this reasoning.

Understanding the mechanisms that facilitate the outcomes for work-life benefits is necessary for advancing knowledge about the processes through which work-life benefits operate to produce either positive or negative results. A more comprehensive understanding of the processes which facilitate the effects of work-life benefits will allow researchers to better identify the range of outcomes which may occur as well as distinguish organizational and individual antecedents that prompt these processes. Finally, this research is likely to have important practical implications as it can support managerial decision making about how to best invest in, structure, and communicate work-life benefits in order to create optimal outcomes for current and potential employees.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Overview of Work-Life Benefits**

Work-life benefits in the United States emerged in prominence in the 1970's and 1980's as a result of the increasing number of women in the workforce which created more dual career and/or single-mother households (Young, 1999; Harrington & Hall, 2007). Around this time, there was tremendous growth in corporate involvement as employers began to provide on-site childcare, eldercare support, and flexible or alternative work arrangements (Kossek, Lewis & Hammer, 2010). This continued until the early 1990's when companies encountered "work-family backlash" causing many organizations to modify the label to "work-life" programs and extend the range of benefits to be inclusive of a more diverse set of employees, particularly those

without immediate family responsibilities (Young, 1999). Today, work-family benefits cover a wide-range of options and have become an important component in employee-benefits packages in organizations.

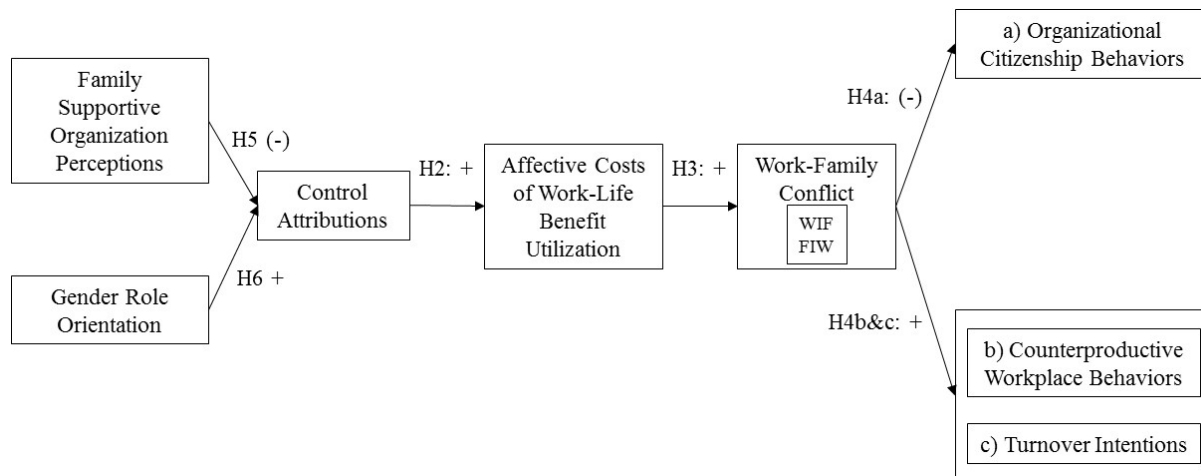
In an effort to keep abreast of these organizational trends, researchers have dedicated a significant amount of attention to the topic. Grounded in the traditional assumption that work-life benefits are favorable, the vast majority of this research focuses on how they enhance outcomes for individuals and organizations. For example, findings from this body of research provide evidence that work-life benefits produce a variety of desirable outcomes such as increased morale (McCampbell, 1996; Rodgers, 1992), job satisfaction (Shinn et al., 1989), and productivity (McCampbell, 1996; Rodgers, 1992; Seylor et al., 1993; Shepard et al., 1996) while reducing work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999) absenteeism (Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Rodgers, 1992; Seylor et al., 1993), tardiness (Seylor et al., 1993), and turnover (Rodgers, 1992; Seylor et al., 1993; Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

The array of findings which have supported the positive effects of work-life benefits has not only enhanced our knowledge but has also likely improved their popularity with decision makers in organizations by positioning them as a tool to create strategic advantages. However, the almost exclusive emphasis on the positive outcomes associated with these practices has limited our understanding of work-life benefits in nontrivial ways. Enough evidence has emerged from research to suggest that it would be worthwhile to explore not only positive but also potentially negative outcomes. For example, some studies have found work-life benefits can actually increase work-family conflict (Hammer et al., 2005; Brough et al., 2005), as well as decrease organizational commitment (Casper & Harris, 2008), engagement, and job satisfaction

(Ratnasingam et al., 2012). Note that, these findings were unexpected and captured a decrease rather than an increase in positive outcomes. Because researchers did not set out to understand possible unintended negative effects, measurement of possible negative outcome variables and explanatory mediators were not included. As such, numerous scholars (e.g. Hammer et al., 2005; Brough et al., 2005, etc.) have called for research that identifies hitherto unspecified mechanisms that link work-life benefit use with employee outcomes.

In a seminal article exploring the linkages between HR practices and firm performance, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) describe the HRM system not as a product of its content but, rather, as an active process through which the organization sends signals to employees. According to this framework, employees attend to and filter information from the HRM system in order to understand what the organization desires from employees in regards to appropriate responses and behaviors (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). In other words, it is the employees' perceptions and reactions which facilitate the link between HR practices and employee behaviors which contribute to organizational outcomes (Nishii et al., 2008). Extending this framework to the current research, I argue that work-life benefits are an important component of the system that communicates messages about what the organization expects of employees, and therefore, the ways in which employees interpret and react to the messages in positive or negative ways. Explained in greater depth below and as illustrated in Figure 1, I propose that employee attributions and the affective costs that burden employees who use work-life benefits are two mechanisms which play an important role in clarifying the relationship between work-life benefits and various outcomes.

In addition to identifying linking mechanisms, this study contributes to the literature by differentiating between types of work-life benefits. As others have argued, work-life benefit



**Figure 1 – Hypothesized Model**

research suffers from both a conceptual and empirical lack of specification due to inconsistent benefit measures (Kelly, et al., 2008; Butts, Casper, & Yang, 2012). Findings vary considerably depending on whether benefits are represented as specific practices or as some aggregate construct as well as whether benefits were simply made available or actually used by employees (Glass & Finley, 2002; Kelly, et al., 2008; Butts et al., 2012). These measurement issues have constrained progress in the field. Rather than assume that work-life benefits as a set are associated with the same outcomes, in the current study, I examine six different benefits separately to determine whether there are similarities or differences across them. In addition, as policy use has been found to be more proximally related to work-family conflict than policy availability (Butts et al., 2012), I focus on the relationships associated with work-life benefit use. In summary, I examine the processes which produce outcomes associated with the utilization of six separate types of benefits: flexible scheduling, flexible work locations, concierge services, reproductive services, dependent care subsidies, and on-site child care. These benefits encompass work-life benefits which have traditionally been examined (i.e. flexible scheduling, flexible work locations, dependent care subsidies, and on-site child care) as well as work-life benefits which



are growing in popularity and have been highlighted in the popular press (i.e. reproductive services and concierge services). Table 1 lists the six benefits along with examples for each.

**Table 1 –Work-Life Benefits and Examples**

<b>Work-Life Benefit</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Flexible scheduling	*Compressed work hours *Flexible arrival and departur times
Flexible work locations	*Telecommuting *Occasionally working from home
Reproductive Support Benefits	*Egg-freezing *Breast milk transportation
Off-Site Dependent Care Subsidies	*Monetary assistance for sick child care *Back-up child care assistance *Daily elder or child care *After-school care
On-Site Child Care	
On-Site Services	*Dinner services *Gym *Dry cleaning *Medical services

### **Employee Attributions**

Extending the framework provided by Bowen & Ostroff, Nishii and colleagues (2008) drew from attribution theory to understand how HR practices affect employee attitudes and behaviors as well as unit-level performance. According to attribution theory, individuals generate causal explanations for other people’s behaviors or events in an attempt to make sense of their environment (Heider, 1958). Importantly, the same behavior or event can generate various explanations (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley & Michela, 1980). According to attribution theorists, a variety of factors influence how individuals make attributions such as whether the locus of causality is internal or external to the person (Heider, 1958), the behavior or event is stable or

variable over time (Weiner, 1979), or the action is socially desirable or not (Jones, Davis, & Gergen, 1961; Jones & McGillis, 1976).

Based on this theoretical reasoning, Nishii and colleagues developed the concept of HR attributions which are “causal explanations that employees make regarding management’s motivations for using particular HR practices” (2008, p. 507). In this study, HR attributions are positioned as the linking mechanism which connects HR practices to outcomes such as employee attitudes and behaviors and, ultimately, customer satisfaction. More specifically, the authors find that employee attributions that HR practices reflect management’s intent to enhance service quality and employee well-being are positively associated with desirable outcomes. On the other hand, employee attributions that HR practices reflect management’s intent to reduce costs and exploit employees are negatively associated with these outcomes. While prior research had examined support and control HR philosophies from the managerial perspective, this study was significant as it shifted the paradigm to consider the employee perspective in evaluating management’s intentions. Furthermore, it brought attention to the important finding that different employees, even in the same firm, can form varying perceptions of why an HR practice is in place. This knowledge bears significant weight as these employee attributions ultimately shape employee and organizational outcomes (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016).

Following the typology of HR attributions proposed by Nishii and colleagues (2008) and in line with attribution theory, I propose that work-life benefits can similarly generate varying psychological and affective responses. More specifically, traditional assumptions about work-life benefits would suggest that employees attribute the benefits to management’s intent to support employees and promote their well-being both professionally and personally. However, perhaps less intuitively, it may alternatively be that some employees make more cynical attributions that

the benefits represent management's intent to control employees in order to get them to stay on-site and/or work more- that is, to eliminate reasons or excuses employees have for needing to turn their time and attention away from their work to tend to their non-work demands. Concierge services are a prime example. Concierge services are benefits offered or subsidized by an employer to address personal needs such as dry-cleaning facilities, medical services, a gym, dry-cleaning facilities, or medical services. Some employees may feel that having these amenities on-site is a convenience and helps reduce strain associated with trying to address both work and personal demands. On the other hand, some employees may feel that by offering these amenities on-site, management eliminates any excuses employees can provide to be away from work. Furthermore, providing concierge services on-site allows managers to better monitor and track employee activities so they know exactly when they are working and when they are not. Thus, some employees may be more likely to interpret work-life benefits as a managerial tool which controls and monitors employee activity. These divergent attributions are applicable to any of the work-life benefits.

Understanding the variations in employee attributions is critical to enhancing our knowledge about work-life benefits as the difference between control or support attributions is likely to play a pivotal role in determining outcomes for employees and organizations. While attributions that management intends to support employees through work-life benefits is in line with traditional assumptions and outcomes, understanding the attributions employees make about management's intent to control may provide insight into a more comprehensive array of outcomes. Therefore, as a starting point, it is important to examine whether employees make varying attributions about management's intentions for work-life benefits. I, thus, present the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Individuals will make varying attributions about work-life benefits.*

*While some may attribute a particular work-life benefits to management's intent to support employees, others may attribute the same work-life benefit as representing management's intent to control employees.*

### **Affective Costs of Work-Life Benefit Utilization**

While work-life benefits offer employees a variety of useful supports, they do not come free of costs. For example, research has shown that using work-life benefits can result in career consequences such as fewer promotions (Dau-Schmidt et al., 2009; Kalleberg & Reskin, 1995) and lower wage growth (Glass, 2004). Evidence shows that negative effects are especially acute for working mothers as they suffer from “motherhood penalties” such as lower wage growth and fewer promotions as a result of being perceived to be less competent and less committed (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Benard & Correll, 2010; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008).

Given these negative findings, employees may experience affective strain associated with using work-life benefits. In fact, the fear of negative consequences is often cited as a potential reason why employees do not use work-life benefits (Bailyn, 1993; Perlow, 1995; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Casper & Harris, 2008). However, these arguments have been offered as part of researchers' post hoc explanations and have not been the explicit focus of prior empirical examinations. The few studies which have directly examined perceived negative consequences have focused on those imposed by others, such as backlash from peers or supervisors and career penalties in the form of fewer promotions or job opportunities, and not the negative affective costs of utilizing work-life benefits as experienced by the *focal user*. In this study, I focus on the internal costs or strain- such as worry or guilt- that employees may experience as a result of

using work-life benefits. To my knowledge, research has yet to be conducted which examines the ways in which work-life benefits influence the negative affective reactions of employees.

Understanding the role of employees' affective reactions may provide critical clues to untangling the processes surrounding work-life benefits. Prior research in work-family literature has found negative affect to be a particularly critical and common component in work-family conflict processes (Repetti, 1989; Ilies et al., 2007). For example, Ilies and colleagues (2007) found that an employee's perceptions of workload, over and above the objective work hours, were associated both with negative affect and employee perceptions of work-family conflict, suggesting that it is employees' affective responses to objective events that matter most for their outcomes (cf. Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When employees attribute work-life benefits as representing management's intent to support employees, they are more likely to feel safe or reassured and respond with positive affective reactions. However, when employees attribute work-life benefits to management's intent to control employees, they may be more likely to experience negative affective reactions such as worry or guilt about how they manage work and family.

Applying this argument to the current study, the traditional understanding of work-life benefits would assume that an employee who uses reproductive benefits such as breast milk transportation would attribute this to management's intent to support her well-being and, thus, respond with desirable positive affective reactions. However, if an employee perceives that management offers breast milk transportation in an attempt to eliminate the need for her to remain at home and thereby maximize her productivity, she may subsequently worry about how she as a mother is being perceived at work and/or may experience family guilt for feeding her baby through the mail. In a more broadly applicable example, these concerns may also

materialize for employees who use flexible work location benefits. On the one hand, employees who take advantage of flexible work location benefits may attribute the policy to management's intent to support employees in balancing work and family responsibilities. On the other hand, employees could also perceive that the technologies provided to them to engage in remote work allow management to monitor their productivity and extend their reach into the personal domain. Such control attributions may be associated with affective strain such as worry about the consequences of not being on-site or guilt about how working at home affects their ability to be fully present for family or other non-work responsibilities. These examples only begin to illustrate the multitude of ways that employees' attributions about management's intentions for work-life benefits can subsequently create powerful affective reactions such as guilt or worry. Accordingly,

*Hypothesis 2: Employee attributions that the work-life benefit reflects managerial intentions to control employees will be positively related to affective costs of work-life benefit utilization.*

## **Work-Family Conflict**

Work-family conflict is one of the most commonly studied variables within the work-family literature as well as in studies examining work-life benefits. While extensive amounts of research have examined how organizationally-provided supports such as work-life benefits impact work-family conflict, a review by Kelly and colleagues (2008) found no consistent patterns across the findings. Some research suggests work-life benefit utilization reduces work-family conflict (e.g. Allen, 2001; O'Driscoll et al., 2003) while other research suggests the association with work-family conflict may be non-existent (e.g. Kossek et al., 2006; Lapierre & Allen, 2006) or even positive (e.g. Brough, O'Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005; Hammer et al., 2005).

Contrary to popular belief, it seems that we cannot conclusively confirm a direct relationship between work-life benefits and their positive impact on reducing work-family conflict.

In the studies which find work-life benefits actually increased work-family conflict, the authors suggest that unknown mediators may be responsible. However as the findings were unexpected, the research designs did not allow for an analysis of mechanisms which produce increased work-family conflict. In both situations, the research teams advocated for future examination of these processes. In response to these calls, I propose that the affective costs employees feel as a result of utilizing work-life benefits, will impact the extent to which individuals experience work-family conflict. Indeed, evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between negative affectivity, typically characterized by psychological distress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and work-family conflict (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011; Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002). It may be that when an employee feels a benefit is in place to control workers, he or she experiences greater affective costs about meeting the demands from different life domains and, as a result, feels increased conflict about how to address the responsibilities from both the work and family domains.

To illustrate, a father who uses sick-child care assistance and attributes the benefit to management's intention to support workers may feel relieved that the organization is assisting him with demands from various domains. This may lead him to feel less work-family conflict as he is better able to manage his time and stress levels with the assistance of the organizationally provided benefit. However, a father who uses the same benefit and attributes it to management's intent to control employees may feel that the benefit is in place in order to reduce excuses to take time away from work. This may make him feel guilty about leaving his child with a stranger or

concerned about not being able to take care of his family's needs personally. This feeling of obligation to go to work while worrying about being able to meet family needs may trigger elevated levels of work-family conflict in being able to manage demands from both domains. Similarly an employee who works from home and feels the flexible location benefit is available because management intends to support employees may feel satisfied with being able to better meet both work and family needs and, thus, reports lower work-family conflict. On the other hand, an employee who works from home and feels the benefit is available because management wants to control employees and maximize worker productivity may worry about how others perceive her lack of time in the office or how it may affect her career outcomes. She may also worry that work demands create a distraction from being fully present for family or personal demands. This may cause the employee to feel unsuccessful in meeting the requirements of either domain and, similarly, lead to increased experiences of work-family conflict. In both of these examples, the affective costs of work-life benefit utilization influence the way individuals feel they are managing work and non-work domains. The affective costs may therefore generate more stable or long-term feelings of conflict between work and family. Therefore, I propose the following:

*Hypothesis 3: The affective costs of work-life benefit utilization will be positively related to work-family conflict.*

### **Positive and Negative Outcomes**

As a majority of research on work-life benefits has been grounded in traditional assumptions, much of the published research on work-life benefits has drawn on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) for theoretical justification. Under this framework, work-life benefits provided by an organization should make employees



feel supported which in turn would motivate them to reciprocate with desired attitudinal and behavioral responses. The use of these theories in work-life benefits literature suggests these policies and practices produce a positive exchange relationship between the employer and employee. Indeed, evidence provides support for this positive exchange relationship as studies have found a negative relationship between the availability and utilization of work-life benefits and turnover intentions (e.g. Grover & Crooker, 1995; Casper & Harris, 2008; Allen, 2001). Furthermore, Lambert (2000) found a significant positive relationship between work-life benefits and three measures of organizational citizenship behaviors. As such, these findings suggest that work-life benefits do indeed motivate employees to reciprocate with desirable affective and behavioral responses.

However, these studies were conducted under the assumption that employees perceive or experience only positive effects of work-life benefits. As it may be the case that individuals also perceive and experience negative outcomes, individuals may also enact negative norms of reciprocity which are characterized by “sentiments of retaliation where the emphasis is placed not on the return of benefits but on the return of injuries” (Gouldner, 1960, p. 172). Applied to the current study, it may be that when employees perceive their organization is the source of their negative experiences (i.e. increased work-life conflict due to work-life benefits), they may not only withhold positive reactions but actually be motivated to react with negative responses. The negative norm of reciprocity would suggest employees are motivated to retaliate and actively try to harm the organization as a result of negative experiences from work-life benefits.

This theorizing warrants the introduction of a variable which has not previously been examined in work-life benefit research. In order to capture the retaliatory actions which may be prompted by the use of work-life benefits, I propose the inclusion of counterproductive

workplace behaviors (CWBs), in addition to the more commonly examined outcome variables of turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors. The construct of CWBs is particularly fitting as it is defined as intentional employee behavior that is harmful to the interests of an organization (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Martinko, Gundlach & Douglas, 2002). Furthermore, CWBs represent actions an employee may take to seek vengeance against an organization for perceived violations due to the use of work-life benefits. Finally, CWBs are a fitting addition to this study as they are often posed as a counterpart to the previously examined construct of organizational citizenship behaviors (Dalal, 2005). Therefore, in order to explore a more comprehensive set of outcomes associated with work-life benefits, I propose an examination of the ways in which work-family conflict is related to organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive workplace behaviors, and turnover intentions.

*Hypothesis 3: Work Family Conflict will be negatively related to (a) organizational citizenship behaviors and positively related to (b) counterproductive workplace behaviors and (c) turnover intentions.*

## **Antecedents**

If, as I have hypothesized, people vary in the attributions they make for work-life benefits, it is critical that we begin to understand why. It is likely that both contextual and individual variables influence attributions (Nishii et al., 2008). Individuals differentially select and attend to information based on personal values and goals or prior experiences (Mischel & Shoda, 1995); at the same time, individuals could also be influenced by shared contextual cues (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In the following sections, I argue that family supportive organization perceptions (FSOP) and gender role orientation (GRO) are two variables that are likely to be particularly influential on employee attributions based on theory and prior research.

### *Family Supportive Organization Perceptions (FSOP)*

Family supportive organization perceptions (FSOPs) are defined as “global perceptions that employees form regarding the extent the organization is family-supportive” (Allen, 2001, p. 416). Examples of ways the organization can be family-supportive include allowing employees to take time off to attend to family or personal matters, acceptance of the integration of family into the work domain, and an understanding of balanced work and family priorities (Allen, 2001). Since its development, the construct has been widely used, and research has supported its associations with reduced work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; Shockley & Allen, 2014; Lapiere, et al., 2008; O’Driscoll, et al., 2003; Kossek, et al., 2011; Greenhaus, Ziegert & Allen, 2012), increased employee commitment (Wayne, Casper, Matthews & Allen, 2013), and greater job satisfaction (Grandey, Cordeiro & Michael, 2007).

While many of these studies focused on the beneficial effects of elevated levels of FSOP, there is evidence indicating that lower levels of FSOP are equally important in predicting employees’ affective and behavioral outcomes. For example, Ratnasingam and colleagues (2012) found that lower levels of FSOP were instrumental in predicting decreased engagement for employees who used on-site child care. The authors suggest this occurs because users of on-site childcare may feel uncomfortable using the service, resentful towards their organization, or fearful of career consequences when they do not genuinely feel supported by the organization. These feelings of discomfort, resentment, and fear subsequently trigger negative norms of reciprocity which are enacted by disengaging with work (Ratnasingam et al., 2012).

With regard to FSOP and support attributions about work-life benefits, I expect these two concepts to be related but distinct for a variety of reasons. First, FSOP reflects more general cultural norms about the ideal worker in the organization whereas attributions measure meaning

attached to specific organizational policies and practices. In addition, it is possible that individual benefits can be associated with varying support or control attributions within the same FSOP context, in part because factors other than FSOP explain variance in support attributions. In summary, support attributions about work-life benefits are a distinct concept separate from FSOP and are measured and examined as two independent constructs.

Thus, I argue that FSOP will be influential in the ways employees make attributions about work-life benefits. When an employee perceives the organization to be highly supportive of family, the employee may also feel that management intends to support the employee's well-being with work-life benefits. However, if an employee perceives lower levels of support for family (i.e. that the organization does not support employees' time and attention addressing family responsibilities), they will be more likely to attribute the work-life benefit to management's intentions to control and exploit the employee in order to increase work productivity and efficiency.

*H4: Employees' perceptions that the organization is supportive of their families and personal lives will be negatively related to attributions that work-life benefits reflect managerial intentions to control employees.*

#### *Gender Role Orientation (GRO)*

While sex and gender roles are continually evolving in the work and family domains, much of our conceptualizations of the roles for men and women are still anchored to past traditions. Gender role theory holds that there are dichotomized gender roles such that women are more identified with family and home-life roles while men are more affiliated with roles in the work or professional realm (Lott, 1988). Therefore, gender role orientation (GRO) is

characterized by the extent to which an individual complies or identifies with the traditional conceptualizations or expectations of his or her gender role (Hochschild, 1989; Larson & Long, 1988; Livingston & Judge, 2008). A person who adopts a more traditional GRO believes that there are ideal workers for the work and family domains such that women are better suited for the home and family roles while men are best equipped to handle responsibilities in the work realm. Individuals who adopt an egalitarian gender role orientation believe that men and women should place equal importance on both work and family and have a balanced identification with both domains (Hochschild, 1989). Traditional and egalitarian GRO should be viewed as two ends of a continuum such that both men and women can vary in their values along the spectrum.

While the traditional purpose of work-life benefits is to assist employees in managing both their professional and personal responsibilities, they often have the simultaneous effect of dismantling the traditional divide of how men and women manage work and family. This may be acceptable for an employee who adopts egalitarian views of gender as he or she believes the roles should be balanced and equally important for men and women. However, this mixture of work and family responsibilities may be less acceptable for an individual who values traditional gender roles, as he or she would expect women to prioritize the family and home domain while men focus on the work domain. The more the organization encourages the use of practices that equate to the outsourcing of traditional home duties, the more likely an individual with traditionalist values will react negatively. For example, when organizations offer dependent care support which outsources the responsibility of child care, a traditionalist may feel this is unnatural as it is the woman's or mother's responsibility to care for her children. Thus, a traditionalist may feel the organization is trying to exert control and take away a woman's natural duties in the family and home domain. For individuals who adopt traditional gender role

orientations, one can imagine how work-life benefits offered by the organization may feel intrusive or even as though managers in the organization are attempting to meddle in the ways employees choose to manage work and family responsibilities. Employees may feel these benefits are not supportive but, instead, feel as if the organization is attempting to control or dictate how they choose to handle work and personal responsibilities. Therefore, employees who adopt traditional gender roles may be more likely to attribute work-life benefits to management intent to control employees.

Hypothesis 5: Employees who adopt traditional gender roles will be more likely to feel that the work-life benefit reflects management's intent to control employees.

## **METHODS**

### **Sample**

I enlisted the services of a third party online survey administration company, Qualtrics Panels, to recruit participants for this study. Qualtrics Panels accesses a nationwide panel of adults over 18 years of age who express interest in participating in research surveys. Online research panels are increasingly being used as a valuable source of data in a variety of high-quality articles in top I-O psychology and management journals (e.g. Bendersky & Shah, 2013; Long, Bendersky, & Morrill, 2011; Phillips, Gully, McCarthy, Castellano, & Kim, 2014; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2011).

I collected responses from 2,025 respondents and, this process took approximately two weeks. Filters were implemented to ensure participants were limited to adults over the age of 18, employed full-time, and working for their current employer for at least 3 months. In addition,

filters ensured respondents were employed in the United States and had access to at least one of the 6 work-life benefits listed in Table 1. The detail of the participants ages is as follows: 18% were 18 to 30 years old, 37% were 31 to 40 years old, 22% were 41 to 50 years old, 19% were 51 to 60 years old, and 5% were 61 and over. Fifty-eight percent of the participants were female, and participants identified as White (88%), Black or African American (6%), Asian (4%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (1%). The data collected for this study is comparable to the demographic detail in prior studies using online survey administrators (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012).

The survey had two sections. In the first section, participants answered questions based on the availability of a specific benefit in their organization. More specifically, participants were initially asked whether each of the six work-life benefits was offered or not offered by the company. Thus, respondents could vary such that some could report having only one of the six benefits available while others could report having all six of the benefits offered by their companies. When respondents indicated that a benefit was offered by their organization, they were then asked questions about utilization, satisfaction, and the control or support attributions they make about management's intentions for the benefit. The second section of the survey encompassed general attitude or personal information questions and was asked of all respondents regardless of the availability of benefits in their organization.

## **Measures**

**Employee Attributions.** The measure for employee attributions was developed for this study. Both the control and support attribution items began with a prompt that state, "When I think about the reasons that management at my organization offers (work-life benefit), I think it is because..." As these items were developed for this study, they are listed below:

### *Control Attributions*

- 1) These benefits allow managers to more easily monitor employee activity.
- 2) These benefits give managers more control over how work gets done.
- 3) These benefits take away excuses employees could have for not meeting work demands.
- 4) Management is interested in exerting influence over the decisions employees make about how they manage their work and non-work responsibilities.
- 5) Management can eliminate doubts about whether employees prioritize work over non-work goals.

### *Support attributions*

- 1) They value employees' well-being.
- 2) They want to reduce stress that employees feel about meeting non-work demands.
- 3) They want to support employees in meeting both personal and professional goals.

Both scales were assessed with a 7 point Likert scale such that 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for control attributions across the six benefits ranged from  $\alpha = .92$  to  $\alpha = .86$ . The Cronbach's alpha for support attributions across the six benefits ranged from  $\alpha = .94$  to  $\alpha = .87$ . After responding to these items, participants were asked a forced choice question to indicate which type of attribution – control or support – predominated for the particular work-life benefit. A prompt was provided which states “All in all, do you view management's intent for (work-life benefit listed) as a way to...”, and respondents were then allowed to choose either “Support employees with their work and non-work responsibilities,” or “Control the ways in which employees perform work by eliminating excuses for not working.” Items were coded as 0 = support attributions and 1 = control attributions.

While participants who reported that a particular benefit was made available to them answered the items for control attributions, the items for support attributions, and the forced choice question, I used only the forced choice question for analyses. There are two primary explanations for this question configuration. First, as work-life benefits are traditionally assumed to provide desirable benefits, providing items for both control and support attributions served the purpose of providing a richer set of examples of how individuals can make



attributions about work-life benefits. Therefore, when the participant answered the forced choice question, he or she had thought more thoroughly about managerial intentions for work-life benefits. Second, hypotheses two through five made predictions based on a predominant control or support attribution. The forced choice item allows for a more distinct examination of the attributions and employee makes about managerial intentions for work-life benefits.

**Affective Costs of Work-Life Benefit Utilization.** The measure for affective costs of work-life benefit utilization was developed for this study. The measure was composed of 4 items that assessed affective reactions related to work-life benefit use. The scale was measured with a 5 point Likert scale such that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Respondents were prompted with the following “Because of my current, past, or expected future usage of ALL of the Work-Life Benefits...” As this measure was developed for the study, all of the items are listed.

1. I worry that people I work with will see me as less committed to my work.
2. I worry that it will negatively impact my career trajectory.
3. I feel guilty that I’m not managing all my family’s needs myself (i.e. without help).
4. I worry that even though my family needs are being met with the help of this benefit, I am less personally engaged with my family.

The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .87$ .

**Work Interference with Family.** A 6-item adaptation of Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams’ (2000) scale was used to measure work interference with family. The items for time-based and strain-based work interference with family were used. Examples of the items are: “My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like,” and “When I get home from work I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/responsibilities.” Responses were evaluated on a five point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, and the Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .93$ .

**Family Interference with Work.** A 6-item adaptation of Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams' (2000) scale was used to measure family interference with work. The items for time-based and strain-based family interference with work were used. Examples of the items are: "The time I spend on family responsibilities often interfere with my work responsibilities," and "Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with family matters at work." Responses were evaluated on a five point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, and the Cronbach's alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .94$ .

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.** This construct was measured using an 8-item scale from Smith and colleagues (1983). Respondents were prompted with the question "In regards to your behaviors at work, how often do you do the following?", and responded on a five point scale where 1 = "Never" and 5 = "Always". Examples of the items include: "Volunteers for things that are not required", "Help others who have heavy workloads", and "Does not take unnecessary time off work." The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .76$ .

**Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors.** Organizational Citizenship Behaviors was measured using a scale developed by Fox and Spector (1999). The scale was adapted to include 11-items which were self-rated to evaluate the frequency of actions taken in the workplace. Respondents were prompted with the question "In regards to your behaviors at work, how often do you do the following?", and responded on a five point scale where 1 = "Never" and 5 = "Always". Example items include "Purposely wasted company materials/supplies", "Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you were not", and "Stolen something from work." The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .96$ .

**Turnover Intentions.** A 4-item scale from Kelloway, Gottlieb, and Barham (1999) was used to measure turnover intentions. An example from this measure is "I am thinking about leaving this

organization.” The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree”, and the Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .94$ .

**Family Supportive Organization Perceptions.** A 7-item adaptation of Allen’s (2001) scale was used to measure Family Supportive Organization Perceptions. A prompt was given prior to this set of questions that read “To what extent do you agree that each of the following statements represent the philosophy or beliefs of your organization (remember, these are not your own personal beliefs—but pertain to what you believe is the philosophy of your organization).” Examples of the items which followed included: “Work should be the primary priority in a person’s life,” and “The way to advance in this company is to keep non-work matters out of the workplace.” Responses were evaluated on a five point scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, and the Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .90$ .

**Gender Role Orientation.** Gender role orientation as evaluated using a 5-item scale (Judge & Livingston, 2008) and was evaluated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strong Disagree” to 4 = “Strongly Agree”. Respondents were provided with the following prompt, “Please rate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements on women's and men's positions in society,” and asked to rate their responses to the items. An example item is “A woman’s place is in the home, not the office or shop.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was  $\alpha = .93$ .

**Supplemental Controls.** In addition to the above variables and in an effort to reduce the possibility of alternative explanations, I included several control variables. Prior research suggests that sex and age is associated with benefit use (Lambert, 2000; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999), benefit satisfaction (Judge, 1993), and perceptions of benefits (Lambert, 2000). Therefore, I controlled for both sex and age. Furthermore, studies have shown that whether

someone has dependents influences work-life benefit utilization (Eby et al., 2005; Young, 1996). As such, I included variables which captured the presence of children or elder dependents. Furthermore, it is likely that an individual's supervisory position in the organization is an important variable to consider. Scholars have argued the importance of leaders as meaning-makers for employees in organizations (Podolny, Khurana & Hill-Popper, 2004). Regarding work-life benefits, as individuals rise in supervisory status they likely aid in creating and shaping the meaning of work-life benefits in a positive manner as they become agents of the organization. Therefore, supervisory status may influence the attributions and outcomes associated with work-life benefits, and I include the variable to control for its effects. Finally, I included organizational age as older companies are likely to have greater ability to provide work-life benefits as well as a more evolved and perhaps stable climate in terms of the ways they support employees' personal lives.

## **Analyses**

All variables were standardized prior to running analyses. I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the underlying structure for affective costs of work-life benefit utilization as it is a new variable developed for this study. The sample was randomly split such that half of the data was used in the EFA and half of the data was used for validation with the CFA. In order to determine that affective costs is a separate and distinguishable variable, I analyzed the 4 items along with the 6 items for work interference with family and 6 items for family interference with work. The ratings of these 16 items were analyzed using maximum likelihood and oblimin rotation. Three factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and explained 75% of the variation. The factors loaded as expected such that one factor contained the 6 items for work interference with family, the next

factor contained the 6 items for family interference with work, and the final factor was composed of the final four items which I have labeled affective costs. This provided support that the items captured the intended constructs. In order to verify the results of the EFA, I conducted a CFA to verify the factor structure of these measures with the second half of the data. The three factor model,  $\chi^2 (101) = 1,489.54$ ,  $p < .000$ , standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = 0.04, produced a significantly better fit than the one-factor model,  $\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 2,659.42$ , and the two factor model,  $\Delta \chi^2 (2) = 2,173.40$ .

Once the factor analyses were conducted, the data was divided into six sub-samples which captured only the respondents who used flexible scheduling ( $n = 1,645$ ), flexible location benefits ( $n = 1,174$ ), concierge services ( $n = 969$ ), reproductive benefits ( $n = 333$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $n = 450$ ), and on-site child care ( $n = 397$ ). The rationale for dividing the data into six sub-samples was to preserve as much statistical power for analyses as only 177 respondents reported using all six benefits. The non-family or flexibility-related benefits were more likely to be reported as being used than the family-related benefits which is consistent with prior research (Allen, 2001; Hammer et al., 2005). Each of these subsets of data was then used to test the model in Figure 1 using structural equation modeling in Stata/IC 14.1. I used the default maximum likelihood method to analyze covariance matrices and used scale scores as single indicators. The control variables (i.e. elder dependents, supervisor status, company industry, and company age) were included in all paths.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for the variables in the model are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Correlations and Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Company Age	3.99	1.82											
2 Industry	4.58	1.89	-0.03										
3 Elder Dependent	0.14	0.35	-0.12 **	-0.07 **									
4 Supervisor Status	2.31	1.30	-0.28 **	0.03	0.19 **								
5 WIF	2.96	1.05	-0.12 **	0.00	0.25 **	0.13 **							
6 FIW	2.36	1.04	-0.26 **	-0.04	0.36 **	0.25 **	0.60 **						
7 Affective Costs	2.49	1.03	-0.24 **	-0.01	0.30 **	0.20 **	0.63 **	0.70 **					
8 OCB	3.88	0.57	-0.05 *	-0.04	0.10 **	0.22 **	0.04	0.00	0.05 *				
9 TO Intentions	2.53	1.23	-0.13 **	-0.02	0.22 **	0.06 *	0.47 **	0.42 **	0.43 **	0.02			
10 CWB	1.77	0.94	-0.22 **	-0.04	0.41 **	0.23 **	0.49 **	0.67 **	0.59 **	-0.01	0.51 **		
11 FSOP	3.25	0.96	0.21 **	0.00	-0.32 **	-0.24 **	-0.58 **	-0.57 **	-0.56 **	-0.07 **	-0.43 **	-0.57 **	
12 GRO	1.81	0.82	-0.25 **	-0.04	0.33 **	0.24 **	0.42 **	0.60 **	0.52 **	0.03	0.34 **	0.61 **	-0.54 **

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Tests of Hypotheses

I began by testing Hypothesis 1 with the chi square goodness of fit test to determine if respondents differed significantly in making control or support attributions for each type of work-life benefit. For all 6 benefits, the expected proportion was entered as .5 for support attributions and .5 for control attributions as seen in Table 3. Partially supporting Hypothesis 1, the results of the tests were significant for flexible scheduling,  $\chi^2(1, N = 1,645) = 375.56, p < .00$ , flexible locations,  $\chi^2(1, N = 1,174) = 249.30, p < .00$ , concierge services,  $\chi^2(1, N = 969) = 166.78, p < .00$ , and reproductive benefits,  $\chi^2(1, N = 333) = 6.92, p < .01$ . Notably, support attributions were more frequent than control attributions for flexible scheduling, flexible location, and concierge service benefits while control attributions were more common than

support attributions for reproductive benefits. The results of the tests for dependent care services and on-site child care were not significant.

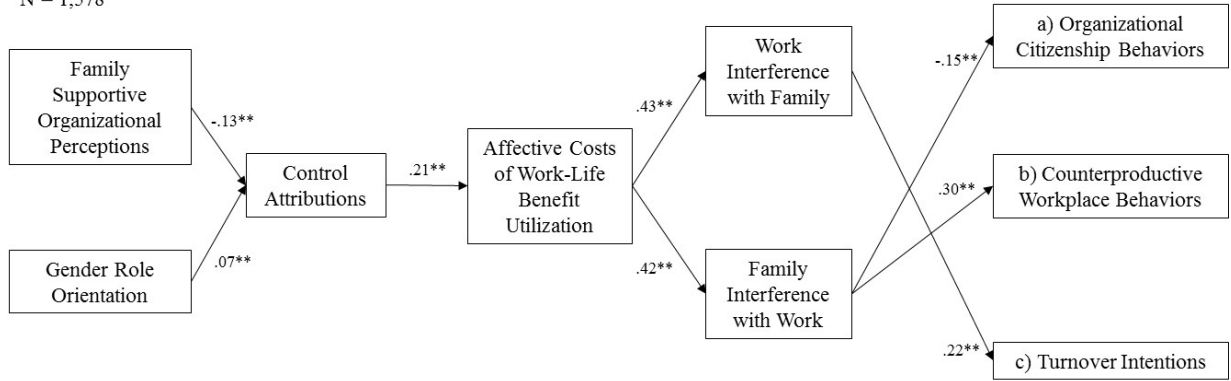
**Table 3 – Chi Square Goodness of Fit Test**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care Subsidies</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
Support	1,216	858	686	142	231	204
Control	429	316	283	191	219	193
N	1,645	1,174	969	333	450	397
$\chi^2$	375.56	249.30	166.78	6.92	0.26	0.26
df	1	1	1	1	1	1
p	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0085	0.6101	0.6101

Hypotheses 2 through 5 involving the linkages between attributions and their antecedents and outcomes were tested in six separate models representing each of the benefits. Overall, the models for all six subsets of data presented good fit to the data: flexible scheduling ( $\chi^2 (4) = 203.87, p <.01; CFI = .97; SRMR =.015$ ), flexible location benefits ( $\chi^2 (4) = 162.50, p <.01; CFI = .97; SRMR =.015$ ), concierge services ( $\chi^2 (4) = 185.41, p <.01; CFI = .96; SRMR =.02$ ), reproductive benefits ( $\chi^2 (4) = 174.24, p <.01; CFI = .91; SRMR =.02$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $\chi^2 (4) = 140.62, p <.01; CFI = .95; SRMR =.02$ ), on-site child care ( $\chi^2 (4) = 120.89, p <.01; CFI = .95; SRMR =.02$ ). The models for each of the benefits are presented in Figures 2a-f. These are appropriate as the suggested recommendations hold that the CFI should be close to .95 and the SRMR be less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

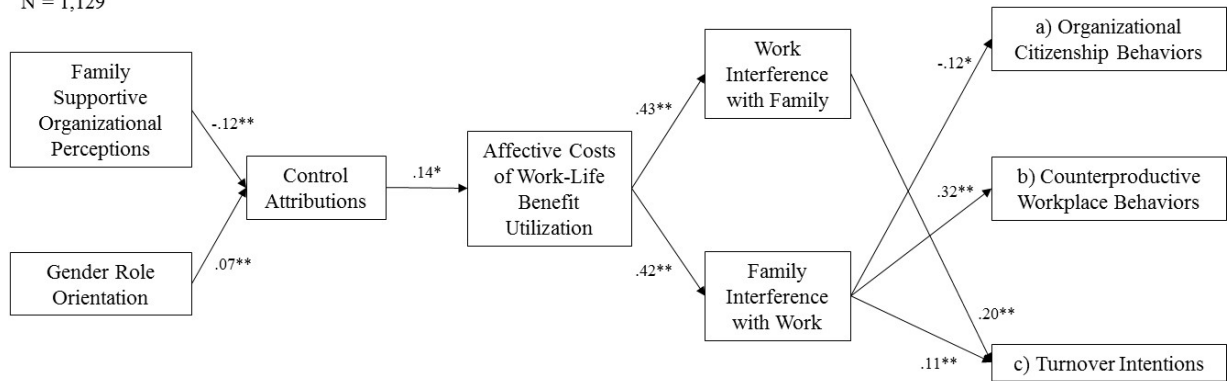
Hypothesis 2 through 4 predicted the pathways for the various outcomes of employee attributions of management’s intentions for work-life benefits. More specifically, Hypothesis 2 predicted that employee attributions that work-life benefits represent management’s intent to

N = 1,578



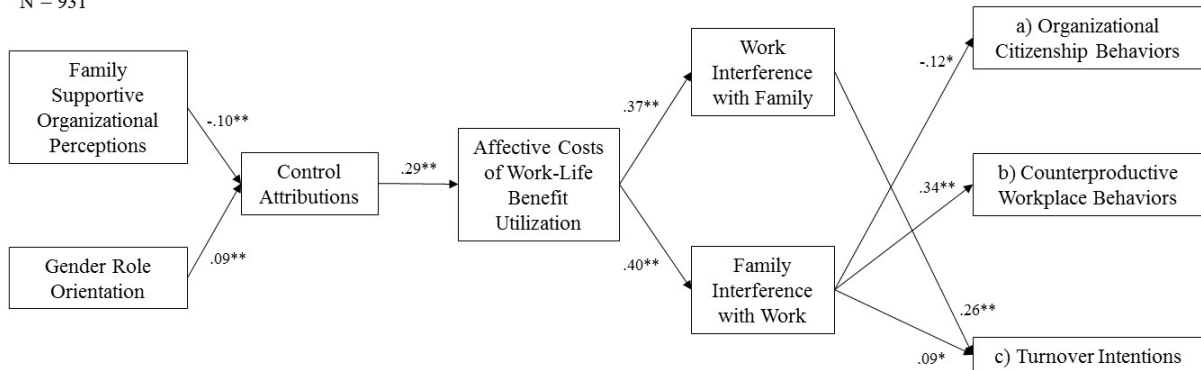
**Figure 2a - Flexible Schedule Model**

N = 1,129



**Figure 2b - Flexible Locations Model**

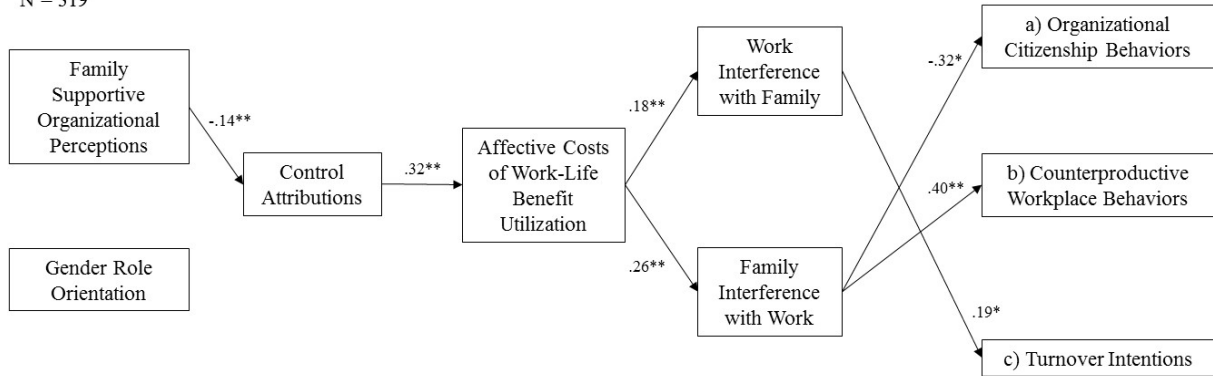
N = 931



**Figure 2c - Concierge Services Model**

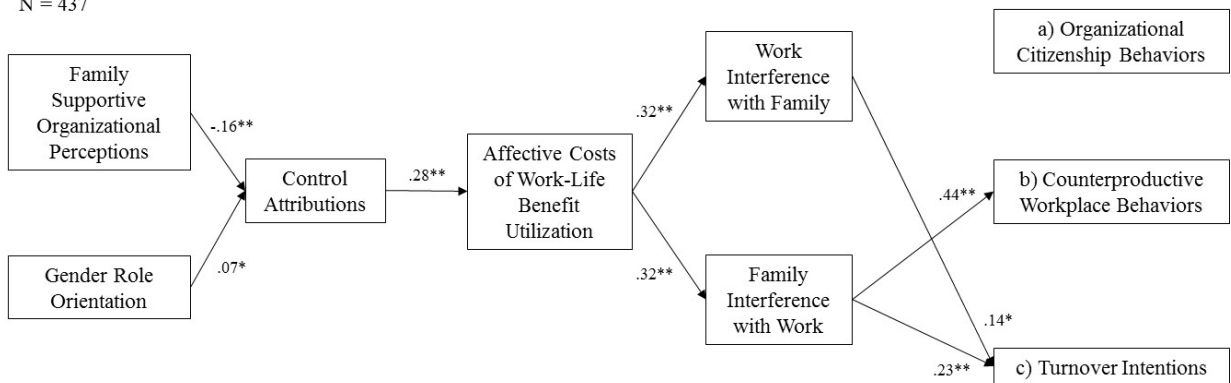


N = 319



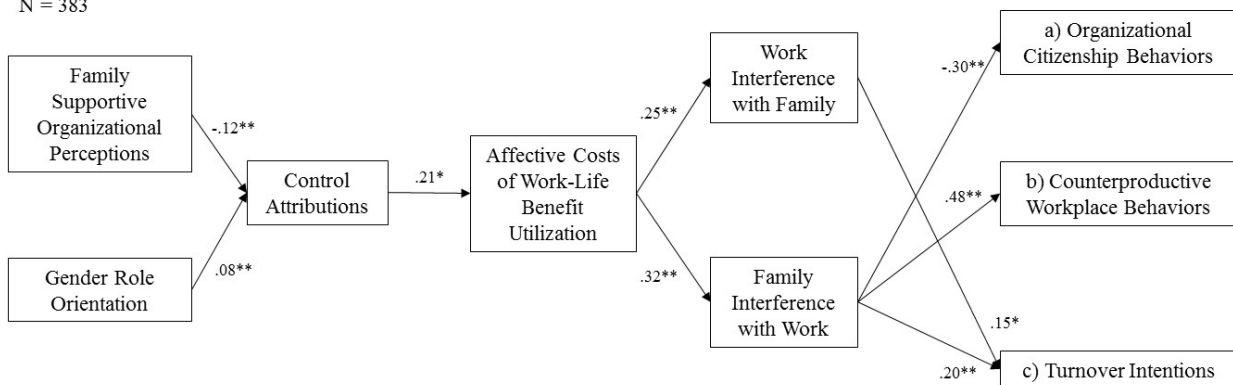
**Figure 2d - Reproductive Benefits Model**

N = 437



**Figure 2e - Dependent Care Subsidies Model**

N = 383



**Figure 2f - On-Site Child Care Model**

control employees would be positively related to affective costs. The results as listed in Table 4a support this hypothesis as the path from employee control attributions to affective costs is positive and significant for all six benefits: flexible schedule ( $b = .21, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = .14, p = .02$ ), concierge services ( $b = .29, p = .00$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = .32, p = .00$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = .28, p = .00$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = .21, p = .01$ ).

**Table 4a – Effect of Control Attributions on Affective Costs**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.20 **	0.21 **	0.08	-0.11	-0.06	-0.12
Age	-0.14 **	-0.13 **	-0.17 **	-0.05	-0.15 **	-0.07
Female	-0.11 *	-0.11 *	-0.13 *	-0.04	-0.01	0.02
Elder Dependent	0.19 **	0.15 *	0.13 †	-0.08	0.06	0.00
Supervisor Status	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
Company Age	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.05 *	0.02	0.01
<i>Variables</i>						
Control Attribution	0.21 **	0.14 *	0.29 **	0.32 **	0.28 **	0.21 *
FSOP	-0.34 **	-0.39 **	-0.30 **	-0.32 **	-0.28 **	-0.26 **
GRO	0.25 **	0.25 **	0.33 **	0.38 **	0.39 **	0.48 **
** $p < 0.00$	* $p < 0.05$	† $p < 0.1$				

Next, Hypothesis 3 proposed that affective costs are positively associated with work-family conflict. This prediction is also supported in that affective costs were positively and significantly related to both work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW). More specifically, the relationships between affective costs and WIF were positive and significant for flexible schedule ( $b = .43, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = .43, p = .00$ ), concierge services ( $b = .37, p = .00$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = .18, p = .00$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = .32, p = .00$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = .25, p = .00$ ), as seen in Table 4b.

**Table 4b - Effect of Affective Costs on Work Interference with Family**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	-0.10 *	-0.11 *	-0.07	-0.22 *	0.17 †	0.09
Age	-0.03	0.00	-0.05 †	-0.06	-0.04	-0.07
Female	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.10	0.07	0.03
Elder Dependent	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.01
Supervisor Status	-0.03 †	-0.02	-0.06 **	-0.05	-0.08 **	-0.04 †
Company Age	0.02 *	0.04 **	0.03 *	0.00	0.02	0.05 *
<i>Variables</i>						
Affective Costs	0.43 **	0.43 **	0.37 **	0.18 **	0.32 **	0.25 **
Control Attribution	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.06	0.06	0.02
FSOP	-0.35 **	-0.32 **	-0.29 **	-0.42 **	-0.29 **	-0.25 **
GRO	0.04	0.05 †	0.12 **	0.23 **	0.18 **	0.29 **
** p < 0.00	* p < 0.05	† p < 0.1				

The relationships between affective costs and FIW were positive and significant for flexible schedule (b = .42, p = .00), flexible location (b = .42, p = .00), concierge services (b = .40, p = .00), reproductive benefits (b = .26, p = .00), dependent care subsidies (b = .32, p = .00), and on-site child care (b = .32, p = .00), as seen in Table 4c. There is no significant direct path between control attributions to either WIF or FIW for any of the six work-life benefits. Therefore, affective costs fully mediate the relationship between control attributions and work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that work-family conflict would be negatively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors and positively associated with counterproductive workplace behaviors and turnover intentions. The results for Hypothesis 4 are presented in Table 4d. There was mixed support for Hypothesis 4a such that WIF was not significantly related to OCBs for any of the 6 benefits. However, family interference with work was negatively and significantly related to OCBs for all but one benefit. The relationships were negative and significant for

flexible scheduling ( $b = -.15, p = 0.00$ ), flexible locations ( $b = -0.12, p = 0.02$ ), concierge services ( $b = -0.12, p = 0.03$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = -0.32, p = 0.01$ ), and on-site child care

**Table 4c - Effect of Affective Costs on Family Interference with Work**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.02	0.05	0.09 †	-0.09	-0.04	-0.10
Age	-0.06 **	-0.05 *	-0.05 *	0.00	-0.06	-0.02
Female	0.07 *	0.07 †	0.02	-0.01	0.01	0.08
Elder Dependent	0.25 **	0.24 **	0.15 **	0.05	0.11 †	0.12 †
Supervisor Status	0.02	0.00	-0.03	0.02	0.00	0.01
Company Age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	0.00
<i>Variables</i>						
Affective Costs	0.42 **	0.42 **	0.40 **	0.26 **	0.32 **	0.32 **
Control Attribution	0.03	0.05	0.08	-0.04	0.08	-0.01
FSOP	-0.18 **	-0.18 **	-0.18 **	-0.28 **	-0.24 **	-0.24 **
GRO	0.23 **	0.24 **	0.28 **	0.46 **	0.38 **	0.37 **

\*\*  $p < 0.00$    \*  $p < 0.05$    †  $p < 0.1$

( $b = -0.30, p = 0.00$ ), but not for dependent care subsidies ( $b = -0.13, p = 0.16$ ). The patterns of significance were similar but, as predicted, in a positive direction for Hypothesis 4b. The relationship between WIF and CWBs was not significant for any of the six work-life benefits.

However, the relationship between FIW and CWBs was significant and positive for all six work-life benefits: flexible schedule ( $b = .30, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = .32, p = .00$ ), concierge services ( $b = .34, p = .00$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = .40, p = .00$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = .44, p = .00$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = .48, p = .00$ ). Finally, the relationships of significance were slightly different for turnover intentions compared to OCBs and CWBs. Whereas WIF was not significantly associated with OCBs and CWBs, it was positively related to turnover for all six

**Table 4d – Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors, and Turnover Intentions**

Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors						
	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.11 †	0.07	0.08	0.24	0.20	0.12
Age	-0.06 *	-0.05	-0.06 †	-0.09	-0.05	0.02
Female	-0.07	-0.09	-0.03	0.03	-0.06	-0.09
Elder Dependent	0.20 **	0.10	0.14	0.06	0.06	0.10
Supervisor Status	0.17 **	0.16 **	0.18 **	0.09 *	0.10 *	0.08 †
Company Age	0.01	0.01	0.04 *	0.04	0.04	0.02
<i>Variables</i>						
WIF	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.17	-0.04	0.11
FIW	-0.15 **	-0.12 *	-0.12 *	-0.32 **	-0.13	-0.30 **
Affective Costs	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.00	-0.06	0.03
Control Attribution	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04	0.07	0.28 *	0.01
FSOP	-0.06 †	-0.09 *	-0.15 **	-0.40 **	-0.32 **	-0.36 **
GRO	-0.02	-0.04	-0.03	0.05	-0.02	0.03
Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors						
	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	-0.07 *	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.03	-0.09
Age	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	0.14 †	0.06	0.11 †
Female	-0.06 †	-0.03	-0.11 *	0.00	-0.12	-0.01
Elder Dependent	0.43 **	0.42 **	0.36 **	0.24 *	0.19 *	0.25 *
Supervisor Status	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03
Company Age	0.00	0.00	0.03 †	0.01	0.00	0.06 *
<i>Variables</i>						
WIF	0.02	0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.11	-0.06
FIW	0.30 **	0.32 **	0.34 **	0.40 **	0.44 **	0.48 **
Affective Costs	0.13 **	0.14 **	0.11 **	0.21 **	0.19 **	0.15 *
Control Attribution	0.43 **	0.37 **	0.34 **	0.43 **	0.49 **	0.36 **
FSOP	-0.09 **	-0.09 **	-0.12 **	0.02	-0.10	-0.13 †
GRO	0.22 **	0.24 **	0.30 **	0.46 **	0.35 **	0.35 **
Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Turnover Intentions						
	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	-0.24 **	-0.33 **	-0.20 **	-0.15	-0.13	-0.26 **
Age	-0.08 **	-0.06 *	-0.07 *	-0.05	-0.04	0.06
Female	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.09	-0.09	-0.10
Elder Dependent	0.15 *	0.16 *	0.23 **	0.30 **	0.18 *	0.18 *
Supervisor Status	-0.06 **	-0.04 *	-0.01	-0.02	-0.05 †	-0.01
Company Age	0.00	0.02	0.03 †	0.03	0.01	0.03
<i>Variables</i>						
WIF	0.22 **	0.20 **	0.26 **	0.19 *	0.14 *	0.15 *
FIW	0.06 †	0.11 **	0.09 *	0.11	0.23 **	0.20 **
Affective Costs	0.11 **	0.14 **	0.08 *	0.15 **	0.09 †	0.07
Control Attribution	0.20 **	0.18 **	0.17 *	0.08	0.11	0.11
FSOP	-0.15 **	-0.13 **	-0.08 *	0.11	-0.10 †	-0.12 *
GRO	0.08 **	0.06 †	0.13 **	0.39 **	0.19 **	0.25 **

\*\* p < 0.00    \* p < 0.05    † p < 0.1

benefits: flexible schedule ( $b = .22, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = .20, p = .00$ ), concierge services ( $b = .26, p = .00$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = .19, p = .01$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = .14, p = .02$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = .15, p = .01$ ). However, the pattern of relationships involving FIW was somewhat weaker for turnover intentions than for OCBs and CWBs. FIW was significantly and positively related to four of the six benefits: flexible location benefits ( $b = 0.11, p = 0.00$ ), concierge services ( $b = 0.09, p = 0.04$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = 0.23, p = 0.00$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = 0.20, p = 0.00$ ). The relationship between FIW and turnover intentions was only marginally significant for flexible scheduling ( $b = 0.06, p = 0.09$ ) and not significant for reproductive benefits.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that there would be a negative relationship between FSOP and employee attributions such that as employees perceived their organization to be more supportive, they would be less likely to form attributions that work-life benefits represent management's intent to control employees. As presented in Table 4e, this hypothesis was fully supported across all six benefits: flexible schedule ( $b = -.13, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = -.12, p = .00$ ), concierge services ( $b = -.10, p = .00$ ), reproductive benefits ( $b = -.14, p = .00$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = -.16, p = .00$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = -.12, p = .00$ ). Finally, Hypothesis 6 predicted that as people valued more traditional gender roles, they would be more likely to form control attributions about management's intent for work-life benefits. As presented in Table 4e, Hypothesis 6 was supported in five out of the six benefits: flexible schedule ( $b = .07, p = .00$ ), flexible location ( $b = .07, p = .00$ ), concierge services ( $b = .09, p = .00$ ), dependent care subsidies ( $b = .07, p = .01$ ), and on-site child care ( $b = .08, p = .01$ ). However, GRO was not a significant predictor for employee control attributions for reproductive benefits. Taken together, these results suggest that employee attributions about management's intentions for work-life benefits

are an important variable to examine when attempting to understand the processes and outcomes associated with work-life benefits.

**Table 4e – Effect of Family Supportive Organization Perceptions and Gender Role Orientations on Control Attributions**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.04 †	0.04	0.02	-0.09	0.10	0.15 *
Age	-0.04 **	-0.05 **	-0.04 **	-0.09 *	-0.07 *	-0.04
Female	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.04	0.05	0.02
Elder Dependent	0.12 **	0.06 †	0.16 **	0.10 †	0.06	0.12 *
Supervisor Status	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04 †	-0.03
Company Age	-0.01 †	-0.01	-0.02 *	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
<i>Variables</i>						
FSOP	-0.13 **	-0.12 **	-0.10 **	-0.14 **	-0.16 **	-0.12 **
GRO	0.07 **	0.07 **	0.09 **	0.04	0.07 *	0.08 **
** p < 0.00	* p < 0.05	† p < 0.1				

Finally, I tested the indirect effects of attributions on OCBs, CWBs, and turnover intentions. These analyses are useful in highlighting the magnitude of the relationship between employee control attributions and desirable versus undesirable outcomes. While the indirect relationship between control attributions and OCBs was only significant for concierge services (b = -0.02, p = 0.01) and dependent care subsidies (b = -0.04, p = 0.00), there was broader support for the indirect relationship between control attributions and CWBs and turnover intentions across the six benefits. The indirect relationship with CWBs was significant and positive for all of the benefits except on-site child care: flexible schedule (b = .08, p = .00), flexible location (b = .07, p = .00), concierge services (b = .12, p = .00), reproductive benefits (b = .10, p = .01) and dependent care subsidies (b = .07, p = .00). Additionally, as displayed in Table 5, the indirect relationship with turnover intentions was significant and positive for all six benefits: flexible schedule (b = .06, p = .00), flexible location (b = .06, p = .00), concierge services (b = .08, p = .00), reproductive benefits (b = .07, p = .01), dependent care subsidies (b = .09, p = .00), and on-

site child care ( $b = .04, p = .07$ ). These results of these indirect relationships therefore lend support to the idea that different mechanisms are at work for negative versus positive outcomes.

**Table 5 – Indirect Effects on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors, and Turnover Intentions**

	<u>Flex Schedule</u>	<u>Flex Location</u>	<u>Concierge</u>	<u>Reproductive</u>	<u>Dependent Care</u>	<u>On Site Child Care</u>
<b>Indirect Effects on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors</b>						
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02 †	-0.01	0.03	0.05
Age	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00
Female	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.01	-0.02
Elder Dependent	-0.04 *	-0.03 †	-0.03 †	0.01	-0.01	-0.03
Supervisor Status	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.02	0.00	-0.01
Company Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Variables</i>						
Control Attribution	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02 **	-0.01	-0.04 **	0.00
Affective Costs	-0.04 **	-0.04 **	-0.04 **	-0.05 **	-0.05 **	-0.07 **
FSOP	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.06
GRO	-0.03 *	-0.03 †	-0.05 *	-0.13 *	-0.08 *	-0.10 *
<b>Indirect Effects on Counterproductive Workplace Behaviors</b>						
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.07 **	0.07 **	0.07 **	-0.11	0.00	-0.02
Age	-0.08 **	-0.08 **	-0.08 **	-0.06	-0.11 **	-0.04
Female	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.05
Elder Dependent	0.18 **	0.18 **	0.18 **	0.04	0.09 †	0.11 *
Supervisor Status	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.00
Company Age	-0.01 *	-0.01 *	-0.01 *	0.00	-0.01	0.00
<i>Variables</i>						
Control Attribution	0.06 **	0.05 *	0.10 **	0.08 *	0.11 **	0.05
Affective Costs	0.14 **	0.14 **	0.12 **	0.10 **	0.11 **	0.14 **
FSOP	-0.21 **	-0.22 **	-0.16 **	-0.27 **	-0.25 **	-0.23 **
GRO	0.17 **	0.18 **	0.21 **	0.32 **	0.31 **	0.34 **
<b>Indirect Effects on Turnover Intentions</b>						
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent	0.03 *	0.05 *	0.01	-0.09 *	0.02	0.00
Age	-0.05 **	-0.05 **	-0.06 **	-0.03	-0.06 **	-0.03 *
Female	-0.02 †	-0.03	-0.04 *	-0.03	0.02	0.03
Elder Dependent	0.09 **	0.10 **	0.10 **	0.01	0.06 *	0.04 †
Supervisor Status	0.00	-0.01	-0.02 *	-0.01	-0.02	0.00
Company Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
<i>Variables</i>						
Control Attribution	0.04 **	0.04 *	0.06 **	0.05 *	0.08 **	0.04 †
Affective Costs	0.12 **	0.13 **	0.13 **	0.06 **	0.12 **	0.10 **
FSOP	-0.19 **	-0.21 **	-0.18 **	-0.20 **	-0.18 **	-0.15 **
GRO	0.09 **	0.12 **	0.15 **	0.18 **	0.21 **	0.21 **

\*\*  $p < 0.00$     \*  $p < 0.05$     †  $p < 0.1$



## Alternative Models

In order to rule out other explanations, I tested three alternative models. Model A represents the hypothesized model. Drawing on prior research which found that work-family conflict predicts affective reactions (Judge, Ilies & Scott, 2006; Livingston & Judge, 2009), I tested models where work-family conflict precedes affective costs. Model B examines a path where control attributions directly predicts work-family conflict, and work-family conflict in turn predicts affective costs. In order to examine the possibility that people's experiences of work-family conflict might shape their attributions, I tested two more models. Model C tests a model

**Table 6 – Alternative Models**

	<b>Model A</b>	<b>Model B</b>	<b>Model C</b>	<b>Model D</b>
<b>Flexible Schedule</b>				
AIC	52,149.09	52,303.67	52,305.31	52,305.31
BIC	52,615.75	52,770.33	52,771.97	52,771.97
CFI	0.97	0.95	0.95	0.95
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
<b>Flexible Location</b>				
AIC	37,722.22	37,844.62	37,845.70	37,845.70
BIC	38,159.75	38,282.15	38,283.23	38,283.23
CFI	0.97	0.94	0.94	0.94
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03
<b>Concierge Services</b>				
AIC	30,725.55	30,813.21	30,815.35	30,815.35
BIC	31,146.30	31,233.97	31,236.11	31,236.11
CFI	0.96	0.94	0.94	0.94
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03
<b>Reproductive Benefits</b>				
AIC	9,638.23	9,654.61	9,654.38	9,654.38
BIC	9,965.81	9,982.18	9,981.96	9,981.96
CFI	0.91	0.90	0.90	0.90
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
<b>Dependent Care Subsidies</b>				
AIC	12,943.38	13,964.75	13,967.95	13,967.95
BIC	13,269.77	14,319.71	14,322.90	14,322.90
CFI	0.94	0.93	0.93	0.93
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
<b>On-Site Child Care</b>				
AIC	11,879.86	11,906.91	11,907.42	11,907.42
BIC	12,223.34	12,250.39	12,250.90	12,250.90
CFI	0.95	0.94	0.94	0.94
SRMR	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02

where work-family conflict predicts affective costs, and affective costs influence control attributions. Finally, in Model D work-family conflict predicts control attributions directly, and the attributions then predict affective costs. Although the cross-sectional design does not enable tests of causality, the relative fit indices for the different models are nevertheless informative. The fit results which compare these 3 alternative models to the hypothesized model are presented in Table 6. For all six benefits, the hypothesized model presents the best fit statistics. Across all six benefits, the hypothesized model has a higher CFI statistics and lower AIC and BIC results than the other three alternative models. The consistent patterns across all 4 models and applicable for all six benefits provides strong support that the hypothesized model is appropriate and the best fit for the data.

## **DISCUSSION**

Prior research has produced considerable evidence demonstrating the value of work-life benefits to both employees and organizations. The overwhelming majority of work-life benefit research has examined and predicted positive associated relationships such that benefits can increase productivity (McC Campbell, 1996; Rodgers, 1992; Seylor et al., 1993) and organizational commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995) while decreasing absenteeism (Goff et al., 1990; Seylor et al., 1993) and turnover (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). While these findings have advanced our theoretical and practical knowledge of work-life benefits, they may have limited our understanding of the comprehensive outcomes associated with these benefits which can include both positive and negative results. The results of this study challenge our conventional understanding of work-life benefits and expand upon the budding evidence that alludes to a more complex process and set of outcomes associated with work-life benefits.

One way in which this study advances our knowledge is through the examination of the attributions individuals make about managerial intentions for work-life benefits. After conducting analyses on six unique types of work-life benefits, compelling patterns emerged which suggest that employees can and do make varying attributions about management's intent to either support or control employees through their utilization of work-life benefits. Furthermore, these attributions vary depending on the specific benefit being examined; in this study, respondents were more likely to make supporting attributions for flexible schedule, flexible location, and concierge service benefits while more likely to make controlling attributions for reproductive benefits. The controlling or supportive attributions employees make regarding the work-life benefit subsequently predicts elevated affective costs such as guilt or worry. More specifically, employees who make supportive attributions are less likely to report experiencing affective costs than employees who make controlling attributions. This is important as affective costs that result from work-life benefit utilization are significantly and positively associated with increased levels of work-family conflict in both directions.

Understanding these linking mechanisms is critical as the relationships between work-family conflict and behavioral outcomes appear to be nuanced and complex. More specifically, the results of this study suggest that FIW is significantly related to increasing OCBs and decreasing CWBs while WIF is not significantly related to either of these outcomes. Furthermore, WIF is significantly and positively related to turnover intentions for all benefits while the results vary based on the benefit. Finally, the results supported the expectation that both FSOP and GRO- which represent one organization-related and one individual difference-based antecedent- help explain differences in the attributions that people make for work-life benefits.

The findings from this study contribute to management literature in several ways. First, the results demonstrate the existence of hitherto unexamined linking mechanisms between work-life benefits and employee outcomes. This is important as a majority of the literature on work-life benefits has historically focused on mediators which explain positive outcomes while being unable to delineate the processes which led to less desirable results. Drawing upon attribution theory and prior findings which argue employee attributions are a linking mechanism between HR practices and various employee and unit-level outcomes (Nishii et al., 2008), this study introduced the concept of attributions to work-life benefit literature. I argued that employees who utilize work-life benefits make attributions about management's intent to either control or support employees. Identifying these differences highlighted the ways in which employees form varying perceptions about particular work-life benefits and, in contrast to conventional wisdom, are not always positive or desirable. This study also introduced the concept of affective costs of work-life benefit utilization as an additional linking mechanism. Considering the frequency with which scholars have noted the importance of employees' fear of career consequences in explaining resistance to work-life benefit utilization (e.g. Perlow, 1995; Bailyn, 1993, etc.), there has been a surprising dearth of research which directly or empirically examines the affective or psychological "baggage" experienced by employees who use these benefits. To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to empirically examine the role in which employees' affective reactions play in determining outcomes associated with work-life benefits.

The identification of these two linking mechanisms is particularly critical as the results of this study suggest that affective costs fully mediate the relationship between employee attributions and work-family conflict. These findings validate prior suggestions which emphasized the importance of employees' affective reactions (Bailyn, 1993; Perlow, 1995), and

highlight the crucial lack of empirical research examining the role of affective reactions to work-life benefits. With the addition of these linking mechanisms, we have evidence of two separate pathways based on control versus support attributions. In line with traditional assumptions, employees who feel that work-life benefits are in place because management wants to support them are less likely to be burdened by worry or guilt and, thus, less likely to report experiences of work-family conflict. This should subsequently lead to more desirable behavioral outcomes. In contrast, and perhaps less intuitive, employees who feel that management intends to control employees through work-life benefits are more likely to report affective costs and, therefore, more likely to experience elevated work-family conflict which can lead to negative behavioral reactions. As such, the introduction of affective costs and control versus support attributions as linking mechanisms enhances our understanding and expands the nomological network surrounding work-life benefits.

The identification of these linking mechanisms and the findings of this study also assist in explaining prior findings that work-life benefits can sometimes increase rather than decrease work-family conflict (Hammer et al., 2005; Brough et al., 2005). The results of this study emphasize the importance of understanding the varying attributions employees make when examining different types of benefits. More specifically, respondents in this study were significantly more likely to make supporting attributions about non-family related benefits (i.e. flexible schedule, flexible location, and concierge services) and significantly more likely to make controlling attributions about reproductive benefits. The results were inconclusive for dependent care subsidiaries and on-site child care. While the causes of these differences were outside the focus of this study, it is interesting to note that the benefits which are directly related to family aspects are the ones that are not significantly related to supportive attributions. Furthermore,

reproductive benefits which not only impact employees' families but the employee's physical entity are the most likely to elicit controlling attributions. One potential explanation for these results may be that employees feel that benefits which directly impact either their families or their own bodies are the most intrusive. Employees may feel that these benefits are not truly supportive as they enable management to outsource family responsibilities or interfere with their own bodies so that they can be more productive and are therefore less likely to make supportive attributions. In summary, these findings are critical to advancing our knowledge as the varying results suggest that work-life benefits should not be examined as a set given this evidence that individuals may attach varying meanings to them.

Another way in which this study makes a contribution is by expanding our awareness of negative outcomes associated with work-life benefits and emphasizing the nuanced ways in which these undesirable results can unfold. Drawing on the less commonly utilized theory of the negative norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), this study demonstrates the ways in which work-life benefits can produce undesirable outcomes such as decreased organizational citizenship behaviors and increased counterproductive workplace behaviors and turnover intentions. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of the role that the directionality of work-family conflict plays in understanding relationships with employee outcomes. More specifically, the patterns of results suggest that OCBs and CWBs are more strongly influenced by FIW than WIF while turnover intentions tend to be more likely affected by WIF. I argue that these results can be explained by considering what is within an individual's power to change. When work interferes with family, an individual may consider the option of changing employers as a means of reducing work's interference with family. In contrast, when family interferes with work, leaving one's organization is less likely to be perceived as a possible solution, as the origin of the

conflict being experienced is the family-, not the work-, domain. The manifestation of family interference with work in the form of fewer OCBs and/or more frequent CWBs may be explained by dynamics associated with Job Demands and Resources theory (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). That is, strain associated with FIW may influence the resources employees have left over to contribute to the organization or make them more likely to take advantage of the organization through CWBs. According to this reasoning, FIW is more likely to be strongly associated with OCBs and CWBs as the data suggests. These findings emphasize the importance of not only examining the level of work-family conflict but the directionality of the conflict in differentiating between the outcomes associated with work-life benefits.

Finally, this study enriches theoretical understanding by highlighting two antecedents which influence employee attributions of work-life benefits. The results demonstrate that attributions can be influenced by both contextual (i.e. FSOP) and individual (i.e. GRO) variables. While the relationship was significant and negative between FSOP and control attributions for all six benefits, the significant and positive relationship between GRO and control attributions only applied to five of the six benefits. The fact that GRO is not significant only for reproductive benefits may be a testament to the intrusive nature of the benefit. It may be that reproductive benefits, which impact both an individual's family and her own physical entity, feel so intrusive that both traditional and egalitarian individuals find this type of benefit to represent management's intent to control employees. These findings suggest that understanding the levers which can be manipulated or monitored to shape outcomes is theoretically important as it extends the nomological network of work-life benefits.

## **Implications for Future Research**

Although substantial contributions have been made to work-life benefit literature (Glass & Finley, 2002), additional research is necessary to advance our knowledge of the interpretations and outcomes associated with these benefits. One potential direction for future research is to draw on psychological contract breach research to investigate how the interaction of attributions and benefit usage can induce varying affective reactions among employees. Scholars examining psychological contract breach have suggested that employees tend to engage in shallow heuristic processing of HR-related messages most of the time (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994); however, when prompted by triggering events, employees are more likely to engage in deeper level sense-making in relation to work-life benefits. This suggests that employees are likely to accept commonly held assumptions and/or organizational rhetoric about the support organizations provide to employees through work-life benefits unless they encounter information that disconfirms their preconceived expectations (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). Employees who are aware of work-life benefit offerings but do not utilize them are less likely to notice or attend to disconfirming cues compared to actual users. Users, in contrast, will have a heightened sensitivity to messages because of the personal relevance of those messages for them (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Future research should, thus, explore the ways in which use impacts the attributions formed compared to non-users and how employees process the meanings provided to them by organizational agents. Furthermore, future research should examine how utilization of benefits potentially strengthens or weakens the relationships between attributions and outcomes. While this study begins to untangle these issues, additional research on how employees' affective reactions vary based on the attributions they make and utilization of benefits may be a potentially fruitful future avenue for research.



Continuing to highlight the importance of differences between use and availability, another potential line of research could explore outcomes specifically associated with non-users. In line with research which suggests that fear of consequences presents a barrier to work-life benefit use (Bailyn, 1993; Perlow, 1995), future researchers should examine the unintended outcomes for employees who do not use the benefit at all as there are likely a variety of reasons why employees do not utilize work-life benefits. It may be that employees simply have no need for the benefit or feel that a benefit may not adequately meet the demands from their personal lives. On the other hand, it may be that they do not use them for fear of backlash from managers or peers. Considerable evidence has supported the notion that work-life benefit utilization and the ways in which employees manage work and personal life responsibilities influence managerial assessments which ultimately impact career outcomes. For example, evidence suggests that when managers perceive an employee is using flexible work practices to enhance productivity, they are more likely to perceive the employee is committed to the organization which results in desirable career outcomes such as increased salary, advanced job positions, and reward recommendations (Leslie et al., 2012). In contrast, when managers perceive an employee uses flexible work practices for personal life reasons, they are likely to perceive employees are less committed which results in less desirable career outcomes. In addition, bosses' perceptions of subordinates' work-family conflict have been associated with career outcomes such that increased perceptions of work-family conflict indirectly predicted less favorable assessments of promotability and fewer nominations for promotion (Hoobler, Wayne, Lemmon, 2009). In addition to managerial influences, employees' avoidance of benefit use may be swayed by co-workers' decisions to use or refrain from benefit use. It may be that a majority of the employees in a work group choose not to use the benefit creating a strong climate where it is difficult to

diverge from the norm and use a benefit (Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002). We know little about why employees make these choices and what results due to this implicit coercion to refrain from utilization. However to my knowledge no study has yet explicitly examined non-users to understand these outcomes and why. Thus, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of outcomes associated with work-life benefits, it is not only important to examine those employees who use benefits but also those who do not.

Finally, prior researchers have noted that some work-life benefits offer employees more control and autonomy than other benefits (Glass & Finley, 2002; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). In a New York Times article about the downsides of generous workplace perks Lotte Bailyn noted, “It’s important to differentiate between those policies that give people more control over what they do and those that allow people to work longer and longer on site” (Tugend, 2014). These statements emphasize the importance of differentiating between benefits, and I suggest one way is by understanding how different benefits affect both perceived control over work and family and attributions about managerial intentions to control or support employees. The results of this study support the criticality of exploring these differences. Two of the benefits which were more likely to elicit supportive attributions about managerial intentions were flexible scheduling and flexible work locations which presumably provide employees with more control over how they choose to handle their work and personal life demands. Similar to these findings, Thomas and Ganster (1995) found that flexible scheduling led to greater perceived personal control over work and family matters. In regards to benefits more closely related to family-aspects, we may need even further specification of benefits to better examine these differences. While the results of this study suggest no significant differences in whether employees make controlling or supportive attributions for dependent care subsidies and on-site

child care, it may be that the categories did not go far enough to distinguish the benefits for examination. For example employees may react differently to subsidies which support daily child care compared to subsidies which provide support to care for a sick child. Therefore, future research could examine the ways in which personal perceptions of control and attributions about management intentions to control are related and how they may vary by benefit type.

### **Practical Implications**

The theoretical viewpoint and results revealed in this study suggest that organizations need to more deeply understand the ways in which employees are interpreting management's intentions for work-life benefits and why. If organizations make narrow assumptions that work-life benefits are exclusively positive, they may ignore the possibility that the benefits are not producing the anticipated results and, even worse, may produce undesirable outcomes. The magnitude of the indirect effects suggest that when employees attribute a WL benefit – such as flexible scheduling – to management's intention to control employee behavior, the associated level of CWBs is .06 compared to -.06 for employees who make support attributions. Similarly, OCBs for employees who make control attributions are more likely to turnover (.04 compared to -.04 for employees who make support attributions). These values relate specifically to flexible scheduling, but a similar pattern emerges for the other benefits. Given the costs associated with investing in work-life benefits as well as with staffing and turnover, it is important for organizations to comprehensively understand the ways in which employees perceive work-life benefits and how this impacts employee outcomes. With this in mind, organizations should carefully examine the policies and practices which are implemented to determine if some benefits are more prone to negative outcomes and explore the ways in which the organization and managers can influence this (e.g. FSOP) to produce desirable outcomes.

While it is important to assess the benefits themselves, it is also important for organizations and managers to evaluate the way in which benefits are communicated to and framed for employees. How work-life benefits are communicated is an important aspect of work-life benefit implementation as it aids in the way employees make sense of the meaning of benefits. This study demonstrates the importance of the role of management in shaping the meanings surrounding benefits as opposed to allowing employees to idiosyncratically make sense of work-life benefits for themselves with the hope they are positive. For example, it may be that a manager who clearly communicates the supportive intentions of work-life benefits can help employees form supportive attributions particularly for benefits which are more prone to mixed reactions such as dependent care subsidies or on-site child care. Furthermore, understanding the affective reactions which emerge due to work-life benefit utilization is an important aspect for managers to consider. Being able to address and assuage the negative affective reactions may prevent subsequent undesirable employee outcomes. As such, this study provides evidence which has important practical implications when implementing work-life benefits in organizations.

### **Limitations**

This study has some limitations that should be addressed. First, one limitation is the potential for common method bias as the data reported in this study is self-reported from a single source. Common method bias is a concern as it can inflate correlations and raise questions about causality (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, prior research has shown that the issue of common method variance is often overstated and does not necessarily affect results or conclusions (Spector, 2006). In regards to causality, while the possibility of reverse causality cannot be ruled out due to the cross-sectional research design, the analysis of alternative models produced worse

fit statistics suggesting the current model is the best representation of processes surrounding work-life benefit utilization.

Another limitation of this study is the possibility of selection bias (Winship & Mare, 1992). Part of the sample selection procedure entailed filtering out potential participants based on whether their employer offered any of the six listed work-life benefits. This may bias the resulting sample in two ways. First, this eliminates any respondent who is in a company where the work-life benefits is not available. Second, this method also eliminates respondents who are in companies where the benefit is potentially offered but the respondent is unaware of its availability. While this may potentially affect the representativeness of the resulting sample, this should not present a problem for my findings due to the nature of my research question. The purpose of this study was to understand individual's reactions based on their use of work-life benefits. Therefore, by selecting only respondents with access to these benefits, I was able to target those most likely to use the benefit and increase the usefulness of the data collected.

## **CONCLUSION**

While work-life benefits have been a component of the employee support system in organizations for a few decades now, their position in strategic importance has risen greatly. However, the rise of dual-career couples with various dependent needs, increasing importance placed on a personal life by younger generations, and a shortage of skilled talent in the labor market are bringing unprecedented attention to work-life benefits, particularly in their ability to bring strategic competitive advantages for organizations. The results of this study suggest that the strategic advantages of work-life benefits may be bounded by the messaging surrounding the benefits and the way they are implemented. The goal for this study is, therefore, to motivate further research and interest in the wider range of outcomes associated with work-life benefits.

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