

Chapter 6 Discussion

Work, home and the interaction between the two domains has been recognized as an important issue at a political level (e.g., Lewis & Lewis, 1996), a public level (e.g., Barnett & Rivers, 1996; Shellenbarger, 1999) and an academic level (e.g., Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). The interface between the two domains has been recognized as a major problem for employees, employers, families, organizations and society at large (Westman & Piotrkowski, 1999).

Lewis and Cooper (1999), in their review of the changing nature of the work-life agenda, have noted that the 1990's have witnessed profound changes in the nature of work. Globalisation, increasingly sophisticated technology, and constant change have been a key feature of most organizations. In both the United States (Henson, 1996) and Europe (Employment in Europe, 1997), there has been a steady growth in the number of temporary positions, with the associated problems of lack of job security and associated anxiety (Reynolds, 1997). This has resulted in people spending more time at work, as employees feel a pressure to equate "face time" with commitment (Bailyn, 1993; Lewis, 1997), and people in low-wage occupations do more than one job. So, in such a scenario time for home starts to get squeezed. This situation is compounded by the fact that boundaries between the two domains are more blurred, as organisations become more virtual with employees working from home for all of a certain part of the work week. In this sense, the logic is simple, work patterns have become more diverse and unstructured, and consequently the impact on a reciprocal relationship with the home side of the equation is increasingly important.

The combination of increasing amounts of women entering the workforce, changes in technology and an increasing number of dual-earner and one-parent families has all led to an understanding of the work-home issue which recognises that; (1) work and home are not separate domains, (2) the boundaries between the two domains are becoming increasingly blurred, (3) it is an issue for both men and women, (4) work and home can influence each other in both a positive and negative way.

The current thesis has investigated these issues with such considerations in firm focus. In the remainder of this concluding chapter; the research questions set out



in chapter one are systematically addressed, theoretical issues and limitations are recognised, and finally practical implications and future research are discussed.

6.1 Research Question One: Antecedents and outcomes of WHI/HWI

The need to understand both the antecedents and outcomes of WHI/HWI has been recognised as critical to the further development of the field (Guest, 2002; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). The present thesis has helped to add to the debate by specifying a more systematic approach to antecedents and by the inclusion of positive outcomes (i.e., engagement). The following section will firstly address our findings with regard to antecedents and secondly, our findings as they relate to outcomes.

Overall, the internal validity of both the job demands and home demands scales used in this thesis were good. In the Internet sample (Chapter 2), the alpha coefficient was $> .70$ for all the demands scales. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis established the scales as independent constructs. Alpha coefficients for the newspaper managers (Chapter 3) were satisfactory, with the exception of emotional home demands and quantitative job demands, which had an alpha between $.50$ and $.60$. In terms of external validity, job demands were more strongly related to WHI (relative to HWI) and home demands were more strongly related to HWI (relative to WHI). In addition, in the longitudinal sample (Chapter 5), job demands were more strongly related to WHI-negative and job resources were more strongly related to WHI-positive (as expected). Overall, the systematic development of subjective measures of our antecedents (especially home antecedents) helps to progress the field beyond the analysis of more structural characteristics, such as work hours, which have limited success in explaining WHI and HWI (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991; Holohan & Gilberst, 1979). Subjective measures are as important as objective ones, and can tap something different than an objective measure does (e.g., perceived career success is a useful concept because it is different from income, status or prestige). Among both the Internet sample (Chapter 2) and newspaper managers (Chapter 3), quantitative job demands and mental job demands were rated higher than their quantitative home demands and mental home demands, respectively. Such a result reflects the specific nature of the work-role, wherein our tasks and demands are very tangible (compared to our home domain). Alternatively, we may still not be assessing home demands in the most exhaustive way and the results may reflect this. The present study has made



a significant contribution to the field by the development and validation of a home demands scale (see Appendix D), with the caveat that we need to further develop the emotional home demands scale. Indeed, our development of a home demands scale represents a timely response to recent review of the field by Geurts and Demerouti (2003), who make the following recommendation for future research;

“To find out which demands and resources in the home situation affects one’s functioning at work, it is important to assess the home situation with the same preciseness as the workplace assessment. This means that work-family researchers should move beyond the investigation of primarily objective family characteristics, such as marital and parental status.” (2003:306).

In terms of outcomes, this thesis (primarily) assessed the impact of WHI/HWI on burnout and engagement. Given that a central aim of this thesis was to develop new ways of measuring the home side of the equation, it was a strategic decision to include both a well-established outcome (burnout) and a new one (engagement). Consistent with a large body of studies (Aryee, 1993; Bacharach et al., 1991; Burke, 1988; Drory & Shamir, 1988; Greenglass & Burke, 1988; Izraeli, 1988; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1996), increased WHI was related to job burnout in the present samples. With respect to HWI, increased levels were related to increased exhaustion in both the Internet (Chapter 2) and newspaper manager (Chapter 3) samples. In addition, increased levels of HWI were also related to decreased levels of vigor in the sample of newspaper managers. Most interestingly, in our sample of dual-earners, the WHI and HWI of the IT professionals was related to the turnover intentions of their partners, but not their own. In the same sample, no relationships between WHI/HWI and marital satisfaction were found. However, both the HWI of the IT professionals and the HWI of their spouses was related to NA at home. Such a result is consistent with Frone (2000) who speculates that attributions of HWI are more likely to be attributed internally and be viewed as an indication of one’s inability to deal with one’s private life.

Engagement is a relatively new addition to the occupational field and should be viewed as part of a more general emerging trend towards a ‘positive psychology’ (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The appropriateness of choosing engagement to relate to burnout is highlighted by recent studies (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2002; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002). The data from our longitudinal sample indicated that WHI-positive was consistently related to



engagement. Theoretically, Schaufeli and Bakker (2002) have identified two underlying dimensions of work-related well-being that encompass the burnout and engagement constructs: (1) activation, ranging from exhaustion to vigor, and (2) identification, ranging from cynicism to dedication. Therefore, burnout is characterised by a combination of exhaustion (low activation) and cynicism (low identification), whereas engagement is characterised by vigor (high activation) and dedication (high identification). In particular, the results of our longitudinal sample (Chapter 6) suggested that burnout and engagement are independent constructs. This result represents a further explication of the Job-Demand Resources model (Demerouti et al, 2001) by extending it with the inclusion of engagement (in agreement with Schaufeli, et al. 2002). In addition, the differential results between our demands and resources model (Chapter 5) indicates that these processes work in different ways and need to be understood in this light. However, it is appropriate to recognise that the explained variance between both models suggests that the relationship between demands, WHI-negative and burnout is more robust and predictive than the relationships contained within the resources model.

6.2 Research Question Two: WHI, HWI and Mediation

The role of WHI as a mediator has been suggested by various studies (Frone et al., 1992; Bakker & Geurts, 2002; Geurts, Rutte & Peeters, 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godschalk & Beutell 1996; Stephens, Franks, & Atienza, 1997). An overall assessment of the thesis indicates that WHI-negative played a mediational role in both the Internet (Chapter 2) and newspaper managers' (Chapter 3) samples. Additionally, HWI-negative was also found to play a mediational role between home demands and burnout. Within our sample of dual-earner couples, WHI-negative explained 8% of the variance in exhaustion for IT workers and 14% of the variance in their working spouses, after controlling for negative affectivity. Within the sample of newspaper manager's positive interference (WHI and HWI combined) mediated between social support from the supervisor and cynicism. With regard to the longitudinal sample (Chapter 5), no support was found for the role of WHI-negative as mediator, but partial support was found for the role of WHI-positive as a mediator between job resources and feelings of engagement. The fact that no mediational role was found for WHI-negative is inconsistent with previous literature, and suggests that we need to know more about the time-lags



involved in the process of WHI. In this regard, Frone et al. (1992) have recommended that daily diaries may be a way forward in understanding the dynamic nature of WHI and how individuals recover or don't recover from its effects. Overall, the evidence indicated that WHI/HWI played a partially mediating role. Such a result is consistent with the assertion by Baron and Kenny (1986) that phenomena in the social sciences involve multiple causes, and as such finding full mediation effects is highly unlikely and theoretically unexpected. As noted by various reviews (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Brown, 1997; Holmbeck, 1997), confusion and misunderstanding still exists with regard to the use of mediation. The lessons learned from this thesis is that one needs to engage in the reciprocal process of building a theoretical rationale for mediation and consequently examining both partial and full mediation. All that said, a theoretical consideration of the fact that WHI/HWI indicated partially mediating results calls for us to consider whether we should expect only a partially mediated effect to begin with. Such a view is consistent with the strong direct relationship found between some demands (e.g., workload) and outcomes (e.g., burnout). The fact that we can differentiate between different types of demands (i.e., quantitative, emotional and mental) allows us to construct different hypotheses with regard to full and partial mediation. A review of the data from the thesis and comparison between demand types reveals that quantitative job demands were most strongly correlated to WHI for both the Internet sample (Chapter 2) and newspaper managers (Chapter 3) whereas emotional home demands were the most strongly correlated with to HWI within the Internet sample. Mental home demands were the most strongly correlated to HWI for the newspaper managers. Within the longitudinal study (Chapter 5), emotional job demands were most strongly correlated to WHI-negative at both Time 1 and Time 2. In conclusion, while it is plausible that some demands will be more directly associated with outcomes, the differential nature of the relationship between antecedents and WHI/HWI means that a more prudent approach is to theorise and assess for both full and partial mediation. The importance of doing both is further suggested by parsimony, in that in checking for full mediation we also garnish the results of partial as well. Therefore, with little extra computation to do, the debate must certain on the arguments for and against full or partial mediation.

Results with regard to HWI were more mixed, with partial support for it as a mediator. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine in more detail the 'performance' of HWI within the thesis. Respondents reported significantly higher levels of WHI



(compared to HWI) in the Internet sample (Chapter 2), but not in the sample of newspaper managers (Chapter 3). This may be due to a gender effect as the newspaper sample was predominately male (81%). IT professionals reported significantly higher levels of WHI than their working spouses. Once again, confounding may be an issue, as IT professionals reported working longer hours (compared to their working spouses). However, the picture is far from clear given that there were no significant differences between IT professionals and their spouses in reported levels of HWI (or exhaustion and cynicism). Traditionally, it has argued that work and home are asymmetrically permeable (Kanter, 1977; Pleck, 1977), meaning that work has a more potent effect on home, than vice-versa. The current study suggests that such asymmetry may not be universal. For instance, in the sample of newspaper managers (Chapter 3), respondents with working partners had significantly higher levels of HWI-negative, and additionally, it was the HWI-negative of IT professionals that was related to the exhaustion and turnover of their working spouses. Taken together, these results suggest that the idea of asymmetry is not appropriate for dual-earners, who are forced to share a greater degree of the home-related burden, and thus this domain increases in significance.

The suggestion that the home domain is of increasing significance is consistent with the sociological research that examined the meaning of work (MOW, 1987). The MOW survey, conducted among eight countries including the Netherlands, asked people to rate the most important domain in their life, and found that (overall) respondents judged family (40%) to be more important than work (27%). Organisational models of job stress have been slow to recognise the impact of the home domain on work. The domain of the household acts to deliver employees to the workplace in a condition fit for work, clothed, fed and rested. Over and above these physical contributions, the home domain also provides an important source of psychological support for those in work and exerts a major influence on the overall pattern of labour market participation (Noon & Blyton, 1997).

6.3 Research Question Three: Gender differences and WHI/HWI

Traditionally, research has found no gender differences with regard to reported levels of WHI and HWI (Aryee, 1993; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Geurts, Rutte & Peeters, 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). Consistently, in the present thesis, no gender differences were found for WHI and HWI in the Internet sample (Chapter 2)



and for HWI between IT workers and their working spouses (Chapter 4). Therefore, it is appropriate to examine gender differences in both the antecedents and outcomes of WHI. In the Internet study, females reported higher levels of quantitative, emotional, and mental home demands. Such a finding is consistent with qualitative research, which found that females talked more about their home domain when asked about their work domain (relative to males) (Montgomery et al. in press). However, in the same sample, the WHI of females was more strongly associated with burnout, which suggests that women are still carrying the heavier burden in the home domain and are thus socialised to cope effectively with stressors in the family domain (La Croix & Haynes, 1987). Consequently, WHI has a greater ability to drain their ability to cope with a demanding work-life. The fact that for males, home demands had a more significant direct relationship with burnout is consistent with gender-role research that suggests that men will find the home domain more stressful (Barnett & Baruch, 1987). The gender differences found in the Internet study are consistent with the differential results found by MacEwen and Barling (1994). They found evidence of gender differences in the magnitude of relationships of both WHI and HWI to depression and anxiety. Their patterns of results revealed that WHI was more strongly related to depression and anxiety among women than men, whereas HWI was more strongly related to the two outcomes for men.

The preponderance of males (81%) in the sample of newspaper managers (Chapter 3) made gender comparisons problematic. However, consistent with the other research in this thesis, there were no gender differences for reported levels of WHI and HWI. Most interestingly, HWI (negative) was reported at a significantly higher rate for managers whose partner also had a job. This represents more evidence that HWI is a bigger issue for dual-earner couples. We can speculate that the movement towards a dual-earner economy will represent the greatest challenge to individuals who still hold traditional attitudes towards the division of labour.

Fundamentally, the present thesis is in broad agreement with previous research in finding no systematic gender difference in reported levels of WHI/HWI. Such results are in stark contrast to an expectation that they would be moderated by gender due to gender-role expectations (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Mortimoer & Sorenson, 1984). So with regard to gender, we are in the interesting position that while there is evidence that women carry the burden of care at home (Berk & Berk, 1979; Hochschild & Machung, 1989), no differences in the experience of WHI/HWI have



been found in both this thesis and previous research. It is obvious that there is a lack of theorising with regard to non-difference; for example in a recent review of literature, Geurts and Demerouti (2003) note the consistent finding of no gender differences in the literature but fail to offer any speculations as to why this might be. However, the present thesis offers some potential insights into the nature of gender difference. Within the Internet sample (Chapter 2), gender differences emerged in the relationship between demands and burnout, with males indicating a stronger relationship between home demands and burnout, and females indicating a stronger relationship between WHI and burnout. Although not conclusive, the present results highlight the fact that gender differences are crucial in the way that antecedents influence WHI/HWI and the way that WHI can impact upon a job-related strain such as burnout. It may be that gender differences represent a risk factor that increases the likelihood between demands and burnout. Although such an idea is inconsistent with the study of Frone (2000) who found that gender didn't moderate between WHI and psychiatric disorders, it may still have value in the sense that females may cope worse with job-related strain (an expectation from gender role theory). In conclusion, the present thesis presents us with 'food for thought' with regard to the way in which gender impacts upon the WHI/HWI process, but much more theorising is needed. In the contemporary world of work, such a theory would need to account for the fact that discontinuous careers are replacing 'jobs for life' and the shift from careers of advancement to careers of achievement (Zabursky & Barley, 1997) may be more congruent with women's needs than with those of men who wish to become more involved in family life.

6.4 Research Question Four: WHI, HWI and Crossover

In the previous section, it was observed that gender differences were not found for reported levels of WHI/HWI. However, the observed crossover results for the dual-earner couples may help us to better understand the link between gender and WHI/HWI. Gender effects were found in the sample of IT workers and their working spouses, in the sense that the HWI-negative of IT workers (who were predominantly male) was associated with the exhaustion and turnover intentions of their spouse (who were predominately female). Such a gender effect is consistent with research from general populations surveys that find, compared to men, women report a greater number of life events occurring to members of their networks and are more adversely



affected by network events (Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Kessler, McLeod & Wethington, 1985; Thoits, 1987). Spouses demands may detract from the emotional health of their partners by exhausting the partners' coping capacities, thereby increasing the partners' vulnerability to concurrent or subsequent stressors who is the focal person here: the spouse or the partner (Rook, Dooley & Catalano, 1991). In this sense, the real gender differences with regard to the field of WHI/HWI does not concern gender-role expectations, but rather gender role differences in the way that individuals are prompted to be empathic to the stress of another person.

The usefulness of crossover is that it helps to elaborate role theory and mechanisms relating to emotional contagion that underscore the interrelations between the focal person and his/her role senders in the different settings (work/home) where the individual finds him/herself (Westman, 2001). Crossover provides a new angle from which to approach WHI/HWI, and helps to widen the range of stressors and strains that can be studied. It is noteworthy that crossover has been overlooked by some of the more recent reviews of the area (e.g. Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Guest, 2002; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). The centrality of role theory within the WHI/HWI literature makes such an omission unfortunate when one considers the interesting implications that crossover stimulates. For example, Westman (2001) poses the question of whether crossover might lead people to redefine their roles at work and home, thereby altering their perceived role processes. In the present thesis, it was found that the home demands of the IT workers crossed over into the work domain of their spouses (Chapter 4), in terms of both exhaustion and intention to leave the organisation. As such, it is possible that both partners would experience a perception of reduced ability within these roles, and such a feelings would prompt them to re-evaluate their ability to perform well in their respective roles. The fact that crossover could potentially prompt role re-evaluation (independently of how they were individually performing) makes it an interesting area of study for a theory which is rooted in role theory.

6.5 Research Question Five: The Way Forward for Future Research

The present thesis represents a response to those researchers who call for us to measure both WHI and HWI (Allen et al, 2000; Frone et al. 1992, 1997) and also to measure positive spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Greenhaus, 1988). A particular strength of the present research relates to the use of multiple methodologies to assess



the phenomena of interest. Beyond this, future studies would benefit from also assessing WHI/HWI in relation to both strategic human resource indicators (at the organisation level) and the impact of increasing elder care (at the community level).

For example, Netemeyer, McMurrian and Boles, (1996) found that HWI was related to self-rated sales performance. Research that could effectively link WHI/HWI to performance indicators would establish it even more predominately as a strategic human resources issue. Additionally, the more traditional measures of absenteeism have not indicated strong relationships with WHI (Allen et al., 2000). However, research that evaluates unscheduled absenteeism indicates the number one reason was family-related issues (26%), with personal needs (20%) coming as the third most frequent reason (Van der Wall, 1998). Taken together, these two causes account for almost half of all incidents. It is precisely these types of employee withdrawal behaviours that can provide us with more relevant outcome variables. Indeed, it is problems such as these that work-life programs can be designed to address.

At a wider community level, demographic data indicate that elder care is and will be a fact of life for people throughout their working lives (Moen, Robinson & Fields, 1994). In terms of research, such increased responsibilities might influence job performance by causing employees to be partially absent from work, arriving late for work, leaving early, or extending lunch breaks. Such work withdrawal behaviour is the area where researchers can really gauge the impact of these increasing forms of HWI. The nature of living is changing with the increasing use of telework and an increasing amount of single parents in society. All these developments call on researchers to assess the reliability and validity of present models of work and home, and the need for new models to emerge to account for these different work experiences. Indeed, the need to be constantly reviewing our assumptions about work practices is highlighted by a recent exhaustive review of telework research (Bailey & Kurland, 2002), which found little evidence to support the hypothesis that the telework population was comprised of women 'escaping' from WHI issues. In this regard, Barnett and Hyde (2001) in their explication of their expansionist theory encourage researchers to be aware that theories need to be constantly updated to reflect changing realities.

At the methodological level, a movement towards more crossover studies and diary studies will help to assess the important impact that WHI/HWI can have on the



people around us and provide a more dynamic picture of WHI/HWI in relation to time-lag and recovery rates.

6.6 The Meaning of Work and Home

It is useful to pause and reflect on what this thesis tells us about the meaning of work and home. Indeed, recent evidence has pointed to the fact that the physical and psychological boundaries of work/home are permeable and flexible (Clark, 2002; Montgomery et al., in press). Montgomery et al. (in press), analysing the meaning that people attribute to work and home, found this idea was most salient in a female executive whose house was only a 'home' when she didn't do work-related activities in it. Moreover, another female employee highlighted how home issues can play a central part in work relations with regard to her consistent 'battle' with the management to ensure that the working arrangements of her and her partner (who both worked at the company) were compatible with their work and home arrangements. Such accounts suggest that individuals actively negotiate the worlds of work and home in an effort to integrate them. Additionally, such research is consistent with the Border theory proposed by Clark (2000), and provides good examples of border permeability that Clark describes in her theory. At the pragmatic level, such research provides additional arguments in favour of the idea that meaningful approaches to work/home and their interaction can best be accounted for by studying negative and positive aspects of the relationship, and the way that demands and resources influence the experience of WHI and HWI.

The orthodox empirical approach involves the specification of hypotheses and the subsequent systematic testing of these hypotheses (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). All that said, the need to interpret our data means that the quantitative studies (Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5) in this thesis also provide useful clues in exploring the meaning of work and home (Kritzer, 1996)⁹.

Firstly, across the four studies, WHI emerged as a significant and consistent predictor of burnout. This all suggests that for individuals, work does impact upon

⁹ Kritzer (1996) argues that the systematic and constructive nature of quantitative analysis means that quantitative analysis in the social science probably involves more levels of interpretation than does qualitative analysis.

their home lives and such interference contributes to increased feelings of burnout. Indeed, the increasing importance of non-work activities (MOW, 1987) is probably an important component within this, as it would be difficult to feel interference between two domains that one valued very unequally. So, in contrast with the older ideas about the asymmetric nature of the relationship (Kanter, 1977; Pleck, 1977), the consistent strength of WHI in predicting burnout suggests that viewing work as the “predominant” domain is incorrect and prompts us to view the two domains as oppositional. The most recent approaches to work-home interactions call for us to view this phenomena as one concerning both integration of domains (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999) and expansion of roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The conclusion is quite a simple one, if the home domain was not important then integration wouldn’t even be a problem to begin with.

Secondly, HWI is meaningful; the challenge lies in the conceptualisation. This thesis represents a starting point in the development of scales to adequately assess HWI and the antecedents that influence it. While it is acknowledged that WHI explained more of the variance than HWI among our studies, HWI could be seen in sharpest focus with regard to our study of dual-earners (Chapter 4). The fact that the HWI of IT professionals was associated with the job exhaustion and intention to leave of their partners demonstrates that it has real meaning as a phenomenon, and (probably more importantly) that it has real meaning as a phenomenon for men.

Thirdly, and lastly, the longitudinal study (Chapter 5) indicated most clearly that positive aspects of our work constitute important meaning. The data indicated that feelings of engagement at work preceded the benefits of positive spillover from work to home.

6.7 Theoretical Issues

In the present thesis, the theoretical approach taken to work and home was operationalised by the instrument used throughout the research. Such an approach stipulates that the interaction between work and home is best studied in terms of negative and positive spillover. The instrument employed distinguishes between four different dimensions underlying the work-home interaction (Wagena & Geurts, 2000). More specifically, one’s functioning (and behaviour) in one domain is influenced by demands from the other domain, and vice versa. The present thesis extends the more traditional model of spillover by placing such interactions within the general



framework of the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). So when job demands require too much effort and time (e.g., overload or deadlines) and job resources (e.g., support or autonomy) are insufficient to deal with high job demands, energy and resources can be depleted and one's functioning at home can be affected (WHI-negative). Alternatively, when job resources are sufficient to deal with job demands, individuals may be stimulated to learn from and "grow" in their job and energy will be mobilised rather than depleted within the home domain (WHI-positive). Both processes could also initiate from the home domain, whereby home demands (e.g., household and care-giving tasks) that require too much effort and time and the lack of home resources (e.g., support from your spouse) will be associated with negative experiences that will deteriorate your functioning in the work domain (HWI-negative). Conversely, the existence of home resources (e.g., babysitting, support) that help individuals to deal with the demanding aspects of their home will be associated with positive functioning at one's work (HWI-positive).

The five theoretical models presented in the Introduction (Chapter 1) were largely descriptive. Reviewing these five models again, it is difficult to conclude that the segmentation model is appropriate within the contemporary setting with the increasingly accumulated evidence that both WHI and HWI are significant issues for a variety of occupations and individuals (Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5). Additionally, the instrumental model is a purely descriptive model as well and excludes a large range of individuals. Therefore, in agreement with a review by Lambert (1990), spillover and compensation are the processes that are most consistent with the empirical evidence pertaining to both positive and negative spillover. In this sense, the present approach can be viewed as a *rapprochement* between the role scarcity (negative spillover) and role enhancement (compensation and positive spillover) hypotheses. Additionally, the demands and resources model (Chapter 5) has helped to extend the previous work on the JD-R model by including engagement (as well as burnout), and extend beyond the traditional role strain hypothesis that assumes that multiple roles can only lead to "strain". A logical conclusion of the present thesis is that the job demands-resources model should be broadened to include other (home) demands and resources as well. The present thesis does not purport to present a unique and 'fresh' theoretical approach to the work/home nexus, but it has helped to frame the conceptualisation of WHI/HWI in a way that recognises the substantive evidence that exists for both the scarcity and enhancement hypotheses.



6.8 Limitations

Firstly, the majority of studies in this thesis involved populations who could be described as 'white-collar'. Conducting research among a narrow range of occupations limits our ability to generalise to the wider population. Economic hardship has well-documented effects on psychological distress and marital conflict (Conger, Rueter & Elder, 1999), and so it is possible that differences in socio-economic status can create their own specific WHI/HWI problems. The empirical evidence on the issue is mixed, whereby Frone et al. (1992) found that their hypothesised model of work-family conflict generalised across both blue- and white-collar workers, but found marked difference in parameters estimates. More specifically, they found that the relationship between WHI and family distress was only important for blue-collar workers, and the relationship between job involvement and WHI was only important for white-collar workers. Such research suggests that differences between socio-economic groups can be expected.

Secondly, although this thesis employed a multi-method approach to the phenomena of WHI/HWI, it is important to recognise that it was primarily based on self-report data and as such is accompanied by all the problems inherent in using self-report instruments (Frese & Zapf, 1988; Kasl, 1987). Such issues include overlap between the independent and dependent variables, and common method variance. Despite such measurement difficulties, stressors and strains do play a central role in the job stress process, and as such self-report measures need to be augmented by other types of measures (not replaced). Indeed, it has been argued that the 'typical' criticism of self-report methods are at worst misinformed and at best unimaginative (Howard, 1994; Spector, 1994)

Thirdly, the benefits of using longitudinal data over cross-sectional data has been well established (Taris, 2002). However, such advantages are only realised if one knows a priori the optimal time lags. Indeed, in the absence of appropriate time lags, longitudinal data can provide biased parameter estimates that may be worse than those provided by cross-sectional data (Gollub & Reichardt, 1987; Kessler, 1987; Kessler & Greenberg, 1981; Leventhal & Tomarken, 1987). With regard to WHI and HWI, Frone et al., (1992) have recommended the strength of daily diary studies to gauge optimal lags in and across different relationships. Such an approach would allow for



stronger causal inferences and provide richer information concerning the magnitude of causal relationships.

Fourthly, an innovation of the present research involved the development of systematic scales to measure both job and home demands. However, the majority of our studies were limited by predominately using work-related outcomes (e.g., burnout and engagement). Future research should try to balance the examination of the phenomena by the employing a comparable set of non-work related outcomes. Indeed, Kirchmeyer (1992, 1993) provides an interesting example of how we can explore the non-work domains by looking at parenting, community involvement, and recreation activities.

Fifthly, and lastly, researchers have recognised the role that mood can play in how respondents fill out questionnaires relating to states such as well-being (Brief et al, 1988; Burke, Brief & George, 1993). Negative Affectivity (NA) as a term was first used by Tellegen (1982) and defined by Watson and Clark (1984) as a mood-dispositional dimension that reflects pervasive individual differences in negative emotionality and self-concept. The implications of NA for the study of stress are straightforward. It is expected that NA would be associated with self-reports of stressors (particularly the ones that are more subjective in nature). Therefore, it is expected that NA would inflate the observed associations between self-reports of stressors and strains considerably. Empirical studies exist which offer evidence to support this assertion (Schroeder & Costa, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). In essence, the debate about NA relates to its potential confounding effect in self-report research (Watson & Clark, 1984). However, within such a debate there has been opposing voices, which have justified the omission of this potential confounder in research. For example, Moyle (1995) in a study of possible influences that negative affectivity could have on the stressor-strain relationship concluded that NA cannot generally account for the observed correlations between work environment measures and strains. Similarly, Schonfield (1996) concluded that NA does not overly distort self-report measures and strain outcomes. Indeed, Dollard and Winefield (1998) even warn against that practice to control for the nuisance aspects of this trait as this may lead to underestimation of the impact of the work environment on strain. Conversely, within the middle ground of the debate about NA, Spector, Zapf, Chen and Frese (2000) while recommending that NA should be included, have also suggested the alternative strategy whereby reducing the affective tone of stressors and strains could



optimise measures. However, even such middle ground approach receives short shrift by researchers who think that attempting this is probably difficult and pointless (Payne, 2000).

Conclusions with regard to the role of NA in relation to WHI research are limited by the few available studies that exist. NA has only been examined in three studies of WHI (Carlson, 1999; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1983; Stoeva, Chiu & Greenglass, 2002). The results are mixed. Carlson (1999) found that NA was related to three forms of WHI-time based conflict; strain based conflict and behaviour based conflict. However, Stoevar et al. (2002), while finding that NA indirectly affected WHI/HWI through its effect on job stress and family stress, found no significant direct effects for NA on WHI or HWI. In the present thesis, only one empirical study included a measure of NA on the grounds that it had been established as an important variable in previous and similar crossover research. In regard to our dual-earner data, although NA was associated with various outcomes (e.g. exhaustion and psychosomatic complaints), both WHI and HWI still predicted a significant amount of variance. Future studies, should aim to study both dispositional and situational factors and their interaction (Stoeva et al., 2002). Scientifically and ethically, researchers should have sound conceptual reasons for adding to the ‘burden’ of respondents who have to fill out lengthy survey forms.

6.9 Practical Implications and Future Directions

To return to a question asked in the introduction, whose problem is WHI/HWI? On the basis of this thesis, it is a problem for both men and women. To be sure, the solutions to the problem are highly dependant on the lens through which you look at it (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Individual, organisational and community-based approaches will all have different goals and agendas. To date, interventions aimed at the individual and organisational level have tended to place work as the starting point of strategies, and interventions have tended to ask not how we can help people balance work and home, but how we can help people arrange their home life so that it interferes with work to the smallest degree possible. While not ignoring the preponderance of WHI, this thesis has gone some way to establish the importance of HWI, especially with regard to the relationship between home demands and burnout for males in our Internet sample. The practical implication is that the home side of the equation is under-researched and under-valued in terms of how it can affect the work role of the individual and that of their spouse. Companies are usually



quite ready to provide work-related training and support to employees, but maybe it is time that organisations also try to provide training and support for non-work related demands (e.g., parental training, role re-orientation for couples).

A consistent explanation offered for employers' lack of attention to the work and home interface is that they view it as a sensitive issue, where they may perceive it as invading an employee's privacy if they inquire about it (Hall & Richter, 1988). This is an interesting rationale when one considers that (typically) WHI is more prevalent than HWI. For example, Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992b) found that the prevalence rate for WHI (60%) was almost three times higher than the rate for HWI (22%) among both men and women. In the present study too, WHI was reported at consistently higher rates than HWI. Such evidence suggests that work is having a detrimental impact on the home domains of employees, and that employers have an obligation to be sensitive to this. For employers to take a separate worlds approach to this issue is to fly in the face of the empirical and anecdotal evidence.

In this sense, the corporate world must expand its conception of why it needs to be concerned about WHI/HWI related issues. Evidence from the United States has indicated that employees with WHI/HWI problems are three times more likely to consider quitting (Johnson, 1999). In addition, employees who believe that work is causing problems in their personal lives are much more likely to make mistakes at work (30%) compared with those who have a few job related personal problems (19%) (Johnson, 1995). Both Wohl (1999) and Friedman and Johnson (1999) have observed that corporations will require extraordinarily committed and creative employees to permit them to survive and prosper in a turbulent and highly competitive market. To promote such energy and commitment, employers must demonstrate concern with the whole person. Moreover, organisations must pay more than lip service to the view that WHI/HWI is not a woman's issue, but rather a human issue. It is widely known that men participate less extensively in work-family programs (Powell, 1999), and this sex difference exists in socially progressive societies (Lewis, 1999). Indeed, such a situation is compounded by the fact that adopting a single work-life program (e.g., dependent child care), as opposed to a full system of initiatives (see Bardoel, Tharenou & Moss, 1998), in effort to be seen to 'work-life friendly' may actually engender negative feelings or resentment and perceptions of unfairness (Grover, 1991; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). In this sense, the area is in need of a paradigm shift away from WHI/HWI, which can potentially reinforce us to believe



that both domains are conflicting, towards a more integrationist picture of how work and home interact (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002). A perspective that starts from work-personal life integration as its goal recognises that people do strive to integrate these two domains (albeit at different rates of integration, see Nippert-Eng, 1996, for a discussion of integration).

At the individual level, people need to clarify what is important in terms of values and life priorities. Goals that are articulated and understood are more likely to be met. Indeed, not only should goals be clarified, but also they should be continually experimented with to challenge assumptions and achieve optimum work-personal life arrangements (McNiff, 2000). The need to rethink personal priorities is most clearly demonstrated in the regret expressed by Laurel Cutler, vice-chairman of Foote Cone & Belding, “I wish I had known sooner that if you miss a child’s play or performance or sporting event, you will have forgotten a year later the work emergency that caused you to miss it. But the child won’t have forgotten that you weren’t there.” (Wall Street Journal, 1997).

In conclusion, this thesis has contributed to our understanding of the nexus between work and home, and the way that interference between the two is an important variable in the job stress literature. Additionally, new questions and new hypothesis have been identified in an effort to consider the balance between work and home, and balance such considerations against the most fruitful path to proceed along.

