Work Pressure, Workplace Social Resources, and Work–Family Conflict: The Tale of Two Sectors

Sanda M. Dolcos
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Dennis Daley
North Carolina State University

Although research has extensively examined work–family issues in the private sector, little is known about sector-related differences. Here, we used data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce and multiple-group structural equation modeling to compare the levels and mechanisms through which work pressure and 3 workplace social resources (i.e., work–family culture, supervisor support, and coworker support) are related to work–family conflict in the public and private sectors. First, work–family culture affected work–family conflict directly in the private sector and indirectly, through reduced work pressure, in the public sector. Moreover, work–family culture had a much stronger impact on supervisor support in the private sector. Second, public sector employees perceived higher levels of supervisor and organizational support while experiencing higher levels of work pressure. The study illustrates the necessity of differentiating between the 2 sectors of employment when studying work–family relationships.

Keywords: work pressure, work resources, work–family conflict, public sector, private sector

Work and family are often considered the most important domains in a person's life. A variety of changes in the composition of the workforce, such as rises in the number of dual-earner couples and single-parent families, and changes in work and life attitudes have profoundly altered the relationship

291

between work and family domains, making it more difficult for employees to balance their work and family demands. As a result of these competing demands, interference can occur between the work and family domains, leading to *work–family conflict* (WFC), which is "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). The psychological experience of "conflict" is influenced by the level of *demands* individuals are confronted with at work and home and by the *resources* available to handle these demands and their ability to use them (Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, & Walters, 2002; Saltzstein, Ting, & Saltzstein, 2001).

Because the work–family problems experienced by employees can have a negative impact on employers and on society as a whole, both private and public organizations should develop initiatives aimed at providing employees with resources to balance work and family responsibilities. Government, as legislator and policymaker, has reacted cautiously to the changing workforce. Although the United States has some national policies, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act's mandating unpaid leaves, it lags behind other advanced industrial countries, such as some European countries and Canada, in terms of paid maternity and parental leaves, reduced work time policies, and quality child care (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Heyman, Earle, & Hanchate, 2004; Heyman, Earle, & Hayes, 2007). National and state regulations lead organizations to adopt family friendly policies because they have to comply with the law (den Dulk, 2001). However, an increased government role runs counter to the United States' dominant cultural values of individualism and minimalist employer or governmental intrusion into individuals' private lives.

In addition to the government-mandated benefits, many public and private organizations provide other work–family supports, such as child and elder care resources along with referral services, flexible scheduling, and telecommuting options. A critical issue to understand in this context is why some organizations decide to be responsive to work–family issues by providing workplace resources, whereas others do not. According to the so-called *institutional theory* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Goodstein, 1994), responsiveness to employees' work–family needs depends on both the strength of institutional pressures and economic or other strategic business or technical factors, such as the need to retain skilled staff and the perceived costs and benefits of introducing work–family arrangements.

The strength of institutional pressure and the costs and benefits of work–family arrangements depend on organizational characteristics, such as sector of employment and the size of the organization, as well as on workforce characteristics, such as gender (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995). Being more visible within the public area and subject to higher normative pressures, public sector organizations are more likely to

provide supportive programs and create supportive cultures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dobbin, Edelman, Meyer, Scott, & Swidler, 1988; Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995). The size of the organization also has a critical influence. Larger organizations are better able to provide a broad base of work–life programs. They tend to adopt more policies related to leave and child and dependent care benefits than smaller organizations (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Morgan & Milliken, 1992). Organizations that depend on women to a higher degree are also more likely to use family friendly employment policies for recruitment and retention purposes (Davis & Kalleberg, 2006; Guthrie & Roth, 1999). Family friendly policies influence whether mothers remain at their jobs after childbirth (Aryee, Luk, & Stone, 1998; Scandura & Lankau, 1997), can reduce turnover because it makes it easier for mothers with young children to continue working, can reduce absenteeism related to caring responsibilities because mothers can attend better to their children's needs, and can increase productivity because they may enable employees to find good-quality daycare and to concentrate better on their work, thus maximizing the quality and the amount of their work.

In spite of these developments, however, there is little understanding on how the ability to balance work and family life varies across the two sectors. Although it is known that provision of family friendly policies may vary by sector of employment (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995), the effects of implementing such formal policies are not clearly established. These formal supports are often underutilized and, even when employees use them, they may not always have the intended consequences (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). It has been suggested that informal workplace characteristics, such as supervisor and coworker support and a supportive work–family culture, may be as important as or even more important than the simple provision of formal benefits.

Prior research on WFC is limited in that it has focused more extensively on individuals employed in private sector organizations; thus, the effects on public sector employees are largely unknown. Although it is generally assumed that work–family experience is similar for employees in the public and private sectors, it has been suggested that public sector employment is perceived as more family friendly than other alternatives (Martino-Golden, 2005), and that women self-select into sectors depending on preferences for family friendly working conditions (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007; Nielsen, Simonsen, & Verner, 2004). Although the conventional wisdom seems to support such sector-related segregation, no empirical studies have examined whether the two sectors actually differ in terms of WFC experienced by their employees. Therefore, in the absence of such comparative studies, it is difficult to determine whether public sector employment offers better opportunities for balancing work and family responsibilities.

To fill this void, the present study used a *demands-and-resources* approach and structural equation modeling (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Voydanoff, 2005) to compare WFC in the private and public sectors. This approach is based on the assumption that although the work environments in the two sectors may vary, the characteristics of these environments can be classified into two main categories: job demands and resources. Thus, the study compared the levels and mechanisms through which work pressure (a work stressor emanating from both physical and psychological work demands) and workplace social resources (i.e., work–family culture, supervisor support, and coworker support) are related to WFC. The study had two main objectives: (a) to compare the interrelationships among the constructs of work pressure, workplace resources, and WFC in public and private sectors; and (b) to compare the levels of work pressure, workplace social resources, and WFC across the two sectors. The following discussion presents the theoretical rationale for the conceptual model guiding this study.

WORK DEMANDS AND RESOURCES

Work demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organizational features of the job that require physical or psychological effort or skills and are associated with physiological or psychological costs (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Although work demands are not necessarily negative, they may be a source of pressure when meeting those demands requires high effort and, therefore, are associated with high costs.

The present study measured *work pressure* by including negative work demands, such as emotionally demanding and tiring job demands, as well as excessive workloads. Previous research in the private sector has shown that job demands, such as workload, were positively and strongly associated with WFC (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000; Voydanoff, 1988). Thus, we expected that employees who feel overwhelmed by their job demands and who perceive their jobs as emotionally demanding would also experience higher levels of WFC, regardless of the sector of employment.

Hypothesis 1: Work pressure increases WFC in both sectors.

Work resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (a) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (b) are functional in achieving work goals; and (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Hence, resources are not only necessary to deal with work demands and to "get things done," but they are also important in

their own right (Hobfoll, 2002). The work–family research has identified the following three main work-based social resources that might help people successfully manage multiple job demands (Moen, Waismel-Manor, & Sweet, 2003; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999; Voydanoff, 2005): (a) positive work–family culture, (b) supervisor support, and (c) coworker support. Hence, the present study investigated the role of these three work–family resources in WFC.

Recent research suggests that workplace social support (i.e., the general supportiveness of the work–family culture, supervisor support, and coworker support) is a crucial variable for integrating work and family responsibilities. In fact, evidence shows that these types of informal support contribute more than formal support to achieving work–family balance and job satisfaction (Allen, 2001; Kinnunen, Mauno, Geurts, & Dikkers, 2005; Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999). Nevertheless, most of this research has been conducted in the private sector. Although the public administration literature has started to call attention to work social support as an important source of reducing work interference with family (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Piitulainen, 2005; Wadsworth & Owens, 2007), many studies on this topic have been conducted in the private sector. To our knowledge, there is no study comparing WFC between public and private organizations and identifying how and why the two sectors may differ in their level and impact of social support.

Work–Family Culture

Work–family culture refers to expectations about how employees prioritize work and family demands, the consequences of devoting time to family responsibilities, as well as to career consequences associated with using work–family benefits (Thompson et al., 1999). The perception of a supportive work–family culture has been associated with important work outcomes and employee attitudes and behaviors. Perceptions of a supportive work–family culture have been shown to decrease negative work-related outcomes such as work strain (Warren & Johnson, 1995), WFC (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002), and turnover intentions (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). In addition, studies have shown that perceptions of a supportive work environment are associated with positive attitudes such as job satisfaction (Allen, 2001; Mauno et al., 2005), organizational commitment (Allen, 2001; Dikkers, Geurts, den Dulk, Peper, & Kompier, 2004; Thompson et al., 1999), and work–family balance (Dikkers et al., 2004; Mauno et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1999).

Supervisor Support

Previous research has shown that the most important component of the informal support is a supportive supervisor (Clark, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999; Warren & Johnson, 1995). Most of the studies investigating this issue have shown that supervisor support leads to reduced WFC and positive work–life outcomes (work–life conflict, stress) in both private (Moen & Yu, 2000; O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and public sector employees (Ezra & Deckman, 1996; Mauno et al., 2005), although other studies have found little evidence for such a significant effect in public sector employees (Wadsworth & Owens, 2007).

Coworker Support

Although supervisor support has received more attention than coworker support, research suggests that both types of support are important resources for managing work and family demands. The few studies investigating this issue found that coworkers affect employees' ability to integrate work and family demands in both the public and private sectors (Brough & Pears, 2004; Thompson & Prottas, 2005).

In summary, workplace social resources are expected to create organizational contexts that give employees more control over their working time and encourage supervisors and coworkers to help employees reduce the interference between work and family demands.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace social resources reduce WFC in both sectors.

SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT

Being more visible within the public area and subject to higher normative pressures, public sector organizations are more likely to provide supportive programs and create supportive cultures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dobbin et al., 1988; Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995). They are sometimes required to execute government policy, which creates normative pressure on public organizations to conform (den Dulk, 2001). Federal, state, and local governments can also use their power to authorize or legitimate policies and structures (Goodstein, 1994) that other organizations from the public sector will adopt. Moreover, because of the characteristics of the public sector labor force, which is predominantly female, the public sector is faced with even

more pressing challenges to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities.

Given that these resources are critical for employees' ability to manage their work and family responsibilities, we expected public sector employees to experience lower levels of WFC.

Hypothesis 3: Public sector organizations provide more workplace social resources than private sector organizations.

Hypothesis 4: Public sector employees experience lower levels of WFC than private sector employees.

METHOD

Participants

We used data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) survey sponsored by the Families and Work Institute (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2003). Data were collected through phone interviews, which were completed with a nationwide cross-section of employed adults. Sample eligibility was limited to people who were 18 years or older, were in the civilian labor force, resided in the contiguous 48 states, and lived in a noninstitutional residence (i.e., household) with a telephone. In households with more than one eligible person, one was selected randomly to be interviewed. Bond et al. (2003) estimated the response rate to be between 52% and 61%. This study focused exclusively on public and private sector employees ($N = 2,648$). The public sector included responses from 714 employees working in public schools and state colleges and universities, as well as federal, state, and local government employees; the private sector included 1,934 employees working for private for-profit businesses.

To our knowledge, the present investigation is the first to compare the public and private sectors using a national cross-sectional survey. The studies based on the NSCW data examine in general the correlates of work–family interference, spillover, job satisfaction, commitment, retention, loyalty, and well-being (Anderson et al., 2002; Bond et al., 2003; Thompson & Prottas, 2005). Some of the studies also examine diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, family circumstances, positions in organizational hierarchies, and so forth (e.g., Roehling, Hernandez Jarvis, & Swope, 2005). The 2002 NSCW data also have been used for examining differences among organizational employment (which includes the pri-

vate, public, and the nonprofit sectors together) and different categories of self-employment (Prottas & Thompson, 2006; Tuttle, 2009). However, to our knowledge, the 2002 NSCW data set has not been previously used to investigate differences between the public and private sectors.

Measures

The items used to measure the variables of interest for this study (see the Appendix) have been developed by the Families and Work Institute in collaboration with experts in the field or have been drawn from preexisting scales (Bond et al., 2003). The items come from different sources and were developed at different points in time (i.e., Quality of Employment Survey, 1977; NSCW 1992, 1997; and the "Feeling Overworked" study), and maintain the 4- or 5-point response scales originally used in the scales from which they were adapted.

Work pressure was measured with four items (e.g., "My job is emotionally demanding and tiring," "I am frequently asked to do excessive amounts of work"). Two of the items were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = *strongly agree* and 4 = *strongly disagree*. The other two items were rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 = *very often* and 5 = *never*. Items were reverse coded so that higher scores represented higher levels of work pressure. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was .70.

Each of the three workplace resources scales (i.e., supportive work–family culture, supervisor and coworker support) were measured on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*. For supervisor and coworker support, the items were reversed so that for each workplace resources scale higher scores represented higher levels of workplace support.

Supportive work–family culture was measured with four items (e.g., "At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs and devoting attention to their family or personal lives"; "There is an unwritten rule at my place of employment that you can't take care of family needs on company time"). The α coefficient for this scale was .71.

Supervisor support was assessed by five items (e.g., "My supervisor or manager accommodates me when I have family or personal business to take care of," "My supervisor or manager understands when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work"). The α coefficient for this scale was .86.

Coworker support was measured by three items (e.g., "I have support from coworkers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life," "I have the support from coworkers that I need to do a good job"). The α coefficient for this scale was .75.

WFC was the mean response to five items (e.g., "How often have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?" "How often have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?"). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *very often* and 5 = *never*. The α coefficient for this scale was .87.

Organizations that depend on women to a higher degree are more likely to use family friendly employment policies for recruitment and retention purposes (Davis & Kalleberg, 2006; Guthrie & Roth, 1999). Because employees' gender may affect the provision of work–family resources and the experienced WFC in the two sectors, we controlled for the effects of gender on WFC.

Data Analysis

Analyses involved descriptive statistics and multiple-group structural equation modeling (SEM) performed with AMOS (Byrne, 2004). SEM tested the model depicted in Figure 1. The initial analyses of the hypothesized model were first conducted separately for each sector (Byrne, 2004; Garson, 2006). The separate testing on each sector allowed us to determine how consistent the model results were. However, it did not allow direct assessment of significant differences in the model's parameters between the two sectors. This was further performed using multigroup modeling. In testing for group invariance, we imposed equality constraints on particular parameters; thus, the data for both
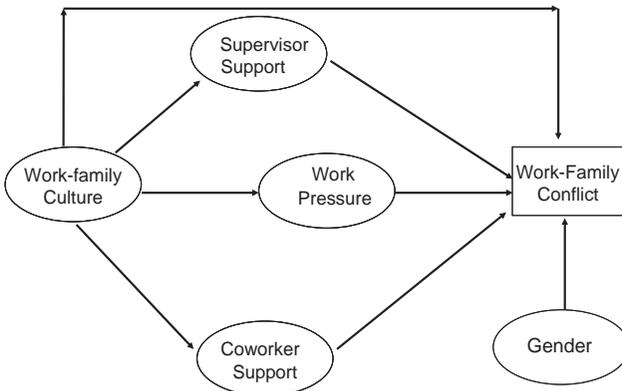

Figure 1. Theoretical model. The hypothesized model predicts that the workplace social resources (i.e., work–family culture, supervisor support, and coworker support) will affect work–family conflict (WFC). It also predicts that work pressure will influence WFC. Work–family culture is expected to influence supervisor support, coworker support, and work pressure. The model also tests for possible gender differences in levels of WFC.

groups were analyzed simultaneously to obtain efficient estimates (Byrne, 2004). The procedure for invariance testing involved first testing for measurement invariance between the unconstrained model for all groups combined and then for a model where certain parameters are constrained to be equal between groups (Garson, 2006).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all measures are presented in Table 1.

Analyses of the demographic variables showed that the public sector organizations employed predominantly women (63%), and the private sector organizations employed about the same proportion of men and women (48.9% vs. 51.1%, respectively). The mean age was similar in the public (43 years) and private (41 years) sectors. As for the marital status, the proportions of married, single, and employees living with a partner were as follows: 61.9%, 33.9%, and 4.2% and 55.3%, 37.9%, and 6.8% in the public and private sectors, respectively.

SEM

Model fit was tested using the joint criteria of comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.90 and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Hoyle, 1995). Given that chi-square values are oversensitive to sample size,

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between the Study Variables

Variable	Public sector		Private sector		Pressure	Culture	Supervisor	Coworker	WFC
	M	SD	M	SD					
Pressure	2.98	0.8	2.9	0.81		$-.319^{***}$	$-.257^{***}$	$-.152^{***}$	$.494^{***}$
Culture	3.07	0.7	2.99	0.73	$-.288^{***}$		$.493^{***}$	$.371^{***}$	$-.323^{***}$
Supervisor support	3.35	0.61	3.25	0.67	$-.176^{***}$	$.350^{***}$		$.462^{***}$	$-.283^{***}$
Coworker support	3.45	0.61	3.41	0.63	$-.069$	$.358^{***}$	$.417^{***}$		$-.293^{***}$
WFC	2.49	0.86	2.48	0.89	$.514^{***}$	$-.242^{***}$	$-.178^{***}$	$-.206^{***}$	

Note. WFC = work–family conflict. Correlations at the top and the right side of the table are for the private sector, whereas the correlations at the bottom and the left side are for the public sector.
$^{***}\ p < .001$.

the large sample size in this study may falsely inflate the chi-square statistics. Therefore, we decided not to use chi square as a measure of model fit. As illustrated in Table 2, the initial model indicated an unacceptable fit to the data for both sectors. The model produced a CFI of 0.828 and an RMSEA of 0.142 in the public sector and a CFI of 0.858, and an RMSEA of 0.143 in the private sector. The examination of regression weights for both the public and private sectors revealed that the path from gender to WFC was not significant. In addition, the path from supervisor support to WFC was not significant in the public sector and was only marginally significant ($p < .05$, standardized regression coefficient $= -.05$) in the private sector. Therefore, these paths were dropped from further analyses. Modification indices for both sectors suggested adding a path from supervisor support to coworker support. The new model incorporating these changes showed a much better fit: CFI $= 0.990$, and RMSEA $= 0.053$ in the public sector; CFI $= 0.985$, and RMSEA $= 0.071$ in the private sector.

Direct Effects

The structural modeling results showed that the hypothesized relationships were supported more for the private than for the public sector. Standardized path coefficients in the structural model are presented in Figure 2. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, excessive work pressure was associated with increased WFC in both sectors ($p < .001$). Hypothesis 2, stating that work resources would reduce WFC in both sectors, was completely confirmed for the private sector and partially confirmed for the pubic sector. In the private sector, two of the work resources significantly reduced WFC: coworker support had the strongest effect ($-.18$, $p < .001$), followed by culture ($-.13$, $p < .001$). In the public sector, coworker support ($-.16$) was the only work resource with a significant ($p < .001$) direct effect on WFC. Given the absence of a direct relationship between work–family culture and WFC in the public sector, we investigated the possibility of an indirect effect.

Table 2. Model Fit and Model Comparison

Model	Public sector		Private sector		Both sectors	
	CFI	RMSEA	CFI	RMSEA	CFI	RMSEA
Proposed	0.828	0.142	0.858	0.143	0.851	0.101
Final	0.99	0.053	0.985	0.071	0.986	0.046

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.
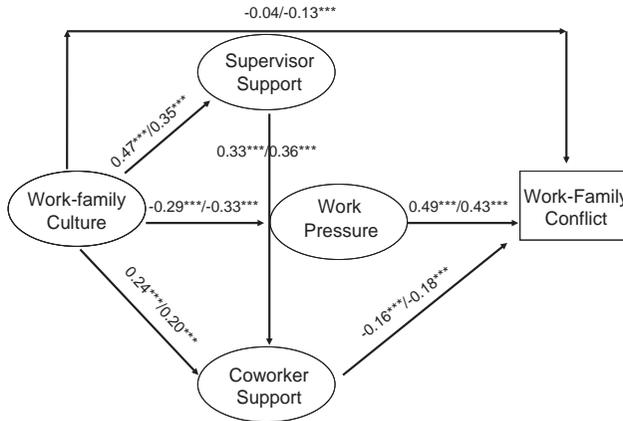
Figure 2. Final baseline model with standardized coefficients. In the final model, the paths from supervisor support to work–family conflict (WFC) and from gender to WFC were dropped and the path from supervisor support to coworker support was added. The standardized regression weights are included and are shown as public/private sector. All of the predicted relationships were supported, with the exception of the prediction relating work–family culture to WFC in the public sector. *** $p < .001$.

Indirect Effects

We applied the path multiplication rule (Garson, 2006) and used the path coefficients to decompose correlations in the model into direct and indirect effects, corresponding, of course, to direct and indirect paths reflected in the arrows in the model. However, although SEM provides some insight into mediation by allowing one to decompose the total effects in a model, the AMOS software does not provide enough detail for a complete assessment of mediation. Therefore, we complemented the SEM analysis with a four-step approach in which several regression analyses were conducted and significance of the coefficients was examined at each step (Baron & Kenny, 1986). We used the Sobel test to determine whether the changes were statistically significant and therefore indicative of a significant mediating effect (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2006).

The post hoc analyses revealed that culture had a significant indirect effect on WFC in both the public and private sectors ($p < .001$). In the public sector, the indirect effect of culture on WFC via work pressure ($-.14$) was much stronger than the direct effect ($-.04$), whereas in the private sector the direct and the indirect effects were about the same ($-.14$ for the indirect effect and $-.13$ for the direct effect; see Figure 3). In addition, the results showed that supportive work–family culture increased supervisor and coworker support ($p < .001$), and supervisor support increased coworker support in both the public and private sectors ($p < .001$).
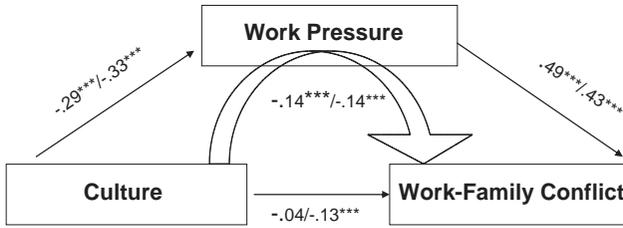
Figure 3. The mediating effect of work pressure on the relationship between culture and work–family conflict. The standardized regression weights are included and are shown as public/private sector. The significance of the indirect relationship was determined using the Sobel test. $^{***} p < .001$.

Multiple-Group SEM

Hypotheses 3 and 4, which directly compared the study variables among the two sectors, were tested using multiple-group SEM. First, a baseline model was determined, using the entire "pooled" sample (i.e., both the public and private sector samples). The baseline model showed an excellent fit to the data: CFI = 0.986 and RMSEA = 0.046. Moreover, the squared multiple correlations indicated that this final model explained 30% of the variance in WFC. Second, to determine whether the measured concepts and the paths were invariant in the two sectors, we set them equally between the two sectors. To identify significant differences between the original and the constrained-equal models, we used Cheung and Rensvold's (2002) suggestion that a difference of at least 0.01 in the CFI values would indicate a meaningful change in the model fit for testing measurement invariance. The CFI difference is preferred over the chi-square difference tests when dealing with large sample sizes (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989). The CFI for both the paths and the intercepts differed at least 0.001 compared with the baseline model (see Table 3), thus suggesting sector-related differences in some of the measures employed, as well as in some of their relationships with other factors.

Hypothesis 3, predicting higher levels of workplace support in the public than in the private sector, was partially confirmed. Multiple group compar-

Table 3. Multiple-Group Analyses: Standardized Maximum Likelihood Estimates for the Baseline Model and the Constrained Models

Model	CFI	MC	p
Baseline (M1)	0.986		
Equal regression weights (M2)	0.982	M2–M1	<.05
Equal intercepts (M3)	0.977	M3–M1	<.001
Equal weights and equal intercepts (M4)	0.973	M4–M1	<.001

Note. CFI = Comparative fit index; MC = model comparison.

ison showed that public sector employees perceived significantly higher levels of work–family culture and supervisor support than private sector employees. There were no sector differences in the levels of coworker support. An interesting finding is that public sector employees perceived higher levels of work pressure than their private sector counterparts. However, contrary to our expectations, there were no significant sector-related differences in the levels of WFC (i.e., Hypothesis 4).

The analyses directly comparing the relationships among the study variables between the two sectors indicated that two of the paths included in the model were significantly different across sectors (i.e., their CFIs differed at least 0.01 compared with the baseline model; see Table 4). First, work–family culture had a much stronger effect on supervisor support in the private than in the public sector. Second, work–family culture had a significant direct effect on WFC only in the private sector.

DISCUSSION

The WFC literature has suffered from a presumption that the public and private sectors are very much alike in terms of WFC antecedents and experiences. In addition to confirming the existence of similarities, the present study also identified important differences between public and private organizations. The study has yielded two main findings relevant to the work–family literature. First and foremost, it provides empirical evidence that the interrelationships among work–family culture, work pressure, and

Table 4. Multiple-Group Analyses: Structural Paths and Indicator Variables

Model	MC	CFI	Significance
Unconstrained (Model 1)	N/A	0.986	N/A
Constrained—all paths	1	0.982	Yes
Paths			
Work–family culture—work pressure	1	0.986	No
Work–family culture—WFC	1	0.985	Yes
Work–family culture—coworker support	1	0.986	No
Work–family culture—supervisor support	1	0.982	Yes
Work pressure—WFC	1	0.986	No
Supervisor support—coworker support	1	0.986	No
Coworker support—WFC (Model 2)	1	0.986	No
Constrained—all indicators	1	0.977	Yes
Indicators			
Work–family culture	2	0.984	Yes
Supervisor support	2	0.981	Yes
Coworker support	2	0.986	No
Work pressure	2	0.983	Yes
WFC	2	0.986	No

Note. MC = model comparison; CFI = comparative fit index; WFC = work–family conflict.

WFC differ between public and private sector employees. Second, it shows sector-based differences in the provision of workplace resources and the levels of work pressure. These results are discussed in turn.

The main contribution of this study consists in identification of different patterns of relationships among the concepts of work pressure, workplace resources, and WFC in the public and private sectors. This study provides initial empirical evidence for different mechanisms through which work–family culture affected WFC in the two sectors. It is interesting that, whereas supportive cultures reduced private sector employees' WFC directly, in the public sector they had an indirect effect—that is, they increased employees' ability to fulfill their job demands, thus leading to lower levels of work pressure and reduced WFC. The difference between the mechanisms through which these workplace resources affect WFC may be due to important cultural differences between the two sectors in shaping family friendly environments. Public sector employees may have a different perception of workplace support and be especially likely to demand such support (Kalleberg, Marsden, Reynolds, & Knoke, 2006), which would lead to differential effects of workplace resources on public and private sector employees.

The present study also confirmed the importance of work–family culture in influencing supervisor and coworker support (Major, Fletcher, Davis, & Germano, 2008). However, although work–family culture played an important role in understanding supervisor support in both sectors, it had a much stronger impact in the private sector. Supportive work–family cultures create norms that respect employees' family time, encourage use of family friendly benefits, and ensure that supervisors are sensitive to family needs (Thompson et al., 1999). Private sector supervisors might rely more than their public sector counterparts on the values and priorities incorporated in the work–family culture. They probably need more clear norms showing organizational support for balancing work and family demands. On the other hand, it might be that, on the basis of previous experience, public sector supervisors are more familiar with the provision of family friendly resources, and thus they consider organizational support as implicit.

Of particular importance is the finding that the public sector is overall characterized by higher levels of workplace social resources. Public sector employees perceived higher levels of work–family culture (i.e., fewer negative career consequences related to the use of family friendly policies and benefits) and stronger supervisor support than their private sector counterparts. In line with institutional theory (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995), some of these differences may be attributed to the higher number of female employees in the public than in the private sector. In the female-dominated public sector, there may be a longer tradition of using family friendly policies, which may have led to a more supportive work–family

culture in these organizations. Tradition and predominance of women may also partly explain why the public sector employees perceived their supervisors as more supportive in regard to family issues than private sector employees did. Given that women use (or at least are expected to use) family friendly benefits more often than men, supervisors and human resource managers in the female-dominated public sector have been confronted with work–family issues more frequently and for a longer period of time than those in the private sector.

Contrary to our expectations, public sector employees perceived higher levels of work pressure. Reductions in human resources and insufficient cross-training within the core job (Kalleberg et al., 2006) may reduce public sector employees' availability to cover for those using formal family friendly resources, such as flexible scheduling, leading to increased work pressure. Alternatively, more women in the public sector may use up vacation and other benefits offered by the organization, which, in turn, might affect more often other employees' resources when taking up their responsibilities.

Collectively, the findings of this study have important practical implications given that they confirm the belief that the public sector offers a friendlier social environment for balancing work and family responsibilities. However, higher levels of work pressure and comparable levels of WFC indicate that public sector employment also has costs, not only benefits, and is not a guarantee for lower levels of WFC.

Study Limitations

The data for this study were collected from a nationally representative sample, thus allowing us to be more confident in the generalizability of our findings. However, this approach also has limitations. The first limitation is related to its reliance on self-report data, which can raise concerns about common method variance. According to Thomas and Ganster (1995), this is a common problem in WFC research because the key constructs are often based on perceptions rather than additional sources. Therefore, combining self-reports with information from more objective sources, such as coworkers or spouses, would help overcome this limitation in future studies. The second limitation of the study is related to its focus on only one directional measure of WFC (i.e., work-to-family conflict), as the study did not assess family-to-work conflict. However, given that work-related correlates of WFC are more likely to influence work-to-family than family-to-work conflict, the focus of the present study is justified.

Conclusion

Although the crucial impact of work–family issues on employees and organizations has been recognized and investigated in a growing amount of research, very few studies have explored sector of employment differences, and most of these studies have been conducted outside the United States. The present study fills this gap and contributes to the work–family literature by illustrating the necessity of differentiating between the two sectors of employment when studying work–family relationships. The study provides two main findings that have both theoretical and practical implications. First, this study shows the importance of sector of employment in influencing work pressure and workplace resources, as well as the differential relationships of workplace resources with WFC in the two sectors. Second, by determining the prevalence of certain workplace resources in the two sectors and by identifying how these resources affect employees from each sector, the current study is useful both to the employers who are responsible for designing appropriate interventions and to the employees who are deciding which sector to choose.

REFERENCES

Allen, T. (2001). Family-supportive work environments: The role of organizational perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 58,* 414–435.

Anderson, S. E., Coffey, B. S., & Byerly, R. T. (2002). Formal organizational initiatives and informal workplace practices: Links to work–family conflict and job-related outcomes. *Journal of Management, 28,* 787–810.

Aryee, S., Luk, V., & Stone, R. (1998). Family-responsive variables and retention-relevant outcomes among employed parents. *Human Relations, 51,* 73–87.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2005). Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10,* 170–180.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51,* 1173–1182.

Bond, J. T., Thompson, C. A., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2003). *Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce.* New York: Families and Work Institute.

Brough, P., & Pears, J. (2004). Evaluating the influence of the type of social support on job satisfaction and work related psychological well-being. *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 8,* 472–485.

Buelens, M., & Van den Broeck, H. (2007). An analysis of differences in work motivation between public and private sector organizations. *Public Administration Review, 67,* 65–74.

Byrne, B. N. (2004). Testing for multigroup invariance using AMOS graphics: A road less traveled. *Structural Equation Modeling, 11,* 272–300.

Cheung, G. W., & Rensvold, R. B. (2002). Evaluating goodness-of-fit indexes for testing measurement invariance. *Structural Equation Modeling, 9,* 233–255.

Clark, S. C. (2001). Work cultures and work/family balance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 58,* 348–365.

Davis, A. E., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2006). Family friendly organizations? Work and family programs in the 1990s. *Work and Occupations, 33,* 191–223.

den Dulk, L. (2001). *Work–family arrangements in organizations. A cross-national study in the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden.* Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

Dikkers, J. S. E., Geurts, S. A. E., den Dulk, L., Peper, B., & Kompier, M. A. J. (2004). Relations among work–home culture, the utilization of work–home arrangements, and work–home interference. *International Journal of Stress Management, 11,* 323–345.

DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review, 23,* 111–136.

Dobbin, F. R., Edelman, L., Meyer, J. W., Scott, W. R., & Swidler, A. (1988). The expansion of due process in organizations. In L. G. Zucker (Ed.), *Institutional patterns and organizations: Culture and environment* (pp. 71–98). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Ezra, M., & Deckman, M. (1996). Balancing work and family responsibilities: Flextime and child care in the federal government. *Public Administration Review, 56,* 174–179.

Felstead, A., Jewson, N., Phizacklea, A., & Walters, S. (2002). Opportunities to work at home in the context of work–life balance. *Human Resource Management Journal, 12,* 54–76.

Garson, D. (2006). *PA 765: Quantitative methods in public administration.* Retrieved November 2006 from http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/weekly.htm

Goodstein, J. D. (1994). Institutional pressures and strategic responsiveness: Employer involvement in work–family issues. *Academy of Management Journal, 37,* 350–382.

Gornick, J. C., & Meyers, M. K. (2003). *Families that work: Policies for reconciling parenthood and employment.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review, 10,* 76–88.

Guthrie, D., & Roth, L. M. (1999). The state, courts, and maternity policies in U.S. organizations: Specifying institutional mechanisms. *American Sociological Review, 64,* 41–63.

Heyman, J., Earle, A., & Hanchate, A. (2004). Bringing a global perspective to community, work, and family: An examination of extended work hours in families in four countries. *Community, Work and Family, 7,* 247–272.

Heyman, J., Earle, A., & Hayes, J. (2007). *The work, family, and equity index. How does the United States measure up?* Montreal: Project on Global Working Families.

Higgins, C., Duxbury, L., & Johnson, K. L. (2000). Part-time work for women: Does it really help balance work and family? *Human Resource Management Journal, 39,* 17–32.

Hobfoll, S. E. (2002). Social and psychological resources and adaptation. *Review of General Psychology, 6,* 307–324.

Hoyle, R. H. (1995). The structural equation modeling approach: Basic concepts and fundamental issues. In R. H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Structural equation modeling: Concepts, issues, and applications* (pp. 1–15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ingram, P., & Simons, T. (1995). Institutional and resource dependence determinants of responsiveness to work–family issues. *Academy of Management Journal, 38,* 1466–1482.

Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1989). *LISREL 7: A guide to the program and applications.* Chicago: SPSS.

Kalleberg, A. L., Marsden, P. V., Reynolds, J., & Knoke, D. (2006). Beyond profit? Sectoral differences in high-performance work practices. *Work and Occupations, 33,* 271–302.

Kinnunen, U., Mauno, S., Geurts, S., & Dikkers, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Work–family culture: Theoretical and empirical approaches.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kossek, E. E., Noe, R., & DeMarr, B. (1999). Work–family role synthesis: Individual, family and organizational determinants. *International Journal of Conflict Resolution, 10,* 102–129.

Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work–family conflict, policies, and the job–life satisfaction

relationship: A review and directions for organizational behavior–human resources research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83,* 139–149.

Major, D. A., Fletcher, T. D., Davis, D. D., & Germano, L. M. (2008). The influence of work–family culture and workplace relationships on work interference with family: A multilevel model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29,* 881–897.

Martino-Golden, M. (2005, September). *Motherhood as a hurdle to descriptive representation: The impact of family friendly workplace policies on women in the higher civil service.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.

Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U., & Piitulainen, S. (2005). Work–family culture in four organizations in Finland: Examining antecedents and outcomes. *Community, Work and Family, 8,* 115–140.

Moen, P., Waismel-Manor, R., & Sweet, S. (2003). Success. In P. Moen (Ed.), *It's about time* (pp. 133–152). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Moen, P., & Yu, Y. (2000). Effective work/life strategies: Working couples, work conditions, gender, and life quality. *Social Problems, 47,* 291–326.

Morgan, H., & Milliken, F. J. (1992). Keys to action: Understanding differences in organizations' responsiveness to work-and-family issues. *Human Resource Management Journal, 31,* 227–248.

Nielsen, H. S., Simonsen, M., & Verner, M. (2004). Does the gap in family friendly policies drive the family gap? *Scandinavian Journal of Economics, 106,* 721–744.

O'Driscoll, M. P., Poelmans, S., Spector, P. E., Allen, T. D., Sanchez, J. I., Cooper, C. L., & Kalliath, T. (2003). Family-responsive interventions, perceived organizational and supervisor support, work–family conflict, and psychological strain. *International Journal of Stress Management, 10,* 326–344.

Preacher, K. J., & Leonardelli, G. J. (2006). *Calculation for the Sobel test: An interactive calculation tool for mediation tests.* Retrieved February 2008 from http://people.ku.edu/~preacher/sobel/sobel.htm

Prottas, D. J., & Thompson, C. A. (2006). Stress, satisfaction, and the work–family interface: A comparison of self-employed business owners, independents, and organizational employees. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 11,* 366–378.

Roehling, P. V., Hernandez Jarvis, L., & Swope, H. E. (2005). Variations in negative work–family spillover among White, Black, and Hispanic American men and women: Does ethnicity matter? *Journal of Family Issues, 26,* 840–865.

Saltzstein, A. L., Ting, Y., & Saltzstein, G. H. (2001). Work–family balance and job satisfaction: The impact of family friendly policies on attitudes of federal government employees. *Public Administration Review, 61,* 452–467.

Scandura, T. A., & Lankau, M. J. (1997). Relationships of gender, family responsibility and flexible work hours to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 18,* 377–391.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25,* 293–315.

Thomas, L. T., & Ganster, D. C. (1995). Impact of family-supportive work variables on work–family conflict and strain: A control perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80,* 6–15.

Thompson, C. A., Beauvais, L. L., & Lyness, K. S. (1999). When work–family benefits are not enough: The influence of work–family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment, and work–family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 54,* 392–415.

Thompson, C. A., & Prottas, D. F. (2005). Relationships among organizational family support, job autonomy, perceived control, and employee well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10,* 100–118.

Tuttle, M., & Garr, M. (2009). Self-employment, work–family fit and mental health among female workers. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 30,* 282–292. doi:10.1007/s10834-009-9154-y

Voydanoff, P. (1988). Work role characteristics, family structure demands, and work/family conflict. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 50,* 749–761.

Voydanoff, P. (2005). Toward a conceptualization of perceived work–family fit and balance: A demands and resources approach. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67,* 822–836.

Wadsworth, L. L., & Owens, B. P. (2007). The effects of social support on work–family enhancement and conflict in the public sector. *Public Administration Review, 67,* 75–87.

Warren, J. A., & Johnson, P. J. (1995). The impact of workplace support on work–family role strain. *Family Relations, 44,* 163–169.

Appendix

Measures

Work pressure

1. My job requires that I work very hard.
2. My job is very emotionally demanding and tiring.
3. Thinking about your main job, how often have you felt overwhelmed by how much you had to do at work in the last 3 months? Would you say very often, often, sometimes, rarely, or never?
4. And how often in the past 3 months have you been asked by your supervisor or manager to do excessive amounts of work? Would you say very often, often, sometimes, rarely, or never?

Work–family culture

1. There is an unwritten rule at my place of employment that you can't take care of family needs on company time.
2. At my place of employment, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably.
3. If you have a problem managing your work and family responsibilities, the attitude at my place of employment is: "You made your bed, now lie in it!"
4. At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.

Supervisor support

1. My supervisor is fair and doesn't show favoritism in responding to employees' personal or family needs.
2. My supervisor accommodates me when I have family or personal business to take care of—for example, medical appointments, meeting with child's teacher, and so forth.
3. My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work.
4. I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues with my supervisor.
5. My supervisor really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life.

Coworker support

1. I feel I am really a part of the group of people I work with.
2. I have the support from coworkers that I need to do a good job.
3. I have support from coworkers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.

Work–family conflict

In the past 3 months, how often
1. have you not had enough time for yourself because of your job?
2. have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?
3. have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?
4. have you not been able to get everything done at home each day because of your job?
5. have you not been in as good a mood as you would like to be at home because of your job?