Family-Friendly Policies in the Police: Implications for Work-Family Conflict

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Although organizational decision-makers are turning toward "family-friendly" policies to reduce employee work-family strain, the usefulness of such policies, as well as perceptions of their availability, remains unclear. Thus, we examined both perceived availability of family-friendly programs as well as the actual usage of such programs for minimizing work-family conflict. Data from the Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study (Delprino, O'Quinn, & Kennedy, 1995) were used from 866 married police officers. Results showed that work stress was positively related to work-family conflict. Furthermore, whereas no relationship between program usage and work-family conflict emerged, there was both a direct negative relationship between program availability and work-family conflict and family-friendly policy availability moderated the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict.

The effects of job-related stressors can wreak havoc on employees, their families, and the organization and community for which they work. This is especially true for individuals who are in more stressful jobs – such as police officers. Specifically, officers may experience physical, emotional, and social problems exacerbated by stressors that result from their jobs (Swanson, Territo, & Taylor, 1998). These negative personal consequences can then influence the relationship that officers have with their families, how they perform work duties and how they interact with members of the community. However, whereas some stressors have received extensive attention in the criminal justice literature (e.g.,

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shift work, Burke, 1988; perceived danger, Mikkelsen & Burke, 2004), a relatively less-studied stressor involves the conflict between an officer's work and home life.

Research has shown that the interaction between work and family has consequences on many aspects of an individual's life. For example, employees who experience work–family conflict also report lower levels of general well–being (Aryee, 1992; Frone, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), lower levels of job satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996); higher levels of burnout (Burke, 1988), and more alcohol use and poorer health (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996). For this reason, it is important to identify the extent to which the conflict can be reduced, whether through organizational interventions or personal tactics.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of work stress on work-family conflict. Additionally, we assess how the availability and use of organizational family-friendly policies and personal support from family relates to work-family conflict. Given the relative paucity of research on work-family conflict and family-friendly work environments in law enforcement, we attempt to fill this gap by examining the effects of work stress and support mechanisms on a sample of police officers.

Police Officer Stressors

It is generally well-accepted that the job of a police officer is stressful (e.g., Anshel, Robertson, & Caputi, 1997; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1989; Norvell, Belles, & Hills, 1988; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Sigler & Wilson, 1988). Researchers have separated the specific factors that lead to stress for police officers into organizational practices, the criminal justice system, the public, and actual police work (Reese, 1986; Swanson et al., 1998, Territo & Vetter, 1981; Violanti & Aron, 1993). More recently, researchers have further narrowed these categories into those work stressors frequently mentioned by officers: organizational practices and inherent police stressors (Martelli, Waters, & Martelli, 1989, Swanson et al., 1998; Violanti & Aron, 1995). Organizational practices are those events

brought about by the administration that are inconvenient or worrisome to the officers (e.g., poor leadership, problems with management; Newman & Rucker-Reed, 2004), whereas inherent police stressors include those events that may be harmful to officers that are typically found in the police work itself (e.g., danger, violence, and crime; Violanti & Aron, 1993).

Storch and Panzarella (1996) examined the various categories of police stressors and noted that two primary categories of stressors tended to emerge: those within the organization and those outside of the organization. Organizational variables include such aspects as relationships with superiors, personnel policies, and work conditions. Variables outside of the organization include relationships with individuals who were not police officers, such as the officer's family, the general public, the media, and the legal system.

These two domains (i.e., organizational vs. non-organizational areas) are not likely to be completely independent of one another. In particular, an individual's role as a police officer may conflict with that individual's role as a family member. That is, many of the stressors that are inherent to police officers' work may influence the relationship that the officers have with their family members (Roberts & Levenson, 2001). For example, shift work may make it difficult to assist in family activities, being on-call may interfere with vacations, stress may carryover from work to home, and displaced emotions may contribute to unnecessary violence or disagreements with friends and family, and so forth. This conflict between work and family, or work-family conflict, has been well examined in many non-police samples (e.g., Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991 with nurses and engineers; Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003 with public accountants; Major, Klein, & Ehrhart, 2002 with employees from a Fortune 500 company). However, as noted earlier, work-family conflict has remained a lesser-examined stressor in the area of police work.

Work-Family Conflict

Work–family conflict can be explained by role theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) and scarcity theory (Marks, 1977). Role theory provides the basic definition of work–family conflict, as work–family conflict is often conceptualized as a type of interrole conflict. Whereby role theory asserts that strain will occur when individuals face competing demands from multiple life roles (Kahn et al., 1964), work–family conflict occurs when the pressures and demands of work interfere with efforts to fulfill family obligations, and vice versa (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). In addition to these competing demands, the conflict that arises can be explained by scarcity theory (Marks, 1977), which states that personal resources of time, energy, and attention are finite, and thus the need to devote more resources to one role means there is consequently fewer resources available to the other role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Sieber, 1974). Therefore, individuals with both work and family demands are likely to experience conflict due to limited personal resources.

Researchers have identified several forms of work-family conflict, including time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict. Time-based conflict occurs when employees do not have enough time to successfully or comfortably complete all tasks associated with their work and their family. That is, the amount of time spent in one domain makes it difficult to complete tasks or participate in activities in the other domain. In terms of police officers, for example, stressors such as irregular hours make it difficult to interact with family members and fulfill personal obligations. Strain-based conflict results when employees experience strain in one domain that interferes with the other domain. For example, stressful events at work may create strain that spills over from the work domain into the family domain, or, conversely, strain from family events may carry over to the workplace. Behavior-based conflict is by far less researched but is hypothesized to occur when behaviors that are expected in one domain interfere with activities in the other domain.

As noted earlier, being a police officer is stressful. Given that numerous aspects of the job are inherently stress-inducing, it is inevitable that an officer will experience some of the negative effects of the many stressors. The stress that is experienced from the stressors that are associated with being a police officer is likely to be related to the conflict that officers experience between their work and home life. With this in mind, we propose that police officers that experience general work stress will also experience work-family conflict. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: General work stress is positively related to work-family conflict.

Reducing Work-Family Conflict

Researchers have consistently demonstrated the negative consequences of work-family conflict for both individuals and organizations. It is no wonder, then, that researchers have examined various ways to reduce employee work–family conflict. Some researchers (e.g., Adams & Jex, 1999) have examined how individuals themselves can reduce the conflict, for example, by working on their time management skills or asking for assistance when necessary. Other researchers (e.g., Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995) have examined how organizations can reduce the conflict, often by creating family–friendly work policies or encouraging a supervisor to provide support to their subordinates. However, there are many additional sources of social support besides supervisors, including other individuals from one's organization, family, professional organizations, or religious affiliations. Given the negative effects of work-family conflict, it is important to try to reduce the conflict and restore balance between an officer's work and personal life. Reduction in work-family conflict can occur either through organizational or personal interventions. However, the extent to which either of these methods works is not clear.

Organizational Polices

As the negative consequences of stress and work-family conflict become increasingly apparent, organizational decision-

makers are turning toward "family-friendly" policies to reduce employee work-family stress. Work environments are considered family-friendly when they "(a) help workers manage the time pressures of being working parents by having policies such as vacation time, sick leave, unpaid or personal leave, or flexible work schedules, or (b) help workers meet their continuing family responsibilities through such programs as maternity and paternity leave, leave that can be used to care for sick children or elders, affordable health insurance, and child-care or elder care programs" (Marshal & Barnett, 1996, p. 253). As Bourg and Segal (1999) noted, family-friendly policies can serve as a way for the organization to inform employees and family members that the family is not viewed as competition.

Despite the purported benefits of family-friendly policies, such as increased productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, relatively few researchers have empirically examined such family-friendly work environments (Aldous, 1990; Bourg & Segal, 1999; Glass & Finley, 2002). The concept is fairly new and the little research that has been conducted has been methodologically weak, based primarily on anecdotes. Researchers (e.g., O'Driscoll et al., 2003) have recently acknowledged that there may be two important factors associated with the effectiveness of organizational programs and how they lessen work-family conflict: the *availability* of the program and the *use* of the program. Because the primary processes of these factors are theoretically distinct, these two factors can differentially affect work-family conflict.

Availability.

Many organizations provide family-friendly services. Although organizations may offer such programs, the employees may or may not need to use them. Yet even if these programs are not used, we suggest that simply making these services available to employees is beneficial for two reasons. The first and primary explanation is based on the employees' perceptions of the organization. Employees who are in organizations that provide these services may perceive the organization as being supportive of their work and nonwork needs (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, &

Sowa, 1986). This feeling of support provides the employee with feelings that the organization is generally concerned about their well-being and will try to do what it can to lessen factors or events that can cause work-family conflict.

The second reason is more instrumental in nature. Although employees may not use the programs, by knowing these programs are available they know that if they do need to use these services, they can. For example, an employee may not use on-site childcare because somebody else (e.g., the employee's spouse) takes care of the children. The employee may realize, however, that if there were an event when that other individual could not take care of the children, the organization offers an alternative option for child-care services.

In terms of the relationship between family-friendly programs and work-family conflict, we propose that the availability of family-friendly programs can have both a direct and a moderating effect on work-family conflict. Individuals who report that their organization has more family-friendly policies are more likely to also report lower levels of work-family conflict. Additionally, similar to Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) construct of perceived social support, the availability of family-friendly programs can also moderate, or affect the strength of, the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict. With this in mind, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: There is a negative relationship between family-friendly policy availability and work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2b: Availability of family-friendly polices moderates the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict.

Usage

Although the existence of family-friendly programs seems important, researchers have suggested that an ideal family–friendly workplace goes beyond just the availability of programs (Fredrik-

sen–Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001; Secret & Sprang, 2001). That is, the amount of usage is also important in affecting organizational outcomes such as decreasing work-family conflict. The reasons program usage affects employees are very similar to the reasons program availability affects employees, but the importance of the two explanations differ. The primary processes to understanding why family-friendly polices usage affects levels of work-family conflict can be explained by the instrumental support the organization is providing. For example, the employee is able to decrease work-family conflict because they are using on-site child care and are able to arrive at work on time and take on the responsibility of the children.

The secondary processes that are occurring are the feeling of perceived organizational support. Just like in the case of availability of programs, the employees feel that the organization is generally supportive and will attempt to provide an environment that is family-friendly. Similar to program availability, we propose that the availability of family-friendly programs can have both a direct and moderating effect on work-family conflict. Individuals who report that they use family-friendly policies are more likely to also report lower levels of work-family conflict and the use of family-friendly programs can also moderate the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict. With this in mind, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Use of family-friendly policies is negatively related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 3b: Use of family-friendly policies moderate the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict.

Family Support

In addition to organizational interventions aimed at assisting employees balance their work and family lives, individuals may use their own personal support system for reducing conflict between the two domains. There are three broad types of social

support: tangible, informational, and emotional (Cobb, 1976; House, 1981; Richman, Rosenfeld, & Hardy, 1993). Tangible support, also called instrumental support, involves assistance in terms of resources, time, and labor. For example, an officer's spouse may offer more assistance with household duties in order to allow the officer time to handle problems that may have arisen either at home or at work.

Informational support involves an individual providing support in the form of information needed to manage demands or problems. For example, a member of the officer's church may provide information to him or her regarding a community assistance program in order to help alleviate problems associated with work–family conflict. Similarly, a family member or friend may provide information in the form of advice, based on their own experiences that may help in terms of managing competing roles.

The third broad type of support is emotional support. This refers to the perceptions that the support giver cares and is concerned about the recipient. Emotional support can be provided verbally (e.g., questioning about officer well-being) or can be made evident by simply being available and listening to the officer when the officer has a problem.

A key support system outside of the work environment is the family. Research has shown that family support is related to less work-family conflict (Burke, 1988; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). A more specific type of family support is spouse support. A supportive spouse treats the marriage as a partnership where each spouse contributes to the relationship, which helps reduce the stressors that accompany work and family pressures. Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, and Current (2001) suggested three techniques to achieve a partnership or to be a supportive spouse. First, the couple equally divides the household labor in an attempt to lessen role overload. This could be achieved by assigning chores equally between the two individuals. Alternatively, they could negotiate household duties and obtain outside help (e.g., professional house cleaners, teenage helper). Second, the couple makes decisions together so

that both spouses' needs and desires are considered. Third, the couple works on creating an interpersonal partnership where they respect, appreciate, and support one another.

Research has shown some support for the benefits of spouse support in the workplace. Burke and Greenglass (1999), for example, examined how spouse support affected nurse satisfaction and wellbeing. They found that whereas spouse support had a significant relationship with marital satisfaction it was not related to wellbeing. Additionally, spouse support had some effect on work-family conflict. Specifically, spouse support did not affect work interfering with family (i.e., work-to-family conflict) but it did reduce family interfering with work (i.e., family–work conflict). They proposed two reasons for these findings. First, the sample was all women and therefore the support was generated from their husbands. Men and women may provide and solicit different types of spouse support. Second, it may be that the issues going on within the organization may have been too big for spouse support to alleviate its negative effects. Parasuraman et al. (1992) examined the effects of spouse support on dual career couples and found employees who report high levels of spouse support are more likely to experience greater family satisfaction. Additionally, they reported a negative relationship between spouse support and work-family conflict (r = -.19). Overall, past research suggests the importance of family support on work-family conflict.

We propose that not only can spouse support lessen the negative effects of work-family conflict; it can also act as a moderator when work stress is high. This would be especially relevant for police officers. There is much spillover between work and family in police work (Roberts & Levenson, 2001), and because the two domains are so related, the support in one domain can affect the interaction between work and family. With this in mind, we posit that spouse support is negatively related to work-family conflict and acts as a moderator, or a buffer, between work stress and work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 4a: Spouse support is negatively related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 4b: Spouse support moderates the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict.

METHOD

Participants

We used a sample of police officers located in Minnesota, New York, and Texas. Data were from the Work and Family Services for Law Enforcement Personnel in the United States study (Delprino, O'Quinn, & Kennedy, 1995). This study provided information on work and family issues from the police officer's perspective, and explored the existence and prevalence of work and family training and intervention programs offered by law enforcement agencies. The researchers collected their data using three different surveys, with response rates for the three waves of survey administrations ranging from 33% to 65%. The National Archive of Criminal Justice Data preserves and distributes computerized crime and justice data for secondary statistical analyses and provides an excellent source to examine work and family issues. Readers who are interested in more details of the methodology of the Work and Family Services study are directed to http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/NACJD-STUDY/02696.xml. After selecting only police officers that were married, our final sample size was 866.

Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 64 with a mean of 37.6 (*SD* = 8.19). Regarding race, 87.9% of participants identified themselves as White, 4.2% as African-American or Black, 5.7% as Hispanic, and 2.2% as other. On average, participants had been in law enforcement for 13.38 years (*SD* = 7.69). Concerning education, 7.5% reported having a high school degree or equivalent, 53.3% reported having some college, 29.0% reported having a college degree, and 9.9% reported completing some post-graduate coursework and/or a degree.

MEASURES

General Work Stress

General work stress was assessed with a one item question, "Overall, how much stress are you experiencing on the job?" The responses for this question were on a Likert-type rating scale from 1 (*none at all*) to 5 (*a lot*). Previous studies have found that one-item measures can be psychometrically comparable to multiple-item measures (Gardner, Cummings, Dunham, & Pierce, 1998; Wanous & Hudy, 2001; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997).

Family-Friendly Policy

Family-friendly policy availability and usage were measured with dichotomous items (0 = No, 1 = Yes) requiring individuals to indicate whether a particular policy (from a list of policies) was perceived to be available and whether the individual had used the policy. Policy examples included "Marital and child support groups," "Counseling for law enforcement family members," and "Family orientation programs." The number of different programs was summed to form an index for the number of available family-friendly policies and the number of used family-friendly programs.

Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict was assessed with five items and is measured with a Likert-type rating scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a lot*). All items were preceded by the statement, "indicate how each issue impacts you or your family". Sample items include "the job becomes a priority over the family," and "conflict between your work and family roles." Scales scores were calculated as the mean of all items. Coefficient alpha for the work-family conflict scale was .74.

Spouse Support

Spouse support was assessed with eight items and is measured with a Likert-type rating scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

All items were preceded by the statement, "how does your spouse/partner provide support for you?" Sample items include "tries to understand my job," and "maintains positive attitude." Scales scores were calculated as the sum of all items. Coefficient alpha for the spouse support scale was .80.

RESULTS

Before we tested our hypotheses, we examined the amount of perceived availability and use of family friendly programs. As shown in Table 1, the three top most widely available services for officers and their families was counseling for law enforcement family members (64%), stress education for law enforcement re-cruits and families (31.3%), and marital and child support groups (24.9%). The most frequently used family friendly programs was counseling for law enforcement family members (10.4%), stress education for law enforcement recruits and families (7.8%), and counseling for law enforcement family members (6.2%).

Table 1
Percent of family programs that were offered and used by the police agency

	Available			Used
	Yes	Unsure	No	
Counseling for law enforcement family members	64.0	19.6	16.4	6.2
Child care on a 24 hour basis	1.9	12.6	85.5	0.0
Marital and child support groups	24.9	33.8	41.2	1.5
Stress education for law enforcement re-cruits and families	31.3	34.3	34.4	10.4
Law enforcement family crisis telephone services on a 24-hour basis	22.1	33.6	44.4	0.7
Family orientation programs (e.g., spouse awareness, precinct visit, etc.)	23.0	28.4	48.6	7.8
Programs geared toward work and family issues for recruits	14.3	39.7	46.1	4.5
Programs geared toward work and family issues throughout officer's career	11.2	36.2	52.6	2.5

Table 2 depicts descriptive statistics, correlations, and coefficient alphas for all the variables of interest. Sex and organizational tenure were used as control variables.

Table 2
Correlations and Descriptives.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sex	1.08	.28	--						
2. Tenure	13.38	7.69	-.13**	--					
3. Work Stress	3.07	0.89	-.03	.18**	--				
4. Work-Family Conflict	2.32	0.79	.02	.02	.39**	(.74)			
5. FF Policies Availability	1.91	1.8	.04	.05	-.09*	-.08*	--		
6. FF Policies Used	0.33	0.77	.02	-.03	.02	.03	.39**	--	
7. Supportive Spouse	16.23	5.83	.07*	-.11**	-.09*	-.25**	.14**	.18**	(.80)

Notes. Coefficient alphas are presented in parentheses on the diagonal. For sex, females are coded as 0 and males are coded as 1. FF = Family-friendly
$N = 866$.
** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

All interaction hypotheses were tested with moderated regression. Aiken and West's (1991) procedure was followed: (1) predictor and moderator variables were centered to prevent multicollinearity between the predictor variables and the interaction term; (2) interaction terms were created between the centered predictor and the centered moderator; (3) moderated regressions were conducted by first entering the control variables, followed by the predictor and moderator variables, followed by the interaction between predictor and moderator. A significant interaction was determined by a significant change in the *R* square.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that work stress was positively related to work-family conflict. This hypothesis was supported (β = .349, $p < .05$). The control variables (sex and tenure) and work stress explained 15% of the variance of work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that family-friendly policy availability was negatively related to work-family conflict. This hypothesis was supported (β = -.03, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 2b proposed that family-friendly policy availability would moderate the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict. This hypothesis was also supported. There was a significant interaction

between work stress and availability of family policies and work-family conflict (β = -.03, p < .05) with the interaction between work stress and availability of family polices explaining an additional 1% of the variance in work-family conflict (p < .05). The results for these analyses are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3
Interaction between Work–Family Conflict and Family–Friendly Environment Perceptions on Physical Training Scores

Variable	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1:				.00	.00
Sex	.04	.10	.01		
Tenure	.00	.00	.02		
Step 2:				.15	.15**
Work Stress	.35**	.03	.39		
FF Policy Availability	-.01	.01	-.04		
Step 3:				.16	.01**
Work Stress x FF Policy Availability	-.03*	.02	-.08		

Notes. FF = Family Friendly. For sex, females are coded as 0 and males are coded as 1. The *B* weights in the columns are from the step of entry into the model. ** p < .01. * p < .05.
N = 289.

Hypothesis 3a proposed a direct relationship between family-friendly policy usage and work-family conflict. This hypothesis was not supported (β = .03, p = .45). Hypothesis 3b proposed that family-friendly policy usage would moderate the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict. This hypothesis was also not supported. Specifically, we found no interaction between work stress, family-friendly policy usage, and work-family conflict (ΔR^2 = .0, p = .62).

Hypothesis 4a proposed that having a supportive spouse was negatively related to work-family conflict. This hypothesis was supported (β = -.03, p < .05). Hypothesis 4b, which proposed that having a supportive spouse would moderate the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict, was not supported. Specifically, we found no interaction between work stress, having a supportive spouse, and work-family conflict (ΔR^2 = .00, p = .60).

DISCUSSION

The very nature of police work is demanding. Whereas police organizations and family members cannot lessen most demands inherent with the job, they can offer support to lessen the potentially negative effects that go with the job. The current study examined both organizational and personal support mechanisms in an attempt to find ways to lessen potential work-family conflict that is associated with work stress.

We found that when police officers perceive their work environment to be stressful they are more likely to report work-family conflict. This is disconcerting because, in general, the job of a police officer is stressful (e.g., Anshel et al., 1997; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1989; Norvell et al., 1988; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Sigler & Wilson, 1988). These results support previous research (e.g., Roberts & Levenson, 2001) that shows that stressors inherent to police officers' work may influence the relationships that the officers have with their family members.

There are many different types of programs that police departments provide to assist police officers and their family members. We found that whereas counseling for law enforcement family members was the most widely available program, stress education for law enforcement recruits and families was the most used. It could be that education-based programs are more widely accepted by police officers. Individuals who participate in programs that involve counseling could be regarded as having some type of "psychological" program. The very fear of falling victim to the stigma of mental illness may be enough to keep some officers from participating in programs that may be beneficial to themselves or their families.

Although we proposed that there would be both a direct and indirect relationship between family-friendly policy usage and work-family conflict, we found no relationship between the two variables. We suggested that employees would experience less work-family conflict because of the instrumental support these programs would provide. It is important to keep in mind that our data

are correlational, and therefore we cannot infer causality. That is, it may be that some of the policies (e.g., post-shooting debriefing for officers and their spouses) would be used only in situations where stress (or work-family conflict) is already present. Similarly, officers who are experiencing stress or conflict may be more likely to use the family-friendly programs, thus creating the positive relationship.

Whereas we found no relationships between program usage and work-family conflict, we did find a negative relationship between program availability and work-family conflict. First, we found a direct effect – individuals who had more family-friendly programs available to them were more likely to report lower levels of work-family conflict. Whereas it could be that the environment of an agency that offers these services is substantially better than the environment of agencies that do not, we were unable to measure this possibility in the current study as there is no control for overall job satisfaction within the agency. Nevertheless, the findings do provide support for our supposition that the mere act of providing family-friendly services, regardless of the rest of the agency environment, is beneficial to employees. We proposed that the primary reason availability of programs affects work-family conflict is because employees who feel they work for supportive organizations also feel that the organization is supportive of their work and nonworking needs. These findings are based on Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) theory of perceived organizational support. In a similar vein, Eisenberger et al. propose that organizational support can work as a moderator, or buffer, between work stress and organizational outcomes. We found this to be the case in our results. Specifically, availability of programs moderated the relationship between work stress and work-family conflict.

Yet another reason for this finding could be that officers perceive the availability of programs as a sense of security or something they have control over. That is, having programs available allows officers control over how they are going to handle a stressful situation – they can choose from a variety of programs, which may reduce feelings of helplessness. As Malloy and Mays (1984) noted, "helplessness and feelings of uncontrollability in the

work environment may be a major source of stress for police officers" (p. 207). The availability of assistance programs may influence the feelings of control that an officer needs to reduce stress and conflict.

Finally, we should note that when asking police officers to list what programs were available in their organization, about one-third of the respondents were not sure what programs were present within their organization. This finding is very important because our results showed that just being aware that a family-friendly program exists within the organization is related to positive outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS

The finding that police officer work stress was related to work-family conflict suggests that police organizations need to be cognizant of the level of stress their officers are experiencing. Whereas it is impossible to control many of the stressors inherent in police work (e.g., dangers or perceived dangers of job), there are some stressors that can be controlled. For example, Newman and Rucker-Reed (2004) suggested that poor leadership and problems with management were prevalent stressors in police organizations. Police organizations could try to lessen these types of stressors through employee and management training. For example, training programs that focus on communication and communication strategies could be offered to employees annually. Similarly, training could be offered to both police officers and their supervisors on how to identify and cope with work stressors.

The current study asked respondents to identify family-friendly programs that the police department offered and used. Two key issues emerged from our findings. First, police officers and their families were much more likely to use educational-based programs than to use psychological-based programs. We proposed that police officers may not be comfortable with psychological programs, possibly deterring them from seeking the help they need. This may indicate that until psychological programs are accepted by both police officers and supervisors as a valid mechanism to assist officer's stress issues, police officers will not be get-

ting comprehensive support and care. Strategies need to be developed to change the negative stereotype associated with using these programs. Police department representatives should show their police officers that they will not get punished by using psychological-based programs; in fact, they may provide an incentive when police officers use these services.

Police departments could also continue to promote the use of these perceived innocuous education programs. Given that it is difficult to quickly change attitudes about stereotypes associated with psychological programs, police departments may want to further promote the educational programs that currently exist. For example, in our sample of police officers, the stress education program for officers and their families is one of the most used of all of the family-friendly programs. Therefore police departments may want to expand their policies and programs to include a more comprehensive intervention strategy that is directed not only on stress education, but also on the lessening of stereotypes.

The second issue is related to the actual knowledge of what programs are available. Our results suggest that approximately one-third of the respondents were not sure of what programs were available in their police department. This is problematic for both the police officer and the police department. It is problematic for police officers because they may not be getting the help that they need because they do not know that there is an available program that would help. It is also directly problematic for the police department because their employees may not be getting proper assistance, support or counseling. In addition, it suggests that their family-friendly programs are not well promoted to their employees. This problem could be remedied in several ways. Police departments could review their orientation procedures to assure that police department family-friendly programs are acknowledged. Another remedy would be to have the police departments initiate a formal education program that keeps police officers and their families informed of current programs. This program could initiate strategies such as keeping an updated bulletin board in the break room, sending out mailings to family members, reminding police

officers at monthly briefings, or sending out messages on police department list serves.

Finally, because our findings stressed the importance of police departments making family-friendly programs *available* to police officers, police departments should periodically review what programs are available to their police officers and families. Whereas program use should be monitored, police officer awareness of the availability of these programs should also be monitored.

Limitations and Future Studies

As with any study, there were several limitations to our study. Perhaps our biggest limitation concerns the archival nature of our data, which limited us in terms of the measures available. Ideally, we would have chosen to measure work-family conflict and spouse support using validated measures. Unfortunately, the data that were collected did not allow us to do so. However, the items that we chose to represent these constructs were very similar to those that are available in some of the most widely used scales. For example, a very common measure of work-family conflict is Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian's (1996) Work–Family Conflict Scale, which includes such items as "The demands of work interfere with my family life," and "Things I want to do at work most likely don't get done because of the demands of my family responsibilities." These items refer specifically to aspects of one's work or family life that interfere with the other domain. The items we chose provide the same general idea, and therefore are most likely adequate representations of the constructs we are intending to capture. Future studies should replicate this study using validated work-family conflict scales.

As with most survey research, the generalizability of the current study's findings may be limited by several factors. One potential limitation is the mono-method, single-source bias. Specifically, the same participants responded to one questionnaire at one time period. Therefore, individuals may have been responding similarly to items based solely on the questionnaire format or be-

cause of a personal tendency to respond in a certain manner. This potential problem, however, is more likely to affect the results by increasing the chance for a Type II error. That is, common method bias tends to attenuate results, thereby reducing the magnitude of relationships that may otherwise exist. Thus, for this study, the results that were significant would be strengthened, and those that did not result may have become significant had common method bias not been present. Therefore, whereas ideally we would have liked to have obtained measures from various sources, using multiple methods, the limitation here does not detract from our findings.

There are a multitude of family-friendly programs that can assist employees dealing with the work-family interface. The current study only focused on eight programs. Although we acknowledged the potential stereotypes of psychological programs we did not assess how police officers felt about the use of these programs. Future researchers should examine such effects of potential stigmatization on the usage of family-friendly policies, particularly in law enforcement.

Finally, the present study is limited by its reliance on a cross-sectional representation of individual employees and organizations. Because data were not measured across time, it is impossible to make causal statements or claims of directionality with certainty. As we noted above, this may help explain the unexpected finding of the negative relationship between family-friendly policy usage and work-family conflict. If we had been able to collect data over time, we may have been able to determine which came first – the usage or the conflict. As it is, however, we can only speak about relationships. Future researchers would benefit greatly from the incorporation of longitudinal studies to examine the directionality of such relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, our findings support Bourg and Segal's (1999) contention that family-friendly policies are important. Whereas the current study sheds some light on family-friendly policies, it also reveals the complexity of the situation. First, the benefits of fam-

ily-friendly programs may be moderated by the nature of the job. Availability (vs. usage) of family-friendly policies may be more important in stressful jobs such as police work compared to less stressful jobs. Second, the type of available and used benefits may be important in predicting conflict and stress. For example, family orientation programs may differ from flexible scheduling programs.

Balancing work and family demands is very important. Family-friendly policies are one way to balance such demands. Therefore, researchers need to continue investigating the types of policies that should be offered to lessen stress and conflict, as well as examine the benefits of merely offering programs versus requiring or encouraging their usage.

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