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# EXAMINING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND PARENTING STRESS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER THROUGH THE LENS OF BOUNDARY AND CONSERVATIONS OF RESOURCES THEORIES

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CONSERVATIONS OF RESOURCES THEORIES

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology:  
Industrial/Organizational

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by  
Alyssa Ann Pettey  
September 2015

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding the challenges parents of children with disabilities face when seeking to balance work and family is a real concern; however, these challenges have not been well studied. Parents of children with disabilities experience excess challenges in the home domain as a result of their caregiving demands that can lead to challenges in balancing family and work. This is particularly problematic for parents raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The present study examined the relationship between inter-domain transitions and work-family conflict in order to identify personal and situational factors that were associated with reduced conflict and parenting stress in a population of parents raising children with ASD. Results of this study demonstrated the importance of individuals' appraisal of transitions on the relationships between inter-domain transitions and work-family conflict and inter-domain transitions and parenting stress. Further, family-supportive supervisor behaviors and segmentation preferences mitigated the experiences of work-family conflict (WFC) and parenting stress for this population. The results of this study provide important implications for organizations in seeking to help parents of children with ASD more effectively balance their work and family domains.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience extreme difficulties in raising their children and managing their work and family demands. Researchers interested in studying the impact of raising a child with ASD on parental well-being have consistently demonstrated that these parents experience high parenting stress (Brobst, Clopton, & Hendrick, 2009; Davis & Carter, 2008; Hall & Graff, 2011; Matthews, Booth, Taylor, & Martin, 2011; Osborne & Reed, 2010; Rao & Beidel, 2009; Rivard, Parent-Boursier, Celine, & Mercier, 2014; Tehee, Honan, & Hevey, 2009), mental health issues (Bromley, Hare, Davison, & Emerson, 2004; Hoefman et al., 2014), physical health issues (Hoefman et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2011), and financial problems (Cidav, Marcus, & Mandell, 2012; Hoefman et al., 2014). In addition to the impacts on parental well-being, these parents experience difficulties in the work force as well. It has been demonstrated that these parents work less hours (Cidav et al., 2012; Matthews et al., 2011), have fewer training and development opportunities (Matthews et al., 2011), have reduced opportunities for promotions (Matthews et al., 2011), and are less likely to be involved in the labor force as compared to parents raising children without disabilities (Cidav et al., 2012). Despite the extreme challenges parents face in both their work and family domains, the work-family field has yet to address the unique needs of this population. Thus, our ability to understand the

mechanisms these families utilize to balance work and family are limited. This void of unique populations is part of a larger issue in the work-family literature (Agars & French, in press) and must be addressed.

The profound effects the work and family domains can have on each other has been well documented (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined as “a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; p. 77). Work-family conflict has been linked to lower family satisfaction (Bedeian, 1988; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992), lower overall life and job satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), increased turnover intentions, reduced organizational commitment, and lower work performance (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). Given these consequences, understanding the processes by which individuals manage their work and family domains is critical.

Despite the wealth of knowledge that has developed out of work-family research, a criticism is that this field has focused on a relatively homogeneous population, dual-earner, middle and high class couples with children (Agars & French, 2011; Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007; Matthews et al., 2011). Thus, researchers have called for an expanded focus in order to advance this program of research by examining the context of part-time, hourly, self-employed workers, workers with elder care responsibilities, and

workers with disabled childcare responsibilities (Agars & French, 2011; Casper et al., 2007; Casper & Swanberg, 2011; Grandey, Cordeiro, & Michael, 2007; Matthews et al., 2011). The reality is that a failure to consider diverse populations in the work-family research leads to a gap in our knowledge of the actual experiences individuals face when balancing their work and family domains (Agars & French, 2011).

The present study aims to address this void by examining a population that has received scant attention in the literature: working parents of children with disabilities (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Brown, 2013; George, Vickers, Wilkes, & Barton, 2008; Matthews et al., 2011). The 2009-2010 National Health Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs revealed that nearly 23% of households with children ages 0-17 had at least one child with a disability. Given this prevalence and the unique hardships these families face in caring for their children, understanding the work-family interface for this population is critical.

Researchers who have studied families raising children with disabilities have demonstrated the added stressors these parents face in managing their daily tasks (e.g. work) and caregiving demands, as well as the subsequent consequences on parent and family well-being (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Brandon, 2007; Bromley et al., 2004; Freedman, Litchfield, & Warfield, 1995; Harper, Taylor Dyches, Harper, Olsen Roper, & South, 2013; Hoefman et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2011). Parents raising children with disabilities report

higher levels of stress, increased physical and mental health problems, and lower marital satisfaction as compared to parents raising non-disabled children (Brobst et al., 2009; Hoefman et al., 2014; Parker, Mandleco, Olsen Roper, Freeborn, & Dyches, 2011). Understanding the added stressors these parents face can be understood through conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Matthews et al., 2011). Conservation of resources theory explains the process by which individuals experience stress and posits that “people strive to retain, protect, and build resources” and any harm or loss of these resources is threatening to individuals (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Resources include personal characteristics, objects, conditions, or energies that serve to help the individual obtain these resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Analyses of the work-family interface of parents raising children with disabilities have revealed that these parents have greater threats to their resources and have fewer opportunities to build and restore existing resources (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Brandon, 2007; Breevaart & Bakker, 2011; Freedman et al., 1995; Matthews et al., 2011). Thus, managing the added stressors in the home domain, in addition to work, have profound consequences on the mental and physical resources of these parents.

The present study will examine the work-family interface among parents raising a child with a specific disability: autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Parents of children with ASD were chosen for this study because researchers have demonstrated that these parents face more stressors and negative

outcomes as compared to parents raising non-disabled children and parents raising children with other disabilities (Brobst et al., 2009; Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010; Hayes & Watson, 2013; Lee, Harrington, Louie, & Newschaffer, 2008; Rao & Beidel, 2009). This study will focus on the transition between work and family roles. Understanding the transitions between domains is important because mental and physical transitions are frequent and relate to increased WFC (Matthews, Winkel, & Wayne, 2014). The present study aims to understand the factors that may mitigate these negative transition effects.

To begin the discussion I will first provide a description of ASD, as well as the prevalence rates among children in the United States. I will then review the literature on the work and family challenges these parents face. Finally, I will discuss boundary and conservation of resources theories in order to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how these parents manage and integrate their work and family domains.

### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism spectrum disorder is a pervasive developmental disorder characterized by social and communication deficits, cognitive impairments, difficulty relating to people, things, and events, sensory and motor impairments, and repetitive behaviors and body movements (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lord & Spence, 2006). The symptoms can range from mild to severe and frequently change over time (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the Centers for Disease Control

(CDC) Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, an estimated 1 in 68 children have been identified with ASD (Baio, 2014). The CDC estimates that the prevalence of ASD has increased 123% since 2002. Furthermore, according to the CDC, ASD is more prevalent among non-Hispanic white children than any other race/ethnicity, and is four to five times more likely to occur in boys than girls.

The challenges parents face in raising children with ASD reach beyond the family. In a United States-based study, Ganz (2007) estimated a lifetime societal cost of \$3.2 million for each individual diagnosed with ASD, 29% of which can be attributed to productivity loss among parents who either reduce their working hours, or exit the labor force to care for their child. In addition, ASD is expensive to employers due to employment-based health insurance. It is estimated that medical costs are 4.1-6.2 times greater for individuals with ASD as compared to those without ASD (Shimabukuro, Grosse, & Rice, 2008).

#### Parenting and Autism: Challenges in the Home Domain

Parents raising children with ASD experience added stressors as a function of the disorder that negatively impact parental and family well-being. These include the severity of autistic symptoms, intense behavioral problems, internalizing behaviors (e.g. anxiety, depression, etc.), externalizing behaviors (e.g. impulsivity, aggression, defiance, etc.), and low adaptive functioning (i.e. communication, socialization, and daily living skills; Brobst et al., 2009;



Bromley et al., 2004; Davis & Carter, 2008; Hall & Graff, 2011; Osborne & Reed, 2010; Rao & Beidel, 2009; Rivard et al., 2014; Tehee et al., 2009; Weiss, MacMullin, & Lunsky, 2014). In addition to the characteristics of ASD, there are also contextual factors that can have a negative impact on the family, such as low family and social support, difficulties finding reliable childcare equipped to meet the needs of children with ASD, reduced time for respite and personal care, financial problems, and difficulties with the healthcare system (Brobst et al., 2009; Cidav et al., 2012; Davis & Carter, 2008; Harper et al., 2013; Matthews et al., 2011; Strunk, Pickler, McCain, Ameringer, & Myers, 2014). Taken together, the characteristics of ASD and contextual factors negatively affect parental well-being, present financial challenges, and lead to less time for respite and personal care for these parents as they seek to meet the child care demands of their children.

A review of the literature on parenting and ASD illustrates that parents of children with ASD experience more stress than parents of typically developing children and parents of children with other disabilities (Brobst et al., 2009; Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010; Hayes & Watson, 2013; Lee et al., 2008; Rao & Beidel, 2009). In order to understand these findings, Hayes and Watson (2013) conducted a meta-analysis on the parenting stress literature which compares parenting stress among those raising children with ASD, typically developing children, and children with other disabilities (i.e. Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, fragile X syndrome, cystic fibrosis, and

fetal alcohol spectrum disorder). The results revealed that the effect of parenting stress was largest between those raising children with ASD compared to those raising typically developing children, as well as parents raising children with other disabilities (Hayes & Watson, 2013). It has been suggested that these high amounts of parenting stress can be attributed to the challenging behaviors associated with ASD (Brobst et al., 2009; Bromley et al., 2004; Davis & Carter, 2008; Hall & Graff, 2011; Kasari & Sigman, 1997; Rivard et al., 2014; Wolf, Noh, Fisman, & Speechley, 1989). These include anger, vindictiveness, defiance, and emotional outbursts (Mandy, Roughan, & Skuse, 2014). The unpredictability and unrelenting nature of these behavioral challenges undoubtedly add to the stress these parents face.

Brobst et al. (2009) examined parenting stress among parents of children with ASD and parents of children without developmental disorders. They found that parents of children with ASD experienced significantly higher amounts of parenting stress as compared to parents of children without developmental disabilities. Furthermore, higher levels of parenting stress were strongly related to the intensity of child behavioral problems and perceived severity of the child's disability. Similarly, in a study of 68 mothers raising children with ASD, Bromley et al. (2004) found that high levels of psychological distress among mothers was strongly associated with raising a child who was more emotionally disturbed and self-absorbed. Kasari and Sigman (1997) found that, among parents of children with ASD, Down

syndrome, and typically developing children, parents of children with ASD reported the highest levels of stress. These high levels of stress were strongly related to having a child with temperamental difficulties. These studies support the notion that behavioral problems associated with ASD largely influence the experience of high parental stress.

In addition to the characteristics of ASD, contextual factors play a vital role in the stress these parents face as well. One important contextual factor is the education children with ASD receive and its impact on parents' satisfaction with these educational services. Although there are many developmental benefits of providing children with ASD educational services, research has demonstrated parents' concerns over the services their children receive. Some researchers have demonstrated that parents are often dissatisfied with their child's educational services overall (Montes, Halterman, & Magyar, 2009), while others have found that parents are mostly satisfied with services their child receive, but have a few concerns (Bitterman, Daley, Misra, Carlson, & Markowitz, 2008). Bitterman et al. (2008) surveyed 3,104 families of children with disabilities nationwide, with 6-7% having children with ASD. Although the findings of this study revealed that between 91% and 96% of parents of children with ASD were satisfied with the services their children received, these parents were more dissatisfied than other parents with certain aspects of the educational system. Nearly 1 in 4 parents were dissatisfied with the fact that their children rarely spent time with typically developing peers, and

one-half of the parents reported that their children were not receiving services that they needed from the school districts (Bitterman et al., 2008). In interviews with 45 parents of children with ASD, Spann, Kohler, and Soenksen (2003) found that 44% of families reported that schools were doing little or nothing to address their child's needs for life skills and vocational training and to help with challenging behavior. Furthermore, 29% of parents expressed low satisfaction with the school's efforts to help meet the needs of their children (Spann et al., 2003). Similarly, Montes et al. (2009) surveyed parents of children with special needs, with a subset of the sample representing parents of children with ASD, in order to evaluate access to and satisfaction with educational and community services. The results revealed that, although children with ASD required more services than children with other disabilities, having a child with ASD more than tripled the likelihood of reporting difficulties obtaining the appropriate services for their child, with the most common reasons being "no providers with skills child needed" and "services not available in my area". Furthermore, having a child with ASD more than doubled the likelihood of dissatisfaction with community and educational services received.

These studies reveal the tremendous struggles parents of children with ASD experience as they seek out the needed services for their children. The challenging behaviors associated with ASD require parents to seek support from educators and other professionals in the community. Despite the fact that

ASD requires treatment and education to help meet the developmental needs of these children, there appears to be many barriers in accessing the required services. Furthermore, even when these services are available, parents express low satisfaction with them and do not perceive that they meet the needs of their children, undoubtedly adding to the stress of raising a child with ASD. The challenges these parents face when seeking to manage their child's disability can have profound effects on their work and family balance. As these parents are dissatisfied with the support they are receiving for their child and are consistently worried about their child's challenging behavior, their available cognitive and physical resources needed in the work domain are reduced. Unfortunately, the lack of quality support from community and educational services is not the only challenge these parents face in meeting the needs of their children while also seeking to balance work. This lack of support has been documented in the healthcare system as well.

Another important contextual factor to consider is the health care services children with ASD receive and their impact on parents' satisfaction with them. Strunk et al. (2014) demonstrated through a qualitative study of 12 parents raising adolescents with ASD the challenges they face in managing their child's health needs and navigating through a health care system that seems ill equipped to meet their needs. Throughout these interviews, parents expressed concern over the lack of medical personnel qualified to care for ASD, feeling rushed during appointments, and a lack of collaboration and

advocacy for their child among physical and mental health providers. These parents also discussed the high stress they face with medical costs due to the high frequency of visits their children require and the lack of insurance coverage for some required therapies. Similarly, Carbone, Behl, Azor, and Murphy (2010) conducted qualitative interviews with parents of ASD and pediatricians caring for children with ASD in order to understand different perspectives on the health care that is provided to these children. Parents in this study were frustrated with the inadequacies of the health care for their children, as well as the lack of collaboration among providers (Carbone et al., 2010). Furthermore, although it has been demonstrated consistently that children with ASD best respond to an interdisciplinary model of treatment that requires collaboration among providers (Myers & Johnson, 2007), the pediatricians in this study acknowledged that they have difficulties collaborating with others due to a lack of time (Carbone et al., 2010). In addition, the pediatricians felt ill equipped to meet the needs of children with ASD.

Collectively, these studies illustrate the reasons for the high amounts of distress parents of children with ASD experience as they navigate through a chaotic health care system that fails to meet the needs of their children. Given the heightened need for medical care and high frequency of appointments required to care for ASD, an ill equipped health care system contributes greatly to the stress these parents are faced with on a daily basis as they seek

to manage work and family. As children with ASD require frequent medical appointments, parents often have to transition between work and family to find the appropriate services, as well as bring their children to appointments. These frequent transitions can be stressful to parents, especially when compounded with the dissatisfaction with the services their children are receiving. The poor support these parents experience from the health care system is part of a larger lack of support these parents receive from various formal and informal sources.

Social support plays a vital role in determining how well parents and families adapt to a diagnosis of ASD (Myers & Johnson, 2007). Research, however, has produced mixed results on the support parents of children with ASD receive. In a study of 23 mothers and 19 fathers raising children with ASD, Tehee et al. (2009) found that parents received low quality of informal and formal supports. Similarly, Brobst et al. (2009) found that parents of children with ASD reported lower levels of total social support than parents of typically developing children. In interviews with 68 mothers raising children with ASD, Bromley et al. (2004) found that single mothers reported less total support than mothers living with a partner. In addition, lower family support was significantly related to higher levels of distress among mothers (Bromley et al., 2004). Hall and Graff (2011) found that among various informal and formal supports, spousal support was found to be the most helpful in raising a child with ASD, whereas support from social groups was found to be the least

helpful. Finally, in a qualitative study of 112 parents of children with ASD, Matthews et al. (2011) found that 25.5% of parents felt emotionally isolated from other family members and 16.4% felt physically cut-off from family.

Despite the research revealing that these parents receive less social and family support, Matthews et al. (2011) also found that 60 percent of parents perceived that having a child with ASD lead to increased emotional support from family members. In addition, Siman-Tov and Kaniel (2011) found that among parents of children with ASD, social support was a vital predictor in determining overall parenting stress, such that more support led to reduced stress. Although some researchers have found that parents of children with ASD receive less support than parents of typically developing children and other researchers have found some supports to be more helpful than others, one thing is clear: social support helps parents of children with ASD cope with their added parenting stressors.

As demonstrated, researchers have documented the substantial stressors parents raising children with ASD experience. Raising a child with a disability is itself stressful, but when compounded with lack of support and difficulties with the health care and educational systems, parents are left with few resources to help cope with the difficulties they experience. These parents struggle with the ambiguity surrounding their child's disability due to an unknown etiology and poor communication among professionals. Additionally, when parents find resources to help with their child's challenging behaviors,



physical impairments, and educational needs, parents are often dissatisfied with them. The need for an interdisciplinary model of treatment and lack of support from professionals and informal networks requires parents to advocate for their child on a daily basis. As a result, maintaining employment can be difficult due to the frequent disruptions they experience related to their child's disability (Matthews et al., 2011). Undoubtedly, the strain experienced as a result of raising a child with ASD depletes the available resources these parents have to contribute to the work domain, leading to experiences of WFC.

#### Parenting and Autism: Implications for the Work Domain

The effect of raising a child with a disability on parents' work domain is an area that has received very little attention in the literature. Even less prevalent is research relating to the effects of raising a child with ASD on parents' working lives. Nonetheless, the studies that have examined this have illustrated the detrimental effects on parents' workforce involvement, as well as some benefits of working for these parents. Given that there are very few studies that have examined parents of ASD specifically in reference to working, I will review the literature on working parents raising children with disabilities in general, as these studies will help provide a framework for understanding how parents of children with ASD navigate through their work and family domains.

Raising a child with any disability can have negative consequences on parents' workforce involvement. According to the National Survey of Children

with Special Health Care Needs 2005/2006, roughly 24% of families raising children with a disability decide to reduce their working hours or quit work altogether to care for their child. These effects are worse for parents whose child's disability include emotional or behavioral disorders (Rosenzweig & Huffstutter, 2004). Among 349 mothers raising a child with an emotional or behavioral disorder, Rosenzweig and Huffstutter found that nearly one-half of the respondents (48%) reported that they had to quit work to care for their child at some point in their careers. Additionally, 27% of the respondents reported that work had been terminated due to work interruptions as a result of childcare responsibilities. Given that ASD is characterized by emotional and behavioral disorders, these parents are likely to experience challenges in the workforce, even more so than parents raising children with other disabilities. Through the lens of conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), raising a child with emotional and behavioral disorders likely strains cognitive and physical resources that make carrying out the demands in the work domain difficult.

Work-family researchers have extensively documented the impacts that work and family domains can have on one another when they are mutually incompatible. For instance, when there are demands in the work domain that have repercussions on the family domain, one is said to be experiencing WFC, whereas when the family domain has repercussions on the work domain a person is experiencing family-to-work conflict (FWC; Greenhaus & Beutell,

1985). Another important concept to consider when examining how the work and family domains influence one another is facilitation. Although the idea of work-to-family and family-to-work facilitation has received much less attention in the work-family literature as compared to conflict (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999), it has been acknowledged that one domain can facilitate or make the other domain easier to deal with (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). Occupying multiple roles can provide social support, increase self-esteem, and buffer against the negative effects of stress (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Thus, parents can gain resources in the work domain (e.g. social support, enhanced self-esteem) that facilitates their role in the family domain. When examining the home domain of parents raising children with disabilities, it is clear that there are extensive demands that may have negative implications for the work domain; however, these parents may also gain resources from work that help them cope with the added stressors of raising a child with a disability. In fact, this is what some researchers have found.

In a study of 96 mother-child dyads, 48 children with learning disabilities and 48 typically developing children, Al-Yagon and Cinamon (2008) examined WFC and facilitation for these mothers. The results of this study revealed that mothers of children with learning disabilities experienced more FWC than mothers of typically developing children. In addition, mothers of children with learning disabilities also experienced more work-family facilitation (WFF) than mothers of typically developing children. Thus, although mothers of children

with learning disabilities experienced demands in the home domain that interfered with their work domain, working provided resources to these mothers to help cope with the demands at home. Similarly, Freedman, Litchfield, and Warfield (1995) conducted focus groups with 26 parents raising children with disabilities in order to examine how raising a child with a disability influences working for these parents. A common theme among the parents was that they derived psychological benefits from working, such that going to work provided “respite” or a “salvation” from the caregiving demands they experienced at home (Freedman et al., 1995). Furthermore, several parents reported that raising a child with a disability helped with their work performance, attitudes toward work, and helped them to be better problem solvers with difficult work situations, suggesting that these parents also experience family-to-work facilitation (FWF; Freedman et al., 1995). In addition to the respite time and facilitation that these parents receive from working, social support is also a resource these parents receive from the work domain.

Freedman et al. (1995) found that parents often relied on support from co-workers and supervisors to help meet their caregiving demands. Parents reported that co-workers and supervisors made it possible for them to take their children to appointments, take work home with them, and come to work late or leave early to attend to their children (Freedman et al., 1995). Similarly, in a qualitative study of 112 parents raising a child with ASD, Matthews et al. (2011) found that many parents relied on informal supervisory support to make

flexible work arrangements, rather than relying on formal policies in the organization. Additionally, George et al. (2008) found that parents raising children with a chronic illness highly valued support from their colleagues and described them as “accommodating, and helpful, especially in times of emergency, providing much needed comfort and reassurance” (p. 67). These findings demonstrate that social support derived from the workplace can be very beneficial in helping parents raising children with disabilities manage their family and work demands. Unfortunately, many parents do not receive this support in the workplace. This lack of support has important implications for these parents’ experience of work-family conflict.

George et al. (2008) found mixed results regarding satisfaction with employment among parents raising children with a chronic illness. Although a small percentage of parents reported contentment with their current employment, the majority of parents had serious concerns. Among these parents’ concerns with employment was their lack of flexible work arrangements available to them, employer attitudes towards their child’s disability, and leave time entitlements (George et al., 2008). Although all parents reported the need for work schedule flexibility to meet the needs of their child, only three parents had flexible work arrangements. Furthermore, one-half of the parents reported that their employers were unsympathetic toward their family circumstances and would make hurtful comments when parents would request a schedule change or time off to care for their child

(George et al., 2008). Many of these parents relied on leave entitlements to care for their child. Although this was a very helpful resource to some parents, others reported that even when they had entitlements, their supervisor would often make it difficult for them to utilize it in times of need. Similarly, Matthews et al. (2011) found that many parents indicated that their employer had no formal supports in place to help meet their needs of raising a child with ASD. In addition these parents were very critical of this lack of structural support, with one respondent stating

I can say, as I worked in Human Resources for many years that employers are generally not very supportive of workers with special needs children. Anyone I know that is looking for a job I always advise them not to say anything about having a child with autism or anything else. (p. 633)

These findings reveal that these parents are often lacking the flexible work arrangements and supervisor support they need to help meet the demands of raising a child with a disability. As these parents face extremely difficult demands in the home domain, work exacerbates the problems they face as they seek to find the resources needed to care for their child. This lack of employer support has detrimental outcomes on workforce involvement and perceived career trajectories for these parents. Because employers often do not provide the needed support, many opt out of the workforce, or face other negative career consequences.

Obtaining and maintaining employment among parents raising a child with ASD can be difficult for a few reasons. The time required to care for a child with ASD, combined with the cost and limited availability of specialized child care services can interfere with parents' paid employment (Cidav et al., 2012). In addition, given that treatment of ASD typically includes physical health treatments, behavioral therapy treatments, and educational services, parents often have to coordinate their child's treatment among multiple providers, which can be time consuming. Given these circumstances, it is clear that parents raising children with ASD require flexible work arrangements to meet the needs of their child's treatment. However, as has been demonstrated, many of these parents do not receive the flexibility they need in the workplace.

The economic cost of raising a child with ASD is also an added stressor. To examine the economic cost of ASD, Cidav et al. (2012) compared children with ASD with children who had other health limitations and children with no health limitations using a nationally representative sample. The findings revealed that mothers of children with ASD earned 35% less than mothers of children with other health limitations and 56% less than mothers of children with no health limitations. Additionally, family earnings among families raising a child with ASD were 21% less than parents raising a child with another health limitation, and 28% less than those with children who had no health limitation, even though both mothers and fathers of children with ASD

were more educated and older than the other two groups. Furthermore, mothers of children with ASD worked fewer hours than mothers of children without disabilities (Cidav et al., 2012). In addition to the economic costs associated with raising a child with a disability, parents of children with ASD also report challenges related to training and development in the work domain.

Matthews et al. (2011) found that raising a child with ASD had implications for parents' perceived career trajectories. Many of the respondents reported that they turned down promotions or took demotions, experienced voluntary or involuntary turnover, and perceived less training and development opportunities than their peers. Some parents reported that, although they would like to be promoted, they could not do so because their new work schedule would interfere with their childcare demands (Matthews et al., 2011).

As discussed, parents of children with ASD experience extreme difficulties integrating their family and work domains. As these parents face difficulties finding reliable child care, adequate health care services for their children, and coping with the challenges of raising a child with challenging behavioral and emotional disorders, they are also faced with the difficulty of finding flexible and supportive employers to help meet their child care demands. Given the benefits of working for parents raising children with disabilities (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Freedman et al., 1995), it is pertinent to identify ways in which these parents can balance their home and work



domains effectively. Thus, the present study will draw on work-family theories to help understand how these parents navigate through both domains and identify potential factors that can help mitigate WFC for this population. Two theories that are particularly relevant for understanding the realities of these families are boundary and conservation of resources theories.

### Work-Family Theories

To better understand how parents of children with ASD manage to integrate their work and family roles in the face of many stressors and demands, boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000) can provide guidance. Boundary theory examines the mechanisms people enact to create, maintain, and change boundaries in order to classify and simplify their world (Ashforth et al., 2000). For example, how does a father separate his work demands from his childcare demands in order to successfully accomplish both? In relation to work and family boundaries, boundary theory focuses on the physical, cognitive, and behavioral boundaries that exist between family and work domains that function to define them as distinct from one another. In addition, boundary theory examines the ease at which individuals can transfer cognitively and physically between the two domains (Ashforth et al., 2000; Hall & Richter, 1988). Although several researchers have examined inter-role conflict between the work and family domains, few have examined the nature of the transitions between domains. For example, how does a mother of a child with ASD manage to leave work unexpectedly to take her child to the

doctor? How does a father manage to be psychologically present at work when he spent the morning struggling with the behavioral challenges of his child? These frequent and, often unexpected, transitions can be difficult to accomplish. Boundary theory explains the mechanisms by which transitions between domains occur, as well as the subsequent benefits and consequences of inter-domain transitions. There are several characteristics of boundaries, and people differ in how their boundaries operate based on contextual factors, as well as individual preferences.

Boundaries are drawn around the roles enacted by individuals (e.g. parent, employee). Boundary theory focuses on the transitions between these roles (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014). Ashforth et al. (2000) further delineate transitions into macro and micro. Macro transitions are often infrequent, permanent transitions, such as a promotion or retirement. Micro transitions are frequent and recurring, such as commuting from work to home, or having to leave work to take a child to an appointment. Micro transitions have been the focus of work-family researchers as compared to macro transitions (Allen et al., 2014).

Micro transitions are defined by two key concepts, flexibility and permeability (Ashforth et al., 2000). Flexibility is the extent to which spatial and temporal boundaries are yielding (Allen et al., 2014). When a role has flexible boundaries, it can be enacted at various times and in different locations. For

example, a mother who works at home may be frequently called on to attend to her mother role during her workday.

Role permeability is the extent to which an individual can be physically present in one role's domain, but at the same time psychologically or behaviorally present in the other domain (Pleck, 1977). For example, while a father of a child with ASD is physically at work, he may also be worrying about his child's health, making him psychologically present in his parent role. Researchers have demonstrated that increased permeability of the work domain is associated with greater family-to-work conflict, while greater permeability of the family domain is associated with greater work-to-family conflict (Bulger, Matthews, & Hoffman, 2007; Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, 2010). Although role permeability has been found to relate to experiences of increased WFC, there is also evidence to support its facilitation between domains. Bulger et al. (2007) also found that work permeability was related to more family-to-work facilitation, while greater permeability of the family domain was related to more work-to-family facilitation.

A construct similar to role permeability is inter-domain transitions. Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, and Bulger (2010) argue that the construct of domain permeability is flawed with variations in the existing conceptualizations. For example, Ashforth et al. (2000) define domain permeability as "the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviorally involved in another

role” (p. 474). On the other hand, Clark (2000) defines permeability as “the degree to which elements from other domains may enter” (p. 756). The former definition focuses on the ability to be present in one domain while also present in another domain, whereas the latter focuses on the degree of spill over between domains. As a result of these inconsistencies, Matthews et al. (2010) conceptualized a new construct, inter-domain transitions, to replace domain permeability. Inter-domain transitions focus on the frequency with which the two domains (i.e. work and family) come in contact with one another (Matthews et al., 2010). Thus, the work-family interface can be studied under this conceptualization as the frequency of cognitive and physical transitions made between domains.

In their work on inter-domain transitions, Matthews et al. (2014) found that inter-domain transitions mediated the relationship between role overload and WFC. Thus, role overload led to experiences of WFC through inter-domain transitions. Furthermore, Matthews et al. (2010) found that frequent inter-domain transitions were associated with increased work-family conflict. More specifically, work-to-family transitions were positively correlated with increased family-to-work conflict and family-to-work transitions were positively correlated with increased work-to-family conflict (Matthews et al., 2010). This can be understood through the lens of conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Transitions from one domain (e.g. work) to another domain (e.g. family) remove resources from the work domain, interfering with

an individual's ability to carry out their responsibilities in the work domain. For example, a mother of a child with ASD who must frequently leave work to take her child to medical appointments will likely experience strain on her resources needed to carry out her responsibilities in the work domain. As a result, she may experience increased work-family conflict. It is important to note, however, that inter-domain transitions are not necessarily a source of inter-domain conflict. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as perceived incompatible demands between the work and family domains. In order for inter-domain transitions to lead to work-family conflict, they must also be cognitively appraised as a threat to existing resources (Matthews et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 2014). Furthermore, Matthews et al. (2014) note that work-family conflict and inter-domain transitions are empirically distinct, demonstrating a moderate correlation ( $r = .22$  to  $.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Matthews et al., 2010). Thus, understanding the mitigating factors of the relationship between inter-domain transitions and work-family conflict is critical because it will provide insight into those factors that can help reduce the occurrence of WFC.

In addition to micro transitions being influenced by flexibility and permeability, boundary theory also focuses on the importance of the degree of segmentation and integration between domains. Ashforth et al. (2000) suggest that any two roles fall on a continuum between complete segmentation and complete integration. Complete role segmentation is characterized by two

roles that have high contrast from one another and have inflexible and impermeable boundaries so they rarely come in contact with one another. Complete role integration is characterized by roles that have low contrast and flexible and permeable boundaries so they frequently come in contact with one another (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary theory proposes that there are costs and benefits to each end of the continuum and individuals rarely have roles that are completely segmented or completely integrated. The benefit of having segmented roles is that there is less role blurring, however challenges are presented because transitioning between highly segmented roles becomes challenging (e.g. “switching mental gears”). The benefit of having integrated roles is that transitions between the two are not as drastic as those between segmented roles, however role blurring becomes a challenge as a result of the frequent inter-domain transitions.

When considering parents of children with ASD, it is likely that they require high integration between their work and family roles in order to meet the needs of their child. Given the stress associated with caring for a child with ASD, as well as the high amount of required medical and school appointments, parents of children with ASD must transition (physically and cognitively) between their work and family roles. As a result, if the work domain lacks the flexibility and permeability that is needed to fulfill their childcare needs, it is likely that they will experience conflict between the domains due to the necessity of having to make frequent transitions.

Furthermore, through the lens of conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), parents of children with ASD may rely on inter-domain transitions as a resource in order to meet their excess demands in the home domain. More specifically, these parents will draw on resources from the work domain to meet their needs in the family domain. For example, a mother may use her lunch break at work to take her child to a medical appointment. Although these frequent transitions may lead to increased perceptions of work-family conflict, there are likely mitigating factors that will determine whether an individual will appraise inter-domain transitions as stressful or not. The following sections will discuss these potential factors.

#### Segmentation-Integration Preferences

As discussed in the previous section on boundary theory, work-home boundary management is influenced by environmental and individual factors. Environmental factors may include specific workplace policies that allow for individuals to integrate their work and family domains, such as being able to take personal calls while at work. Furthermore, individuals differ in their preferences toward integrating or segmenting their work and family domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Kreiner, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996). For example, Nippert-Eng (1996) found that some individuals preferred to segment their domains by keeping separate calendars for work and home and not discussing one domain while in the other. On the other hand, some individuals preferred to integrate both domains, essentially breaking down boundaries that existed

between them. Those who preferred integrating their domains would bring co-workers home for dinner, hang family pictures in their work office, and discuss family life while at work (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Thus, those who prefer to integrate their domains have permeable boundaries, whereas those who prefer to segment their domains do not (Ashforth et al., 2000).

A shortfall of the WFC literature is an over reliance on understanding situational factors that influence whether individuals will experience WFC, while not attending to possible individual characteristics that can determine whether an individual will experience this conflict (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). In response to this need, Kreiner (2006) examined the relationship between individual's preferences for segmentation of the work and family domains and the extent to which the workplace supplied the resources necessary to segment or integrate the two domains, in order to determine how the interaction between individual and situational factors influence WFC. Kreiner (2006) argues that individuals vary in their degree of segmentation preferences and organizations vary in the degree to which they allow individuals to segment or integrate their domains. Thus, through a person-environment (P-E) perspective, individuals will experience the best fit when their preferences of segmentation or integration are matched with the organization's environment. That is, if an individual prefers to integrate their work and family domains and the organization supplies opportunities to integrate one's family life into their work context, then the individual will



experience good fit. On the other hand, if there is incongruence between one's preferences and the organizational context, then the individual will experience a misfit (Kreiner, 2006). Furthermore, Kreiner (2006) examined the consequences of this incongruence and found that individuals experienced increased WFC and stress when there was a misfit between their preferences and the organizational context. These findings highlight the importance of considering both individual and environmental factors when examining how individuals manage their work and family domains.

When examining parents of children with ASD, understanding this dynamic interplay between individual and environmental factors is crucial. As parents of children with ASD likely require highly integrated domains in order to meet the needs of their children, understanding their preferences for integration or segmentation can provide guidance in understanding their experiences of stress and WFC. More specifically, because the home environment for these parents requires high integration of domains, the degree to which they actually prefer to integrate or segment their domains can lead to experiences of increased or decreased stress and WFC. Thus, the present study will explore segmentation preferences as a mitigating factor of the inter-domain transitions-appraisal of transitions relationship to assess its impact on WFC and parenting stress.

## Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB)

In addition to segmentation preferences, family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) could be an important mitigating factor of the inter-domain transitions-appraisal of transitions relationship. FSSB is defined as “those enacted behaviors exhibited by supervisors that are supportive of families” (p. 182; Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, 2007). Hammer et al. (2007) developed the FSSB construct in order to understand the gap in research revealing that despite the increase in organizational interest in work and family concerns, work and family policies were not effective in reducing employees’ experiences of WFC (Kossek, 2005). For example, many of the family-friendly policies (e.g. dependent care assistance) in place were highly underutilized by employees (Kossek, 2005). Additionally, even when these policies were utilized there was evidence to support that these policies actually increased family-to-work conflict, rather than reduced it (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). Thus, FSSB was developed to address these gaps in order to guide our understanding of the processes by which formal organizational policies can actually help employees to balance their work and family domains.

Family-supportive supervisory behaviors is a multilevel model addressing organizational, supervisor, and employee level factors (Hammer et al., 2007). More specifically, FSSB links organizational practices, policies, and culture with supervisor behaviors and, in turn, employee perceptions of

supervisor support and experiences of WFC and work-family enrichment (WFE; Hammer et al., 2007). The organizational factors (i.e. culture, climate, practices, and policies) are purported to impact FSSB. FSSB then influences employee perceptions of supervisor support for the family domain and employee experiences of WFC and WFE. Finally, employee reports of WFC and WFE are expected to influence organizational, individual, and family outcomes (Hammer et al., 2007).

The FSSB model addresses many of the gaps in the research by explicating the process by which organizational level factors can actually have an impact on individual employees. As demonstrated in the literature, simply having family-friendly policies and practices in place is necessary, but insufficient in and of itself (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Hammer et al., 2005). Employees must also perceive that the organizational environment is supportive of their work-family balance. That is, the policies and practices should be aligned with what the organization values and supports. Allen (2001) demonstrated that perceptions of a family-supportive organization have a stronger relationship with work and family balance than do objective measures of family-friendly policies. According to FSSB a critical component to this is that the employees perceive that their supervisor is supportive of the family-friendly policies. Thus, in order for employees to take advantage of organizational policies, they must feel that their organization and supervisor are supportive of their work-family balance (Allen, 2001). According to

Hammer et al. (2007), supervisors are the “link” between formal and informal organizational supports, such that supervisors have the discretion to implement and support the organizational policies and practices. These family supportive supervisor behaviors are further broken down into four dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling behaviors, and creative work-family management (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009).

The emotional support dimension of FSSB focuses on the employee perceptions that they are cared for by their supervisor. More specifically, emotional supervisor support focuses on the supervisor’s awareness of the employee’s “family and personal life commitments” (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 840). This includes the extent to which supervisors “make employees feel comfortable discussing family-related issues, express concern for the way that work responsibilities affect family, and demonstrate respect, understanding, sympathy, and sensitivity in regard to family responsibilities” (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 841). Thus, the emotional support dimension focuses on the supervisor’s sensitivity towards employee family needs.

The role modeling dimension focuses on the extent to which supervisors model behaviors that employees perceive will lead to a healthy work-life balance (Hammer et al., 2009). The role modeling dimension is based on social learning theory, which states that a large portion of human learning is obtained through observations of others (Bandura, 1977). Thus,

supervisors can be a useful resource to employees in demonstrating strategies to achieve work-family balance.

The instrumental support dimension focuses on reactive supervisor responses to employee's work and family needs on a day-to-day basis (Hammer et al., 2009). Thus, it is the extent to which supervisors provide resources on a day-to-day basis that helps employees successfully manage their work and family demands. For example, this includes responding to schedule requests for flexibility and interpreting organizational policies. Thus, this focuses on "supervisors' routine reactions to manage day-to-day employee scheduling conflicts" (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 842).

Lastly, creative work-family management focuses on proactive, restructuring of the work in order to aid in employees effectiveness in balancing work and family demands (Hammer et al., 2009). Whereas instrumental support is reactive, creative work-family management involves strategic planning that helps employees be more effective in both their work and family domains. According to Hammer et al. (2009) creative work-family management behaviors "can involve major changes in the time, place, and the way that work is done that simultaneously balances sensitivity to employees' work-family responsibilities with company, customer, and coworker needs" (p. 842). Thus, these behaviors include a consideration of how the supervisor can best accommodate the needs of employees, while taking the larger system into account.

These family-supportive supervisor behaviors have been linked to important employee and organizational outcomes. For instance, FSSB has been linked to employee work-family conflict, job satisfaction, physical health, and turnover intentions above and beyond general supervisor support (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011; Hammer et al., 2009). Thus, there is strong support for the FSSB construct and the important outcomes it is related to.

In the context of parents of children with ASD, a supervisor who demonstrates family-supportive behaviors is critical in helping meet the demands of work and family. Matthews et al. (2011) demonstrated that parents of children with ASD often rely on informal supervisory support to help meet their childcare demands, especially when the organization does not have formal policies in place. Furthermore, those parents who did not receive formal or informal supports from their organization expressed resentment towards their organization's lack of concern for their family needs (Matthews et al., 2011). In addition, George et al. (2008) found that many employers and supervisors were unsympathetic towards their family demands and this lack of sympathy caused many problems for parents of children with ASD as they sought to balance their work and family demands. Taken together, it is evident that parents of children with ASD require supervisors who demonstrate family-supportive behaviors. These behaviors not only help these parents balance their work and family lives by providing increased flexibility and

creative problem solving when a conflict arises, but also provide much needed emotional support. Thus, having a supervisor who demonstrates FSSB is an invaluable resource to parents of children with ASD, as it can help make balancing the excess demands in the home domain with work more manageable.

### Present Study

In the present study, I will examine the relationships between inter-domain transitions, appraisal of inter-domain transitions, and WFC and parenting stress. For a depiction of the model, please see Figure 1. Hypothesized direct effects are indicated with solid arrows and hypothesized indirect effects are indicated with dashed arrows. I propose that the relationships between inter-domain transitions and WFC and parenting stress will be partially mediated by an appraisal of inter-domain transitions, such that inter-domain transitions will lead to WFC and parenting stress through appraisal of inter-domain transitions. I propose this relationship will be partially mediated because inter-domain transitions remove resources from one domain to another, regardless of the appraisal of transitions, which may still influence WFC and parenting stress. Furthermore, I hypothesize that the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of transitions will be moderated by segmentation preferences and FSSB. More specifically, it is proposed that if an individual prefers to segment their work and family domains, inter-domain transitions will be appraised as stressful which, in turn,

will increase WFC and parenting stress. Furthermore, I propose that the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of transitions will be moderated by FSSB, such that having a supervisor who demonstrates FSSB will lead one to appraise inter-domain transitions as less stressful and will, in turn, reduce WFC and parenting stress. Lastly, I propose that FSSB will predict WFC, such that having a supportive supervisor will be related with reduced WFC.

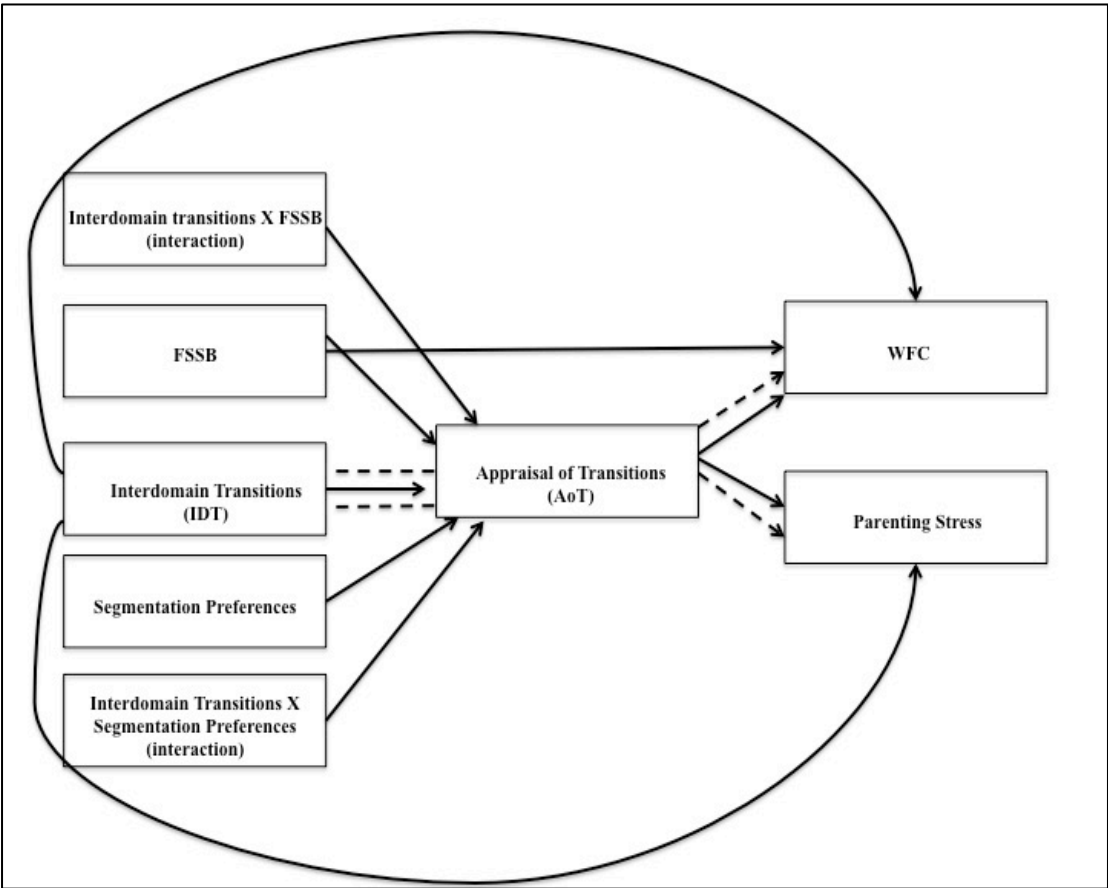


Figure 1. This Figure Represents the Hypothesized Model



## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODS

#### Sample

The present study used survey data collected from working parents/caregivers of children with ASD. The participants were recruited through the University Center of Developmental Disabilities (UCDD) at California State University, San Bernardino and through online support groups for parents of children with ASD. The final sample included 121 participants. Of those who responded to the demographic questions, the majority of respondents were female (85.3%) and mothers (81%). The average age of participants was 40.4 and the ethnicity of this sample was 73.3% Caucasian, 18.1% Hispanic, and all other ethnicities made up less than 4% of the sample. Further, 82% of participants were married or in a committed relationship, 87.9% were the primary caregiver of their child with autism, and 51.3% were the primary financial provider for their family. The majority of participants worked full-time (66.4%) and 73% of participants worked 30 or more hours per week.

#### Procedure

The participants who were recruited through the UCDD at California State University, San Bernardino were invited to participate at their weekly support group meetings. These parents were given a brief verbal introduction

to the study and were asked to complete a paper survey. Most participants completed the survey onsite, however a small percentage of participants took the survey home and returned it the following week. For participants who were recruited through various online support groups, a brief study description and link to the electronic survey were posted. All responses were anonymous and the survey took approximately 15-25 minutes to complete.

### Measures

The final survey contained six scales. Although each scale consisted of two or more subscales, the subscales were combined to create one scale score for each variable. This is due to the small sample size in this study, which did not warrant analyzing the subscales of each variable. In addition, participants were asked a series of demographic questions regarding individual, family, and work characteristics. For a listing of the demographic questionnaire, refer to Appendix A.

#### Inter-Domain Transitions and Appraisal of Inter-Domain Transitions

Inter-domain transitions was measured using the scale developed by Matthews et al. (2010). Inter-domain transitions occur when an individual must physically or cognitively deal with an issue from home while at work and vice versa. Both scales were measured using a 6-point frequency scale using the following format range: 0 = never to 5 = 5 or more times per week. The family-to-work transitions scale included five items such as “how often have you changed plans with your family to meet work related responsibilities?” The

work-to-family transitions scale included six items such as “how often have you arrived to work late so you could deal with family demands?” The reliability of this scale was .80. Please refer to Appendix B for a complete listing of this scale

The Hassles Scale included a list of several daily hassles an individual may experience along with a measure of intensity of each daily hassle.

Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, and Lazarus (1981) measured the intensity of daily hassles using a 3-point scale (1 = somewhat severe, 2 = moderately severe, 3 = extremely severe). Measuring daily hassles has demonstrated that daily annoyances contribute largely to an individual’s adaptational outcomes above and beyond major life event stressors (Kanner et al., 1981). Kanner et al. (1981) note that in determining the influence of daily hassles on psychological outcomes, it is important to assess the degree to which individuals assess these hassles as bothersome. Similarly, inter-domain transitions occur frequently and the extent to which they are appraised as distressing to individuals can be measured similarly to the measurement of intensity of daily hassles.

Drawing from the measurement of daily hassles (Kanner et al., 1981), appraisal of inter-domain transitions was assessed using a measurement of distress resulting from inter-domain transitions. Thus, each inter-domain transition item also included a scale assessing the amount of distress associated with each transition. This was measured on a 4-point scale: 1 = not

stressful at all, 2 = somewhat stressful, 3 = moderately stressful, and 4 = extremely stressful. The reliability for this scale was .87. For a complete listing of the scale, please refer to Appendix B.

#### Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict was measured using the measure developed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000). This measure contains 18 items with six dimensions: one dimension for each strain-, time-, and behavior-based strain for both work-to-family (WIF) and family-to-work conflict (FIW). The response item format are on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability for this scale was .88. For a complete listing of the scale, please refer to Appendix C.

#### Segmentation Preferences

Segmentation preferences were measured using the scale developed by Kreiner (2006). This measure assesses the extent to which individuals prefer to segment their work and family domains. The scale contains four items measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. An example item is "I don't like to have to think about work while I'm at home." Furthermore, because the segmentation preferences scale only measures preferences for segmenting the work domain from the family domain, four items were developed to capture preferences for segmenting the family domain from the work domain. A retranslation task was conducted prior to using this scale in the study and the results provided preliminary evidence

for an eight-item scale consisting of two subscales. The reliability of this scale was .86. For a complete listing of the scale, please refer to Appendix D.

#### Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors

Family-supportive supervisor behaviors were measured using the multi-dimensional scale developed by Hammer et al. (2009). The scale contains four dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling behaviors, and creative work-family management. This is a 14-item measure and items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability of this scale was .96. For a complete listing of the scale, please refer to Appendix E.

#### Parenting Stress

Parenting stress was measured using the Parenting Stress Index Short-form (PSI-SF) scale developed by Abidin (1995). The PSI-SF is a self-report measure and assesses parents' perceptions of their interactions with their children, their child's difficult behaviors, and the extent to which they feel "trapped" from their parenting demands. This is a 36-item measure and consists of three sub-dimensions: parenting distress, parent-child dysfunction interaction, and difficult child. Thirty-three of the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The other three items had different response options, which can be viewed in Appendix F along with the complete listing of the scale. The reliability of this scale was .91.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

The hypothesized model was tested with path analysis using Mplus 7.0 software (Muthèn & Muthèn, 1998-2011). The full model is presented in Figure 2. Solid lines represent the hypothesized direct effects between measured variables, and the hypothesized indirect effect values are presented below. Non-statistically significant paths are indicated in grey. The hypothesized model examines the direct and indirect relationship of inter-domain transitions on WFC and parenting stress through appraisal of inter-domain transitions. Further, the moderating effect of FSSB and segmentation preferences on the inter-domain transitions-appraisal of inter-domain transitions relationship is examined.

#### Data Screening

To assess the missing data, a missing values analysis was conducted. Two variables, appraisal of transitions and parenting stress, were missing more than 5% of responses. However, based on follow-up t tests, it was determined that this data was missing completely at random. Therefore, a pairwise deletion was conducted for 10 missing cases.

Higher scores represented more frequent inter-domain transitions, more severe appraisal of transitions, increased WFC, and increased parenting stress. Further, higher scores on the FSSB scale represented positive

perceptions about family-supportive supervision, and higher scores on the segmentation preferences scale represented preferences to segment work and family domains. Composite scores were calculated for all six scales.

Two univariate outliers ( $Z > 3.3$ ) were found, one on the inter-domain transitions scale and one on the segmentation preferences scale, and both were removed from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 121 participants. Skewness and kurtosis statistics were examined and none of the distributions were severe enough to warrant transformation, as none of the skewness or kurtosis statistics were significantly different from zero using the commonly used alpha level of .001 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Lastly, the assumptions of homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were not violated. Refer to Table 1 for a listing of bivariate correlations between study variables.

#### Model Estimation

Robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimation was used to estimate the model, which corrects the chi-square and fit indices for multivariate non-normality. There was moderate support for model fit, Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  (7, N = 121) = 19.26, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .12, 90% CI [.06 .19], SRMR = .04. Although some researchers suggest a properly specified model has a 2:1 chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio, others have suggested that a 3:1 or 5:1 ratio may be indicative of good fit. Furthermore, Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest that a CFI value above .90 indicates an adequate fitting model. Although the RMSEA was higher than what is expected for an acceptable

model, this may be due to the combination of small degrees of freedom and small sample size. Kenny, Kaniskan, and McCoach (2014) estimate that the probability of obtaining a RMSEA value above .08 for a properly specified model with sample sizes close to 100 and degrees of freedom between 5 and 10 is .11 to .17. Thus, this fit statistic, though commonly reported, may not be an accurate index for this analysis. For the SRMR, values less than .08 are desired (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Taken together, the data adequately fits the hypothesized model.

#### Direct and Indirect Effects

As seen in Figure 2, inter-domain transitions, FSSB, and segmentation preferences significantly ( $p < .05$ ) predicted appraisal of transitions. However, the interaction between inter-domain transitions and segmentation preferences and the interaction between inter-domain transitions and FSSB were not significant predictors of appraisal of transitions. Further, appraisal of transitions was a significant predictor of both WFC and parenting stress. Inter-domain transitions was not a significant direct predictor of WFC and parenting stress; however there was a significant indirect effect of inter-domain transitions on WFC (standardized coefficient = .31) and parenting stress (standardized coefficient = .29) through appraisal of transitions, as hypothesized. In addition, FSSB was not a significant direct predictor of WFC. Although not hypothesized, there was a significant indirect effect of FSSB (standardized coefficient = -.08) and segmentation preferences (standardized



coefficient = .12) on WFC through appraisal of transitions. There were also significant indirect effects of FSSB (standardized coefficient = -.09) and segmentation preferences (standardized coefficient = .13) on parenting stress through appraisal of transitions.

### Model Modifications

Two recommended modification indices that would improve the fit of the model included segmentation preferences and the interaction of inter-domain transitions and FSSB predicting WFC. The interaction is more theoretically sound and was added first, which improved the fit indices (CFI = .95, RMSEA = .11, CI 90% [.03 .18], SRMR = .04). The added direct path was statistically significant (standardized coefficient = .13) and all other paths, both direct and indirect, remained relatively the same with this addition. A further examination of the interaction revealed that there was a stronger, positive relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC for those who reported higher levels of FSSB. Refer to Figure 4 for a depiction of the interaction.

Following this modification, segmentation preferences was added as a direct predictor of WFC. The addition of this path greatly improved the fit of the model (Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  [5, N = 121] = 2.59,  $p$  = .76, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00, CI 90% [.00 .09], SRMR = .02). In addition, this path was statistically significant (standardized coefficient = .27), and the addition of this path resulted in inter-domain transitions becoming a significant predictor of

WFC (standardized coefficient = .29). Figure 3 displays the model with post hoc modifications included.

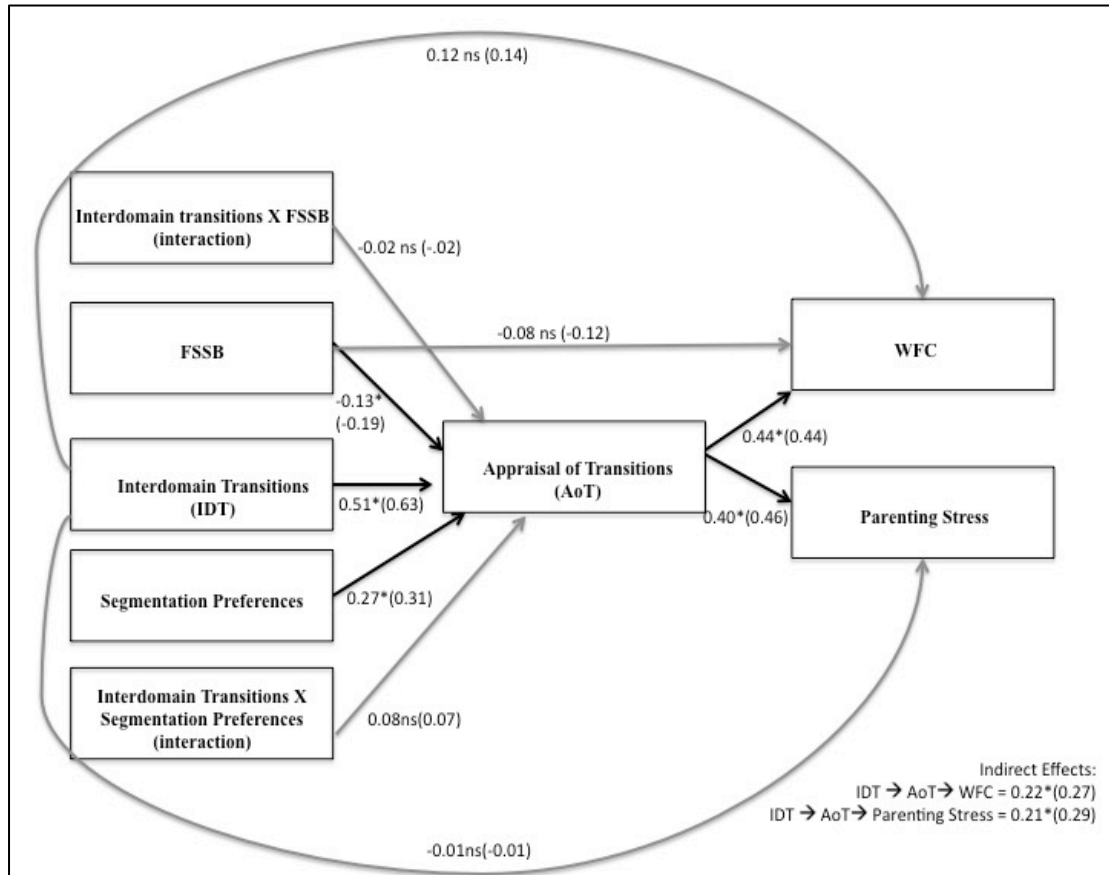


Figure 2. This Figure Represents the Initial Hypothesized Model Prior to Modifications

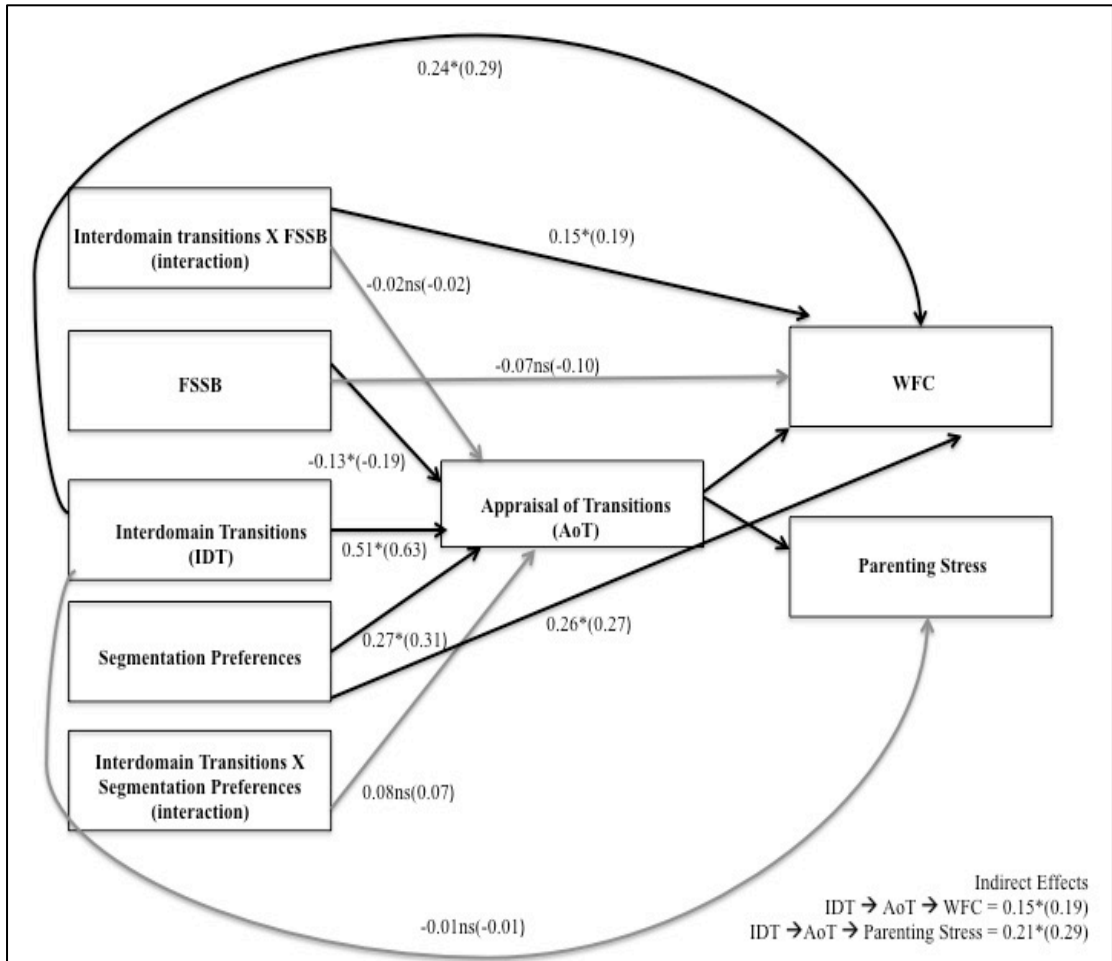


Figure 3. This Figure Represents the Hypothesized Model with Modifications Added

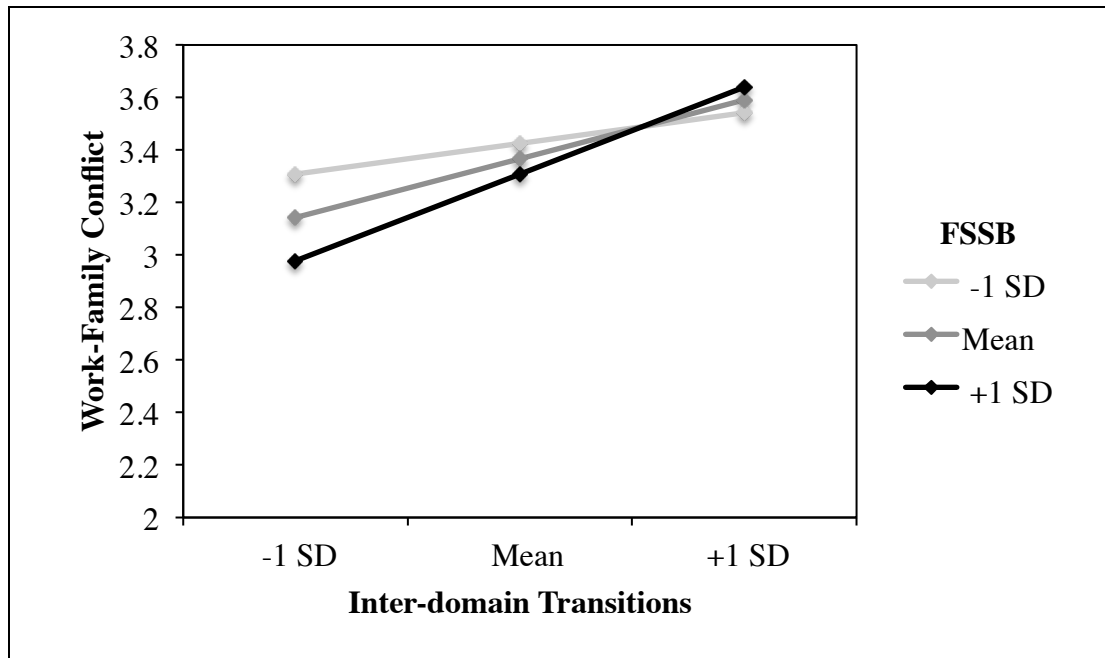


Figure 4. Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors Significantly Moderated the Relationship between Inter-Domain Transitions and Work-Family Conflict, Standardized Beta = 0.15,  $p < .05$ . There was a Stronger Positive Relationship between Inter-Domain Transitions and Work-Family Conflict for Participants with High Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors than Participants with Low Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations among Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Inter-domain Transitions	2.70	.81	.80					
FSSB	3.11	.95	-.26**	.96				
Segmentation Preferences	4.00	.69	-.07	-.14	.86			
Appraisal of Transitions	2.12	.65	.66**	-.38**	.26**	.87		
Work-Family Conflict	3.31	.66	.46**	-.33**	.33**	.57**	.88	
Parenting Stress	3.10	.57	.30**	-.21*	.12	.43**	.43**	.91

Note. N=121. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  listed on the diagonal. \*\* Denotes correlations significant at the  $p < .01$  level; \* denotes correlations significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between inter-domain transitions and work-family conflict and parenting stress among parents of children with ASD. Further, this study aimed to assess FSSB and segmentation preferences as potential mitigating factors of the positive relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC and parenting stress. Frequent inter-domain transitions, defined as physical transitions between the work and family domains, have been found to relate to increased experiences of WFC (Matthews et al., 2010). Parents of children with ASD must frequently transition from their work and family domains in order to meet their unique caregiving demands. This study aimed at identifying factors that mitigate the conflict and stress that arises from frequent transitions in order to help parents of children with ASD more effectively balance their work and family domains.

Inter-domain transitions require individuals to remove cognitive and/or physical resources from one domain (e.g. work) and apply them to another domain (e.g. home), which can be a source of conflict and stress for individuals, as explained by conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). One additional goal of the present study was to demonstrate that, although inter-domain transitions can lead to increased experiences of WFC and parenting stress simply because they remove available resources, there is a cognitive appraisal that mediates this relationship. More specifically,

individuals who appraise inter-domain transitions as more stressful may be more likely to experience increased conflict and stress.

Overall, study findings provided partial support for study hypotheses. First, results demonstrated that individuals who appraised their transitions as more stressful also reported increased levels of WFC and parenting stress. Further, it was demonstrated that the relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC was partially mediated by appraisal of transitions. Thus, although inter-domain transitions directly predicted WFC, a significant amount of variance in this relationship was captured through transition appraisals. Contrary to what was predicted, there was not a direct effect of inter-domain transitions on parenting stress.

These findings are consistent with research conducted by Kanner et al. (1981), who found that small, daily stressors have a profound impact on one's mental well-being above and beyond major life crises. Further, Kanner et al. (1981) demonstrated the importance of assessing individuals' appraisals of these small, but frequent stressors to determine the impact on well-being. Similarly, the present study illustrated that, although inter-domain transitions are not major stressors, when they occur frequently, they impact mental well-being by influencing WFC and parenting stress.

These findings also provide guidance for understanding how inter-domain transitions influence WFC and parenting stress. Conservations of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) argues that this relationship is observed

because transitioning from the work domain to the home domain removes available resources to carry out the necessary tasks at work and vice versa. Further, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined WFC as an individual's perception that the demands between work and family are incompatible in some respect. Thus, although inter-domain transitions can lead to WFC and parenting stress by removing resources, individuals' appraisal or perception of these transitions may be a more important predictor of whether or not these transitions will actually result in increased WFC and parenting stress. From this perspective, individuals differ in how they appraise transitions based on personal characteristics, as well as various situational factors. One situational factor that was examined in the present study was the support parents received from their supervisors that demonstrated concern for family needs.

Family-supportive supervisor behaviors were predicted to moderate the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of inter-domain transitions. FSSB have been shown to relate to reduced experiences of WFC because support from one's supervisor is an added resource that can aid an individual in meeting the demands of both work and family (Hammer et al., 2007). As a result, it was expected that the added resource of FSSB would moderate the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of transitions, such that if an individual reported higher levels of FSSB, they would appraise transitions as less stressful, resulting in reduced experiences of WFC and parenting stress. Although the moderating effect of FSSB on the



inter-domain transitions-appraisal of transitions was not significant, FSSB was a significant direct predictor of how one appraised inter-domain transitions. Consequently, these results suggest that the strength of the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of transitions does not change based on differing levels of perceived FSSB; however, FSSB does significantly predict transition appraisals. This non-significant interaction effect could have been observed because the predictors themselves explained a high amount of variance in appraisal of transitions (57%), leaving little variance to be explained by the interaction. The finding that FSSB significantly predicted transition appraisals is critical because appraisal of transitions was associated with increased WFC and parenting stress as demonstrated through the significant, positive direct effects with WFC and parenting stress. Thus, FSSB can serve as a mitigating situational factor for these parents as they seek to balance their work and family demands.

Although FSSB was not a significant direct predictor of WFC, there were significant indirect effects of FSSB on WFC and parenting stress through appraisal of transitions. FSSB served as a mitigating factor of WFC and parenting stress by reducing the severity of appraisals for individuals. Previous research has suggested that FSSB is directly related to important employee outcomes, such as WFC (Hammer et al., 2011; Hammer et al., 2009); however, these studies did not assess how one's appraisal of transitions influences this relationship. Consequently, although FSSB was not a

significant direct predictor of WFC, as previous research would suggest, the added resource of having a family-supportive supervisor was associated with less severe cognitive appraisals of transitions and, in turn, reduced WFC and parenting stress. Taken together, these findings provided strong support that FSSB served as a mitigating factor for experiences of conflict and stress for parents of children with ASD, and provided further insight into understanding the mechanisms by which FSSB influenced WFC and parenting stress.

The added path from the interaction of FSSB and inter-domain transitions to WFC is supported theoretically by conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). FSSB could be an added resource that would mitigate the strength of the relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC; for higher levels of FSSB, the relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC would be weaker. However, based on the information gathered from probing the interaction, results were contrary to this perspective. The interaction revealed that the strength of the positive relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC was actually greater for individuals who reported higher levels of FSSB. Although this finding was unexpected, research on overcommitment (Morin, Vandenberghe, Turmel, Madore, & Maïano, 2013) has demonstrated that during times of stress, employees who have stronger attachments to their organization or leaders may experience more negative outcomes than those who do not have close relationships with their supervisors.

This study also examined the mitigating effects of segmentation preferences on WFC and parenting stress. Segmentation preference is the extent to which individuals prefer to keep their work and family domains separate (Kreiner, 2006). The unique caregiving demands of parents of children with ASD require these parents to have highly integrated domains (Matthews et al., 2011). Thus, it was hypothesized that the relationship between inter-domain transitions and appraisal of transitions would be moderated by segmentation preferences. The moderating effect was non-significant, which is possibly due to the high amount of variance that was explained in transition appraisals by the predictors; however there was a significant direct effect of segmentation preferences on appraisal of transitions. Those who preferred to segment their domains appraised transitions as more stressful than those who preferred to integrate their domains.

Through the lens of boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), transitions are a boundary-spanning activity where individuals are forced to handle activities from one domain while being physically present in the other. As a result, transitions are likely to be appraised as more stressful for individuals who prefer to segment their domains because these transitions mark a point in time where the work and family domains come in contact with one another. Further, the nature of the transitions could influence how stressful individuals who prefer to segment their domains appraise transitions to be. For example, some transitions may be abrupt, such as having to leave work to pick a sick

child up from school, whereas other transitions are planned, such as the commute home from work. It is possible that planned transitions are less stressful for individuals who prefer to segment their domains because there is perceived behavioral control over the transitions, as compared to more abrupt transitions that don't allow individuals to cognitively prepare for the boundary crossing. Given this unique population of parents of children with ASD, transitions are more likely to be abrupt given the unpredictable nature of ASD. An area for future research would be to examine how the nature of transitions may impact appraisal of transitions differentially for those who prefer to segment their domains as compared to those who prefer to integrate them.

The second addition to the model was a direct path from segmentation preferences to WFC. Adding this path revealed a positive relationship between segmentation preferences and WFC, such that individuals who preferred to segment their domains were more likely to experience increased WFC. The extent to which an individual prefers to segment or integrate their domains has implications for work-family balance; however, the relationship has been inconsistent. Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2006) found that individuals who preferred to integrate their domains experienced increased family-to-work conflict, whereas McNall, Scott, and Nicklin (2015) found that individuals who preferred to integrate their domains experienced more work-to-family enrichment. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have suggested that individuals who prefer to integrate their domains will experience increased work-family

facilitation because resources gained from one domain can more easily transfer to the other domain. From this perspective, individuals who prefer to integrate their domains are more likely to experience positive work-family balance because they may gain positive resources from one domain that help them to meet their demands in another domain.

Although this study did not assess work-family facilitation, it is possible that individuals who preferred to segment their domains experienced more WFC because their boundary management preferences did not afford them the opportunity to apply resources gained from one domain to another. Furthermore, given this unique population, raising a child with ASD may provide resources that aid parents in carrying out their work tasks. Consistent with this, Freedman et al. (1995) found that many parents reported that raising a child with a disability made them better problem solvers at work and helped them to better cope with difficult work situations. Taken together, raising a child with ASD can provide valuable resources to parents to help them meet their demands in the work domain; however, individuals who prefer to segment their domains may not have the opportunity to transfer these resources across boundaries, which may result in increased experiences of WFC.

The results of this study have demonstrated that, although frequent inter-domain transitions can be a source of stress and conflict for individuals, it is important to examine how individuals appraise these transitions in order to understand their impact on WFC and parenting stress. Further, this study

demonstrated that there are personal and situational mitigating factors to this relationship. More specifically, FSSB and segmentation preferences were two factors that influenced how individuals appraised their transitions and, in turn, impacted their experiences of WFC and parenting stress.

Parents of children with ASD experience many challenges in meeting their unique caregiving demands, while also balancing the demands of employment. As a result, understanding factors that can help these parents more effectively balance work and family is critical. This study provided many opportunities for future research to examine ways to help parents of children with ASD meet their caregiving demands, while also maintaining paid employment.

#### Future Research

Future research should examine the directionality of inter-domain transitions (i.e. family-to-work and work-to-family) and their impact on family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict. Matthews et al. (2010) found that work-to-family transitions were related to increased family-to-work conflict and vice versa. Given that parents of children with ASD likely experience the most role overload in the family domain because of their caregiving demands, it would be meaningful to examine the directionality of the transitions and their impact on conflict and stress. For example, it is possible that frequent work-to-family transitions have a stronger impact on parenting stress than family-to-work transitions. Additionally, certain mitigating factors may be more

important at reducing specific types of conflict and stress. For example, FSSB may be a more important mitigating factor for work-to-family conflict, whereas other forms of support, such as spousal support, may be more important for reducing family-to-work conflict and parenting stress. Thus, future research should examine the directionality of transitions and their potential differential impact on WFC and parenting stress for parents of children with ASD, in order to gain a better understanding of how these relationships operate.

The present study demonstrated the importance of segmentation preferences and FSSB as factors that reduced the severity of appraisals of inter-domain transitions. Future research should examine other potentially mitigating factors. These include other forms of social support, such as spousal and coworker support, various organizational supports, such as the availability of resources aimed at helping employees balance work and family (e.g. telecommuting, flextime, childcare, etc.), and other personal characteristics, including personality. A criticism of the work-family literature is an overreliance on examining situational determinants of WFC, while not attending to important individual differences factors (Allen et al., 2012; Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007). A recent meta-analysis, however, has demonstrated that dispositional factors are important predictors of WFC (Allen et al., 2012). As a result, future research should examine how dispositional factors, including personality traits, operate to influence WFC and parenting stress for this population.

Lastly, it would be beneficial for future research to examine how the nature of transitions influences experiences of WFC and parenting stress for individuals who prefer to segment their domains. As mentioned previously, abrupt transitions may be appraised as more stressful for individuals who prefer to segment their domains. This could be possible because abrupt transitions do not allow individuals to cognitively prepare for their transitions and may be seen as a lack of behavioral control over boundary management. Understanding the nature of transitions would provide greater insight as to why transitions are appraised as more stressful by parents of children with ASD who prefer to segment their domains. This relationship may be observed for all individuals who have to balance work and family demands and prefer to segment their domains; however, it would be interesting for future research to compare how segmentations preferences influence appraisal of transitions differentially for parents with challenging caregiving demands versus those who do not face these challenges. There could be potential differences because raising children with disabilities requires high integration of domains, which could have implications for the stress and conflict that is experienced for those who prefer to segment their domains.

### Implications

The results of the present study revealed that the organizational context factor, FSSB, mitigated the stress parents of children with ASD experience because of frequent inter-domain transitions. As demonstrated, increased



FSSB was associated with less severe appraisals of transitions.

Consequently, one implication for organizations is that they can help reduce the stress these parents face by training supervisors to be more supportive of family needs, particularly for parents who have challenging caregiving demands.

Hammer et al. (2011) demonstrated that training aimed at increasing supervisors' use of family-supportive behaviors was effective at reducing employees' experiences of WFC. The FSSB training utilized by Hammer et al. (2011) focused on the four critical dimensions of the FSSB construct: emotional support, instrumental support, role-modeling behaviors, and creative work-family management. The purpose of the training is to develop supervisors' empathy for their employees' family needs, while helping them to role model their own effective work-family balance strategies and identify ways to restructure the work to help employees meet their work and family challenges.

Hammer et al. (2005) explained that simply having family-friendly organizational policies and practices is insufficient in helping to reduce employees' experiences of WFC. Rather, employees must perceive that their organization supports their need for work-family balance. Consequently, FSSB demonstrates to employees that their family needs are important to the organization and that supervisors are willing and able to assist with work-family challenges when possible. This is particularly important for parents

of children with ASD in reducing the stress they may experience because of their frequent transitions. Thus, organizations can develop and implement FSSB trainings for leaders in order to improve their ability to demonstrate family-supportive behaviors.

The results of the present study also revealed that segmentation preferences mitigated the severity of appraisal of transitions and WFC. Individuals who preferred to segment their domains appraised their transitions as more stressful and experienced increased WFC. Although we tend to conceptualize individual preferences as constant, it is important to consider the possibility that they can be changed (Kreiner, 2006). An implication for organizations is that they can help parents of children with ASD balance work and family by educating them on how their preferences for segmentation may influence their experiences of conflict and stress. It is likely that these parents do not realize how their preferences influence their ability to effectively balance their domains. By communicating these processes, individuals may be more likely to develop towards a preference for domain integration. These conversations could take place in the context of a support group for parents of children with special needs, or through conversations with supervisors.

Overall, this study demonstrated that parents of children with ASD transition frequently between their work and family domains in order to meet their challenging caregiving demands. Although these transitions can be a source of stress for parents, the present study illustrated that organizations

can play a vital role in reducing employees' experiences of WFC and parenting stress by engaging in practices that can reduce the stress that is associated with frequent inter-domain transitions.

### Limitations

One limitation of this study was that it utilized a cross-sectional design as opposed to a longitudinal design. Given the nature of the relationships, no doubt a longitudinal perspective would shed additional light. Matthews et al. (2014) examined cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships between role overload, inter-domain transitions, and WFC. Their findings suggested that inter-domain transitions served as a temporary coping mechanism for individuals, such that inter-domain transitions were used as a resource to help alleviate role overload because transitions allowed individuals to draw on resources from one domain to help meet demands in another domain. For example, if a mother is experiencing overload in the home domain, she may leave work during her lunch break to attend her child's school meeting. By drawing on resources from work, she is able to meet her demands in the home domain, essentially reducing her experience of overload in the home domain. Although inter-domain transitions may serve as a temporary coping mechanism for role overload, Matthews et al. (2014) found that this increased experiences of WFC at one point in time. Further, although it was expected that role overload would be reduced overtime because of the use of inter-domain transitions, Matthews et al. (2014) found that role overload

actually increased longitudinally. Their findings suggest that inter-domain transitions may serve as a temporary coping mechanism of role overload, not as a preventative coping mechanism as they had hypothesized. Although the present study did not examine how role overload influences the relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC, the findings from Matthew et al. (2014) demonstrated that the relationship between inter-domain transitions and WFC is complex and should be observed longitudinally to better understand how they are related.

Given this information, the results of this study could change if examined longitudinally. For example, we might expect the strength of the relationships between inter-domain transitions and WFC and parenting stress to increase. On the other hand, it could also be that, over time, individuals develop other coping mechanisms that help them deal with frequent inter-domain transitions, leading to reduced WFC and parenting stress. Overall, the limitation of a cross-sectional design does not allow for examination of the time-lagged effects that may be operating.

Another limitation of this study was the small sample size that was obtained. Given the unique population of working parents of children with ASD, obtaining a large sample size was prohibitive. Although many more parents were willing to participate in the study, a common theme among parents was that they were not currently working because they had to quit paid employment due to their caregiving demands. This also presents issues in

terms of how representative the sample was of the population. It is possible that those who experience the most severe forms of conflict decide to quit work. Thus, the present sample may not be representative of the population, particularly for those who experience severe conflict.

The small sample size in the present study limited the information we could draw from the analysis. Had there been a larger sample size, the analysis in this study could have examined the directionality (i.e. family-to-work and work-to-family) of many of the study constructs. There could have been interesting findings had we been able to examine if work-to-family transitions and family-to-work transitions differentially impacted family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict. Further, the mitigating factors (i.e. FSSB and segmentation preferences) could have had differential impacts on family-to-work and work-to-family conflict.

Lastly, a limitation of this study is that the sample consisted primarily of females (85.3%). It is important to consider the possibility that males raising children with ASD may have different experiences balancing their work and family domains as compared to females. Consequently, these results may not generalize to males raising children with ASD.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that frequent inter-domain transitions can be a source of stress for parents of children with ASD as they seek to meet their work and family challenges. Although a direct relationship

was observed between inter-domain transitions and WFC, the results confirmed that measuring how individuals appraise their transitions is critical in understanding their impact on WFC and parenting stress. Inter-domain transitions do, in fact, remove available resources from one domain to another, however individuals differ in how these transitions are appraised based on individual and situational factors. This study demonstrated the importance of understanding these individual and situational factors, as it provides insight into ways organizations and parents of children with ASD can reduce the conflict and negative experiences that have been demonstrated in the work domain. Although segmentation preferences and FSSB were both important factors in reducing the stress these parents experiences, there are likely many other organizational and personal factors that can mitigate these relationships. Thus, understanding these other factors is important so that organizations can develop strategies to help these parents meet their challenges in order to achieve a successful balance between work and family.

APPENDIX A  
DEMOGRAPHICS

## Demographics

1. What is your gender?  
 Male  
 Female
2. What is your age?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity?  
 African American  
 Asian American  
 Caucasian/White  
 Latino/Hispanic  
 Middle-Eastern American  
 Native American/American Indian  
 Other  
Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Marital Status  
 Single (never married)  
 Married/Long-term/ Committed Relationship  
 Divorced/Separated  
 Widowed
5. Are you the primary caregiver of your child with autism?  
 Yes  
 No
6. Are you the primary financial provider for your family?  
 Yes  
 No
7. What is the age of your child with autism?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many children are you responsible for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How many children with a disability are you responsible for?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What is the disability(ies) (other than autism)?  
\_\_\_\_\_



10. In which industry are you employed?

- Construction
  - Manufacturing
  - Retail/Sales
  - Office/Administrative Support
  - Transportation/Materials Moving
  - Food Preparation Services
  - Healthcare and Social Services
  - Professional/Business Services
  - Information Technology
  - Educational Services
  - Legal Services
  - Federal, State, or Local Government
  - Other, please specify:
- 

11. How long have you worked for your current organization?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Months

12. On average, how many hours do you work per week?

- 0-9
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50 or more

13. What is your employment status?

- Full-time
- Part-time

14. What is your employment level?

- Entry-level
  - Mid-level, non-management
  - Management
  - Executive
  - Other, please specify:
-

15. How many times have you changed jobs in the past 5 years?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

16. What is your annual income?

- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-39,000
- \$40,000-\$49,000
- \$50,000-\$59,000
- \$60,000-\$69,000
- \$70,000-\$79,000
- \$80,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$109,999
- \$110,000-\$119,999
- \$120,000-\$129,999
- \$130,000-\$139,999
- \$140,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

APPENDIX B  
INTER-DOMAIN TRANSITIONS AND APPRAISAL  
OF TRANSITIONS SCALES

### Inter-domain transitions scale

Inter-domain Transitions	Severity			
Stem: How often have you...				
0 = never	1 = not stressful at all			
1 = less than once a month	2 = somewhat stressful			
2 = 1-3 days a month	3 = moderately stressful			
3 = 1-2 days a week	4 = extremely stressful			
4 = 3-4 days per week				
5 = 5 or more days per week				
1. Arrived to work late so you could deal with family demands?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
2. Left work early to meet family responsibilities?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
3. Changed the hours you work to meet family demands?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
4. Left work during your lunch break to meet family responsibilities?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
5. Stopped what you were doing at work to meet a family responsibility (like making a dentist or doctor appointment)?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
6. Received calls from family members while at work?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
7. Received calls from co-workers or your supervisor while at home?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				
8. Gone into work on the weekend to meet work responsibilities?	1	2	3	4
1    2    3    4    5				

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 9. Stopped what you were working on at home to call work?                 | 1   2   3   4 |
| 1   2   3   4   5   |               |
| 10. Changed plans with your family to meet work related responsibilities? | 1   2   3   4 |
| 1   2   3   4   5   |               |
| 11. Answered work related e-mails while at home?                          | 1   2   3   4 |
| 1   2   3   4   5   |               |

*Inter-domain Transitions* developed by Matthews, R. A., Barnes-Farrell, J. L., & Bulger, C. A. (2010). Advancing measurement of work and family domain boundary characteristics. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77(3), 447–460. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.05.008

*Appraisal of Transitions* derived from Kanner, A., Coyne, J., Schaefer, C., & Lazarus, R. (1981). Comparison of two modes of stress measurement: Daily hassles and uplifts versus major life events. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 4(1), 1-39.

APPENDIX C  
WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT SCALE

## **Work-family conflict scale**

### **Time-based work interference with family**

1. My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like.
2. The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities.
3. I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities. Time-based

### **Time-based family interference with work**

4. The time I spend on family responsibilities often interfere with my work responsibilities.
5. The time I spend with my family often causes me not to spend time in activities at work that could be helpful to my career.
6. I have to miss work activities due to the amount of time I must spend on family responsibilities.

### **Strain-based work interference with family**

7. When I get home from work I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/ responsibilities.
8. I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family.
9. Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I come home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy.

### **Strain-based family interference with work**

10. Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with family matters at work.
11. Because I am often stressed from family responsibilities, I have a hard time concentrating on my work.
12. Tension and anxiety from my family life often weakens my ability to do my job.

### **Behavior-based work interference with family**

13. The problem-solving behaviors I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home.
14. Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at work would be counterproductive at home.
15. The behaviors I perform that make me effective at work do not help me to be a better parent and spouse.

### **Behavior-based family interference with work**

16. The behaviors that work for me at home do not seem to be effective at work.
17. Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work.
18. The problem-solving behavior that work for me at home does not seem to be as useful at work.

Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., & Williams, L. J. (2000). Construction and Initial Validation of a Multidimensional Measure of Work–Family Conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 56(2), 249–276.  
doi:10.1006/jvbe.1999.1713



APPENDIX D  
SEGMENTATION PREFERENCES SCALE

## **Segmentation Preferences Scale**

### **Segmenting the work domain from the family domain:**

1. I don't like to have to think about work while I'm at home.
2. I prefer to keep work life at work.
3. I don't like work issues creeping into my home life.
4. I like to be able to leave work behind when I go home.

### **Segmenting the home domain from the work domain:**

5. I don't like to have to think about home while I'm at work.
6. I prefer to keep home life at home.
7. I don't like issues at home creeping into my work life.
8. I like to be able to leave issues at home behind when I go to work.

Kreiner, G. E. (2006). Consequences of work-home segmentation or integration: a person-environment fit perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(4), 485–507. doi:10.1002/job.386

APPENDIX E  
FAMILY-SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR BEHAVIORS SCALE

## **Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors Scale**

### **Emotional support**

1. My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and nonwork life.
2. My supervisor takes the time to learn about my personal needs.
3. My supervisor makes me feel comfortable talking to him or her about my conflicts between work and nonwork.
4. My supervisor and I can talk effectively to solve conflicts between work and nonwork issues.

### **Instrumental support**

5. I can depend on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if I need it.
6. I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated nonwork demands.
7. My supervisor works effectively with workers to creatively solve conflicts between work and nonwork.

### **Role modeling behaviors**

8. My supervisor is a good role model for work and nonwork balance.
9. My supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and nonwork balance.
10. My supervisor demonstrates how a person can jointly be successful on and off the job.

### **Creative work-family management**

11. My supervisor thinks about how the work in my department can be organized to jointly benefit employees and the company.
12. My supervisor asks for suggestions to make it easier for employees to balance work and nonwork demands.
13. My supervisor is creative in reallocating job duties to help my department work better as a team.

14. My supervisor is able to manage the department as a whole team to enable everyone's needs to be met.

Hammer, L. B., Kossek, E. E., Yragui, N. L., Bodner, T. E., & Hanson, G. C. (2009). Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB). *Journal of Management*, 35(4), 837–856. doi:10.1177/0149206308328510

APPENDIX F  
PARENTING STRESS INDEX

## **Parenting Stress Index**

### **Parental Distress**

1. I often have the feeling that I cannot handle things very well.
2. I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my children's needs than I ever expected.
3. I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.
4. Since having this child, I have been unable to do new and different things.
5. Since having a child, I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do.
6. I am unhappy with the last purchase of clothing I made for myself.
7. There are quite a few things that bother me about my life.
8. Having a child has caused more problems than I expected in my relationship with my spouse (or male/female friend).
9. I feel alone and without friends.
10. When I go to a party, I usually expect not to enjoy myself.
11. I am not as interested in people as I used to be.
12. I don't enjoy things as I used to.

### **Parent- Child Dysfunctional Interaction**

13. My child rarely does things for me that make me feel good.
14. Most times I feel that my child likes me and wants to be close to me.
15. My child smiles at me much less than I expected.
16. When I do things for my child, I get the feeling that my efforts are not appreciated very much.
17. When playing, my child doesn't often giggle or laugh.
18. My child doesn't seem to learn as quickly as most children.

19. My child doesn't seem to smile as much as most children.
20. My child is not able to do as much as I expected.
21. It takes a long time and it is very hard for my child to get used to new things.
22. For statement 22, choose from choices 1 to 5 below. 58. I feel that I am:
  1. a very good parent
  2. a better than average parent
  3. an average parent
  4. a person who has some trouble being a parent
  5. not very good at being a parent
23. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me.
24. Sometimes my child does things that bother me just to be mean.

### **Difficult Child**

25. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children.
26. My child generally wakes up in a bad mood.
27. I feel that my child is very moody and easily upset.
28. My child does a few things which bother me a great deal.
29. My child reacts very strongly when something happens that my child doesn't like.
30. My child gets upset easily over the smallest thing.
31. My child's sleeping or eating schedule was much harder to establish than I expected.

For statement 32, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.

32. I have found that getting my child to do something or stop doing something is:
  1. much harder than I expected
  2. somewhat harder than I expected
  3. about as hard as I expected
  4. somewhat easier than I expected
  5. much easier than I expected



For statement 33, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.

33. Think carefully and count the number of things which your child does that bothers you. For example: dawdles, refuses to listen, overactive, cries, interrupts, fights, whines, etc. Please circle the number which includes the number of things you counted
1. 1-3
  2. 4-5
  3. 6-7
  4. 8-9
  5. 10+
34. There are some things my child does that really bother me a lot.
35. My child turned out to be more of a problem than I had expected.
36. My child makes more demands on me than most children.

Hammer, L. B., Kossek, E. E., Yragui, N. L., Bodner, T. E., & Hanson, G. C. (2009). Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB). *Journal of Management*, 35(4), 837–856. doi:10.1177/0149206308328510

APPENDIX G  
INFORMED CONSENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Department of Psychology

### Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study designed to investigate work-family conflict and parenting stress among parents raising children with autism spectrum disorder. This study is being conducted by Alyssa Pettey, under the supervision of Dr. Mark Agars, for a master's thesis project at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of California State University, San Bernardino. A copy of the official Psychology IRB Stamp of approval appears at the bottom of this page.

In this study you will be asked to respond to measures of the transitions you make from your work and family domains and the extent to which you perceive these transitions as stressful. Furthermore, you will be asked to respond to measures of work-family conflict, parenting stress, the degree to which your supervisor demonstrates family-supportive behaviors, and the degree to which you prefer to segment your work and family domains. In addition, there will be demographic questions assessing your family, personal, and employment characteristics. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researchers. No identifying information will be collected, and your responses will be completely anonymous. Summary results of this study will be available from Dr. Mark Agars (909-537-5433) after August 1, 2015.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time during this study without penalty. This study involves no risk beyond those of everyday life, nor any direct benefits to you as an individual. To ensure the validity of the study we ask that you not discuss this study with other participants.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Mark Agars at (909) 537-5433.

Please place a check or an X in the space provided below to acknowledge that you are at least 18 years old and have read and understand the statements above. By marking the space below you give consent to participate voluntarily in this study. Thank you very much.

Participant's X \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE			
APPROVED	1/18/15	VOID AFTER	1/18/16
IDB #	H-15WI-01	CHAIR	

The California State University  
Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Maritime Academy  
Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

APPENDIX H  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **Debriefing Statement**

Thank you for participating in our study designed to investigate work-family conflict and parenting stress for parents of children with developmental disabilities. This study is being conducted by Alyssa Pettey, a graduate student of the Industrial-Organizational Psychology M.S. program at California State University, San Bernardino, under the supervision of Dr. Mark Agars. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of California State University, San Bernardino.

This study involved no risks beyond those of everyday life, nor any direct benefits to you as an individual beyond the participation in psychological research. In order to ensure the validity of the study, we ask that you do not discuss this study with other participants or other individuals who may also serve as participants.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Mark Agars at (909) 537-5433 or via [magars@csusb.edu](mailto:magars@csusb.edu). Summary results of this study will be available from Dr. Agars after August 1, 2015.

APPENDIX I  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

**Human Subjects Review Board  
Department of Psychology  
California State University,  
San Bernardino**

**PI:** Alyssa Pettey and Mark Agars  
**From:** Jason Reimer  
**Project Title:** Examining Work-Family Conflict and Parenting Stress for Parents of Children with ASD through the Lens of Boundary and Conservations of Resources Theories  
**Project ID:** H-15WI-01  
**Date:** 1/18/15

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**Disposition: Administrative Review**

Your IRB proposal is approved. This approval is valid until 1/18/2016.

**Good luck with your research!**



Jason Reimer, Co-Chair  
Psychology IRB Sub-Committee

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