EXPERIENCES OF WORK MEANINGFULNESS THROUGH THE LENS OF WORK-FAMILY IDENTITY

Rebecca Aliya Steiner

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EXPERIENCES OF WORK MEANINGFULNESS THROUGH
THE LENS OF WORK-FAMILY IDENTITY

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

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

by
Rebecca Steiner
August 2024
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August 2024
Approved by:

Mark Agars, Committee Chair, Psychology

Nicholas Moon, Committee Member

Gino Howard, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

In today’s growing workforce, there is a need for individuals to feel worthwhile and valuable for the work that they do in an organization, with the experience of meaningfulness at work seen as increasingly important among employees. The purpose of this study was to investigate work-family identity and its role in experiences of work meaningfulness. Specifically, we utilized a cross-sectional survey design to examine the moderating effects of boundary management and FSSB in determining the relationship between identity and experiences of work meaningfulness. We tested our hypotheses using data collected from 196 employees who were categorized as either “work-identified” or “family-identified.” Results showed a main effect for identity and experiences of meaningfulness and supported the role of FSSB as a moderator in the relationship between identity and work meaningfulness. Implications of our findings along with limitations of this study and directions for future research are also discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my professors in the IO psychology department and specifically my thesis advisor and mentor Dr. Mark Agars for his support and guidance. My growth and abilities in writing and critical thinking would not be the same without him. Lastly, to my family and specifically my husband, for his unconditional love and support. I would not have made it through my hard times without him. Thank you all.
DEDICATION

To my children, Kevin and Harper. May you always follow your passion and strive to reach your goals.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The experience of meaningfulness at work is seen as increasingly important among employees (Mostafa, 2021). Meaningful work has been described as having a psychological state of feeling useful and valuable, while not being taken for granted in work-related experiences (Kahn, 1990). If an employee is able to achieve the experiences of work meaningfulness, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and be more satisfied and productive (Albrecht, 2015). An employee’s work-family identity could matter for understanding the experiences of work meaningfulness. This is due to employees who identify differently (either work or family) have different organizational needs, which could in turn relate to different experiences of work meaningfulness as well (Kubiak, 2022).

The centrality of our work role or our family role to our social identity, known as work-family identity, may prove to be important to understanding the extent to which employees experience meaning in their work. Family-identity is defined as an individual who is highly focused on one’s role in the family, while work-identity is defined as one’s identity being highly focused on the role they have at work (Mannon et al., 2007), which can be measured on a continuum as seen in this study. Employees who have strong family-identities perceive meaningfulness at work differently than those who have a stronger work-identity
due to a difference in what an employee needs to get out of their organization (Mannon et al., 2007), such as receiving time off for family vs. being rewarded for attendance rates for not needing time off. Employees perceive their role of either a worker or family member as more important than the other, which in turn could relate to how they determine what organizational policies and practices will best help their identity of importance. Work meaningfulness can best be explained by work-family identity through understanding how an employee can manage boundaries between these identities in the workplace.

Boundary management theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) argues that the factors involved in how we manage the boundaries between work and family are important to understanding workplace experiences, such as work meaningfulness, by reducing work-family conflict that can arise from not successfully managing boundaries. Organizational leaders and family supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) have also been shown to be effective in improving work meaningfulness for their employees through boundary management (Mills et al., 2014). Effective leaders are able to manage and assist employees and their differences in role identity by modifying organizational policies to better accommodate the needs of the identity that each employee deems as important (Mills et al., 2014).

Employees who prefer a permeable family boundary have higher work meaningfulness when they have access to work-family support policies that allow them to blend work and home. This is due to their organizational needs of
blending work-family support being met (Kubiak, 2022). Those who prefer an impermeable home boundary have higher work meaningfulness when they have access to segmenting work-family support policies allowing them to separate work and home (Capitano et al., 2017). This is due to their organizational needs of segmenting work-family policies being met (Kubiak, 2022). Therefore, experiences of meaningfulness for individuals could be different in terms of their work-family identity (Gardner et al., 2021).

Employees who have a stronger work-identity could experience lower work meaningfulness if their family obligations interfere with work demands, causing family-work conflict. Similarly, employees who have a higher family- identity could experience lower work meaningfulness when work demands interfere with family obligations, causing work-family conflict. This can be caused by a lack in boundary management segmentation. With the increasing demands in one domain, the boundary strength weakens in others, which creates conflict in those domains (Kossek et al., 2012). The domain in which more attention is given greatly depends on the identity of that individual. The ability of an employee to appropriately manage conflict in their work or family domains could be directly impacted by the extent to which they receive family supportive supervisory behaviors, which in turn may impact work meaningfulness. This support may be differentially important, however, depending on the work-family identity of an employee. Therefore, work-family identity could matter for work meaningfulness if the organization, through policy, practices and leadership,
provides matching levels of boundary permeability that fit the needs of the employee.

Work Meaningfulness

In today’s growing workforce, there has become a need for individuals to feel worthwhile and valuable for the work that they do in an organization (Canboy et al., 2023). Employees who have experiences of work meaningfulness are more likely to have found value and significance in the work that they do (Ericsson et al., 2016). A review of research reveals several definitions of the term work meaningfulness. Work meaningfulness has been described as the meaning of work, job meaningfulness, workplace meaningfulness, and psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990; Steger et al., 2013). Albrecht (2015) described the meaning of work as a calling or a career (what work means to an employee), while Wrzesniewski et al. (2013) argues that work meaningfulness is the significance an individual acquires from their work. Albrecht (2015) describes work meaningfulness as a tool to help employees understand and evaluate their purpose and importance in their work. By understanding their purpose and importance in their work, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and be more satisfied and productive Albrecht (2015).

Previous research also includes Hackman and Oldhams (1970) example of work meaningfulness as the experiences an employee has on the job that are generally meaningful, valuable and worthwhile, while Kahn (1990) describes
work meaningfulness as a psychological state of people feeling worthwhile, useful and valuable. Although there are many different definitions of work meaningfulness, the most common factors include a positive work-related psychological state where employees feel they are making a significant and important contribution to a worthwhile purpose in their work (Albrecht, 2015). For the purpose of this study, we will be defining work meaningfulness as a psychological state of people feeling worthwhile, useful and valuable (Kahn, 1990).

Experiences of workplace meaningfulness are important to explore due to the increasing need from employees to feel worthwhile in their organization (Albrecht, 2015). With employers able to facilitate meaningfulness in the workplace, employee engagement, satisfaction, motivation, and performance can increase for the individual (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). Leaders have begun to realize that helping their employees achieve meaningfulness in the work that they do will positively impact the organization. This has caused organizational interventions, such as giving time off when needed, to be put in place to increase the experience of meaningfulness in the workplace (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021).

Perceived meaning in work has been identified as a key factor in organizational identification, job performance and organizational commitment (Chaudhary, 2022). With these factors being important to employees and the organization, leaders have become more interested in how to help their employees achieve this experience of meaning in their work. Experiences of
work meaningfulness can be related to internal sources, such as the identity of the employee, or by external sources such as leadership and work context (Chaudhary, 2022). Both internal and external sources of meaning prove to be important in determining how an individual perceives their experiences of workplace meaningfulness. This is because workplace meaningfulness can be shaped by the individual's sense of who they are and what they value, or by the way they perceive their work to be significant and valuable (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). With the growing need for employees to experience meaning in the work that they do, it is important to further understand the internal and external sources that can contribute to this experience.

There remains a lack of an understanding of what specifically can contribute to gaining the experience of meaningfulness in work. One way research has shown to be effective in assisting experiences of meaningfulness at work is through leader behavior (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Since leaders are becoming more aware of the benefits of employees experiencing meaningfulness, certain behaviors have developed to help assist their employees in achieving higher levels of workplace meaningfulness within the organization. Leaders have been associated with being able to facilitate key aspects of experiences of meaningfulness through supportive behavior for their employees (Panda et al., 2021).
Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors

With an increase of work conflicting with nonwork life (and vice versa), a need for supportive workplace policies and supportive supervisors has emerged (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Family supportive supervisors have empathy for their employees' lives outside of work and attempt to help them balance their work and nonwork demands (Hammer & Zimmerman, 2011). Family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) are the behaviors demonstrated by supportive leaders that can actively help employees attempt to balance work and family (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Family supportive supervisors are aware that their employees have non-work lives and strive to help facilitate the managing of work and family responsibilities (Hammer & Kossek, 2009). Family supportive supervisor behaviors have been demonstrated to be effective in accommodating employees' organizational needs, such as needing time off or extra sick days (Chen & Zhang, 2020). Supervisors who participate in FSSB can reduce employee work-family stress, (Crain et al., 2014) and can increase employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Wang et al., 2013).

There are four different dimensions of FSSB including emotional support, instrumental support, role-modeling, and creative work-family management (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Emotional support for family supportive supervisors is having communication skills that incorporate care and concern for an employee's non-work life (i.e., family life). If an employee feels that their supervisor is expressing concern for their day-to-day lives that include non-work activities, this
can increase meaningfulness in the workplace (Panda et al., 2021). Instrumental support in FSSB is the extent to which a leader manages the work tasks and the work environment to minimize employee experiences of work-family conflict while providing resources to assist employees with their needs for non-work life on an individual basis (Crain & Stevens, 2018). When an employee has their needs met, they are more likely to experience positive workplace outcomes within the organization (Kubiak, 2022). When a leader can demonstrate role-modeling, they are able to effectively manage their own work-family responsibilities with observable behavior, which can give the employees a good example of how to balance their own work/life responsibilities. Finally, creative work-family management gives the supervisor the ability to manage the work-family demands of their employees while promoting creative solution solving abilities. Having these creative solution solving abilities is important for the employee to be able to manage their work-family demands so that their work life can be experienced as meaningful.

Family supportive supervisor behaviors may also be important to facilitating workplace meaningfulness in organizations. An employee who has a leader that can help enhance their purpose and importance in their work will be able to experience higher levels of workplace meaningfulness (Panda et al., 2021). When employees feel that they are not supported by their supervisors, they may find themselves disengaging from their work and find work less meaningful to their personal experiences. However, when employees are
supported by FSSB, they are more likely to be engaged with their work, which can lead to higher levels of work meaningfulness if that engagement is perceived by them as significant and meaningful (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Supervisors are generally considered to be representations of the organization, where if they appear to be supportive to their subordinates, the organization will be viewed as supportive as well (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In order for an individual to feel like the work that they do is meaningful, they must feel like they are being valued for the work that they do, and this sense of value can stem from supervisors (Panda et al., 2021). Research has shown that family supportive supervisor behaviors are positively related to employees' meaningful perception of work (Panda et al., 2021) and that the relationship between a supportive supervisor and their employees is shown to influence the individual's own perception of how meaningful their work is and how engaged they will be (Panda et al., 2021). One way a supervisor can help manage these experiences of meaningfulness at work for employees is to help facilitate boundaries between work and family.

**Boundary Management**

Managing boundaries between work and family is important for employees to be effective within their organization. Boundary management is the act of individuals managing the critical boundaries between multiple life roles, such as work and family, by separating levels of importance for each role (Rothbard &
Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). Managing one's boundaries within an organization is essential for individuals to navigate the overlap between work-life and family-life. The ability to effectively manage work-life boundaries has been linked to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace meaningfulness (Perlow & Kelly, 2014). Though the potential positive impact of boundary management has been made clear, employees take different approaches to the process.

Boundary management styles can differ in terms of the technique employees use to separate different roles in their life, including work and family (Kossek & Ruderman, 2012). Some of these techniques can include only responding to work emails between certain hours, not taking personal calls while on the job, or saying no to certain work tasks because you already have a full load. These provide important ways that employees can separate work and home. There are also different boundary management styles that can impact organizational outcomes. These can include work-to-family and family-to-work stress and conflict, which can lead to lower levels of work meaningfulness (Kossek et al., 2006). According to boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), employees create and maintain boundaries between life domains, such as work and family, to make their environment feel more comfortable. With an employee's environment being simplified by the successful management of their boundaries, higher levels of work meaningfulness can be achieved.

With the importance of enacting boundaries between work and family, it is also important to understand the act of setting boundaries and the certain degree
of crossover between those domains, known as boundary permeability. Permeability of boundaries is defined as allowing aspects of one domain into another, with different degrees of how those aspects cross into domains (Capitano et al., 2017). When employees can feel like they have a positive balance of their boundary management permeability, meaning they can successfully allow crossover between boundaries that fit within their identity, they can be open to experiencing higher levels of meaning within their work by having less work-to-family or family-to-work stress and conflict.

**Work-Family Identity**

Identity for an individual can provide meaning to the different social roles within their life (Bagger et al., 2008), such as if a person has placed more importance on their work life, they will find meaning in their work roles, compared to an individual who places more importance on their family life will find more meaning in their family roles. Similarly, identity can provide a guideline on how an individual behaves (Thoits, 2012). Individuals typically have several different identities they associate with their social roles, and these identities differ in importance within a salience hierarchy (Stryker, 2004). This hierarchy contains the importance of each identity the individual possesses and decides how much resources are going to be given to certain identities (Nielsen et al., 2020).

Stryker (2004) described the multiple identities a person can have, including work and family, where the more salient the identity is, the more that
individual will view their experiences through the lens of that identity. The stronger the salience is for that identity, the more attention will be given to it for interpreting how to respond to life experiences (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). Specifically, if an individual has a higher salient family-identity, they are more likely to spend their time investing into family than an individual who has a less salient family-identity. Similarly, if an individual has a higher salient work-identity, they will focus more on work tasks and responsibilities than someone who has a less salient work-identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). This is important for leaders to understand in helping to facilitate workplace meaningfulness for their employees by understanding what drives their employees' meaning based on their identity.

According to identity theory, when an individual has a higher salient family-identity, family responsibilities become an important part of their self-concept and will spend a great deal of time on family social roles (Stryker, 2004). Similarly, when an individual has a higher salient work-identity, work roles and responsibilities are placed higher in one's self-concept than those who identity with family (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). If an individual associates strongly with a family-identity, and their work role is interfering with their family demands (or family demands onto work roles for work-identity) then this may cause that individual to experience less work meaningfulness (Nielsen et al., 2020) through higher levels of work-family or family-work conflict.
Current Study

There is much to gain through a clearer understanding of how work meaningfulness is achieved. As such, the primary purpose of the present study is to examine work-family identity as a potential source of the experience of work meaningfulness for individuals with the use of moderators. Given the complexity of the relationship, we believe it’s important to explore the role of moderators. Specifically, we examined the potential moderating effects of boundary management and FSSB in determining the relationship between experiences of meaningfulness and identity. A graph of anticipated interaction effects is presented for each moderator (see Figures 1 and 2). Specifically:

Hypotheses:

Because we believe the relationship between work-family identity and meaningfulness can only be understood through moderated relationship, our first hypotheses predicts the null:

H1: The direct relationship between work-family identity and meaningfulness will be non-significant.

H2: The relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness will be moderated by levels of FSSB. Specifically, for work-identified individuals, high levels of FSSB will result in low work meaningfulness, while for family-identified individuals, high levels of FSSB will result in high work meaningfulness.

H3: The relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness will be moderated by levels of work boundary permeability. Specifically, for work-
identified individuals, high levels of work boundary permeability will result in low work meaningfulness, while for family-identified individuals, high levels of work boundary permeability will result in high work meaningfulness.

**Exploratory Research Question:**

In addition to the study hypotheses, this study will also explore potential differences related to the gender norms of women being typically categorized as having a dominant family-identity while men typically being categorized as having a dominant work-identity. This study will examine a comparison of non-traditional gender identity norms to traditional gender identity beliefs. Specifically:

**Research Question:**

RQ1: Will individuals with non-traditional gender identity for work/family (specifically women with a dominant work-identity and men with a dominant family-identity), experience work meaningfulness differently than individuals who identify with their traditional gender norm identity?
Figure 1. Graph of Anticipated Interaction Effects for FSSB.

Figure 2. Graph of Anticipated Interaction Effects for Boundary Permeability.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Participants

The current study had 243 participants. Inclusion criteria required that participants were working adults who worked at least 35 hours a week, worked in their current organization for at least 1 year, and met the family requirement of either having children or being married/in a long-term commitment relationship. The mean age of the sample was 43, and most participants were White (74%) with the second highest ethnicity being Black or African American (10.7%). Almost one-quarter of participants (24%) had an annual income between $50,001 and $75,000, and 29% of participants reported having a total family income between $100,001 and $150,000. The sample was evenly split with 49.8% men and 50.2% women, with over a third of participants (37%) reporting having 2 children. The highest number of years worked at their current organization was reported as 43, with the majority (60%) of participants working 40 hours per week (see Table 1).
Table 1. Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>49.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Income</strong></td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>$30,001 - $50,000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21.4</td>
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<td>$50,001 - $75,000</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>$75,001 - $100,000</td>
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<td>$100,001 - $150,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over $150,000</td>
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<td><strong>How Many Children</strong></td>
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<td>More than 5</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
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*Note.* $n = 243$
Procedure

Participants were recruited using Prolific (n = 173) and Facebook (n = 70) with the survey design platform of Qualtrics. Participants were invited to complete a 15–20-minute survey entitled, “Experiences of Workplace Meaningfulness through the Lens of Work-Family Identity.” Participants from Prolific were compensated $1.80, participants from Facebook did not receive compensation. Participants were provided a consent form to review and agree for their participation, followed by the study survey which included questions regarding their demographics, FSSB, work-family identity, boundary management, work meaningfulness, work-family conflict, transformational leadership, and work engagement. The survey concluded with a debriefing and thank you message. Participants completed the survey at their convenience and at a location of their choosing.

Measures

For the measure of FSSB, we used the 14-item multidimensional scale developed by Hammer et al. (2013) (see Appendix A), which measures four sub-dimensions of FSSB including emotional support (α = .93), instrumental support (α = .86), role modeling behaviors (α = .95), and creative work-family management (α = .90). Items are rated from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree, where higher values on the score indicate greater experiences of FSSB. The overall scale was used which included all four of the sub-dimensions. The
overall reliability was α = .96, with sample questions such as “My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and nonwork life.” As well as, “My supervisor is a good role model for work and nonwork balance.”

For the measure of work-family identity, we used a measure developed by Frear et al. (2019) and Lodahl and Kejnar (1965) (see Appendix B). The measure includes 20 statements about an individual’s work and family involvement to determine work and family identity salience. Sample items included “A major source of satisfaction in my life is my career” and “Most of my interests are centered around my career.” To categorize participants into either work or family identity, we used a median split procedure used in research to group participants based on scores across multiple variables (Baay et al., 2014; Brown et al., 1989). Work-identified individuals were defined as being above the median score on work-identity salience and below the median score on family-identity salience. Family-identified individuals were defined as being above the median score on family-identity salience and below the median score on work-identity salience. For the present study, participants who were not clearly work-identified nor family-identified, were excluded from the analyses. The Cronbach alpha (α) value for work-identity salience was .83 and .73 for family-identity salience. Items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

For the measure of boundary management used in this study, we used the measure developed by Kossek et al. (2006) (see Appendix C). This scale consisted of nine items using a scale ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 =
strongly disagree, where higher values on the score indicate greater boundary management permeability. The reliability estimate for this scale is $\alpha = .73$.

Sample items from this scale included, “I only take care of personal needs at work when I am “on Break” or during my lunch hour” and “I tend to handle emails related to my family separate from emails related to my work.”

For the measure of work meaningfulness, we used the Work as Meaning Inventory scale developed by Steger et al. (2012) (see Appendix D). This scale consisted of 10 items. Items are rated from 1 (absolutely untrue) to 5 (absolutely true), where higher values on the score indicated greater experiences of workplace meaningfulness. Sample items from this scale included, “The work I do serves a greater purpose” and “I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.” The total meaningful work scale internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .94$).

For the measure of work engagement, we used the Work Engagement scale developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) (see Appendix E). This scale consisted of 17 items. Items were rated from 0 (never) to 1 (almost never) to 6 (always), where higher values on the score indicated greater work engagement. Sample items from this scale included, “At work, I feel bursting with energy” and “When I am working, I forget everything else around me.” The total work engagement scale internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .94$). For correlations (see Table 2 and Table 3).
Table 2. Correlations for Study Variables

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>1. FSSB</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.96</td>
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<td>2. Work-ID</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Family-ID</td>
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<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>4. Boundary Management</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Work Meaningfulness</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Work Engagement</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * (p < .05) ** (p < .01)
Table 3. Correlations for FSSB Subsections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emotional Support</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Instrumental Support</td>
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<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role Model</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Creative WF</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * (p < .05) ** (p < .01)
CHAPTER THREE
RESULTS

Data Screening

Data from 294 participants were collected. Of these, three cases were screened out of the study because participants did not meet the study criteria due to them working less than a year at their organization. Data were also screened for cases that failed at least one of the two attention checks, resulting in fifty additional cases being removed. The Prolific standards for time completing a 15 – 20 minute survey was three minutes. Therefore, any participants that took the survey in less than three minutes were not collected, resulting in quick responders being excluded. A total of 244 completed participant responses met the study criteria.

To account for missing values, participants were required to answer survey questions, aside from demographic questions. Any participants that did not complete the survey in its entirety were not collected. The assumption of normality was analyzed by examining study variables for violations of skewness and kurtosis, minimal violations were noted. The assumption of normality was met. There was one case with a minimal univariate outlier present ($z = 3.61$) when using 3.3 as the cut off. Since there were other data points close to the cut off (3.01, 2.77, 2.77, 2.72, 2.69, 2.43) the minimal univariate outlier remained in the data. The criterion for multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance $[\chi^2 (8)]$
A multivariate analysis (χ² = 26.125, p < 0.01) revealed one multivariate outlier, which was filtered out from the data. After screening out univariate and multivariate outliers the sample size was n = 243.

In order to categorize participants as “work” or “family” identified, scores on the measure of work-identity and family-identity were separated using a median split procedure, as described earlier. Participants were categorized as “work-identity participants” (n = 99), or “family-identity participants” (n = 97) (see Table 4). Other participants consisted of cases who either were above the median for both work and family related items (n = 22), or below the median for both work and family related items (n = 25). These participants were screened out of the analysis for the purposes of this study. Participants were categorized into these groups by being coded as either 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on their median score. The first group consisted of participants that scored high on the work-identity items and low on the family-identity items (coded as 1), the second group consisted of participants that scored high on family-identity items and low on work-identity items (coded as 2), the third group consisted of participants that scored high on both work and family-identity items (coded as 3), with the final group consisting of participants that scored low on both work and family-identity items (coded as 4). Codes were then reduced to 1 (work-identity) and 2 (family identity) once codes 3 and 4 were removed. After screening out the cases who were not included into either the “work-identity” or “family-identity” categories, the sample size was n = 196. For demographics after median split (see Table 5).
Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Scales After Median Split

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work-Identity</th>
<th>Family-Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSSB</td>
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<td>.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work-ID</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-ID</td>
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<td>.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boundary Management</td>
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<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Meaningfulness</td>
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<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work- ID</td>
<td>Family-ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income</td>
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<td>$10,001 - $30,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001 - $50,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001 - $75,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001 - $100,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001 - $150,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $150,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Children</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Work-Id (n = 99), Family-ID (n = 97)*
Model Hypothesis Testing

The current study examined work-family identity and the experiences of work meaningfulness. A moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the main effect of work-family identity and work meaningfulness, along with the moderation effect of FSSB and boundary management on the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness.

We anticipated moderation would be central to the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness, therefore Hypothesis 1 predicted the null, anticipating there would not be a direct relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness. Hypothesis 1 was not supported ($b = -0.479$, $p < .001$), indicating that work-identified individuals generally experienced higher levels of work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness would be moderated by FSSB. Hypothesis 2 was supported ($b = .134$, $p = .034$, $r^2 = .35$, $F (1, 195) = 21.21$, $p < .001$) (see Table 6), indicating that the relationship between work-family identity and meaningfulness was impacted by FSSB. Specifically, high levels of FSSB were important in the experience of work meaningfulness for family-identified individuals, but not for work-identified individuals (see Figure 3). The unstandardized $b$ coefficient suggests that for each one-unit increase in FSSB, there is an associated increase of .134 units for work meaningfulness. Additionally, this coefficient suggests that the relationship between family-identity
and work meaningfulness is moderated by FSSB. Specifically, the presence of FSSB influences the strength or direction of the relationship between family-identity and work meaningfulness. In addition, the coefficient (.134) was found to be statistically significant (p < .001), indicating that the relationship between family identity and work meaningfulness is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness would be moderated by boundary management permeability. Hypothesis 3 was not supported (b = -.002, p = .978), indicating boundary management permeability did not moderate the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness.

Table 6. Regression Table for Moderation Effect of FSSB for Work-family Identity and Work Meaningfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSSB</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Management</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 196*
Exploratory Analysis

To further explore the relationships among work meaningfulness and identity, an exploratory analysis was conducted. The purpose of the exploratory analyses was to examine these relationships of work meaningfulness and identity among a different set of populations. Specifically, comparing experiences of work meaningfulness with individuals categorized as having non-traditional gender identities to those categorized as have traditional gender identities. It is important to examine these relationships due to the increasing number of women who have taken a more predominate role within organizations (Spenner & Rosenfeld, 1990), and the growing number of men who are seeing the importance of being present for family obligations (Morgan, 2004).

In order to explore these differences, we examined groups of participants whose work-family identity were inconsistent with traditional gender norms (e.g., men with family-identities and women with work-identities) and compared them to those who were consistent with traditional gender norms (e.g., men with work-identities and women with family-identities). We compared these two groups on factors such as increases with FSSB being associated with increases of work meaningfulness, increases of work engagement being associated with increases of work meaningfulness, and comparing the mean differences in work meaningfulness between traditional and non-traditional work-family identified individuals. Specifically, group 1 (n = 48) included female participants who identified as having a dominate work-identity, whereas group 2 (n = 47) included
men who identified as having a dominate family-identity. We then created two separate groups of participants with traditional gender norms to complete a comparison. Specifically, group 3 (n = 51) included men who identified as having a dominate work-identity, whereas group 4 (n = 50) included women who identified as having a dominate family-identity.

A series of Pearson correlation coefficients, $t$-tests and moderated multiple regressions were conducted to compare experiences of work meaningfulness for participants with non-traditional and traditional gender norms to determine if differences were found between the two groups. The significant findings are as follows:

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between FSSB and work meaningfulness for participants categorized as non-traditional work-family identity. There was a positive, moderate correlation between the two variables, $r (94) = .295, p = .004$. Therefore, increases in FSSB for non-traditional gender identity individuals were associated with increases in experiences of work meaningfulness. This was compared to the Pearson correlation coefficient computed to assess the linear relationship between FSSB and work meaningfulness for participants categorized as having traditional work-family identity. There was also a positive, moderate correlation between the two variables, $r (100) = .443, p < .001$. Therefore, increases in FSSB for traditional gender identity individuals were associated with increases in experiences as work meaningfulness as well. This indicates that increases in experiences of
work meaningfulness can be associated with increases of FSSB for both traditional and non-traditional gender identity individuals. However, it is important to note that the relationship between FSSB and work meaningfulness is stronger for traditionally identified individuals than those who identify non-traditionally.

A second Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between work engagement and work meaningfulness for participants categorized as non-traditional work-family identity. There was a positive, strong correlation between the two variables, $r(94) = .818, p < .001$ (see figure 4). Therefore, as work engagement increases for non-traditional gender identity individuals, their experiences of work meaningfulness can increase as well. This was compared to the Pearson correlation coefficient computed to assess the linear relationship between work engagement and work meaningfulness for participants categorized as having traditional work-family identity. There was also a positive, strong correlation between the two variables, $r(100) = .820, p < .001$. Therefore, as work engagement increases for traditional gender identity individuals experience, their experience of work meaningfulness can increase as well. This indicates that increases in work engagement were associated with increases in work meaningfulness regardless of individuals categorization of traditional or non-traditional gender identities. Since the relationships between work engagement and work meaningfulness were nearly identical for traditionally and non-traditionally identified individuals, identity does
not play a role in determining the strength of the increase in work meaningfulness based on work engagement.

Two independent $t$-tests were computed to compare the mean differences in work meaningfulness between two groups of participants - traditional and non-traditional work-family identified individuals (see Table 2). The first independent $t$-test was computed to compare the mean differences in work meaningfulness for non-traditionally identified individuals. Significance was found $t(93) = 6.38, p < .001$, indicating a meaningful difference between experiences of work meaningfulness for men and women who are categorized as having non-traditional gender identities. Specifically, women who have a dominate work-identity generally have higher work meaningfulness than men who have a dominate family-identity. This was compared to the independent $t$-test that was computed to compare the mean differences in work meaningfulness for traditionally identified individuals. Significance was also found $t(99) = 5.43, p < .001$, indicating a meaningful difference between experiences of work meaningfulness for men and women who are categorized as having traditional gender identities. Specifically, men with work-identities generally have higher work meaningfulness than women with family-identities. This indicates that individuals with a work-identity, regardless of gender, generally experience higher levels of work meaningfulness than those with a dominant family identity.
Figure 3. Graph of Interaction Effects for FSSB.

Figure 4. Graph of Work Engagement and Work Meaningfulness for Non-Traditional Gender Identity.
Table 7. Mean Differences in Work Meaningfulness for Traditional and Non-Traditional Gender Identities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Gender Identity</th>
<th>Non-Traditional Gender Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>4.177</td>
<td>.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.296</td>
<td>1.046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Men with work-identity ($n = 51$), women with family-identity ($n = 50$), men with family-identity ($n = 47$), and women with work-identity ($n = 48$).
CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION

The present study advances literature in the domains of work-family identity and work meaningfulness. First, the current study provided support for the idea that work-family identity is positively related to experiences of work meaningfulness. Contrary to Hypothesis 1, our study found that work-identified individuals generally experience higher levels of work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals within organizations. Although we hypothesized a null relationship, further review of the relevant theory and literature (Canboy et al., 2023, Popova-Nowak, 2010) provides evidence that a relationship could have been expected. Popova-Nowak (2010) found work-identity led to higher levels of work engagement, which as we also show in this study, higher work engagement leads to higher work meaningfulness. Canboy et al. (2023) also demonstrated how employee engagement can increase experiences of work meaningfulness. Therefore, if an individual has a dominant work-identity, they may experience higher levels of work meaningfulness due to their higher levels of work engagement. Despite not supporting the null in Hypothesis 1, the crux of our study was not this initial hypothesis, but moderation. The lack of a null finding does not change the interest in our remaining hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that for work-identified individuals, high levels of FSSB would result in low work meaningfulness, while for family-identified
individuals, high levels of FSSB would result in high work meaningfulness. Partial support was found for Hypothesis 2 with the relationship between family-identified individuals and FSSB on work meaningfulness. Specifically, higher levels of FSSB were associated with significantly higher experiences of work meaningfulness for family-identified individuals. However, for work-identified individuals, higher levels of FSSB did not lower their experiences of work meaningfulness. In fact, the experiences of work meaningfulness for work-identified individuals were virtually unchanged by levels of FSSB.

The results of our second hypothesis build on the results of previous research showing when employees are supported by FSSB, they are more likely to have higher levels of work meaningfulness (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Our results add to these findings by showing the significance of work meaningfulness being associated with increases of FSSB for family-identified individuals. Our findings also align with prior research that shows employees who have stronger family-identities perceive meaningfulness at work differently than those who have a stronger work-identity, perhaps due to a difference in what an employee needs to get out of their organization (Mannon et al., 2007). Our results show this difference in experiencing meaningfulness based on identity with the lack of change in work meaningfulness for the work-identified individuals and the increase in work meaningfulness in the family-identified individuals in the presence of high FSSB.
The lack of a difference in work meaningfulness in response to high FSSB for individuals who are work-identified, is consistent with previous research that found work-identified individuals may have still felt supported by their supervisor, even if that supervisor primarily showed FSSB (Monnot, 2016). When leaders show any form of support to their employees, they are able to facilitate key aspects of experiences of work meaningfulness (Crain & Stevens, 2018). With work-identified individuals feeling like they have a form of support from their supervisors, levels of work meaningfulness may not have decreased as was hypothesized. Research has also shown that supportive supervisors are positively related to experiences of work meaningfulness (Ahmed, 2022). Therefore, a possible explanation for not seeing a decrease in the experiences of work meaningfulness could be due to their supervisor still showing support, even if the support did not meet the exact needs of their identity (Monnot, 2016). Our results from Hypothesis 2 also showed that FSSB was not related to experiences of work meaningfulness for work-identified individuals. One possible explanation for not seeing an increase in work meaningfulness could be due to the lack of having their identity-specific organizational needs met (Kubiak, 2022), meaning the needs that are most important to their identity were not prioritized by their supervisor. Therefore, the lack of change (neither increasing nor decreasing) in work meaningfulness for work-identified individuals that experienced high FSSB could be due to their supervisor showing them support, but not the kind of support that prioritizes the needs that most align with their identity.
Hypothesis 3 predicted that the relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness would be moderated by boundary management permeability. Specifically, for work-identified individuals, high levels of work boundary permeability were expected to relate to low work meaningfulness, while for family-identified individuals, high levels of work boundary permeability would be related to high work meaningfulness. No support for Hypothesis 3 was found. Our results for Hypothesis 3 could be explained by previous research that looks at boundary separation having a positive effect on work meaningfulness (Wepfer et al., 2018), not necessarily boundary permeability as previously suggested in our study. Research argues that individuals aim to balance work and nonwork life in order to achieve work meaningfulness (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000) and this balance can be achieved by the segmentation of boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000). Wepfer et al. (2018) describes how separation can establish this balance if both the domains of work and nonwork have their needs being met. For example, if the work domain meets the needs of an individual’s capabilities in work, while the non-work domain meets the need for importance and significance, the balance of boundary separation can be achieved, increasing the experiences of work meaningfulness, suggesting why Hypothesis 3 did not find significance in boundary permeability for work meaningfulness based on identity.
Exploratory Findings

Organizations have started to see an increasing number of women who have made careers a more prominent role in their lives (Spenner & Rosenfeld, 1990), and men who are seeing the importance of being present for family obligations (Morgan, 2004). With this growing number of men and women who are taking on roles that go against the traditional norms of society, it is important to examine whether these individuals experience work meaningfulness the same as traditionally identified individuals or differently.

To better understand how work meaningfulness can be beneficial to organizations for the different gender identity groups, we incorporated the aspect of work engagement. Previous literature looks at work engagement as an important outcome if work meaningfulness is achieved. According to Albrecht (2015), if an employee is able to achieve the experiences of work meaningfulness, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and be more satisfied and productive. Therefore, this study examines how work engagement and work meaningfulness can be compared for traditional and non-traditional gender identity groups.

Our study provided several important findings during the exploratory analysis that can be used for identifying next ideas to test in future research. First, increases of work meaningfulness was associated with higher levels of FSSB regardless of individual categorization of traditional or non-traditional gender identities. Specifically, men with either work or family-identities and
women with either work or family-identities all showed increases in work meaningfulness when associated with increases in FSSB. Although no differences were found as a function of gender or identity, there is literature that provides guidance for why this is the case. These results are consistent with previous research that shows when individual’s organizational needs are met, their experiences of work meaningfulness could increase (Kubiak, 2022). In this case, having more FSSB would increase work meaningfulness for men and women of either traditional or non-traditional gender identities due to their organizational needs being met. Specifically, for both men and women with a family-identity, having higher work meaningfulness with more FSSB could be due to their family needs being met by the organization (Kubiak, 2022), ultimately relating to higher levels of work meaningfulness. In the case of men with a work-identity, having higher work meaningfulness with more FSSB could be due to their supervisor still showing support, even if the support did not meet the exact needs of their identity (Monnot, 2016). When leaders are able to show support to their employees, regardless of the type of support, work meaningfulness can increase (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Finally, women with a work-identity could have experienced higher work meaningfulness with more FSSB due to research from Scarr et al. (1989) that suggests some of the needs of working mothers, such as social supports, parental leave, and child care, can be facilitated by FSSB, resulting in some of their organizational needs being met, which could increase work meaningfulness.
Another interesting aspect of the finding that increases in FSSB were associated with increases in experiences of work meaningfulness regardless of individual categorization of traditional or non-traditional gender identities, is that the increase was stronger for traditionally identified individuals. Specifically, when FSSB was high, work-identified males reported higher levels of work meaningfulness than family-identified males. Similarly, when FSSB was high, family-identified women reported higher work meaningfulness than work-identified women. This is consistent with the results of Hypothesis 1 that showed work-identified individuals generally experience higher levels of work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals. Therefore, men with work-identities would have higher work meaningfulness than men with family-identities, due to the nature of work-identified individuals generally having higher work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals. A possible explanation of women with family-identities having higher work meaningfulness with more FSSB than women with work-identities is that FSSB would meet more of the organizational needs for the family-identified women (Kubiak, 2022), compared to only meeting some of the needs of a work-identified women (Scarr et al., 1989).

Another interesting finding of the exploratory analysis was the strong positive relationship between work engagement and work meaningfulness for participants categorized as both traditional and non-traditional work-family identity. Our findings showed that the higher an individual’s experiences of work meaningfulness, the more they will be engaged in their work. This is consistent
with the previous literature that shows if an employee is able to achieve experiences of work meaningfulness, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and be more productive (Albrecht, 2015). If an employee can achieve a feeling like the work they do within an organization is worthwhile, they could be more engaged with the work that they do (Albrecht, 2015). These findings from the current study are important because organizations are faced with a lack of employee engagement due to lower levels of meaningfulness in the workplace (Stains, 2019), and the results of this study show that when work meaningfulness is increased, regardless of gender or work/family identity, work engagement will be increased as well. The findings are also consistent with prior research that show when employers able to facilitate meaningfulness in the workplace employee engagement can increase for the individual (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021).

To further understand the experiences of non-traditionally identified participants, we also explored differences in experiences of work meaningfulness between men who were family-identified and women who work-identified. Our results suggest that women who have a dominate work-identity generally have higher work meaningfulness than men who have a dominate family-identity. These results were compared to the traditional gender identity norms and their experiences of work meaningfulness that found men with work-identities generally have higher work meaningfulness than women with family-identities. These findings indicate that individuals with a work-identity, regardless of gender,
generally experience higher levels of work meaningfulness than those with a dominant family-identity. The findings from this comparison are consistent with previous research that found having a dominant work-identity led to higher levels of work engagement (Popova-Nowak, 2010) which in turn could lead to higher levels of work meaningfulness (Canboy et. Al, 2023). Therefore, if an individual has a dominant work-identity, they could experience higher levels of work meaningfulness due to their higher levels of work engagement. Our findings are also consistent with the results of the current study that showed work-identified individuals generally experience higher levels of work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals.

Overall, there were several important findings within the results of our study. First, is the notion that individuals with a dominate work-identity generally have higher experiences of work meaningfulness than individuals with a dominate family-identity. This is an important finding for organizations so that they can put more of an effort in facilitating work meaningfulness for employees who have a dominant family-identity. Another important finding of this study is when FSSB are present, experiences of work meaningfulness are higher for family-identified individuals. Leaders can use these findings to help them facilitate work meaningfulness for their family-identified individuals who generally have lower work meaningfulness than the work-identified employees.
Theoretical Implications

The results of this study extend the growing research on the experiences of work meaningfulness. Researchers have investigated several organizational factors such as engagement, satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Wang et al., 2013) that can increase with an employee experiencing meaningfulness. However, research is lacking in determining how work meaningfulness is achieved. The present study provides a better understanding on how increases in work meaningfulness are associated with work-family identity, and the family supportive supervisor behaviors employees experience from their leaders.

There is an abundance of research on the benefits of FSSB within organizations, such as leaders being able to help balance work and family life for employees (Hammer & Zimmerman, 2011), accommodating employees’ organizational needs (Chen & Zhang, 2020), reduce employee work-family stress (Crain et al., 2014), and the ability to increase employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Wang et al., 2013). All of which have been shown in the research to be related to higher levels of work meaningfulness. The results of the present study add to this literature by explaining how FSSB can be associated with increases in experiences of work meaningfulness for family-identified employees.

There is a severe lack in the research available that links work-family identity to work meaningfulness. Popova-Nowak (2010) found a direct effect between work-identity and work engagement, while Canboy et. al (2023)
suggested that work engagement can lead to work meaningfulness. Our study found a direct effect between work-family identity and work meaningfulness, with meaningfulness being higher for work-identified individuals. Our findings indicate that employees who have a strong work-identity generally experience higher work meaningfulness than those with a strong family-identity, providing support for the direct relationship between work-family identity and work meaningfulness. Therefore, the results of our study can be used for gaining a better understanding of how work-family identity can have a direct effect on work meaningfulness. Our finding that showed work-identified individuals generally have higher work meaningfulness than family-identified individuals is important to add to the work-family literature to help explain the fundamental idea that work meaningfulness can be shaped by the individual’s sense of who they are, and what they value (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021).

Our results also can add to the work-family literature when looking at identity theory and identity salience. When an individual has a higher salient family-identity, family responsibilities become an important part of their self-concept and will spend a great deal of time on family social roles (Stryker, 2004). Similarly, when an individual has a higher salient work-identity, work roles and responsibilities are placed higher in one's self-concept than those who identity with family (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). If an individual associates strongly with a family-identity, and their work role is interfering with their family demands (or family demands onto work roles for work-identity) then this may cause that
individual to experience less work meaningfulness (Nielsen et al., 2020) through higher levels of work-family or family-work conflict. However, when examining the relationship between identity salience and work meaningfulness, there are other factors to consider. Not only is the salience of identity important (what we do in terms of our identity) but also the aspect of what we would prefer to do, even if circumstances do not allow for it. For example, answering work calls during family time may not be because of a dominate work identity, or that family time is not important, but because work deadlines are approaching and answering the call is necessary. Similarly, if an employee has to leave work to pick up their children, this may not be because they have a stronger family identity, but because they are required to make that choice due to the child being sick at school. By adding the aspect of what an individual would rather do, to what they actually do in terms of their identity salience, work meaningfulness could increase.

The results of the exploratory analyses add to the work-family identity literature as well. Our findings showed increases of work meaningfulness were associated with increases of FSSB, regardless of individual categorization of traditional or non-traditional gender identities. However, the relationship was stronger for participants with traditional gender identities, than participants with non-traditional gender identities. This means that for men with work-identities (and women with family-identities), more FSSB was associated with higher increases of work meaningfulness than men with family-identities (and women
with work-identities). However, when gender identity norms were not separated into categories of traditional and non-traditional (Hypothesis 2), higher FSSB was only associated with increases in work meaningfulness for family-identified individuals. This finding is important to add to the work-family literature to demonstrate the differences in FSSB being associated with increases in work meaningfulness between not only work and family-identified individuals, but also their categorization of traditional and non-traditional gender norms. With participants who identified against traditional gender norms seeing a smaller increase in work meaningfulness with higher FSSB than those who identified traditionally, work-family research can be expanded to consider not only the identity of the individual, but also if that identity is part of what society deems as “normal” or not. By achieving this inclusion of non-traditional gender norms, researchers will be able to gain a better understanding of how to achieve work meaningfulness for a larger population.

The present study also contributes to the literature on boundary management. Although this study did not find significance in determining work meaningfulness through work-family identity and boundary management permeability, there are noteworthy implications for research. Our study showed permeability of boundaries for work-family identity was not associated with increases of work meaningfulness, with previous research suggesting boundary separation being important for increasing work meaningfulness. With integrating boundaries having both positive (e.g. job satisfaction and work engagement) and
negative (e.g. anxiety and depression) workplace outcomes (Wepfer et al., 2018), the permeability of that integration may vary across situations and individuals, as seen in our results. Adding this information to the boundary management literature further explains how permeability and integration can evolve and change from person to person.

Practical Implications

The experience of meaningfulness at work is seen as increasingly important among employees (Mostafa, 2021). With the growing number of employees either wanting to work from home or not go back to work at all since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a developing need for organizations to be able to offer their employees something more than just a paycheck. The experiences of work meaningfulness have been shown to increase organizational commitment (Chaudhary, 2022) and assist employees with being more engaged in their work and be more satisfied and productive (Albrecht, 2015). The results of the current study provide practical implications that supervisors can use to facilitate the experiences of work meaningfulness for their employees to obtain organizational commitment and increases in work engagement.

Leaders may use the results of this study to understand the importance of creating a supportive workplace environment in order to increase workplace meaningfulness. Family supportive supervisors should also use the results of this study to understand that their family supportive behaviors are beneficial to
women who have a dominate family-identity, and men and women who have non-traditional gender identities for increasing work meaningfulness. This is beneficial for leaders to know so they can facilitate work meaningfulness to a larger portion of their employees, by understanding that differences in identity relate to differences in achieving meaningfulness. It is important to note that the majority of the FSSB impact is facilitated by policy and procedures, which can have a large impact on work meaningfulness. With this in mind, leaders can use the results of this study to incorporate family supportive policies throughout the workplace, such as granting time off as needed for sick children, promoting flexible schedules, and even providing or assisting in childcare. Leaders who are not family supportive should also consider these results to understand that showing family supportive supervisor behaviors could benefit their organization.

Leaders can also use the results from this study to facilitate work meaningfulness by increasing employees work engagement, as seen in the results of the exploratory analysis. Work engagement can be achieved through employees successfully meeting their required job demands (Schaufeli et. al, 2009). Leaders can take steps to help employees meet their job demands by giving encouraging feedback and participating in active listening. If leaders can facilitate higher levels of work engagement for their employees, they will be more likely to have higher experiences of work meaningfulness as well.
Limitations

This study had limitations that should be noted. First, the measure of boundary management may have contained some items that captured differences unrelated to permeability. Specifically, some of the items in the scale such as, “I prefer to not talk about my family issues with most people I work with” and “I tend not to talk about my work issues with my family” may not have cleanly captured levels of permeability. Instead, the items may portray participants as not wanting to discuss their issues in life with people who are not involved in them. Therefore, if participants selected high on the scale for these questions, simply because they prefer not to talk about their issues with others, and not because they prefer a permeable boundary between work and family, the results of our study could have been altered by the characteristics of the measure not gathering the correct information. This may have caused a limitation in our study due to not being able to determine if boundary management was a moderator for work-family identity and work meaningfulness or not, since some items on the scale could have measured unrelated aspects.

Another limitation of this study is the issue that our study results might not match the demographics of the total population, causing a lack in generalizability. Since the majority of participants were collected using the convenience sampling technique, Prolific, the demographics of our sample do not align with that of the total population. Specifically, over two-thirds of our sample (75%) where White, while only 10% were Black or African American, 8% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian, and

50
3% multiracial. According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), the workforce population is consisted of 70% White employees, with 15% Black, 13% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 2% multiracial. Since the total population does not align with the demographics of our sample, the generalizability of our study to the total population is limited due to the different experiences, values, and organizational needs different cultures may have (such as valuing work that allows more time with family vs. valuing work that has a higher income) (Taras et al., 2011). Since work meaningfulness is described in the literature as finding value in the work one does (Ericsson et al., 2016), seeing the purpose and importance of their work (Albrecht, 2015), and can be obtained by meeting the employees’ organizational needs (Kubiak, 2022), differences in purpose, values, and needs other cultures may experience could affect how they are able to experience work meaningfulness. When different cultures have contrasting experiences at work (Taras et al., 2011), the experiences of work meaningfulness for the total population can be drastically different than the results of our study that showed experiences of meaningfulness for mostly White employees.

Future Research

The results of this study provide several possibilities for future research. First, there is a lack of research on how men and women experience meaningfulness differently. Researchers argue about the extent of gender differences when it comes to work meaningfulness (Lopez & Ramos, 2017;
Burbano et. al, 2023; Burbano et. al, 2022). Although this study found that people with a strong work-identity, regardless of gender, had higher work meaningfulness than those with a strong family-identity, future research could expand on how men and women experience meaningfulness, regardless of identity. This would broaden the research on how experiences of work meaningfulness can be achieved and how it can best be facilitated.

It would also be beneficial to examine the experiences of work meaningfulness cross-culturally. Since different cultures may have a different understanding of what meaningful work is (Taras et al., 2011), how they achieve experiences of work meaningfulness are likely to vary as well. This would be an important aspect to incorporate into future studies due to the large number of multicultural workplaces. Most organizations are comprised of more than one culture or ethnicity. Therefore, having a better understanding of how to facilitate work meaningfulness for other cultures would benefit organizations due to more of their employees being able to achieve these experiences. Future research could incorporate the results of this study that contained a predominantly White sample, and compare it to results that have other ethnicities as the majority of participants in order to examine how different cultures achieve work meaningfulness. This would give a clearer understanding of how work meaningfulness is achieved for non-white populations and the population as a whole.
Future research should also consider including measures of boundary management integration and permeability when examining boundary management. If only permeability is measured, then only the aspect of how spillover from domains is examined (Russo, et. al, 2018) and not the actual integration of those domains. If both measures of integration and permeability are included in future studies, researchers will be able to examine the importance of domains being integrated and also how they are being integrated by levels of permeability.

Finally, future research should further investigate the findings of the exploratory analysis that found men and women who were categorized as non-traditional gender identity norms both experienced higher work meaningfulness with higher FSSB, while men of traditional gender identity did not. It could be beneficial for future research to investigate what are some of the determining factors for men with traditional gender identities to experience higher levels of work meaningfulness. This is important for organizations to consider because increasing experiences of meaningfulness for all employees will have better organizational outcomes than only being able to facilitate work meaningfulness for certain groups. Specifically, if leaders are able to increase work meaningfulness for every employee, regardless of identity, work engagement, satisfaction, and productivity (Albrecht, 2015) will be higher overall for the organization.
Conclusion

The current study sheds light on the experiences of work meaningfulness for both work and family identified individuals, and the support needed from leaders to be able to obtain this experience. This study presents an expanded understanding of the importance of achieving meaningful work, and highlights keys aspects of what organizations and leaders can do to help facilitate this goal. The research in this study explored the relationship between work-family identity, FSSB and boundary management in determining levels of work meaningfulness. To better understand this relationship, further research should continue to explore how organizations and leaders can increase work meaningfulness, by taking into consideration employee identity. Due to the growing need for individuals to feel worthwhile and valuable within their organization, it is critical that leaders improve their abilities to facilitate work meaningfulness for all employees, creating a supportive and flourishing organizational environment.
APPENDIX A

SCALES
FSSB Scale

Hammer et al. (2013)

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

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 model

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.
Work-Family Identity Scale

Frear et al. (2019) and Lodahl and Kejnar (1965)

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

Work Identify Items:

1. I’ll stay overtime to finish a job, even if I’m not paid for it.
2. You can measure a person pretty well by how good a job they do.
3. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.
4. For me, mornings at work really fly by.
5. I usually show up for work a little early to get things ready.
6. The most important things that happen to me involve my work.
7. Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking ahead to the next day’s work.
8. I’m really a perfectionist about my work.
9. I feel depressed when I fail at something connected with my job.
10. I live, eat, and breathe my job.
11. I would probably keep working even if I didn’t need the money.
12. I am very much involved personally in my work.
13. Sometimes I’d like to kick myself for the mistakes I make at work.
14. To me, my work is only a small part of who I am. R
15. I avoid taking on extra duties and responsibilities in my work. R
16. I used to be more ambitious about my work than I am now. R
17. Quite often I feel like staying home from work instead of coming in. R

Family Identify Items:
1. My family is more important than my work.

2. Most family things are more important than work.

3. I used to care more about my work, but now my family is more important to me.

4. To me, my work is only a small part of who I am.

5. The most important things that happen to me involve my work. R

6. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job. R
Boundary Management Scale

Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2006)

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

1. I only take care of personal needs at work when I am “on Break” or during my lunch hour.
2. I prefer to not talk about my family issues with most people I work with.
3. Throughout the work day, I deal with personal and work issues as they occur. R
4. It would be rare for me to read non-work-related materials at work.
5. I tend to integrate work and family roles through the work day. R
6. I tend to handle emails related to my family separate from emails related to my work.
7. I try to not think about my family or friends when at work, so I can focus.
8. I tend to not talk about work issues with my family.
9. I actively strive to keep my family and work-life separate.
Work Meaningfulness Scale

Steger et al. (2012)

1 = absolutely untrue to 5 = absolutely true

1. I have found a meaningful career.
2. I understand how my work contributes to my life’s meaning
3. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.
4. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.
5. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth
6. My work helps me better understand myself.
7. My work helps me make sense of the world around me.
8. My work really makes no difference to the world. (R)
9. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world.
10. The work I do serves a greater purpose.
Work Engagement Scale

Schaufeli and Bakker (2006)

0 = never, 1=almost never to 6 = always

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. Time flies when I am working.
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. My job inspires me.
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
10. I am proud of the work that I do.
11. I am immersed in my work.
12. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
13. To me, my job is challenging.
14. I get carried away when I am working.
15. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.
INFORMED CONSENT

PURPOSE: The primary purpose of the present study is to examine work-family identity as a potential source of the experience of work meaningfulness for individuals. This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be invited to participate in a study about work-family identity and workplace meaningfulness. They will then be given a consent form for their participation, followed by a 15-20 minute survey consisting of 93 questions about family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), work meaningfulness, work identity, family identity, boundary management, work-family conflict, transformational leadership and work engagement. This survey will also include the collection of demographic data including: age, gender, ethnicity, family information, and income. The survey will conclude with a debriefing, and thank you message. This is an online survey that participants can complete at their own convenience.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIAL: The survey will ask only generic demographic questions, such as gender, age, sex, and occupation. The questionnaire exploring FSSB, work-family identity, work meaningfulness, boundary management, work conflict, transformational leadership and work engagement. It will ask questions regarding participants' feelings towards their workplace constructs with the option to decline to answer. No names will be collected. The only individuals who will see this information are the principal and co-investigator. The survey software does collect IP Addresses. We will eliminate it prior to transferring the data to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) or similar analysis software. The survey software used is password protected and encrypted. Computers and laptop devices used throughout for the study will be password protected.

DURATION: This survey should take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. RISKS: There are no present risks associated with your participation in this study. If participants begin to feel uncomfortable for any reason, they may discontinue participation at any time, either temporarily or permanently, and it will not affect their relationship with the researcher(s) or the university.

BENEFITS: There are no guarantees that participants will receive any benefits from participating in this study; however, participation provides researchers with a better understanding of whether an employee’s work/family identity plays a role in workplace meaningfulness.
CONTACT: The researchers for this study include Rebecca Steiner and Dr. Mark Agars. For more information you can contact Dr. Mark Agars at Mark.Agars@csusb.edu.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
IRB #: IRB-FY2024-179
Title: Experiences of Workplace Meaningfulness through the Lens of Work-Family Identity
Creation Date: 12-6-2023
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Mark Agars
Review Board: Main IRB Designated Reviewers for Department of Psychology
Sponsor:

Study History

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Key Study Contacts

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https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783474103.00021


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