Reconceptualizing Work-Family Conflict for Business/Marriage Partners: A Theoretical Model

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The dynamics and consequences of the unique relationship between marriage partners who run a business together have not been adequately addressed in the family business literature. In this article, we redefine the term “work-family conflict,” used elsewhere to refer to internal conflict experienced by individuals, to apply to this partnership. We argue that work-family conflict experienced by business-marriage partners is affected by personal characteristics pertaining to each partner and to the couple as a whole. Work-family conflict within the partnership in turn affects the quality of the marriage relationship and ultimately the success of the business. A model of the antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict for business-marriage partners is proposed, and testable propositions are generated. Future research is recommended to test the individual propositions and overall model.

Little research has been conducted on the dynamics of husbands and wives running businesses together. The number of businesses run by husbands and wives working together full time in the U.S. has been estimated at more than 700,000 (Greene and Greene 1994), and is growing each year. These couples have been underexamined within the family business literature, even though the dynamics of the business-marriage relationship can have profound consequences on the success of the business.

One of the most important concepts pertaining to family relationships that has emerged from the literature is work-family conflict. Our study will begin with a brief review of prior models of work-family conflict. We conclude that it is difficult to fit business-marriage partners into existing models, and a new definition and model of work-family conflict is needed for them. We use theories from several different research streams to develop a conceptual framework to capture the dynamics of this relationship. This framework identifies antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict for business-marriage partners. In summary, this article addresses the following research question: How can work-family conflict be explained within the unique work-family relationship held by marriage and business partners?

Prior Models of Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict has been defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which
the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Participation in one role (work or family) is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role. Work conflict is defined as the extent to which an individual experiences incompatible role pressures within the work domain, and family conflict is defined as the extent to which an individual experiences incompatible role pressures within the family domain (Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly 1983). Thus, work, family, and work-family (interrole) conflict are three measures of role conflict, measured at the individual level. In these definitions, it is assumed that the work and family "domains" are separate, and that individuals experience conflict at work with one set of people (a role set consisting of individual role senders) and at home with a different role set. The role sender in the family domain (spouse) may pressure the individual to engage in family activities, while there is an opposing pressure from the role sender at work (superior) to engage in work activities. These role senders typically observe the individual's performance within only one domain. Therefore, the attributions of role senders regarding the causes of the individual's behavior tend to be domain-specific. The individual's attempts to explain poor work or family performance in terms of variables in the other domain are likely to be met with some skepticism (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

For example, Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983) developed and tested a model of work, family, and interrole conflict (Figure 1). Work conflict was measured with items that relate to an individual's superior's) such as: "At work I receive incompatible requests from two or more people." Most of the family conflict items had "spouse" as the source of conflict rather than "family." Take for example: "My spouse and I have different ideas about spending time with relatives." The interrole conflict items pertained to excessive work time, schedule conflicts, and fatigue or irritability. Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983) found that 13 percent of the variance in work-family conflict was explained by work conflict and family conflict.

The Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983) model has been extended in subsequent research (for example, Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1994; Higgins, Duxbury, and Irving 1992). However, all prior models depict work-family conflict as an internal state experienced by an individual. In this article, we propose a new definition of work-family conflict as experienced by a couple that shares both work roles and family roles. Drawing from several streams of relevant research, in particular the family business literature, we propose a model of work-family conflict for business marriage partners, generate testable propositions.

Figure 1
Model of Work-Family Conflict Proposed by Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983)

![Diagram of the model](image)

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and suggest implications for research and practice. Our model suggests that work-family conflict in this context is most appropriately assessed at the couple level, with antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict assessed at both the individual and couple levels.

**Model of Work-Family Conflict for Business/Marriage Partners**

The existing work-family conflict literature tends to address the experiences of individuals who are employees rather than owner managers (Stoner, Hartman, and Arora 1990). It is based on the assumptions that (1) the work and family domains are physically separate; (2) the primary role senders in each domain (one’s superior and one’s spouse) do not interact; and (3) role expectations from the separate domains are likely to be incompatible. The literature assumes that one’s role at home is husband/wife and father/mother, and at work is employee (Kahn et al. 1964). Prior research typically has investigated the impact of either work pressures or family pressures on work-family conflict. Rarely have the joint effects of specific work and family pressures been studied (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). In contrast to the dominant type of work-family conflict model in the literature, the model developed in this article for business marriage partners assumes that (1) the work and family domains are not separate; (2) the primary work and family role sender is the same person; and (3) role expectations are not necessarily incompatible.

Our model addresses the question: How do two individuals who comprise a couple that lives and works together experience work-family conflict? To address it, we propose a new definition of work-family conflict specifically for marriage/business partners as conflict that arises when the individuals who make up a partnership disagree over the allocation of work-family conflict.

**Figure 2**

*Model of Work-Family Conflict for Business/Marriage Partners*
of time that each gives to work and family roles.

The model in Figure 2 depicts separate inputs for Partner 1 and Partner 2. *Partner inputs* consist of personal characteristics brought by each individual to the partnership including attitudes regarding traditional sex roles, skills and abilities, role in starting the business, and preference for allocation of work-family roles. The similarity or dissimilarity of these inputs influences the partnership's allocation of time to work and family roles. No particular allocation of time to these roles by the partners is argued to be ideal. Instead, we are concerned with what happens when the parties disagree over the allocation of time and what causes such disagreement. In addition, each partner has a perception of his own inputs and those brought to the partnership by the other individual. If the perception an individual has of his or her partner's inputs closely matches that of the other partner, work-family conflict is likely to be low. Therefore, *couple inputs* are in part measured by the "gap" (the difference in perceptions between the individual inputs). For example, in the work domain, Partner 1 may believe that she primarily brings managerial skills to the family business whereas Partner 2 perceives that Partner 1 brings technical skills rather than managerial skills to the partnership. In the family domain, Partner 2 may perceive that he is particularly skilled at helping their daughter with her math homework, whereas Partner 1 may perceive the skills of Partner 2 in this area as deficient. Dissimilarity in perceptions of both work and family inputs makes role allocation difficult and ultimately leads to work-family conflict. Couple inputs also include the gap in perceptions of the equity of the couple's decision-making process, parental responsibilities, mutuality of support, and role overload.

The model also depicts separate outputs or outcomes for Partner 1 and Partner 2. *Partner outputs* consist of the satisfaction that each individual gets from the relationship, the support offered by the partner, and satisfaction with life in general. The quality of the marriage relationship is a *couple output* that results from the satisfaction that each partner feels. This, in turn, is argued to affect the success of the business, assuming that a healthy marriage relationship is positively related to a successful business. In the following sections of the article, we will generate propositions for the relationships between antecedents, work-family conflict, and consequences identified in our model.

**Partner Inputs**

Partner inputs are those characteristics of the individual that will most strongly influence the process that takes place when partners jointly allocate the time that each will give to work and family roles. The following sections will present the logic for how several different partner inputs may influence the level of work-family conflict in business marriage partners.

**Attitudes Regarding Traditional Sex Roles**

In American society, what came to be known as "traditional sex roles" developed within white middle-class families that could afford to have the woman not earn wages outside the home (Powell 1993). Traditional sex roles emphasize differences between women and men. One influence on sex role development is an individual's parents; that is, parents who claim that opportunities for both sexes should be equal are more likely to encourage their children to deviate from gender stereotypes than parents who advocate separate roles for women and men (Antill 1987). In general, however, men are socialized to do market work, and women to do domestic work (Glass 1990). Sensitization theory suggests that men's self-esteem and identity have traditionally been linked to their performance of the work role, whereas women's self-concept has been associated with their performance of the parenting and spouse roles (Pleck 1979). If a woman is extensively involved in the work role, this may arouse anxiety and guilt in her regarding her performance in the traditional family.

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role and thereby lead to increased work-family conflict (Staines 1980). Thus, the background of each partner has an effect on how they view their involvement in work and family. If marriage-business partners have a similar view of what work and family roles men and women should perform, this will lead to less conflict. Further, Beutell and Greenhaus (1982) found that women whose career orientations are dissimilar from those of their husbands experience relatively intense conflict between work and family roles.

In our society, the husband’s dominance is the norm. This norm is reflected in the common practice of wife and children taking the man’s last name, in the common expectation that wives, even those who work full-time outside the home, will carry far more than 50 percent of the workload at home, and in myriad other ways (Rosenblatt et al. 1985). Many of the problems in couple-owned businesses relate to early childhood perceptions, misperceptions, and decisions made early in life (Kadis and McLendon 1991). Business-marriage partners tend to adhere to traditional models of masculinity and femininity and rely on a conceptual boundary between work and family based on gender differences to define their roles within the two domains (Marshack 1994). If the two partners have different attitudes towards traditional gender roles, then this conceptual boundary line may be more difficult to establish, thus leading to work-family conflict. This leads to Proposition 1:

Proposition 1: The lower the similarity in attitudes toward traditional gender roles, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

Skills and Abilities

In a study on sibling rivalry in family firms, it was recommended that siblings be given separate positions and areas of responsibility in the company and a code of conduct developed to govern sibling behavior that includes standards for recognizing siblings’ strengths and weaknesses (Handler 1991; Ward 1987). Communication, trust, and respect for family members’ abilities and positions are critical to managing relationships within the family firm. Applying this to business-marriage partners, it would seem that understanding and respecting each partner’s abilities and skills, and allocating separate positions and areas of responsibility within the company and within the home would foster a positive relationship. Dividing work assignments according to talent rather than gender allows for healthier succession planning and opportunities for individual advancement for all family members who desire to work in the family business (Marshack 1994). Allocating tasks in the family domain should also be done according to skills and abilities rather than gender. In the case of a family business in which a husband and wife are both involved and in which the husband has more expertise or more executive power than his wife, a marital dynamic may result that encourages tensions over who does what (Rosenblatt et al. 1985). Therefore, when skills and abilities are perceived differently by one or both partners, the allocation of time to tasks and roles is more difficult and conflict may result. Thus:

Proposition 2: The less complementary the skills and abilities that business-marriage partners bring to the partnership, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

Role in Starting the Business

Many people who start their own businesses have a number of reasons for doing so, such as a need and or want to earn money and a desire to avoid investing further time and energy working for others (Kaslow and Kaslow 1992). The impetus for starting a business usually comes from one person (traditionally a male, though this trend is certainly shifting). Typically, “prime mover” may ask his wife to join him as a cashier, bookkeeper, secretary, office manager, or general assistant (Kaslow and Kaslow 1992). In marriage business partners, it could be the case that both individuals have an equal amount of entrepreneurial drive, or that one partner is the entrepreneur and the other is a follower. Most of the entrepreneurial and family business
research focuses on just one founder, although a family member may also become involved at the start-up (or buyout) as a partner or member of an entrepreneurial team (Dyer and Handler 1994). Marschak (1994) found that in business marriage partners the husband is more often the leader and decision maker at work and at home, while the wife is consistently the support person. For example, husbands work more hours at work (a mean of 60 hours per week) compared to their wives (a mean of 49 hours per week), leaving management of the household to their wives.

Although research suggests that males tend to have a higher preference for entrepreneurship than females, this does not imply that women believe entrepreneurship is not a viable career option for them (Scherer, Brodzinski, and Wiece 1990). In fact, between 1987 and 1992, US Census figures indicate that the number of women-owned firms increased by 43 percent nationwide, employment increased by 102 percent, and sales grew by 134 percent; additionally, the National Foundation of Women Business Owners (NFWBO) estimates that during the entire 1987-1996 period, the number of women-owned businesses has increased by 78 percent, that employment has grown by 138 percent, and sales have risen 236 percent (NFWBO 1996). Women may aspire to being entrepreneurs, but they need specific opportunities and motivation to develop feelings of competency and strong expectations for success to complement their aspirations for venture creation and management.

When family businesses are founded, they are typically expressions of an entrepreneur's desire for independence (Ward 1987). Family businesses are often founded without the intent of being family businesses, and often family issues only begin to arise when the second family member enters the firm on a permanent basis (Hoy and Vereser 1994). The family, while a source of support, initially remains in the background, and it is the character of the owner that profoundly affects the growth of the company. The desire of an entrepreneur to be recognized as the business superior to a spouse, and conversely of the entrepreneur's spouse to be his or her coequal seem to create tensions over who does what (Rosenblatt et al. 1985). Founders tend to control and manage dissent, permitting very little input from others in the decision making process (Dyer 1986). It is this tension between being equal marriage partners and unequal business partners that leads to conflict. When one partner believes he or she has had the lead role in starting the business, he or she may expect more of his or her time to be allocated to the work role. Therefore:

**Proposition 3.** The lower the similarity in attitudes toward how much weight (or influence) should be given the lead partner, the higher the work-family conflict.

**Preference For Allocation of Work-Family Roles**

"Balance" has been mentioned frequently in the work-family literature. In terms of balancing one's work identity and family identity, an individual may achieve work-family balance by ensuring that conflicting identities are kept separate or by applying consistent personal values across both identities (Allen, Wilder, and Atkinson 1983; Label 1991). In terms of gender differences, even when men and women are equally involved in their work role, many will perceive a higher level of work conflict due to society's expectations that they succeed in their roles at work (Duxbury and Higgins 1991). Women experience greater family conflict, which may be similarly exacerbated by societal expectations. In our model, the partners are both involved in work and family roles that are "balanced" according to the mutual wishes of both partners.

Spillover theory (Evans and Bartolome 1981) is used to explain how work influences family life. Positive spillover involves the spread of satisfaction and stimulation at work to high levels of energy and satisfaction at home. With negative spillover, the problems and conflicts at
work drain and preoccupy the individual, making it difficult to participate in family life. For women, the family role intrudes into the work role more than the work role is allowed to intrude into the family role; for men, the opposite is true. In the case of working men and women equally sharing family roles, at least two positive outcomes are likely to occur: (1) communication and interactions between the spouses will increase, enhancing their marital happiness, and (2) the job satisfaction of women will tend to increase since they can now devote more of their discretionary time to work-related activities in a stress-free manner (Sekaran 1989). In business-marriage partnerships, it has been suggested that a more equal balance between home and work tasks and a more collegial relationship with one's spouse (such as sharing of power) may open growth opportunities for the family business as well as for the marriage relationship (Marshack 1994). Then:

**Proposition 4:** The lower the similarity in preferences for allocation of work and family roles across the two partners, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

The following proposition pertains to the relationship between the gap in the two partner’s perceptions of each other’s inputs and the level of work-family conflict, measured as a couple-level variable.

**Proposition 5:** Business-marriage partners with perceptions of their own and their partner’s inputs that closely match those of the other partner will experience less work-family conflict than those with perceptions that do not match. In other words, the larger the gap between each partner’s perceptions of their mutual inputs, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

In the next section, several couple inputs are described and propositions generated regarding their significance when perceptions are disparate.

**Couple Inputs**

Couple inputs are an integral part of the model, as the gap in perceptions of these critical variables will also increase the conflict arising from jointly allocating work and family roles to each partner.

**Decision-Making Process**

Equity theory examines how individuals determine the fairness of inputs to outcomes, such as what is a fair reward for a given task, or a fair effort for a given reward (Adams 1963). Determinations are based on perceptions of contributions relative to rewards. It is likely that business-marriage partners perceive as fair the decision-making process that they jointly develop and in which they participate. In consulting to family businesses, the principles of fairness, mutual respect, and consideration are among the basic tenets that guide interventions with couples involved in a joint venture (Kaslow and Kaslow 1992). If the marriage is reasonably equal in its dynamics and functioning, the business will usually reflect this.

Decision-making in family businesses often focuses on conflict and agreement between parent and offspring or between siblings (Ward 1987). In marital relationships, there is one norm that considers spouses as equal partners, making it appropriate for each partner to want to have a say in each other's decisions, and a second norm of husband dominance and control (Rosenblatt et al. 1985). In addition, the decision-making process in family businesses must address the overlap of the family and business systems that includes family relationship dynamics in the business decision-making process. In a business-marriage partnership, if the decision-making process is dominated by one partner, or if the partners do not perceive the process to be as fair or as accurate as it could be, this will lead to conflict in mutually allocating time to work and family roles. Therefore:

**Proposition 6:** The larger the gap in perceptions of the equity of the partnership's joint decision-making process, the higher the level of work-family conflict.
Parental Responsibilities

Family characteristics such as number and age of children and responsibility for children can place extensive time demands on an individual (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). In the Higgins et al. (1992) study, only parents with children living at home were included as participants. Although they did not provide a reason for specifying the sample in this manner, it may have been because such individuals experience a particularly high level of work-family conflict.

The presence of children may have a different effect on the level of work-family conflict in a business-marriage relationship than in a typical dual-career relationship. In a study of work-family conflict in female entrepreneurs, marital status, number of children, and hours worked were not significantly related to work-family role conflict (Stoner et al., 1990). This result may be a unique feature of being a small business owner, where autonomy and the control of business ownership may permit the structuring of time to accommodate many dimensions affecting work-family conflict.

In another study, employer-supported childcare was thought to operate according to the process of spillover by (1) directly enabling workers to better perform family responsibilities such as taking care of their children; and (2) affecting family life indirectly through workers' added satisfaction with a workplace that is responsive to their personal needs (Lambert 1990). Business-marriage partners who bring their children to work or work out of their home may also experience lower work-family conflict due to the process of spillover.

In a family business, parents can teach their children the qualities they will need in business as well as those that make the family run more smoothly (Ward 1987). Further, the process of resolving conflicts must begin in the home, in the lessons that children are taught, and in the way the family conducts itself. In business-marriage partnerships, the couple must agree on their responsibilities as parents in terms of including the children in the family business or keeping the family domain separate from the work domain. This leads us to Proposition 7:

**Proposition 7:** The larger the gap in perceptions of the partnership's parental responsibilities, the higher the level of work-family conflict. In particular, the lower the similarity in attitudes towards including the children in the family business, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

Mutuality of Support

When an individual experiences simultaneous time pressures from the work and family domains, the individual may seek support from role senders in either or both the work and family domains (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1994). If the support is not sufficient to modify time demands, then either work will interfere with family or family will interfere with work, depending on which demand takes precedence. Perceptions of the mutuality of support may be based on the relative amounts of support provided and received by the donor and the recipient or on perceptions of the absolute and relative role demands and responsibilities experienced by the partners. In our model, the work and family domains are shared, with the couple experiencing simultaneous time pressures. Assuming a high mutual exchange of support, time demands can be modified to alleviate the pressure and reduce work-family conflict. Well-managed businesses and healthy families are both based on commitment to a shared ideal (be it the selling of products or the creation of a home), and both run especially well when their members offer one another mutual support (Ward 1987). Therefore, if one partner is not supportive of the other in terms of picking up the slack in either domain, then the allocation of work and family roles will lead to conflict:

**Proposition 8:** The larger the gap in perceptions of the partnership's mutuality of support, the higher the level of work-family conflict.
Role Overload

Overload, a major component of work-family conflict, exists when the total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed work and family roles are too great to perform the roles adequately (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Expectations associated with work and family roles can lead to physical and psychological strain through overload and interference, two components of role conflict (Cooke and Rousseau 1981). One way to cope with role overload is to allocate more time to work-related activities when work conflict is high, or more time to family-related activities when family conflict is high. This coping strategy will be difficult to implement when work and family demands are simultaneously high (Higgins et al. 1992). In our model, the decision-making process at the couple-level would enable partners to discuss role overload and decide what tasks must be done promptly, what tasks can wait to be completed, and what someone else can be hired to do.

In a study of paired employees (couples who work in the same organization), pairing was found to enhance individual and group performance in comparison to dual-career couples with separate employers (Werbel and Hames 1992). Paired employees are able to coordinate work schedules (a significant source of work-family conflict), and the employer may work with the paired employees to minimize the disruptive spillover from family to work. In applying this phenomenon to business marriage partnerships, work-family conflict will arise when the partners disagree on the extent of role overload. In other words, no matter how they allocate work and family roles to each partner, there is too much work in the work and or family domains to be successfully managed by the partnership. Outside assistance in either or both work and family domains may be necessary:

Proposition 9: The larger the gap in perceptions of the partnership's level of role overload, the higher the level of work-family conflict.

Work-Family Conflict in Family Businesses

Conflict resolution is an important topic in the family business literature. Owner-managers of small family businesses are expected to simultaneously achieve both family and business goals, and management control problems often arise when the needs of the family and the firm conflict (Riordan and Riordan 1993). It has long been believed that this inevitable contradiction between the needs of the business and those of the family is a special barrier to the long-term business health of family businesses (Ward 1987). Two important variables to consider in solving problems arising in family businesses run from the home are the amount of time devoted to the business and the degree of control over the schedule of business affairs (Owen and Winter 1991). Thus, there has been some consideration in the family business literature of work-family conflict. In our model, this conflict is measured explicitly at the couple level and pertains to the conflict that arises over the allocation of time that each partner is expected to give to work and family roles.

Partner and Couple Outputs

The rationale for the development of this model is that work-family conflict experienced within a business marriage partnership has important consequences. These consequences are, in part, experienced separately by each partner. High work-family conflict is likely to lead each partner to feel less satisfied with the relationship, the other partner, and with life itself (Higgins et al. 1992; Kopelman et al. 1983). In addition, work-family conflict has consequences for the couple as a unit. No research has been conducted on these consequences because, as we have seen, work-family conflict has generally not been examined for business marriage partners and has not been operationalized as a couple-level variable. However, we argue that the couple's level of work-family conflict is likely to affect the quality of their marriage and ultimately, as
anecdotal evidence suggests (Waldman 1988), the success of the business:

**Proposition 10.** The higher the level of work-family conflict, the lower the levels of satisfaction with the relationship, satisfaction with the support provided by the other partner, and satisfaction with life experienced by each partner.

**Proposition 11.** The lower the levels of satisfaction, the lower the quality of the marriage relationship.

**Proposition 12.** The lower the quality of the marriage relationship, the less successful the business.

**Conclusions**

The existing definition and models of work-family conflict focus on the roles of individuals. The term as previously defined does not apply to the unique relationship of business and marriage partners, whose work and family roles are shared and interchangeable, not inherently incompatible. In considering the unique situation of business marriage partners, we have challenged the assumptions underlying these models and the appropriateness of concepts used to explain work-family conflict for individuals. Thus, we have reconceptualized work-family conflict for this unique partnership. The new definition and conceptual model explain and predict events at both the individual and couple levels.

The contribution of this article is that it proposes a model and generates propositions pertaining to the relationship between business marriage partners. These propositions need to be tested as part of an overall research program on entrepreneurial couples. Future research is needed that measures work-family conflict at the couple-level using the business marriage partnership as the unit of analysis. Instruments need to be developed that cater to the specific needs of this partnership, taking into consideration the shared work-family domains, shared sources of support, and entrepreneurial characteristics of the individuals. Such a research program will help us to better understand the factors that influence the success of business marriage partners in their businesses as well as in their family relationships. Future research may also want to address the psychology of the individuals involved including personality traits such as risk-taking propensity and locus of control.

Gaps in perceptions between partners are an important part of our model. The way a gap in perceptions is conceptualized in a research project has important implications for the formation of hypotheses and the analytical technique used to test for relationships (Venkatraman 1989). This gap can be conceptualized as the lack of a theoretically defined match between each partner’s perceptions. An absolute difference technique may be used where the gap is measured as the absolute difference between perceptions. In this article, it is argued that the closer the fit between perceptions, the lower the expected work-family conflict. With the absolute difference measure, the concept of theoretical fit is directly interpretable, and hypothesis testing can be performed (Keller 1994). Regression analysis can be used to determine whether a gap in perceptions is a good predictor of work-family conflict. It is important to note, however, that this technique for measuring fit is susceptible to bias in the wording or scaling of questionnaire items since difference scores are used (Keller 1994). To minimize these scaling differences, the scores may be standardized before difference scores are computed. When the propositions regarding differences in perceptions are empirically tested, the findings will increase our understanding of how the fit between each partner’s perceptions affects the couple-level variable of work-family conflict.

After reading this article, practitioners and consultants should look differently at work-family conflict in family businesses. We suggest that the quality of the marriage relationship between partners is positively related to the success of the family business. If the level of work-family conflict is high, individual satisfaction levels and the quality of the marriage
relationship will be low and will adversely affect the business. Our model has practical implications for how consultants may help family businesses as well as how business-marriage partners may help themselves. It suggests that the partners will benefit from ongoing discussions of what they bring to both the marriage and business in attitudes, expectations, skills, abilities, preferences for allocation of time across work and family roles, preferences for decision-making about how time will be allocated across roles, and readiness to be supportive of each other throughout the life of the partnership. Such discussions, which may be facilitated by family business consultants, will help to make the partners aware of the magnitude of factors that influence the success of their “joint venture” and will help them to reduce differences in their perceptions regarding these factors. If such discussions are successful at addressing and resolving differences over key issues, the end result will hopefully be improved satisfaction with life for both partners, a healthier marriage, and a more successful business.

References


