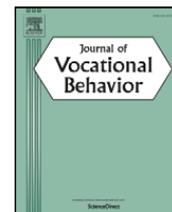


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## Beyond conflict: Functional facets of the work–family interplay

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with three positive facets of the work–family interplay, i.e., transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood, and cross-domain compensation. The latter refers to the experience that engagement in one domain helps dealing with failures in the other domain. In two correlational studies ( $N_1 = 107$  working mothers,  $N_2 = 146$  working men and women), cross-domain compensation predicted domain-specific well-being even when we controlled for work–family conflicts and the two other positive facets (viz., transfer of competencies and positive mood). In an additional experiment ( $N_3 = 63$  working men and women), which exclusively focused on compensation, participants were asked to remember a job-related failure. Then they were instructed to think about a positive job-related experience (i.e., *intradomain* compensation) or family-related experience (i.e., *cross-domain* compensation). Compared to a control group, both experimental groups showed faster emotional recovery, with *cross-domain* compensation being a slightly more effective strategy at the beginning of that recovery.

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## Beyond conflict: functional facets of work–family interplay

Work and family are arguably the two core domains of adult life. In applied psychology, there is increasing interest in investigating the relationship between these two central life domains. For the past decades, psychological research has mainly focused on the negative effects (e.g., conflicts) of being involved in work and family simultaneously (see Caspar, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007) while often overlooking the positive effects. The present set of studies addresses possible positive effects of simultaneous engagement in the family and work domains. More specifically, we investigate three facets summarized under the umbrella term of enhancement: transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood, and cross-domain compensation. The latter denotes the experience that engagement and positive experiences in one life domain can help to cope with negative experiences in another life domain. The first two studies investigated subjective perceptions of the three facets of work–family enhancement (transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood, compensation) in both directions (work-to-family, family-to-work). The third study tested the hypothesized beneficial effect of family experiences for coping with negative work-related experiences (i.e., compensation) within an experimental design.

Among sociologists, the debate about the potentially positive effects of maintaining multiple roles began in the 1970s. For example, Sieber (1974) postulated that having multiple roles provides a greater number of opportunities and resources to facilitate personal growth and better functioning. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, psychologists transferred open-system approaches to the work–family interplay. Spillover theories posit that emotions and behavior in one sphere carry over to the other (e.g., Staines, 1980). Some researchers also discussed a complementary relationship between work and family based on the assumption that positive experiences or achievements in one life domain can make up for deficits in the other (see Staines, 1980). Mostly, however, psychological research has focused on the strains and stress resulting from holding multiple, potentially

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conflicting roles. Only recently have psychologists begun to pay more systematic attention to the potentially positive effects of involvement in both the work and family domains.

In the literature, positive effects of the parallel pursuit of family as well as work-related goals are referred to as positive spillover, enrichment, facilitation, positive transfer, and enhancement (for conceptual differentiations see [Edwards & Rothbard, 2000](#); [Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006](#)). We use the term “enhancement” to describe the acquisition of resources and experiences in one life domain that are beneficial for the other. Following [Greenhaus and Powell \(2006\)](#), two groups of experiences can be distinguished: (i) *buffering* (i.e., participation in both domains protects individuals from the impact of distress in one of the roles), and (ii) the *transfer of positive experiences* (i.e., positive experiences in one domain produce positive experiences/outcomes in the other domain). We propose to differentiate between two types of transfer of positive experiences, namely (a) the transfer of positive *mood* from work to family and vice versa and (b) the transfer of *competencies* acquired in one life domain to the other life domain. This results in three facets of positive work–family interplay that underlie the current research: (1) transfer of positive mood, (2) transfer of competencies, and (3) compensation defined as buffering negative experiences in one domain through positive experiences in the other. All three facets of enhancement will be described in more detail below with a particular emphasis on cross-domain compensation.

### Studies I and II: Self-constructions of perceived work–family enhancement

An important part of the current research approach is to conceptualize perceived enhancement as a central work–family experience independent of work–family conflict experiences. This is based on the assumption that such *positive* subjective constructions can have a unique effect on psychological functioning.

Regarding compensation, [Greenhaus and Powell \(2006\)](#) reviewed studies showing that feeling satisfied in one domain weakens the negative effect of stressors on subjective well-being in the other life domain. For instance, [Barnett, Marshall, and Pleck \(1992\)](#) showed that marital and parental role quality moderate the impact of work characteristics on psychological distress. [Voydanoff and Donnelly \(1999\)](#) reported job and marital satisfaction to buffer the impact of hours spent caring for old parents on psychological distress. [Linville \(1987\)](#) showed that self-complexity (i.e., a high number of distinct self aspects) reduces the impact of stress on depressive symptoms. [Rothermund and Meiniger \(2004\)](#) demonstrated that the number of self aspects serves as a stress buffer irrespective of distinctiveness. Within this latter research tradition, self aspects are typically indicated by self-descriptive traits. Note, however, that [Freund and Smith \(1999\)](#) showed that the number of self-defining domains buffers the negative effects of health problems in old age. This is closer to the current conception of involvement in life domains.

Within work–family research, different conceptualizations of compensation are discussed (see [Edwards & Rothbard, 2000](#)). For some researchers compensation denotes that a person decreases his/her involvement in a dissatisfying domain while increasing his/her involvement in another domain. For others, compensation occurs if a person responds to dissatisfaction in one domain by pursuing rewards in another domain. In our own conceptualization, compensation represents a shift of attention to a potentially satisfying domain. Note, that we do not assume that someone seeks out contrasting experiences or higher involvement in the respective other domain (see [Zedeck, 1992](#)). Instead, simply that by focusing one's attention to things that go well in the one domain should help putting negative experiences in the other into a broader context and works as a buffer. We assume that enhancement through cross-domain compensation can work in both directions: Work-to-family compensation takes place when positive experiences in the work domain compensate for failures and shortcomings in the family domain, whereas family-to-work compensation takes place when positive experiences in the family domain compensate for failures and shortcomings in the work domain. An example of work-to-family compensation is when the pride felt after a successful day at work counteracts the anger felt after an argument with one's spouse. An example of family-to-work compensation is when family life helps to forget about one's work-related worries.

Note, that this definition of compensation differs from mere spillover of positive mood where positive emotions, whatever their source, should affect not only one particular life domain but are transferred to others as well. “*Transfer of positive mood*,” then, denotes a direct transfer or spillover of mood from one domain to the other (e.g., when you are in a good mood at work, you are still in a good mood when you arrive at home; see also [Chen, Powell, & Greenhaus, 2009](#)). As noted by [Edwards and Rothbard \(2000\)](#) mood spillover is largely unintentional and concerns the general persistence of positive mood that is not restricted to one life domain. This does not imply, however, that people are unaware of such effects. In fact, they might construe the interplay of work and family as one that is characterized by spillover effects.

The “*transfer of competencies*” concerns the usefulness of skills acquired in one life domain for another domain. This facet is similar to what has been summarized under the term of “instrumental” positive spillover (see [Chen et al., 2009](#)). In our view, these competencies can be classified mostly as either social (e.g., perspective taking, being empathic) or self-regulatory (e.g., being persistent, time-management skills).

#### *Consequences of enhancement: domain-specific satisfaction*

In line with other authors (see [Greenhaus & Powell, 2006](#)), we conceptualize enhancement experiences as largely independent of conflict experiences. In addition, we assume that different forms of enhancement can occur simultaneously. This assumption allows us to determine the relative impact of different forms of enhancement and conflicts on outcomes or under different circumstances. In Studies I and II, we focus on job and partnership satisfaction as outcomes.

As mentioned above, psychological research has only begun to investigate positive effects of simultaneous engagement in different life domains. Until recently, most research in this area was concerned with *conflicts* between work and family engagement. Although conflict seems to contribute to negative emotions and ill being (see Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006), we expect that conflicts are not or are only weakly negatively associated with the *positive* experience of satisfaction: Not experiencing problems does not necessarily make people satisfied. If, however, associations between conflicts and positive outcomes are found, they should be negative.

How might transfer experiences and compensation contribute to satisfaction in the work and family domains? In our view, enhancement (positive transfer and compensation) should predict domain-specific satisfaction. More precisely, the experience that participation in one domain enhances functioning in the other should be perceived as positive and should lead to a favorable judgment of the *supporting* life domain. In other words, the subjective utility of the respective domain should increase. Therefore, work-to-family enhancement (e.g., the transfer of competencies acquired in the work domain to the family domain) should be positively associated with satisfaction in the *work* domain (H1, H2, H3; see Fig. 1). Similarly, family-to-work enhancement should lead to satisfaction with the *family* domain (H4, H5, H6; see Fig. 1). These hypotheses are also in line with Edward and Rothbard's reasoning that shifting time and attention to another rewarding domain may increase domain-specific satisfaction because focusing on rewards heightens satisfaction with the rewarding domain. Within the enhancement experiences, both perceived positive transfer (transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood) and perceived compensation should add uniquely to the prediction of domain-specific satisfaction because they refer to qualitatively different experiences. Whereas positive transfer has an optimizing function, compensation is geared towards counteracting negative experiences (i.e., the prevention of the detrimental effects of failure).

Compared to intradomain links, cross-domain associations might depend more on the specific enhancement facet. *Transfer of competencies* should be positively related to satisfaction in the transferred-to-domain because they increase the probability of success in the transferred-to-domain (H7, H10; see Fig. 1). With regard to the *transfer of moods*, one could argue that if positive mood is transferred from one domain to the other, this transferred mood, in turn, might favor domain-specific satisfaction (H8, H11; see Fig. 1). In contrast, by definition, compensation occurs as a response to negative experiences in one of the two life domains. Therefore, on the one hand, the necessity of compensation might lead to negative evaluations of the domain that needs compensation (i.e., decreased satisfaction with this domain). In fact, as outlined by Edwards and Rothbard (2000, p. 188–189), "reactive compensation occurs when (...) undesirable experiences in a domain decrease satisfaction in that domain and lead to the pursuit of (...) pleasurable experiences in the other domain." On the other hand, successful compensation might enhance well-being in the failure domain. Therefore, the hypotheses on cross-domain effects of self-reported compensation experiences do not specify a direction (H9, H12; see Fig. 1).

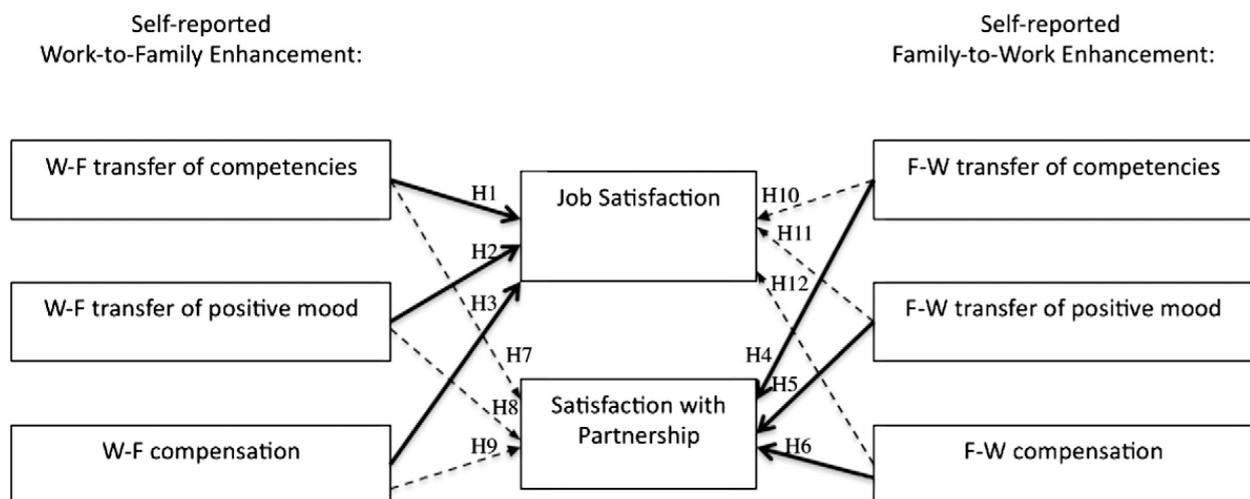
**Study I**

The main purpose of Study I was to test the hypotheses summarized in Fig. 1 and to demonstrate that self-reported compensation experiences uniquely add to the prediction of domain-specific positive satisfaction over and above work–family conflicts and positive transfer experiences. The new conceptualization of cross-domain enhancement also necessitated the development of a new measure, which will be introduced in the context of Study I.

*Methods*

*Procedure and participants*

Participants were 107 working mothers ( $M = 39.07$  years,  $SD = 5.64$ ), all living in Switzerland. They were mainly recruited via newspaper advertisements and completed the questionnaire in our laboratory. Each woman received 20 Swiss Francs (about \$17)



**Fig. 1.** Self-reported work–family-enhancement and domain-specific well-being (hypothesized positive relationships: H1 to H6, H7, H8, H10, H11; undirected hypotheses: H9, H12; Study I + II).

for participating. Most of them were living in a stable relationship (93.4%); on average, they had two children (mean age:  $M = 7.02$  years,  $SD = 4.61$ ). Participants worked in a broad range of occupations with an average of  $M = 28.84$  h per week ( $SD = 11.08$ ). Please note that it is typical for Swiss mothers to work part-time only (Romans, 2008). 70.5% of the participants held an advanced university degree.

Measures

In the following, we first describe the newly developed self-report measure of work–family enhancement as well as the measures used to assess work–family conflict and work- and family-related well-being. Scale means, standard deviations, internal consistencies, and intercorrelations are displayed in Table 1. If not mentioned otherwise, participants rated all items on a six-point scale from 1 “fully disagree” to 6 “completely agree”.

To assess the three theoretically derived facets of work–family enhancement (i.e., compensation, transfer of competencies, transfer of mood), a new questionnaire including 44 items was developed. Note that the new measure of work–family enhancement is different from the recently published questionnaires by Carlson et al. (2006), Hanson, Hammer, and Colton (2006), and van Steenbergen, Ellemers, and Mooijaart (2007) as these questionnaires do not include subscales for perceived compensation. A full list of the English version of the items for all three subscales is provided in the Appendix A. Fourteen items measured compensation (7 items for the compensatory effect of work on family experiences; 7 items for the compensatory effect of family on work experiences; e.g., If things aren't going well at home, my job gives me a boost.). Eighteen items measured the transfer of competencies (9 items for work-to-family competence transfer; 9 items for family-to-work competence transfer; e.g., The expertise and competencies acquired at work, strengthen my organizational abilities at home.). By focusing on meta-skills (i.e., social and self-regulatory skills), items could be applied to all kinds of occupations. Moreover, pilot testing based on open responses showed that skills pertaining to the specific job are relatively rare (e.g., a physician's transfer of medical knowledge from the workplace to treating his or her children's illnesses at home). Finally, 12 items measured the transfer of positive mood (6 items for work-to-family mood transfer; 6 items for family-to-work mood transfer; e.g., If i feel good at home, I'm in a good mood at work, too.). Building upon Russell's (1980) circumplex model of affect, the mood-transfer items considered valence as well as arousal.

To test the factor structure of this instrument, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses with Amos 6.0 (factors were allowed to correlate). These analyses showed that the proposed 6-factor structure ( $\chi^2/df = 1.73$ , CFI = .80; RMSEA = .08) had the best fit as compared to a 1-factor ( $\chi^2/df = 3.64$ , CFI = .27; RMSEA = .16), a 2-factor (work-to-family transfer, family-to-work transfer;  $\chi^2/df = 3.26$ , CFI = .37; RMSEA = .15), and a 3-factor solution (compensation, transfer of competencies, transfer of mood;  $\chi^2/df = 2.95$ , CFI = .46; RMSEA = .14). Therefore, it seems justified to base further analyses on six separate subscales.

With regard to mean levels, there was no significant difference between W–F compensation and F–W compensation ( $F[1] = .40$ , n.s.). With respect to the transfer of competencies, there was a significantly higher endorsement of F–W statements than of W–F statements ( $F[1] = 28.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, concerning the transfer of mood, participants reported higher W–F transfer than F–W transfer ( $F[1] = 6.95$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

To assess work–family conflicts, we used items from an instrument developed by Carlson and Frone (2003) using a 5-point scale ranging from (1) “never” to (5) “always.” Six items referred to work-to-family conflicts (e.g., “When you are at home, how often do you think about things that you need to accomplish at work?”) and six items referred to family-to-work conflicts (e.g., “When you are at work, how often do you think about things that you need to accomplish at home?”).

Job satisfaction was assessed using a 10-item scale (Giegler, 1985). Partnership satisfaction was assessed with a six-item version of the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998).

Results

We conducted two hierarchical multiple regression analyses to test our hypotheses. The outcome criteria were job satisfaction and satisfaction with the partnership. Work–family conflicts were entered first, followed by positive transfer experiences (transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood) in the second step, and, in order to test the additional predictive power of this facet, compensation in the final step. Results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1  
Study I: scales' descriptives, internal consistencies, and intercorrelations (N = 107).

	M	SD	α	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. W–F Compensation	4.15	1.02	.90	1.00									
2. F–W Compensation	4.29	1.01	.89	-.05	1.00								
3. W–F Transfer of Competencies	3.85	1.12	.90	.32**	.23*	1.00							
4. F–W Transfer of Competencies	4.37	1.04	.91	.16	.23*	.45**	1.00						
5. W–F Transfer of Positive Mood	5.13	.85	.90	.15	.19*	.28*	.17	1.00					
6. F–W Transfer of Positive Mood	4.83	.94	.93	.15	.25*	.22*	.27**	.25**	1.00				
7. Conflicts (W–F)	2.89	.63	.76	-.15	-.06	.01	-.17	.00	-.13	1.00			
8. Conflicts (F–W)	2.62	.55	.68	-.04	-.11	-.09	.12	-.02	.01	.15	1.00		
9. Job Satisfaction	4.93	.83	.88	.38**	.03	.37**	.12	.11	.27**	-.18	-.22*	1.00	
10. Satisfaction with Partnership	4.82	.83	.86	-.22*	.32**	.08	-.08	.11	-.03	-.05	-.17	.19	1.00

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

**Table 2**Study I: work and family satisfaction: associations with work–family conflict, positive transfer and compensation (multiple regression analyses,  $N = 107$ ).

	Job satisfaction <sup>a</sup>		Satisfaction with partnership <sup>b</sup>	
	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1: <i>Work–Family Conflicts</i>		.07**		.03
Work–Family	.10		–.09	
Family–Work	–.17		–.13	
Step 2: <i>Transfer... ... of Competencies</i>		.16**		.03
Work–Family	.29*		.06	
Family–Work	–.05		.14	
... of <i>Positive Mood</i>				
Work–Family	–.07**		.08	
Family–Work	.22*		–.19	
Step 3: <i>Compensation</i>		.06*		.15**
Work–Family compensation	.25**		–.23*	
Family–Work Compensation	–.08		.30**	

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .<sup>a</sup> Multiple  $R = .54$ \*\*.<sup>b</sup> Multiple  $R = .45$ \*\*. Beta weights refer to the full model.

### Satisfaction with the supporting domain

As predicted, role conflicts were less predictive of positive functioning than enhancement experiences. Although work–family conflicts were significantly associated with job satisfaction, enhancement explained a larger percentage of inter-individual differences in job satisfaction. Confirming H1 and H3, work-to-family transfer of competencies as well as work-to-family compensation were positively related to job satisfaction. However, contrary to expectations (H2), work-to-family transfer of mood did not show a positive but a negative association with job satisfaction. None of the conflict indicators were predictive of positive family-related outcomes. In addition, with respect to partnership satisfaction, neither the transfer of competencies (H4) nor the transfer of mood (H5) added to the prediction but family-to-work compensation did (H6). Most importantly in the present context and as predicted, compensation added to the prediction of work satisfaction and partnership satisfaction over and above conflict and positive transfer experiences.

### Cross-domain effects

Cross-domain effects (i.e., prediction of work outcomes by family-to-work enhancement and prediction of family outcomes by work-to-family enhancement) turned out to be rare. With respect to the transfer of competencies, no significant associations were found (H7, H8). The transfer of positive mood appeared to be beneficial in the work (H11) but not in the family domain (H8). In fact, none of the work-to-family enhancement facets increased satisfaction with the family domain. But there was a negative association between work-to-family compensation and partnership satisfaction, confirming H9. Family-to-work compensation, however, left job satisfaction unaffected (H12).

### Discussion

#### Perceived enhancement and positive functioning in the work and family domains

We expected enhancement experiences (i.e., compensation, transfer of competencies, transfer of positive mood) to be linked to indicators of domain-specific well-being over and above role conflict. Moreover, we expected compensation to have an effect beyond work–family conflict and other enhancement experiences. The pattern of results mostly supported these expectations. Overall, satisfaction with the supporting domain was more pronounced than the cross-domain influences (i.e., prediction of work outcomes by family-to-work enhancement and prediction of family outcomes by work-to-family enhancement). With respect to cross-domain effects on satisfaction, it is important to note that work-to-family compensation was negatively related to relationship satisfaction. As elaborated in the introduction, this finding is plausible because the perceived necessity of compensating for setbacks and negative experiences in the relationship domain implies and brings to mind a suboptimal domain-specific life situation, which can, at least to some extent, add to decreased family-related well-being. In contrast, the positive associations between work-to-family compensation and job satisfaction as well as between family-to-work compensation and partnership satisfaction goes in line with our assumption that the experience that participation in one domain helps to deal with problems and failures in another domain leads to a favorable judgment of the *supporting* life domain.

#### Measurement of perceived enhancement and mean level differences

Study I demonstrated that the three hypothesized facets could be measured reliably with the proposed questionnaire. The six-factor structure was confirmed by factor analysis, supporting the assumption of three separate facets of work-to-family and of family-to-work enhancement. The different facets of work–family enhancement were largely unrelated to role conflict, attesting

to the divergent validity of the enhancement measure. With regard to reliability, all subscales were shown to have high internal consistency.

There were significant mean level differences in enhancement direction (W–F, F–W) for the transfer of competencies and the transfer of mood. However, compensation in the two domains did not differ. With respect to the transfer of competencies and the transfer of mood, the mean level differences converge with Hanson et al.'s findings (2006), namely higher F–W than W–F transfer of competencies and higher W–F than F–W transfer of mood. Carlson et al. (2006) and van Steenbergen et al. (2007) did not report the respective mean level comparisons, thus preventing cross-study comparisons. Taken together with Hanson et al.'s (2006) results, findings speak in favor of more permeable affective boundaries from work to family than from family to work, but also of the specific potentials for learning within the family domain.

#### *Open questions and limitations*

Study I was the first investigation of a new measure of three components of work–family enhancement. The results are promising but also leave a number of questions unanswered. For instance, contrary to expectations, transfer of positive mood did not show a positive association with relationship- and work-related outcomes. This might be partly explained by the transient nature of mood, which does not relate to the more enduring characteristics of domain-specific satisfaction. Another open question is why only the transfer of competencies from the work to the family domain was relevant for domain-specific satisfaction, whereas the transfer of competencies from the family to the work domain appeared to be irrelevant. This finding cannot be explained by a floor effect of family-to-work transfer since the mean level of the transfer of competencies from family to work was even higher than the transfer of competencies from work to family.

As with any study, Study I also has limitations. One is the cross-sectional nature, which does not allow for causal conclusions. It may well be that satisfaction is a prerequisite for enhancement. Another limitation concerns the sample that was comprised exclusively of working mothers. Acknowledging the necessity to replicate our findings with a more heterogeneous sample, Study II included working men and women, and among them parents as well as childless adults.

## **Study II**

The primary goal of Study II was to test whether findings from Study I could be replicated with a more heterogeneous sample. In other, words Study II served the purpose of cross-validation. We expected that (i) perceived work-to-family enhancement would primarily be predictive of job satisfaction, (ii) family-to-work enhancement would primarily be predictive of partnership satisfaction, and (iii) compensation would have a unique predictive value beyond conflict and other enhancement facets. Furthermore, Study II allowed us to explore mean level differences in enhancement and to explore possible differences in the strength of relationship between enhancement and positive outcome criteria depending on socio-demographic characteristics (gender, parenthood status). With respect to gender, van Steenbergen et al. (2007) found that women reported higher levels of work–family facilitation than men did in a number of subscales. But van Steenbergen et al. (2007) did not include a measure of compensation, so there is currently no empirical data on possible gender differences with respect to compensation and also no theoretical rationale why women should compensate more often than men. With regard to parental status, one could argue that having children offers a number of learning opportunities that might result in a higher level of perceived family-to-work transfer of competencies but not necessarily in differences regarding the transfer of positive mood and compensation. Therefore, mean level comparisons were exploratory.

### *Methods*

#### *Procedure and participants*

All instruments used in this study were administered via Internet. A link to the study was placed on the laboratory's homepage. As an incentive for participation, each participant was offered a written individual feedback on his/her job-strain level.

The sample was comprised of  $N = 146$  Swiss participants (67 male; age:  $M = 41.90$  years,  $SD = 10.09$ ). Most of them lived in a stable relationship (92.5%), 65.1% had children ( $n = 11$  single parents). Participants worked in a broad range of occupations. 48.6% of them held an advanced university degree. Their weekly working hours ranged from 8 to 50 h. Women ( $M = 29.73$ ,  $SD = 11.70$ ) worked fewer hours than men ( $M = 39.56$ ,  $SD = 7.78$ ), which is consistent with representative Swiss employment data (see Romans, 2008).

#### *Measures*

As our central goal was to replicate findings from Study 1 with a more heterogeneous sample, the same measures were used. Descriptive statistics and internal consistencies of study scales are given in Table 3. Confirmatory factor analyses corroborated findings from Study I: The 6-factor structure ( $\chi^2/df = 1.74$ , CFI = .88; RMSEA = .07) had the best fit when compared to a 1-factor ( $\chi^2/df = 5.10$ , CFI = .34; RMSEA = .17), a 2-factor (work-to-family transfer, family-to-work transfer; ( $\chi^2/df = 4.43$ , CFI = .45; RMSEA = .15), and a 3-factor solution (compensation, transfer of competencies, transfer of mood;  $\chi^2/df = 3.77$ , CFI = .56; RMSEA = .14).

**Table 3**  
Study II: scales' descriptives, internal consistencies, and intercorrelations ( $N = 146$ ).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. W–F Compensation	3.43	1.23	.95	1.00									
2. F–W Compensation	4.37	1.05	.93	-.14	1.00								
3. W–F Transfer of Competencies	3.64	1.05	.92	.57**	.12	1.00							
4. F–W Transfer of Competencies	4.07	.98	.93	.33**	.43**	.54**	1.00						
5. W–F Transfer of Positive Mood	4.88	.81	.93	.24**	.28**	.41**	.26**	1.00					
6. F–W Transfer of Positive Mood	4.57	.96	.94	.43**	.18*	.40**	.30**	.32**	1.00				
7. Conflicts (W–F)	3.03	.77	.74	-.14	.11	-.11	-.08	.06	-.12	1.00			
8. Conflicts (F–W)	2.92	.83	.77	.19*	-.16	.16	.01	.10	-.06	.38**	1.00		
9. Job Satisfaction	4.50	1.04	.91	.40**	.00	.33**	.10	.13	.22**	-.26**	.09	1.00	
10. Satisfaction with Partnership	4.85	.98	.94	-.24	.57**	.03	.20*	.28**	-.01	-.02	-.06	.27**	1.00

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

**Results**

*Mean level differences in work–family enhancement*

To analyze mean level differences in direction (W–F, F–W) and between the different subgroups (men vs. women, parents vs. non-parents), analyses of variance were conducted that included direction as a within-subject factor and gender as well as parenthood (yes, no) as between-subject factors. Table 4 summarizes the results for work–family compensation. There was a clear effect of direction: F–W compensation proved to be higher than W–F compensation. This main effect was qualified by two interaction effects: (1) Interaction of direction and gender: Inspection of the means showed that men reported lower W–F compensation but higher F–W compensation than women. (2) Interaction of direction and parenthood: Inspection of means showed that parents had higher values on W–F compensation than non-parents.

With respect to the transfer of competencies, an analysis of variance with the within-subject factor of direction, and gender and parenthood as between-subject factors evinced a significant main effect of direction ( $F[1,142] = 22.03, p < .01, \text{Eta}^2 = .13$ ) with W–F transfer ( $M = 3.64, SD = 1.05$ ) being lower than F–W transfer ( $M = 4.07, SD = .98$ ). None of the two- or three-way interactions was significant. Regarding the transfer of positive mood, an analysis of variance with the within-subject factor of direction, and gender and parenthood as between-subject factors, again, showed a significant main effect of direction ( $F[1,142] = 17.69, p < .01, \text{Eta}^2 = .11$ ) with W–F transfer ( $M = 4.88, SD = .81$ ) being higher than F–W transfer ( $M = 4.57, SD = .96$ ), as well as a significant interaction between direction and parenthood ( $F[1,142] = 7.49, p < .01, \text{Eta}^2 = .05$ ). This interaction was due to parents reporting a higher level of F–W transfer ( $M = 4.74, SD = .80$ ) than non-parents ( $M = 4.24, SD = 1.13; F(1) = 9.69, p < .01, \text{Eta}^2 = .06$ ), whereas the level of W–F transfer did not differ between the two subgroups (both  $M$ s = 4.88). There were no other significant interactions.

**Table 4**  
Study II: mean level differences in work–family compensation depending on direction, gender, and parenthood (repeated measurement ANOVA, two between-subject factors,  $N = 146$ ).

	Analysis of variance	
	$F(1,142)$	$\eta^2$
Main Effect: Direction		
Work–Family vs. Family–Work	49.12**	.26
Work–Family: $M = 3.43 (SD = 1.23)$		
Family–Work: $M = 4.37 (SD = 1.05)$		
Interaction Effect: Direction * Gender	8.03**	.05
Work–Family <sup>a</sup>		
Men: $M = 3.20 (SD = 1.16)$		
Women: $M = 3.63 (SD = 1.27)$		
Family–Work <sup>b</sup>		
Men: $M = 4.57 (SD = .96)$		
Women: $M = 4.20 (SD = 1.10)$		
Interaction Effect: Direction * Parenthood	8.15**	.05
Work–Family <sup>c</sup>		
Parents: $M = 3.59 (SD = 1.17)$		
Non-Parents: $M = 3.14 (SD = 1.31)$		
Family–Work <sup>d</sup>		
Parents: $M = 4.28 (SD = 1.10)$		
Non-Parents: $M = 4.54 (SD = .93)$		
Interaction Effect: Direction * Gender * Parenthood	2.58	.02

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup>  $F(1) = 4.53^*$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ .

<sup>b</sup>  $F(1) = 4.76^*$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ .

<sup>c</sup>  $F(1) = 4.57^*$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ .

<sup>d</sup>  $F(1) = 4.76$ , n.s.

**Table 5**

Study II: work and family satisfaction: associations with work–family conflict, positive transfer and compensation (multiple regression analyses,  $N = 146$ ).

	Job satisfaction <sup>a</sup>		Satisfaction with partnership <sup>b</sup>	
	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1: Socio-Demographics		.05		.09*
Gender <sup>c</sup>	.06		.22*	
Parenthood <sup>d</sup>	.07		.06	
Working Hours	.20		.02	
Step 2: Work–Family Conflicts		.21**		.01
Work–Family	–.41**		–.26**	
Family–Work	.16		.10	
Step 3: Transfer...		.08*		.11*
... of Competencies				
Work–Family	.30*		.11	
Family–Work	–.32*		–.05	
... of Positive Mood				
Work–Family	–.05		.17	
Family–Work	–.07		–.20	
Step 4: Compensation		.06*		.21**
Work–Family compensation	.31*		–.28*	
Family–Work Compensation	.21		.46**	

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> Multiple  $R = .63^{**}$ .

<sup>b</sup> Multiple  $R = .65^{**}$ .

<sup>c</sup> Women = 0, men = 1.

<sup>d</sup> Non-parents = 0, parents = 1. Beta weights refer to the full model.

*Associations with domain-specific satisfaction*

To compare results to Study I, the same two regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses that work–family enhancement predicts positive work–family functioning (i.e., job satisfaction, partnership satisfaction) above and beyond conflict and that compensation uniquely adds to the prediction. Note, however, that we now used a four-step procedure with Step 1 including gender, parental status and working hours. Working hours were included because men worked significantly more hours than women.

The results of the two regression analyses are displayed in Table 4. Socio-demographic characteristics were unrelated to domain-specific satisfaction with the exception of gender that predicted satisfaction with partnership. Men reported to be more satisfied with their partnership than women. Overall, confirming our hypotheses and replicating Study I, role conflicts were less predictive than enhancement experiences (see Table 5). Work-to-family conflicts were negatively associated with the two satisfaction measures, whereas family-to-work was unrelated to work and partnership satisfaction. In both analyses, compensation (Step 4) added to the prediction over and above both conflict experiences (Step 2) and transfer experiences (Step 3). Table 6 summarizes and contrasts the main findings from Study I and II.

**Table 6**

Summary of results from Study I and Study II.

	Confirmed in...	
	Study I	Study 2
<i>Overall Effects</i>		
(a) Compensation adds to the prediction of job satisfaction beyond work–family conflict, transfer of competencies and transfer of positive mood.	Yes	Yes
(b) Compensation adds to the prediction of partnership satisfaction beyond work–family conflict, transfer of competencies and transfer of positive mood.	Yes	Yes
<i>Source-Domain Effects: Satisfaction in the supporting domain</i>		
H1: W-to-F transfer of competencies is positively related to job satisfaction.	Yes	Yes
H2: W-to-F transfer of positive mood is positively related to job satisfaction.	No	No
H3: W-to-F compensation is positively related to job satisfaction.	Yes	Yes
H4: F-to-W transfer of competencies is positively related to partnership satisfaction.	No	No
H5: F-to-W transfer of positive mood is positively related to partnership satisfaction.	No	No
H6: F-to-W compensation is positively related to partnership satisfaction.	Yes	Yes
<i>Cross-Domain Effects: Satisfaction in the domain that needs support</i>		
H7: W-to-F transfer of competencies is positively related to partnership satisfaction.	No	No
H8: W-to-F transfer of positive mood is positively related to partnership satisfaction.	No	No
H9: W-to-F compensation is associated with partnership satisfaction.	Yes	Yes
H10: F-to-W transfer of competencies is positively related to job satisfaction.	No	No
H11: F-to-W transfer of positive mood is positively related to job satisfaction.	Yes	No
H12: F-to-W compensation is associated with job satisfaction.	No	No

With respect to *satisfaction with the supporting domain*, as in Study I, W–F transfer of competencies (H1) and W–F compensation (H3) both added to prediction of job satisfaction (positive associations), whereas W–F transfer of positive mood did not (H2). Moreover, converging with Study I and confirming H6, F–W compensation added significantly positive to the prediction of partnership satisfaction. The source–domain associations of compensation and satisfaction turned out to be even stronger than in Study I (i.e., higher Betas in Study II). Neither the F–W transfer of competencies (H4) nor the F–W transfer of positive mood (H5) were positively associated with partnership satisfaction.

There were only two significant *cross-domain effects*, namely an unexpected negative association between F–W transfer of competencies and job satisfaction (H10) and, converging with Study I and supporting H9, a negative association between F–W compensation and partnership satisfaction. Replicating Study I, neither the W–F transfer of competencies (H7) nor the W–F transfer of mood (H8) showed significant associations with partnership satisfaction. As in Study I, there was also no association between F–W compensation and job satisfaction (H12).

### Discussion

Overall, results of Study II replicated the main findings of Study I. Converging with Study I, Study II showed that enhancement contributed to the prediction of domain-specific outcomes over and above work–family conflicts. Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, parental status, working hours) did not change the result pattern. The important role of compensation became even more evident in Study II. Again, work-to-family compensation was positively associated with work satisfaction, whereas family-to-work compensation was positively associated with partnership satisfaction. This supports the hypothesis that people value a life domain more positively when it supports functioning in another life domain. Perceiving that one life domain offers opportunities to deal with problems, pressure, or failure in another important domain appears to lead to a favorable judgment of the *former*.

When it comes to cross-domain relationships of perceived work–family compensation, as in Study I, family-to-work compensation failed to show a significant association with work satisfaction. But converging with Study I, there was a negative association between work-to-family compensation and partnership satisfaction. This supports the assumption that perceiving the very necessity of compensating for failures or problems, underlines the fact that one's family situation is less than optimal.

Regarding the influence of gender and parenthood status, men indicated a higher F–W compensation but a lower W–F compensation than women. There were no gender-related differences in the endorsement of transfer of competencies or the transfer of positive mood. Overall, then, there was no clear evidence that women profit more from experiencing a positive interplay between work and family than men. Comparing parents and non-parents evinced two differences. First, parents reported more work-to-family compensation and more transfer of positive mood from the work to the family domain than childless participants. Given that only two mean level comparisons were significant, it seems premature to conclude that parents profit more from work–family-enhancement than childless participants.

The focus of Studies I and II was on self-constructions of enhancement experiences. Participants' enhancement reports were associated with positive functioning in the work and family domains, particularly self-reported compensation, which led to positive evaluations of the domain that helps dealing with problems and failures in another domain. One might argue that this finding is nothing but participants' subjective constructions. They might believe that being engaged simultaneously in the work and the family domain is not only stressful but also offers positive effects, maybe to reduce cognitive dissonance stemming from the high costs of being engaged in both life domains. Guided by this belief, they might endorse items reflecting positive relations between work and family as well as positive outcomes. Therefore, in order to complement the self-report approach of Studies I and II, we used an experimental approach in Study III. We induced a failure experience in the work domain and subsequently instructed participants to focus their attention either on a positive event in the family domain (*cross-domain* compensation), or the work domain (*intradomain* compensation).

### Study III: The emotion-regulatory function of actual intradomain and cross-domain compensation

Failure in an important life domain such as work is typically associated with negative emotional reactions. Does it help in such a situation to focus on the positive sides of another important life domain such as family? In other words, can a switch of attention to another domain serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy to deal with acute decrements in subjective well-being? Or is it better to concentrate on positive aspects and former achievements within the domain of failure? To attempt compensation of failure within the same domain where one experienced a failure would be in line with the theory of self-completion (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). This theory proposes that, when people feel threatened in an important identity (e.g., rejection of a paper threatens the identity of being a successful researcher), they will seek out symbols associated with achievement *within* this identity domain and to communicate their accomplishments to others (e.g., send latest publication to colleagues). Thereby people achieve a sense of completeness. Self-completion theory, then, predicts that focusing on one's former achievements in the *same* domain that was threatened by failure (e.g., being a good researcher) would serve the goal of self-completion better than stressing a different identity (e.g., being a good parent).

However, building on the buffering idea that feeling satisfied in one domain weakens impaired well-being due to stressors in the other life domain, we predict that focusing on the positive aspects of another life domain (e.g., being a good parent) also helps dealing with decreases in positive affect due to failure in one domain. This hypothesis is consistent with items reflecting the positive effect of compensation in Studies I and II. These items indicate, for example, that, if things are not going well at work,

family life gives a boost and that helps to get “recharged” (and vice versa). Therefore, we hypothesize that, in addition to the positive effects of *intradomain* compensation, *cross-domain* compensation is also a helpful strategy for emotional restoration after failure.

There might be individual differences in the effectiveness of these strategies. For instance, the success of *cross-domain* compensation might depend on the psychological involvement in the two respective life domains. Individuals who are very involved in their jobs consider their work to be a very important part of their lives. How good they feel about themselves is closely related to how well they perform in their jobs. For these people, one might expect that a job-related failure is associated with particularly strong negative affective reactions. Moreover, it might be particularly important for them to restore their endangered work-related self-identity. Hence, self-completion activities within the work domain might be most effective in recovering from the threat (*intradomain* compensation). In contrast, for individuals who are also very involved in the family domain, it might be more effective to temporarily switch attention to the family domain (*cross-domain* compensation). To summarize, Study III tests whether an intervention that encourages the use of compensatory strategies helps emotional recovery from work-related failure by focusing on family domain (*cross-domain* compensation) or further on the work domain (*intradomain* compensation).

## Methods

### Procedure and participants

Participants were recruited via personal communication by the third author. Requirements for participation were being in the workforce and living with a long-term partner. Depending on participants' preferences, the experiment either took place in our laboratory or in a quiet meeting room at the participant's workplace. The experimental procedure included a baseline measurement of emotional well-being (T1). This baseline assessment was followed by a job-related failure induction. The failure induction was important because a negative experience is a logical prerequisite for subsequent compensatory behavior. Participants were instructed to remember an experience or event from work as detailed as possible (including their feelings, thoughts and perceived responsibility for the event), which they considered to be extremely negative. They were asked to write down their memories during 4 min. Next, as a manipulation check, emotional well-being was reassessed (T2). Participants then received different instructions depending on the experimental group. The *cross-domain* compensation group was instructed to remember and write down a positive event/experience from the family domain, the *intradomain* compensation group a positive event/experience from the work domain, and the control group was instructed to write down their thoughts, whatever came to their minds. Each group was given 4 min for this task. While working on that task, participants were asked four times (T3–T6), once every minute, to rate their state emotional well-being. Examples of severe negative work experience and of positive work and family experiences are listed in Table 7. To estimate possible order effects, half of the participants worked on self-report instruments on domain-specific involvement (see below) before the experimental procedure, whereas the other half filled them out afterwards.

78 working adults from Switzerland took part in this experiment. The manipulation did not work for 15 of them, i.e., they did not show any decrease in subjective well-being after the failure manipulation. These participants were excluded. It is not unexpected that some participants did not show a well-being decrease because, for ethical reasons, we only used a fairly mild manipulation. Note that those who did not show a decrease reported failures that took place longer time ago than those who showed a decrease. The final sample comprised  $N = 63$  persons (31 male; age:  $M = 38.24$  years,  $SD = 9.30$ ).  $N = 22$  of them were randomly assigned to the *cross-domain* compensation group,  $n = 21$  to the *intradomain* compensation group and  $n = 20$  to the

**Table 7**

Study III: sample reports on negative and positive experiences in the work and family domains.

Negative and positive experiences (transcribed protocol examples)
<p>Negative work experiences</p> <p><i>“I was teaching a three-day course at an applied college. At the third day, the atmosphere became negative. Some of the participants announced that they were no more interested in any small group exercises and that they also didn't like further inputs from plenum discussion. I made alternative suggestions. I didn't succeed. I felt empty.”</i> (ID 10)</p> <p><i>“Just before my holidays, a patient consulted me who suffered from vertigo. I examined him very intensely and finally sent him home. Two days later, he was admitted to hospital with cerebral hemorrhage. After my holidays, his wife gave me a call to tell that they will change doctor. This was a failure for me. In all conscience, I did what I could do but I did overlook something really severe. In addition, I was disappointed because of the unrealistic patient expectation that a physician should be able to diagnose everything.”</i> (ID 47)</p>
<p>Positive family experiences</p> <p><i>“The most positive family experience was home birth of my son. I had a fast delivery without any complications. This birth was the most wonderful moment despite having labor pains. The first gaze of the newborn gave me a feeling of holiness. The birth was so harmonious, there was so much joy. I will never forget it.”</i> (ID 64)</p> <p><i>“A week ago, my boyfriend and I gave a housewarming party. It was wonderful to see how our parents helped us. It is good feeling to know that we can build on them. I am so happy about the strong company in the two families. I am so proud to have such parents!”</i> (ID 22)</p>
<p>Positive work experiences</p> <p><i>“Last June, I have organized an event. The preparation phase had been intense but worthwhile. The participants' feedback was very positive and I am proud that I did such a good job. It was hard work but satisfying in the end. I hope that I will be equally successful with organizing the next event.”</i> (ID 72)</p> <p><i>“A new project team was planned to be installed. I was the first person that had been asked to join the team and to take part in the necessary further training, which was paid by the company. I have been very happy about the confidence shown to me.”</i> (ID 26)</p>

control group. The experimenter was unaware of the group assignments since instructions were handed over to the participants in closed envelopes. All of the participants were working and were living in a stable relationship. 50.8% were parents. Participants worked in a broad range of occupations. 60.3% of them had an advanced university degree. Their weekly working hours ranged from 20 to 70 h ( $M = 40.64$  h/week,  $SD = 10.19$ ) with women ( $M = 35.53$ ,  $SD = 8.36$ ) working fewer hours than men ( $M = 45.92$ ,  $SD = 9.27$ ).

### Measures

*State emotional well-being* was assessed using a visual analogue scale, a horizontal line of 100 mm in length, anchored by emotional descriptors at each end. We asked participants to indicate their current feelings with regard to the following four bipolar states at each of the six measurement points: (1) happy – sad, (2) proud – disappointed, (3) relaxed – tense, and (4) content – discontent. For each measurement point, we built a mean score across the four items. Higher scores indicate more positive affect ( $M_1 = 70.69$ ,  $SD_1 = 13.90$ ;  $M_2 = 55.25$ ,  $SD_2 = 15.60$ ;  $M_3 = 66.88$ ,  $SD_3 = 18.13$ ;  $M_4 = 68.85$ ,  $SD_4 = 17.35$ ;  $M_5 = 71.13$ ,  $SD_5 = 17.24$ ;  $M_6 = 72.44$ ,  $SD_6 = 16.12$ ). Cronbach's Alphas ranged from .75 to .92.

As an inter-individual difference variable, two scales of *domain-specific psychological involvement* were included: (1) Three items from Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) *job involvement scale* ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .73$ ,  $MD = 4.33$ ,  $\alpha = .54$ ). A sample item reads "The most important things that happen to me involve my work." (2) Three items formulated in the exact same way to assess *family involvement* ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = .61$ ,  $MD = 5.00$ ,  $\alpha = .54$ ). A median split served to build subgroups (high and low domain-specific psychological involvement).

### Results

As can be seen in Fig. 2, there was a decrease in emotional well-being from baseline as measured at T1 to the time immediately after failure induction, indicated by emotional well-being (T2). Before running our main analyses, we conducted a repeated measures analysis of variance to test (a) whether this decrease was significant and (b) whether it was equally strong in the three experimental groups (intradomain compensation, cross-domain compensation, control group) as well as in the subgroups defined by order of measurement (measurement of involvement before or after the experimental part) and high vs. low domain-specific involvement. We obtained, as expected, a main effect of *Time* ( $F[4,143] = 52.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .55$ ) but no significant interactions with time and the between-subject variables. Hence, failure induction significantly decreased well-being and had been equally effective in all subgroups.

Next, we concentrated on well-being change after the failure induction had been taken place (T2 to T6). Again, we conducted a repeated measures analysis of variance with time as within-subject factor comprising five measurement points, experimental group (intradomain compensation, cross-domain compensation, control group), order of measurement as well as job involvement (high vs. low) and family involvement (high vs. low) as between-subject variables. Again, we found a main effect of *Time* ( $F[4,172] = 33.41$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .44$ ), indicating that, as to be expected, over time the negative effect of the failure induction wore off. More interestingly in the present context, the hypothesis of a significant interaction between *Time* and *Experimental Group* was confirmed ( $F[8,172] = 3.69$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .15$ ). In addition, we found an unexpected significant three-way interaction between *Time*, *Experimental Group* and *Measurement Order* ( $F[8,172] = 2.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ ) as well as a significant four-way interaction between *Time*, *Experimental Group*, *Measurement Order* and *Family Involvement* ( $F[4,172] = 3.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). Further inspection of the three-way interaction showed that measurement order was relevant solely for the cross-domain compensation group. For this group, having filled out the involvement measures before the experiment ( $n = 9$ ) led to higher well-being at T4 ( $M = 86.44$ ,  $SD = 11.84$ ) and T5 ( $M = 88.56$ ,  $SD = 11.84$ ) than having filled out the measures after the experiment ( $n = 13$ ; T4:  $M = 71.01$ ,  $SD = 18.91$ ,  $F[1] = 4.67$ ,  $p < .05$ ; T5:  $M = 74.67$ ,  $SD = 16.88$ ,  $F[1] = 4.82$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

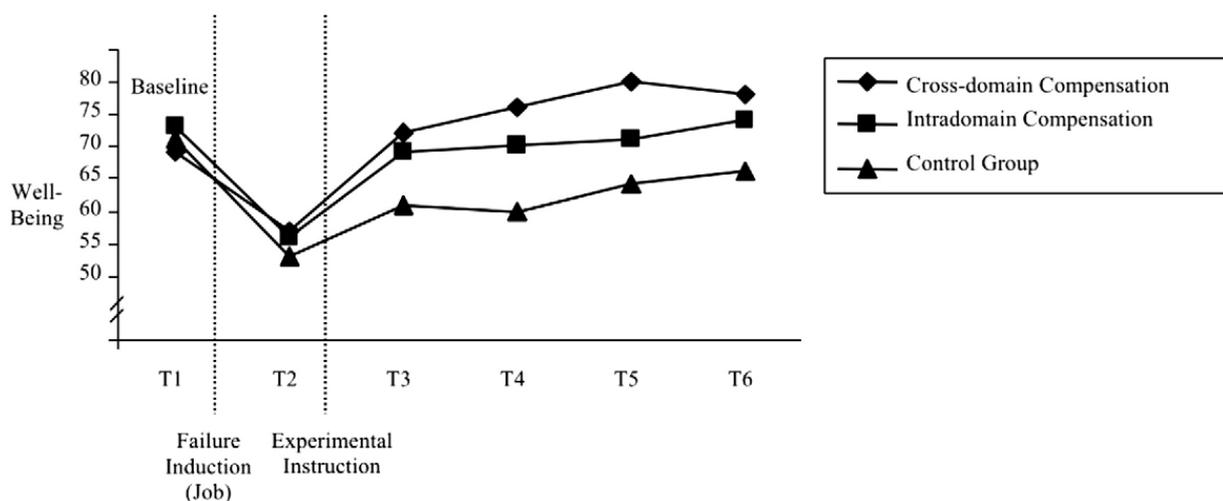


Fig. 2. Emotion regulation after work-related failure: intradomain and cross-domain compensation (Study III).

Fig. 2 illustrates that, across all groups, there is an increase of emotional well-being during the intervention phase. The *Time\*Group*-interaction is due to the different pace with which this emotional recovery takes place. It reflects the faster well-being recovery in the two experimental groups compared to the control group. On a univariate level, contrasting the experimental groups with the control group led to significant differences at T3 ( $F[1] = 6.08, p < .05$ ), T4 ( $F[1] = 10.02, p < .01$ ), T5 ( $F[1] = 9.66, p < .01$ ), and T6 ( $F[1] = 6.74, p < .05$ ). When only comparing the cross-domain compensation group with the control group, we found significant differences at all four measurement points after receiving the compensatory or control instruction (T3:  $F[1] = 5.46, p < .05$ ; T4:  $F[1] = 12.07, p < .01$ ; T5:  $F[1] = 14.07, p < .01$ ; T6:  $F[1] = 8.25, p < .05$ ), whereas the intradomain group and the control group only differed at T4 ( $F[1] = 4.68, p < .05$ ). Hence, compared to the control group, the cross-domain compensation group showed stronger emotional recovery than the intradomain compensation group. The two compensation groups solely differed at T5 ( $F[1] = 3.13, p = .08, \eta^2 = .07$ ).

## Discussion

Study III is a first experimental investigation of compensation of stressors in one life domain by focusing on positive aspects in the same or another domain. In contrast to the correlational methodology based on self-report scales used in Study I and II, we aimed at isolating the effect of compensation experimentally and at zooming in on the processes of compensation on a microanalytic level. The results of this experiment provide evidence for the effectiveness of both, *cross-domain* and *intradomain* compensation. When it comes to the relative effectiveness of the strategies, the results were less clear but, overall, *cross-domain* compensation appears to be slightly more efficient in counteracting the negative effects of a failure experience (i.e., emotional recovery was *faster*). One could argue, however, that *intradomain* compensation is more effective in the longer run as mood continues to increase when the limits of cross-domain compensation are reached. Domain-specific psychological involvement did not moderate the effects of compensation.

Although promising, there are several limitations to Study III. First and most importantly, Study III focused exclusively on job-related failures. Generalizability to negative experiences in the family domain needs empirical testing. In addition, one might argue that it would have been desirable to have included another experimental group instructed to think about negative experiences in the family domain. This would ensure that the positive effect of domain switch is not simply due to think about the family domain but to reflect one's family-related strengths and achievements.

Future experiments could also use other ways to directly induce negative experiences such as false feedback. We refrained from using such a procedure in line with APA guidelines according to which deception is to be used as a last resort only. Note also that we were largely successful in inducing a negative experience, i.e., more than 80% of the participants reported a significant drop in affect after thinking about a failure in the work domain.

Study III did not reveal effects of domain-specific involvement but it would be premature to conclude that psychological involvement is irrelevant. One has to take into account that the scale, albeit established in the work domain, turned out to have low internal consistency, which might have worked against identifying involvement-dependent influences. In addition, at least for the family domain, psychological involvement ratings were very high, which might have led to a restriction of variance (i.e., ceiling effect). Future studies should use alternative measures of involvement.

Unexpectedly, we found an interaction of *Time*, *Experimental Group* and *Measurement Order*. Participants from the cross-domain compensation group who judged their domain-specific involvement before the experiment started, showed a stronger increase in affect after the manipulation than those who filled out these questionnaires in the end. One might speculate that having thought intensively about the two domains beforehand pre-activates mental resources (e.g., job-related self-efficacy) that can be used later on when dealing with failure-induced well-being impairment and that the pre-activation leads to an easier retrieval of positive memories at least within the work domain.

Finally, the effectiveness of intradomain compensation could have been stronger if we had chosen a procedure with a stronger focus on making work successes visible to others. Self-completion theory assumes that the public display of accomplishments after failure is important to achieve a sense of completeness. Note, however, that the present conceptualization of cross-domain and intradomain compensation refers to internal experiences rather than the public restoration of a self-image.

## General discussion

Three studies demonstrated that work–family compensation is an important predictor of positive cross-domain functioning. Two correlational self-report studies found that compensation predicts satisfaction in the work and family domains over and above the effects of work–family conflicts and two other facets of enhancement (i.e., transfer of competencies and positive mood). As the correlational designs of the self-report studies do not allow for causal inferences, we conducted an additional experiment. As expected, the experiment showed that compensation accelerated emotional recovery after job-related failure. To our knowledge, this is the first set of studies investigating subjective perceptions of compensation in both directions (work protects from the negative well-being effects of family-related problems/failures; family protects from the negative well-being effects of work-related failure/problems; Studies I and II) as well as the actual beneficial effects of family experiences for coping with negative work-related experiences (Study III). Building on our research approach and findings, we will conclude by outlining three pleas for advancing theoretical and empirical knowledge in the field of work–family enhancement.

*A plea for differentiating between beliefs and actual behavior*

Self-report measures have various shortcomings (e.g., common method variance, social desirability effects), for example Greenhaus and Powell (2006) criticize self-report when they state “self-reports at best capture individuals' perceptions of enrichment rather than enrichment per se” (p. 87). In our view, however, this is not necessarily a limitation and there are also several good reasons to assess work–family enhancement via self-report. In fact, two very different things are assessed when measuring subjective (via self-report) and objective enhancement. Self-constructions or beliefs, as measured by questionnaire, can have an effect on psychological functioning that is independent of actual enhancement. In order to understand how work and family enhance each other, self-constructions or beliefs – even if they are inaccurate and biased – are a central part of the experience of well-being and functioning and, although subjective, no less “real” than other indicators of functioning. The power of self-constructions and beliefs for well-being and future behavior is well known with regard to other psychological constructs such as self-efficacy beliefs or causal attributions. Therefore, we believe it to be worthwhile to investigate self-constructions of cross-domain enhancement, too.

*A plea for differentiating functional subcomponents of work–family enhancement*

Only recently, psychology has begun to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of work–family synergies (see Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Empirically, there is not yet a broad knowledge base regarding components of work–family facilitation and their outcomes. Early studies were based on short self-report scales, which did only differentiate between the two directions of synergy, i.e., from work to family and from family to work (e.g., Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002; Grzywacz & Marks, 2005). Such short scales are perfectly suited for large assessments such as MIDUS (Midlife Development in the United States; e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2005). However, they do not allow insight into the range of functional facets of the positive work–family interplay. Meanwhile, suggestions for more differentiated multidimensional self-report scales have been put forth (Carlson et al., 2006; Hanson et al., 2006; van Steenbergen et al., 2007). None of these very useful measures, however, captures all three facets of positive work–family relations we proposed to be relevant, namely (1) positive mood transfer, (2) transfer of competencies, and (3) cross-domain compensation. Therefore, we developed a new measure that includes compensation as one important dimension in addition to the transfer of positive mood and competencies. Studies I and II attest to the usefulness of this measure. These studies also showed that compensation uniquely adds to the prediction of domain-specific satisfaction. These results underline the importance of integrating compensation into the conceptualization of work–family enhancement.

Studies I and II did not provide strong evidence for gender differences or differences between parents and childless adults with respect to mean levels of enhancement. Perhaps, other socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., caring for a child vs. caring for an elderly person) and especially psychological factors such as subjective role boundaries (see Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000) are of higher importance. It might be, for instance, that enhancement is stronger among individuals who display high role integration (i.e., individuals who perceive their roles as being permeable) than among those who try to segment their roles. Especially when it comes to compensation, however, role segmentation might be useful, too.

*A plea for a multi-methods approach*

We believe that no single method alone will be able to catch the richness of work–family enhancement phenomena. Future research on the interplay of work and family should make use of different methods complementing self-report with reports by colleagues or the partner as well as by experimental and experience-sampling methods (see also Caspar et al., 2007). Building on the argument that self-constructions or beliefs about enhancement are conceptually and psychologically different from the actual occurrence of transfer, the question how they are related is most intriguing. What measures could be used? Mood transfer could be measured by repeated diary assessments of mood at work and at home. This procedure was chosen by Williams and Alliger (1994). Based on an experience-sample design, they tested whether affect experienced in one role influenced affect experienced in subsequent roles and found clear evidence for a spillover of negative affect. The evidence for a pleasant-mood spillover was weak: It was restricted to high arousal affect (i.e., elation) when participants went from home to work.

Whether a diary procedure would also be useful for assessing the transfer of competencies and compensation is not easy to decide. The question is whether these facets of enhancement take place and are detectable on an everyday basis. At least in terms of acquiring a new competency that is then carried into the other domain, first-time transfer is expected to be a rather rare event. Another promising way to investigate the transfer of competencies could be a critical incident approach (i.e., ask individuals about concrete situations in which they experienced such a transfer). Note, however, that in this case, too, measurement is based on self-reports. This holds also true for third party assessments (co-worker, partner) of the target person's enhancement behaviors and experiences. These ratings would represent another person's subjective view.

In conclusion, the current studies demonstrate the importance of investigating positive effects of the work–family interplay. No doubt, there are potentially detrimental effects of enduring work–family interferences, but focusing exclusively on the negative side depicts a biased and incomplete picture. From an applied viewpoint, the present results could encourage career counselors to focus more explicitly on clients' experiences of work–family enhancement both in terms of positive transfer (mood, competencies) and compensation. From a research perspective, the necessity of conceptualizing and investigating facets of positive links has now begun to be acknowledged by a number of researchers. Our results give further evidence that this is a promising route to follow.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:[10.1016/j.jvb.2010.02.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.02.011).

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