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# The Influence of Meaningful Work on Marital Satisfaction in Dual-Earner Couples with Family Meaning as a Moderator

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### Abstract

The purpose of our study was to empirically investigate how individuals' meaningfulness of work (MOW) is positively related to marital satisfaction of his or her spouse, and how meaningfulness of family (MOF) may moderate this relationship. Our sample consisted of dual earning couples with children, which allowed for data analysis through the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), and Actor-Partner Interdependence Moderation Model (APIMoM). As hypothesized, there were actor and partner effects; individuals who experienced higher MOW reported higher marital satisfaction and higher MOW for individual's predicted higher levels of their spouse's marital satisfaction. Hypothesis 2a and 2b were also supported; individual's own sense of MOW was more strongly related to their own marital satisfaction when they were on MOF, and spouse's sense of MOW influenced an individual's marital satisfaction when the spouse was also high on MOF. Implications are discussed.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

The Influence of Meaningful Work on Marital Satisfaction in Dual-Earner Couples with  
Family Meaning as a Moderator

by

Nicole Conklin

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

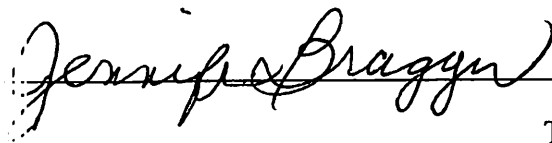
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THE INFLUENCE OF MEANINGFUL WORK ON MARITAL SATISFACTION IN  
DUAL-EARNER COUPLES WITH FAMILY MEANING AS A MODERATOR

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

by

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Montclair, NJ

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*The Influence of Meaningful Work on Marital Satisfaction in Dual-Earner Couples with Family Meaning as a Moderator*

In 2017, employed men and women spent a daily average of 8.44 hours participating in work, and work-related activities, and 9.15 daily hours on personal care, including sleep (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Based on this statistic, it is clear that people dedicate a majority of their day to their work. Trying to balance work and family can be very taxing on individuals (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, research supports that meaningfulness of work (MOW) can provide a multitude of personal, and family benefits (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglass, 2014). Little of MOW research focuses on the effects of one spouse's work on other's home and vice versa. Our purpose is to examine MOW and whether and how it links to marital satisfaction.

*Meaningfulness of Work*

Employees with families are typically trying to achieve a sense of balance. This sense of balance is achieved when work and home-life overlap because there is a shared purpose between what one is aiming to achieve at home and what one is aiming to achieve at work (Chalofsky, 2010). When one has an overarching purpose or meaning in his/her life, this purpose provides cohesion between the various facets of life.

Meaningfulness can be attained through various family, work, and life domains, and the meaning can spill from one domain to another (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). Finding meaningfulness at work (MOW) can relate to our basic reasons for existing and can vary from person to person; when asked to describe what constitutes MOW, similar themes appear among employee's responses. These themes typically include satisfying personal

values, expanding skill sets, feeling a sense of community, finding balance, personal growth, and development (Chalofsky, 2010). Based on these themes, and individual's need for balance, Chalofsky created an "integrated wholeness" model that contains three key elements: sense of self, work itself, and sense of balance.

The first element, sense of self, pertains to self-awareness (Chalofsky, 2010). This includes a person's knowledge of their own values, health, spirituality, purpose in life, enjoyment, serving and helping others, and openness to change (Munn, 2013; Grady & McCarthy, 2008). When one has a sense of self, they bring all of these important aspects to the workplace, where they can develop their potential. This leads to the second element of Chalofsky's model: the work itself. This element includes the ability to perform work through facing challenges, using creativity, learning, emotional, cognitive, and moral development into one's potential, and coming to understand oneself and what is fulfilling to him or herself (Munn, 2013; Grady & McCarthy, 2008; Chalofsky, 2003). The final element, a sense of balance, includes balancing all of life's domains: work, spirituality, and personal, and the time that one devotes to themselves and others (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). These three elements work together to give one "an inclusive state of being" (Chalofsky, 2003). Therefore, MOW is fueled by aspects beyond paid employment, and can contribute to one's integrated wholeness (Svendsen, 1997).

Inspired by Chalofsky's review of theoretical discussions of MOW (2010), Lips-Wiersma used interviews, focus groups, and diaries to investigate whether the themes suggested by his review were actually the sources employees discussed as providing MOW. Her research found that in a search for meaning, individuals try to meet a balance in meeting their own needs as well as others needs, and between the needs of action and



reflection (Lips-Wiersma, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Individuals are constantly trying to search for this balance, and a lack of balance can even lead to meaninglessness (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). In the past, research has referred to the need to maintain hope, but also face reality, because both are needed to make sensible decisions for obtaining a meaningful life (Pauchant, 1995). Based on descriptions given by participants, Lips-Wiersma (2002, Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009) found that inspiration might be a better term than hope. Individuals identified both inspiration and reality as an important feature in one's search for meaning. Using these qualitative measures, she was able to develop a scale measuring MOW (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). The scale provides seven distinct elements: unity with others, developing the inner self, serving others, and expressing full potential, reality, inspiration, and balancing tensions (doing/being, self/others). This is the first time these dimensions have been brought together in such a way to help understand the fullness of meanings that people credit to their work, and that aligns with the elements of meaningfulness Chalofsky found in his review of MOW literature. Unifying such dimensions, allows MOW to be conceptually underpinned with the sources of its meaningfulness.

MOW comes with the gratification of knowing that performed daily tasks are contributing to the greater good (Munn, 2013). This requires organizations to take a broader and more in-depth view of their employees, because there is an interdependent relationship between employees and organizations, in which employees seek out organizations that will not only take care of them, but take care of their families by understanding the need for work-life balance (Munn, 2013; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). An organizational culture in which employees can be themselves, interact with co-

workers, and talk about their personal lives contributes to a person's ability to find MOW (Munn, 2013; Chalofsky, 2010). In recent years, organizations have been taking steps to provide a meaningful workplace by helping employees find balance in their lives. These benefits and policies include job-protected parental leave, part-time return-to-work opportunities, and on-site child care, to name a few (Mitchell, 1997). Organizations that provide these helpful work-home balancing policies, can aide in making the workplace more meaningful. In sum, MOW positively transitions into influencing individuals' values and overarching purpose in life, causing spillover into home life (Chalofsky, 2010; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

Taken together, the manner in which one lives their life contributes to one's ability to find MOW. This is executed through one's sense of balance between their work, personal, and spiritual lives. A sense of self-awareness and balance causes individuals to seek supportive organizational cultures. The ideal organizational culture for attaining MOW would have values that align with the individual, and an environment that allows them to express their true selves.

### *Partner Effects*

According to Finkel, Hiu, Carswell, and Larson (2014), in present times, spouses look to each other to help them fulfill their higher-level needs such as personal growth and self expression. They describe their view as the "Suffocation Model," because spouses are climbing higher on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as to what spouses look to each other for in a marriage. They use climbing a mountain as a metaphor for climbing the hierarchy of needs, in turn losing more air and suffocating as individuals move higher up. The suffocation model identifies self-discovery as a central aim in life.

In this case, the ideal spouse would support, and facilitate self-discovery. Research supports this claim, in finding that when one has individual goals outside of the marriage, it leads to marriage satisfaction (Brunstien, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996). One possibility for this link may be related to the process of self-discovery. People thrive when making progress in identifying their purpose in life (Feeney & Collins, 2014). Spouses aide this process by comforting one another in times of pressure, and encouraging opportunities for their self-discovery and growth. The degree to which one's spouse assists in his or her personal growth aides in fulfilling those goals, and in increasing the quality of the relationship (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999; Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009). Effective ways spouse's help facilitate each other's growth include urging one another to set reasonable goals, validating those goals, and offering encouragement (Feeney & Collins, 2014). Aiding in helping a spouse achieve their higher-level goals can aide in an individual's own sense of balance by addressing personal and relationship concerns (Kumashiro, Rusbuly, & Finkel, 2008). Taken together, in today's marriages, spouses are exerting their own energy and resources to help their spouse achieve a sense of purpose, which in turn aides in their own sense of balance.

It is common for work-related experiences to crossover and influence home life (Westman, 2001). Most of the research on how work influences home focuses on the negative effects work may have of marital satisfaction (Perry-Jenkins, & MacDermind, 2013; Sears, Repetti, Robles, & Reynolds, 2016). However, though there is not much research that focuses on positive crossover effects, there is evidence that high levels of work engagement are linked to high levels of daily happiness of the spouse (Rodriguez-

Munoz, Sanx-Vergel, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2014). Research suggests work engagement is more likely in situations where employees feel their job is meaningful (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017). Additionally, research finds that when an individual experiences high work self-direction, their spouses report higher levels of marital satisfaction (Sun, McHale, Crouter, & Jones, 2017). One element of work self-direction includes performing meaningful tasks. Therefore, it is possible that there is a link between one having MOW and their spouse's marital satisfaction.

In sum, spouses in today's world are looking to their spouse to aide in higher level needs such as self-discovery. By aiding a spouse in this search, individuals contribute to their own sense of balance by increasing the quality of their relationship and addressing personal concerns. MOW also aides in self-discovery because it leads to a sense of fulfillment, balance, and purpose within an individual (Chalofsky, 2010). Research has found links between facets that contribute to individuals MOW and their spouse's marriage satisfaction. (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2017). Based on these findings and our proposed rationale, it is hypothesized that there will be a partner effect between MOW and marital satisfaction, in that reports of an individual's high MOW will lead to his or her spouse's high levels of marital satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 1:* Individuals MOW will be positively related to their spouse's marital satisfaction.

#### *Meaning of Family as a Moderator*

An essential component of MOW is the ability to attain work-life balance (Chalofsky, 2010). If through and in work one finds and creates purpose through unity with others and serving others, developing oneself, and through purpose and inspiration

to make the other a better place (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009), work and home life become interdependent, and meaningfulness flows such that work and home domains, rather than being dichotomous and compartmentalized, are more in harmony and less in conflict with one another (Munn, 2013; Mackey Jones & McKenna, 2002). Positive spillover occurs when work and family influence each other similarly (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). For example, if MOW lead to optimistic, friendly, and happy moods, these positive feelings would also occur at home while with family. If one feels they are contributing MOW, this can positively spillover into their home life (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

MOW has been linked a variety of positive outcomes. Individuals who report having MOW also report higher job, and life satisfaction (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglass, 2014; Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016). These individuals also report high levels of life meaning, and the notion of living out a life calling (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). MOW is also associated with positive affect, and less feelings of depression, anxiety, and work stress. These benefits add to the argument that MOW can be considered essential for one's general well-being (Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2017). All of these benefits of MOW can positively spillover to the interdependent domain of home life. For example, in the dimension of "serving others," individuals express comfort in performing worthwhile work, and addressing current social, and environmental problems (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). This dimension can spillover to home life because addressing such issues can aide in making the world a better place for the individual's own children. In the dimensions of "expressing full potential," one is devoted to outwardly expressing their talents, creating, and applying their own ideas (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). This

dimension may spillover into home life by using creative and new ideas to generate new family activities. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that if one experiences high levels of MOW, they would also experience high levels of meaningfulness of family (MOF).

MOF can act as a moderator between MOW and marital satisfaction. For example, dual-earner couples have an equal division of labor at home, and in turn higher levels of marital satisfaction than non dual-earner couples (Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010). A possible explanation is that the couple feels a sense of meaning both at work and at home, as opposed to other couples who are not both employed, and do not share household responsibilities evenly. Another important way that MOF can act as a moderator is through positive moods and emotions.

MOW and MOF can merge to create one's overall meaning of life (Chalofsky, 2010). Meaning in life is associated with happiness (Lane & Mathes, 2018). Positive moods such as happiness play an important role in the way married couples form their interactions, and express their behaviors to each other. For example, positive emotions such as joy, help build one's social resources (Fredrickson, 1998). Sharing good news with these social resources endorses feelings of trust with that person when they respond enthusiastically (Reis et al., 2010). Positive moods can also increase sensitivity to the importance of a situation (King, Hirks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006). Conversely, negative moods and emotions can shape less pleasant marital interactions. Negative work days can lead to angrier behavior at home for married women, and more withdrawn behavior from men (Schulz, Cowan, Pape-Cowan, Brennan, 2004). However, research finds greater downregulation of wives' negative experiences and behaviors increased marital satisfaction for both spouses (Bloch, Haase, & Levenson, 2014). In sum, positive moods

and emotions that may spillover from a meaningful life can facilitate healthy interactions and communication, while a meaningless life with negative emotions lead to less healthy marital interactions.

Some past studies have found links between meaning and marital satisfaction (Reyes-Fournier, 2015). However, these associations were only formed through positive correlations between levels of meaning and levels of marital satisfaction. The current study aims to further discussion on this topic. Based on these correlations, and positive emotions associated with MOW, it is hypothesized that MOF will act as a moderator between MOW and marital satisfaction for and individual. Due to the benefits associated with MOW, there is also reason to observe the influence of a spouse's MOF as a moderator to the individual's marital satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2a:* MOW and MOF will interact to positively influence an individual's marital satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Spouse's MOW and MOF will interact to positively influence and individual's marital satisfaction.

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

Participants were recruited through Qualtrics Panel Services. Qualtrics is an online research platform with numerous uses including tracking consumer behavior, advertising and product testing, and academic research (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). This platform allows for data collection with selection criteria. Participants were required to have a dual-income family, with both partners working at least part time, and at least one child under the age of 18. Qualtrics identified couples who met this selection criteria.

Panel service respondents were compensated \$7.50 per couple in exchange for their participation.

Data were collected from 114 dyads (94 heterosexual and 20 homosexual dyads). Within the sample, 49% were men. The participant age range spanned from under 20 years to 60 years or older. The average age range was 30-39 years. Most participants (81%) were White, followed by African American (8%), Asian (6%), multiple races (2%), and American Indian (1%). Most (32%) reported having a bachelor degree, 4% had less than a high school degree, 16% had a high school degree or equivalent, 14% had some college but no degree, 20% had an associate degree, and 15% had a graduate degree. Nearly all (96%) participants were married, with 3% in a domestic partnership or civil union, and 1% single but cohabitating with a significant other. The range for number of children per dyad was between one to five children, with an average of two children. Children were between three months to 17 years old.

Most (86%) participants reported working full time. Participants reported various occupations including office and administrative, education, healthcare, computer and mathematical, management, sales and related occupations, etc. Most (27%) of dyads reported a combined household income between \$75,000 and \$99,999, 23% earned less than \$50,000, 16% earned between \$100,000 and \$124,999, 12% earned between \$125,000 and \$149,999, 3% earned between \$150,000 and \$174,999, 8% earned between \$175,000 and \$199,999, and 8% earned \$200,000 and up.

### *Procedure*

The research team shared the online Qualtrics survey, along with qualifying criteria, with the Qualtrics project manager, who obtained participants from their participant pool. The



vendor utilized the proper selection criteria when recruiting participants. To ensure the likelihood of honest responses, participants were instructed to complete the survey in privacy, without his or her spouse in the same room. Participants completed the survey online and were thanked and compensated for their participation.

### *Materials*

*Meaningfulness of Work.* This scale was created based on the important dimensions for MOW identified by Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012). These include four major dimensions: developing the inner self, unity with others, service to others, and expressing full potential, and three supplemental dimensions: inspiration, reality, and balancing tensions. These dimensions are measured by 28 items. Cronbach's alpha for the overall instrument is  $\alpha = .94$ . The first dimension, *Developing Inner Self*, is reliant on one's own perspective of the world, and is defined as wanting to be the best self one can be. Three items embody this dimension, including "I feel inspired at work." This subscale Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = .82$ . The second dimension, *Unity with Others*, represents MOW through the bond of belonging and common values among individuals working together. This dimension is exemplified through six items, including, "I can openly talk about my values when we are making a decision." The Cronbach's alphas was  $\alpha = .92$ . The third dimension, *Expressing Full Potential*, is centered around conveying one's talents, creativity, and having a sense of achievement. This dimension is outwardly directed, as opposed to developing the inner self. There are four items in this dimension, and a sample item is, "I create and apply new ideas or concepts." The Cronbach's alpha for this dimension was  $\alpha = .86$ . The fourth dimension is *Serving Others*, in which meaningfulness comes from contributing to the wellbeing of others on the individual, and

large scale levels. This dimension contains four items, including, “I feel I truly help our customers/clients.” The Cronbach’s alpha was  $\alpha = .85$ . The *Inspiration* dimension refers to one’s drive and creativity to achieve goals and balance. This dimension is embodied in four items, including, “The work we are doing makes me feel hopeful about the future.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this dimension was  $\alpha = .87$ . The *Reality* dimension refers to the practical implications one needs in the pursuit of goals and balance. This dimension has three items including, “We recognize that life is messy and that is OK.” The Cronbach’s alpha was  $\alpha = .74$ . The last dimension, *Balancing Tensions* embodied the conflict one faces in being and doing. This dimension has four items, including, “I have a good balance between the needs of others and my own needs.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this dimension was  $\alpha = .86$ . Participants recorded their responses to these items on a Likert scale from 1= very infrequently to 5= very frequently.

*Meaningfulness of Family.* The researchers adapted the 28-item MOW scale to relate to MOF. This adaptation allows for a parallel comparison between perceived meaningfulness in both work and at home. For example, the *MOW* item “I feel I truly help our customers and clients” was rewritten as “I feel that I truly help my partner/family members in their lives.” The Cronbach’s Alpha for the overall scale was  $\alpha = .94$ . The Cronbach’s Alphas for all seven dimensions are: *Developing Inner Self*  $\alpha = .88$ , *Unity with Others*  $\alpha = .94$ , *Expressing Full Potential*  $\alpha = .87$ , *Serving Others*  $\alpha = .83$ , *Inspiration*  $\alpha = .88$ , *Reality*  $\alpha = .76$ , and *Balancing Tensions*  $\alpha = .89$ .

*Marriage Satisfaction.* The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1983) is a three-item measure designed to assess marital satisfaction. Participants rate their marital satisfaction on a 7-point Likert scale (1= extremely dissatisfied to 7=

extremely satisfied). A sample item is “How satisfied are you with your partner as a spouse?” Cronbach’s Alpha for the KMS is  $\alpha = .92$ .

### *Analyses*

When studying members of a dyad, such as dual-earner spouses, it is important to use the correct statistical tools when measuring how these interpersonal relationships influence each other. One of the characteristics of interdependent relationships is that the scores of the dyad are correlated in a way in which knowledge of one member’s score provides knowledge about the other member’s score (Cook & Kenny, 2005). The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is a model that uses suitable statistical measures for assessing the interdependence of two-person relationships. APIM can simultaneously estimate both partner and actor effects. An actor effect is the influence of a person’s own variable on an outcome variable, such as how a man’s coping strategies influencing his job satisfaction. A partner effect is a measure of interdependence which assesses the influence on the same outcome variable, but assesses the influence of the measurement of that variable on the partner’s measurement of the outcome variable. For example, how a man’s coping strategies influencing his wife’s job satisfaction. The actor and partner variables are the same variable, but from different persons (an individual and his/her partner in some respect). Additionally, dyads can be assessed as distinguishable or indistinguishable. In a distinguishable dyad, each member can be differentiated along some dimension, such as a male and a female couple. Conversely, when there is no distinguishable difference between the two members, such as with a gay or lesbian couple, the dyad is considered indistinguishable. The current study will assess actor and partner effects, as well as distinguishable and indistinguishable dyads. The current study

contains data from both heterosexual and homosexual married couples. The application used through RStudio (R Studio Team, 2015) allows for data analysis of both distinguishable and indistinguishable dyads.

The independent variable in these analyses is MOW, and the dependent variable is marital satisfaction (of an individual and his/her spouse). As stated in Hypotheses 2a and 2b, there is also a moderator variable; MOF. APIM creates a correlation between the independent variables (individual and spouses' MOW), in order to control for partner effects when assessing actor effects, and control actor effects when assessing partner effects. The APIM also controls for other sources of independence between the dyad through the residual errors of the dependent variables (individual and spouses' marital satisfaction).

All analyses were run using RStudio's shiny web application framework for R (RStudio Team, 2015). Within these programs, both analyses utilize the program Lavaan, which allows for assessment of both distinguishable and indistinguishable dyads (Rosseel, 2012). However, each hypothesis was run through a different program within shiny. The first hypothesis was run through DyadR (Kenny et al., 2018) and tested using *APIM\_SEM* (Rosseel, 2012). The analysis was performed using structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM can estimate and test more than one equation concurrently and identify relationships between factors in different equations. This application was utilized to determine the interdependence of MOW and marital satisfaction on both spouses. The second hypothesis was also tested using shiny, but through the application Actor-Partner Interdependence Moderation Model (APIMoM). APIMoM was used to identify if MOF moderates the relationship between MOW and marital satisfaction.

## Results

### *APIM Analysis*

APIM with structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to account for dyadic interdependence. Dyads were treated as indistinguishable because the data contain both heterosexual and homosexual married couples. Due to missing data for one couple, the final analysis included 113 dyads.

APIM results are presented in Table 1 and visualized in Figure 1. The partial intra-class correlation was calculated after removing the effects of MOW (partial ICC= 0.79,  $p < .001$ ). The ICC compare variability within a dyad to variability between dyads with larger effects indicating greater interdependency. The current ICC indicates 79% of differences in marital satisfaction is due to couples even after removing effects of MOW, thus justifying the need for APIM. Results reveal a significant actor ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $r = .137$ ), and partner effect ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $r = .161$ ), with partial  $r$  suggesting smaller effect sizes. Results support hypothesis 1: Individuals who experience MOW have spouse's with higher levels of marital satisfaction.

We formally tested for a full interdependent model through the  $k$  parameter, which is the ratio of partner effect to actor effect (Kenny & Ledermann, 2010). While  $k$  can range from negative infinity to positive infinity, three values are of interest when identifying dyadic patterns; -1, 0, and +1. When  $k = -1$ , a contrast pattern is present;  $k = 0$ , is an actor-only or partner-only pattern; and  $k = +1$  is a couple pattern. A Monte Carlo bootstrapping analyses with 1,000 samples reveals an average  $k$  of 1.18 95% CI [.82, 1.63], confirming a couple model in which spouse's marital satisfaction is equally influenced by individual and spouses' MOW.

*APIMoM Analysis*

Our APIM analysis found both actor and partner effects between MOW and marital satisfaction. An actor-partner interdependence moderation model (APIMoM) was run to test if MOF influences this relationship.

In the current study, MOF is a mixed variable varying between and within spouses (Garcia, Kenny, & Ledermann, 2015). When using mixed variables with APIMoM, there is a total of two moderator variables: how much MOF influences an individual's marital satisfaction (actor moderator), and how much his or her spouse's MOF influences their marital satisfaction (partner moderator). Because our study uses indistinguishable dyads with SEM, there are four possible interactions. Due to the nature of our hypotheses we will explore two of these interactions: (1) the actor effect moderated by the actor's moderator variable (actor-actor), and (2) the partner effect moderated by the partner's moderator variable (partner-partner).

Table 2 provides information about MOW and MOF interacting to influence marital satisfaction. The actor-actor effect ( $b = .42$ ,  $\beta = .14$ ), and partner-partner effect ( $b = .29$ ,  $\beta = .10$ ) were both significant ( $p < .001$ ). This means the association between an individual's MOW and marital satisfaction was moderated by their own MOF (Figure 2). Additionally, the effect of a spouse's MOW on an individual's marital satisfaction was moderated by their spouse's MOF (Figure 3).

**Discussion**

The purpose of our study was to empirically investigate how MOW influences the marital satisfaction of individuals with children and their spouses, and to investigate how individuals and their spouses MOF may moderate this relationship. Our sample consisted

of dual earning couples with children, which allowed for data analysis through APIM to investigate how MOW and MOF in an individual's life influences spouse's marital satisfaction. As hypothesized, there were partner effects and both actor-actor and partner-partner interactions occurred; individuals who experienced higher MOW reported higher marital satisfaction and higher MOW for individuals predicted higher levels of their spouse's marital satisfaction. Individual's MOW was more strongly related to their own marital satisfaction when they were high on MOF, and spouse's sense of MOW influenced an individual's marital satisfaction when the spouse was also high on MOF.

#### *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

Past research has found that MOW positively influences one's values and purpose in life, causing spillover into his or her home life (Chalofsky, 2010; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Other factors such as an individual's work engagement and work self-direction, have been positively linked to spouse's happiness and satisfaction with their marriage (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2017). The current study expands upon this research in finding a partner effect such that an individual's sense of MOW positively influences their spouse's marital satisfaction. It is possible this partner effect can be explained by the previously mentioned "Suffocation Model" (Finkel et al., 2014).

The Suffocation Model suggests that individuals look to their spouses to fulfill higher level needs such as self-discovery (Finkel et al., 2014). Accordingly, spouses aide each other in the process toward self-discovery and personal growth, which increases the quality of their relationship (Feeney & Collins, 2014; Drigotas et al., 1999; Rusbult et al., 2009). Self-discovery may be attained through finding MOW, as employees seek out organizations that will not only take care of them, but take care of their families by

understanding the need for work-life balance (Munn, 2013; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). By aiding each other in this search, spouses contribute to their own sense of balance by easing personal and relationship concerns (Kumashiro et al., 2008). In this case, married couples are exerting their own resources to help their spouse find meaning, but they are also aiding in their own sense of balance. Our findings suggest this may be the case, as individuals reported higher levels of marital satisfaction when their spouse reported having MOW.

Findings from moderation analyses in this study suggest that MOF strengthens the relationship between MOW and marital satisfaction. An actor-actor interaction was reported, in which an individual's increased levels of MOF strengthened the relationship between MOW and marital satisfaction. These findings suggest that MOF interacts with MOW to increase satisfaction in marriage. Research supports the notion of an interdependent relationship between work and home life because the two domains overlap into an individual's sense of balance (Chalofsky, 2010; Munn, 2013; Mackey Jones & McKenna, 2002). Meaningfulness in both of these domains can positively spillover into marital satisfaction, as our results indicate. A possible reason for the spillover may be due to meaningful life's link to positive emotions (Lane & Mathes, 2018), which have been related to beneficial marital communication. For example, joy has been linked to building one's social resources (Frederickson, 1998), and sharing good news with these social resources endorses feelings of trust with that person when they respond enthusiastically (Reis et al., 2010). By experiencing joy through MOW, one can experience MOF through the desire to share these experiences with their social resources, being their spouse and/or their children. In turn, these healthy communications and



interactions in the marriage may influence perceived satisfaction in marriage. Research conducted by Lips-Wiersma and others finds that opportunities for and perceptions of unity with others, expressing one's full potential, developing oneself, and ability to serve others make work meaningful (Lips-Wiersma, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Our research finds that these perceptions interact with perceptions of these factors in one's home (family) life to increase employees' marriage satisfaction.

These findings expand upon past research, which has shown an opposite effect of marital satisfaction positively spilling over to influence creativity in the workplace (Tang, Huang, & Wang, 2017). The spillover of psychological resources from a happy marriage resulted in a positive output in the workplace. Our research provides more insight into how the happy marriage originates, by exploring the influence of MOW and MOF. Previous research has also found a connection between work and home life positively influencing marital satisfaction (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2014). These researchers found that high levels of family to work facilitation, or the interdependent domains of family life benefiting work life, caused increased levels of marital satisfaction. Our research provides more insight to these interconnected domains by identifying meaningfulness as one important factor in family-work domains and marital satisfaction.

Moderation analyses also discovered a partner-partner interaction in which spouse's MOF strengthened the relationship between spouse's MOW and an individual's marital satisfaction. One of Chalofsky's (2010) elements for achieving integrated wholeness includes a sense of balance. This element includes balancing all of life's domains including work, personal, and the time one devotes to themselves and others (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). In accordance with the Suffocation Model, in aiding a

spouse to attain a sense of balance in both home and family, individuals are achieving their own sense of balance, which eases their own personal and relationship concerns (Kumashiro et al., 2008) and can add to feelings of satisfaction in the relationship. Our findings of a partner-partner interaction suggest that spouse's MOF strengthens the relationship between spouse's MOW and an individual's marital satisfaction because the spouse feels a sense of balance in work and family, and the individual is happier with the marriage because of the help they provided to help their spouse achieve this balance and possibly because the spouse's MOW and MOF can influence their own emotions, which spill over to the individual. Employees are likely to communicate with their spouses about work and family events and about perceptions of factors that make work and family life meaningful. Given the central role that one's spouse (life partner) can play in an individual's life and in the interpretation of the events of their work and home life, sharing between spouses about events at work and home can influence both the interpretation of such events, and the emotion regarding such events, which can in turn influence marital satisfaction. As supported by our analyses, a spouse's perceived MOF interacts with the spouse's MOW, which moderates spouse's MOW influence on the individual's marriage satisfaction. For example, an individual may feel they expressed their full potential in the workplace because they gave the idea that started a successful new campaign. They may decide to celebrate by taking the family out to a dinner, in turn influencing their levels of MOF. This individual's spouse would feel increased levels of marital satisfaction because their spouse expressed high levels of MOW and MOF. This example would support the Suffocation Model hypothesis because the desire to help a spouse fulfill higher level needs, such as self-discovery in the workplace, increased his or

her own perception of the quality of the marriage (Drigotas, et al., 1999; Rusbult et al., 2009).

Dual-earner married couples can find ways to practically implement these findings. Research finds individuals thrive while making progress in identifying their purpose in life (Feeney & Collins, 2014). Our findings suggest that if one feels purpose in their work and home life, and has a spouse who feels similarly and/or aids in the interpretation of events or circumstances that influence perceived meaningfulness, this can increase the quality of their relationship (Drigotas et al., 1999; Rusbult, et al., 2009). MOF strengthens the relationship between an individual's MOW and marital satisfaction. However, their spouse's MOF also strengthens the relationship between their spouse's MOW and their own marital satisfaction. These findings indicate that MOF may play an important factor in life purpose. If this is the case, the couple may both seek out jobs that they perceive as meaningful because the employer understands the need for work-home balance. The spouses may seek out jobs that include job-protected parental leave, on-site child care, work-from-home opportunities, and other benefits and policies that allow for more attention to their home lives and helps achieve the "integrated wholeness" discussed by Lips-Wiersma and others (Lips-Wiersma, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009) as necessary for living a meaningful life. By having a meaningful work environment, the emotional benefits can positively spillover into their home lives, in which their work is supporting. The positive spillover and more family time can influence healthy marital interaction, increasing their satisfaction with the marriage. These healthy marital interactions may stem from the positive emotions each spouse feels from their meaningful jobs. For example, feeling a sense of community at work may inspire more

work-related events in which spouses and families can attend. The ability to expand a skillset, or express full potential at work may stimulate encouraging, optimistic conversations between spouses. If a problem occurs at work, these healthy interactions encourage spouses to provide support, and potentially help in solving these problems. Additionally, home life provides an outlet for spouses to find meaning through serving their families. For example, building a treehouse in the backyard for one's children provides a sense of unity among the family, allows expansion of skill set, and may even help develop inner self. Furthermore, MOF may provide positive spillover back to the workplace. A sense of unity at home may influence employees to try and achieve this unity at work by bringing new ideas for work-related events to their employers. As our results indicate, the elements of meaningfulness are interconnected between work and home life, and each domain can aid in development of the other. These two domains resulting in an overall feeling of meaningfulness positively spills over many psychological resources that result in a happy, healthy relationship.

#### *Limitation and Future Directions*

The present study includes several limitations of note. First, the current study utilized all self-report methods. Research on close relationships benefits from a multimethod approach (Clark & Reis, 1988). Future research may want to report not only individual marital satisfaction, MOW, and MOF but also their perception of their spouse's levels on these three variables. This method would allow for comparison of their own perception with their spouse's view.

Second, the MOF measure has not been validated to the same extent of MOW measure. However, one research study (Reeves et al., 2018) found that this measure

factors into the same four major dimensions identified by Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012). Future studies may want to collect more data to further assess the construct validity of the MOF measure.

Third, the marital satisfaction measure for the current study was three items long. While the items are from an established scale, The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1983), future research may want to expand upon this measure to incorporate various sub-facets such as couple communication, or perceptions of spouse to investigate how these aspects that may play a role in marital satisfaction and relate to MOW and MOF

Fourth, two of the interaction effects from the APIMoM analyses were not examined. Due to the nature of the hypotheses, only actor-actor and partner-partner interactions were interpreted, and actor-partner and partner-actor interactions were excluded. Future research may want to observe these two interactions to expand upon our overall knowledge of MOF as a moderator. Additionally, future research may want to run an Actor-Partner mediation analysis (APIMeM) to further explain the relationship between MOW and marital satisfaction.

### *Conclusion*

The present study enhances the literature on MOW and marital satisfaction by using an APIM approach, and identifying a possible moderator between these two variables. MOW not only influences an individual's marital satisfaction, but also their spouse's satisfaction with the marriage. Moderation analyses indicate that MOF of both the individual and their spouse strengthen these relationships. These results have merit in meaningfulness, work life balance, and marital satisfaction research.

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Appendices

Table 1. APIM Results

Effect	<i>B</i>	Lower	Upper	p value	$\beta$	partial r
Intercept	3.87	2.757	4.986	< .001		
Actor	0.27	0.111	0.421	< .001	0.14	0.14
Partner	0.31	0.159	0.468	< .001	0.17	0.16
<i>k</i>	1.18	0.82	1.63			

Note: *k* was run through a separate Monte Carlo bootstrapping analyses.

Table 2. Effects in the Moderation Model

Cause	Type	<i>B</i>	p value	CI	$\beta$
Meaningful Work	Actor	-0.14	.030	-0.267 to -0.014	-0.07
	Partner	-0.07	.280	0.544 to 0.057	-0.03
Family Meaning	Actor	1.00	< .001	0.842 to 1.159	0.52
	Partner	0.70	< .001	0.544 to 0.861	0.37
Interaction	Actor-Actor	0.42	< .001	0.283 to 0.561	0.14
	Partner-Partner	0.29	< .001	0.153 to 0.431	0.10

Figure 1. Standardized APIM Model

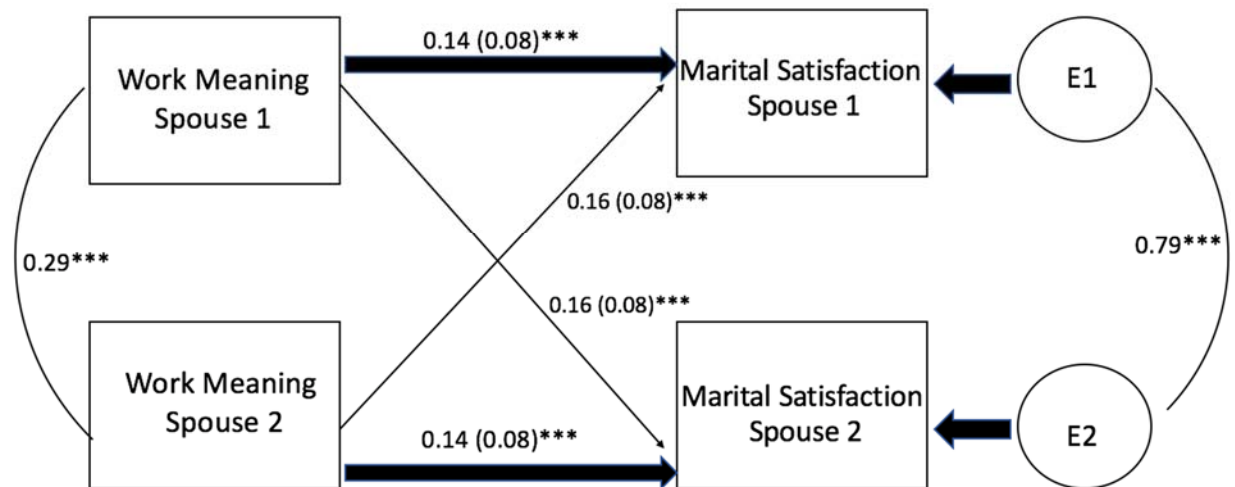


Figure 2. The Effect for Actor's MOW at Different Actor Moderator Values

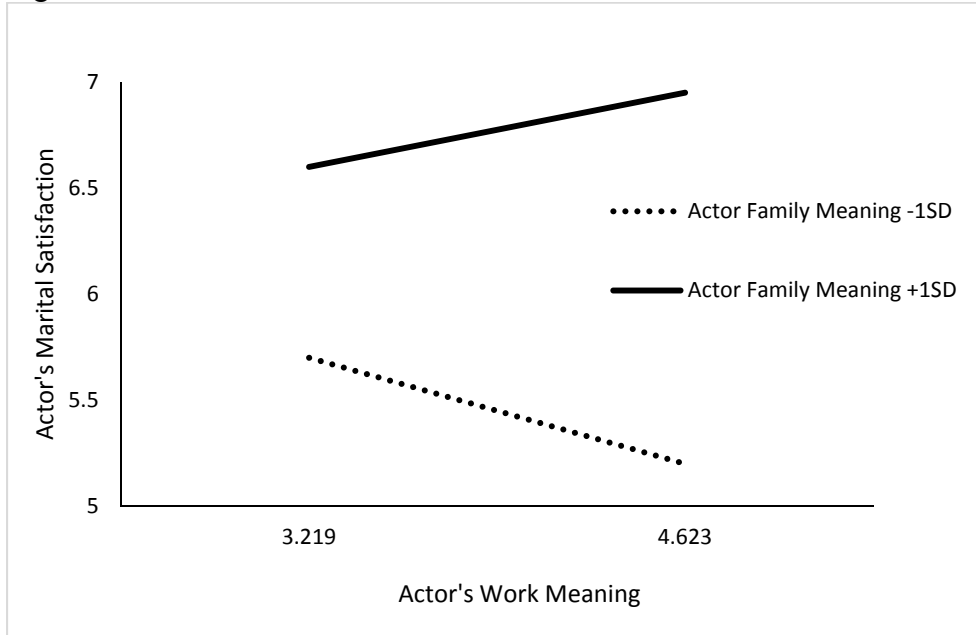


Figure 3. The Effect for Partner's MOW at Different Partner Moderator Values

