WOMEN AND LABOR MARKET: WORK FAMILY CONFLICT AND CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study is to discuss and analyse the relation between the present labour market configuration and women's professional career management. Because this is such an extensive topic, our discussion will focus mainly on Work Family Conflict (WFC) and Self-efficacy perception during a career transition period. Previous studies have focused, although not extensively, on such relationships. We intend to provide some additional clarification regarding these associations. The Participants were employees working at a Professional Center in Abruzzo, Italy. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the influence of Work-family conflict (WFC) on how women manage their career; the relations found among the variables in study were generally small. Mostly, WFC doesn't influence on the career transition management process. Self-efficacy perception plays a role as a mediator between readiness level and Career Self Management. Results are discussed based on previous literature in the field of gender, work-family conflict and Career Management. Limitations of the study are discussed as well as directions for future researches are provided.

Key words: labor market, Gender, Work Family Conflict, Carerr Self-Management

RESUMO

O objetivo do presente estudo é analisar a relação entre a atual configuração do mercado de trabalho e o desenvolvimento da carreira profissional de mulheres. Por ser esse um tópico muito extensivo, a discussão centrar-se-á, principalmente, no conflito família trabalho (CFT) e a percepção da autoeficácia durante o período de transição de carreira. Estudos anteriores dedicaram-se a essa relação, ainda que não exaustivamente. Temos como objetivo oferecer alguns novos esclarecimentos sobre essa associação. As participantes desse estudo eram trabalhadoras de um centro profissional em Abruzzo, Itália. Uma análise multivariada da variância foi conduzida para avaliar a influência do conflito família trabalho (CFT) em como as mulheres administram suas carreiras. A relação encontrada entre as variáveis desse estudo foi em geral pequena. Na maioria dos casos CFT não interfere no processo de administração de carreira. A percepção da autoeficácia aparece como mediado entre o nível de preparação e de administração de carreira. Os resultados são discutidos com base na literatura existente no campo de gênero, conflito família trabalho e administração de carreiras. As limitações desse estudo também serão apresentadas, assim como sugestões para futuras pesquisas.

Palavras chave: mercado de trabalho, gênero, trabalho, carreira.

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate how women manage their career, more specifically if work-family conflicts influence on how they deal with their career, and if it does, how it does it. Women who face low levels of work-family conflict manage better their career? Women who manage better their work-family conflicts, do they also manage better their career development?

The research has a quantitative character and it will make use of secondary dates from a research realized in Centri di Formazione Professionale dell'Abruzzo. The research was conducted by the Centro per le Transizioni al Lavoro e nel Lavoro (CE.TRANS.) and the category of workers involved were managers, tutors and coordinators. It was proposed due to a reconfiguration in the organizational context, and it gave special attention to gender issues, such as behavior, attitude, motivation, representation and meaning of work.

This study is divided in three main parts. The first part concerns to the theoretical background, we begin by examining the present labor market configuration and gender segregation practices, work-family conflict and organizational practices. We shift then to examine the relationship between women and their career. To address our question about how work-family conflict's influence on women's career management, it was conducted a Multi analyzes of variance (MANOVA). Next, we present our results, which suggested that, the current labor market characteristics influences directly on how women manage their career process.

1.1 Labor market gender segregation

To affirm that labor market is gender segregated means that there is an unequal and twisted division of work based on gender differences. According to Maume Jr and Houston (2001), because of the labor market gender segregation, it still believed that, some jobs are appropriate for women and others are appropriated for men.

Occupational sex segregation is related to the fact that women hold jobs, which are seen, as less prestigious, receive less training, promotion opportunities and pay lower incomes. Labor segregation influences women's and men's working experience, consequently, their skills and interests (Ridgway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Acker (1990) states that organizations are gendered therefore it is not possible to understand organization's process without considering gender as integral part of it.

Horizontal labor market segregation means that women are still concentrated at the lower levels of certain areas of employment often called "pink ghettos" (Touga, Brown, Beaton & Joly, 1995). It is still expected for women to act in fields such as child care, nursing, elder care, routine industrial jobs and office work. This ghettoization influences not only labor sex segregation, but also contributes to sex inequality, wage gaps, and unequal rates of mobility opportunities (McBrier, 2003).

The gender gap and different careers possibilities are related to the vertical labor market segregation. It means that, although men and women occupy the *same job categories*, men do the more skilled jobs, have more responsibility and higher salaries than women. *Earnings are lower in female-dominated occupation than in male-dominated occupations with similar educational requirements (Jacobs & Lim, 1992, p.451).*

This evidences that women's one-way movement into labor force was not enough to promote gender equality, because there are other variables such as unequal home and family work division and devaluation of female's occupation, which shy men away from these fields and maintain gender inequality. *Gender divisions of [sic]labour remain deeply unequal in practice both in paid work and households, and fathers are still seen by themselves and other family member as primarily economic providers* (Duncan, et al., 2003, p.310).

1.2 Work-family Conflict and Motherhood

Because of the great changes in the conception of gender, parenthood and career which affect the employment relationship, researches on work-family conflict has spawned attention to the flip side of how men and women negotiate their work and family's obligation (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robission, 2000; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997; Edwars & Rothbard, 2000; Gutek, 2001; Mclwain, Korabik & Rosin, 2005).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (p. 77). Because work and family entail multiple roles, which may cause opposing and incompatible pressure, it might become difficult to one to equally participate in both roles. The conflict arises whenever the demands of one role interfere with one's ability to meet responsibilities in another.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identify three major forms of work-family conflict: (1) time based conflict, (2) strain-based conflict and (3) behavior-based conflict. The first type of conflict is based on the assumption that time is a limited resource, therefore one must divide his/her time among the multiple roles which one must perform. The problem is that, the time

dedicated to activities within one role can not be devoted to activities within another role. Hence, the more time one spends in a certain role, the less time one will have to meet the demands and responsibilities of another role. The second form of conflict concerns to role produced strain. The dissatisfaction or emotional distress produced from one domain can arise difficulties to meet the demands of the other role domain. *The roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another* (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p.80). Finally, the third form regards to role overload. It occurs when the behavioral style from one domain is incompatible with behaviors from another domain, and the *person is unable to adjust behavior when moving between domains* (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000, p.182).

Work-family conflict becomes more complex, when its bidirectional aspect is considered. According to Frone, Russel and Cooper (1992) the interference of work on family (W-F) and the interference of family on work (F-W) are both conceptually and empirically distinct constructs. *An important distinction is made between the extent to which work interferes with family life (work-to-family conflict) and the extent to which family life interfere with work (family-to-work conflict)* (Frone, et al., 1997, p.149).

Gutek, Searle & Kepla (1991) state that, the more time one dedicates to family responsibilities, the more he/she will experience family-to-work conflict. It means that, either men or women who dedicate more time to family activities will suffer interferences from family-to-work. However, Greenhaus, Collin and Parasuraman (1997) highlight that women would experience more intensively family-to-work conflicts than men, because they still have most of the housework responsibilities.

> Moreover, it has been suggested that the impact of family life on work behavior is especially pronounced for women, who bear most of the responsibility for rearing children and assuring the well-being of the family (p. 249-250).

It can be assumed that work-family conflict is largely influenced by gender social expectations. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (2002) affirm that family responsibilities impact negatively in women career because they tend to sacrifice their career to satisfy family's duties.

The influence of feminist movement, together with economical changes, lead women to work outside their houses, and to do so, they had to change their relation with motherhood. Children increase time spent in housework and request extra time for child care, however this is not equal to both parents, it is expected that women devote more time to children than men.

Therefore, women who are mothers have less time to dedicate to market work, than childless mothers do. One solution for this situation was institutional care; however it was much criticized, because children wouldn't receive enough parental attention. *Theories of child development and psychology, developed over the last century, suggest that maternal bonding, attentive parenting and high-time inputs are necessary for optimal educational and social outcomes for children* (Craig, 2007, p.70).

It seems that market work and motherhood are incompatible, because children require full-time parental care, thus women face a dilemma, choose their economic independence and their personal wishes or become a "good" and "competent" mother according to society's pattern. However, Williams and Cohen Copper (2004) affirm that this idea – women and paid work being incompatible – is socially constructed.

Fuegen, Biernat, Haines and Deaux (2004) state that it is expected that mothers perform more parental behavior than fathers do. Women should give more physical and emotional care attention to their children, than men should; therefore it is expected from women to be less work-committed and reliable than men. According to the authors, this would have a strong influence in the hiring process. Working mothers have fewer chances to be hired, than working fathers do. In fact, fatherhood is seen as a positive aspect in a male career, men who have a family are seen as more reliable, and more responsible than men who don't have one. This is related to the male breadwinner stereotype, because men are economic providers, they would be more committed to their work. While a full-time working mother violates her caregiver role, a full-time working father fits his provider role.

When women become mothers, the way that they are perceived change. On the one hand, they begin significantly to be seen much more as warm and nurturing, but, on the other hand, they are seen as less competent and work-committed. Because they are viewed as less competent, they are also viewed as less worth for training or promoting (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick; 2004).

Finally, it is interesting to notice that recently a new perspective about work-family interface have been studied, not only its conflict aspect, but the positive side of this interaction. If they are well managed, family and work interface can bring a mutual improvement in both roles. Therefore it can be assumed that having a family brings not only conflict to employees, but it can, and should, be seen also as a beneficial aspect, which can influence positively their work performance (Carson et al. 1995).

1.3 Career Self-Management

Career should be understood as the result of the interaction of individual skills and competences and the organization's environment. At the same time, it is influenced by the social, economical and political context. It concerns to the work-related activities that an individual perform along his or her working life (King, 2004).

According to Baruch (2003) career can be define as a lifelong process of work experiences, which leads to professional development and personal satisfaction. *Career is a major life constituency – it evolves around work, and work provides sense of purpose, challenge, self-fulfillment, and, of course, income* (p. 59). In the last decades, career development was managed, mostly, by the organizations. It was related to stability at the organization, long-term contract and high levels of organizational commitment. However, now, due to the current labor market changes, individuals are the main responsible for their career development.

In this context employees must be able to manage their career strategically, to know how to be flexible, to adapt to labor market's requests and to conciliate their working and non working life. According to this perspective, employees have an individual responsibility for his/her career, almost totally independent from the organization. The clearly and well-defined job position and career progress in a single organization has been declining and giving space to a new concept of career: boundaryless career (Bricoes, Hall & Frautschy DeMuth, 2005).

Boundaryless careers regards to the work experience, which does not take place in a single work set. It concerns to the career development process that happens outside the traditional organizational career plan. Hence, it suggests movement across organizations and employers (Pringlen & Mallon, 2003). It would allow workers to manage better the physical (transition across different organizations, jobs and countries) and psychological (the perception of the capacity to make transitions and integrate the work experiences) aspects of his/her working life (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). *A person with a boundaryless career mindset navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterized by different levels of physical and psychological movement* (Bricoes, et al. 2005, p.31).

Although some authors (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Bricoes, et al. 2005) presents boundaryless careers as a result of the emancipation from the organization's limits, Pringlen and Mellon (2003) highlight that this is not completely true. According to the authors boundaryless career brings also more instability, loss of identification and lack of security to the employees, who became the only responsible for their career development. Moreover, it is important to notice that there are still some social and political boundaries

which influence career's choice. *We suggest that to see careers as boundaryless is still an aspirational vision and fraught with difficulties given the persistence of inequitable distribution of resources and enduring social views of what actually constitutes a career* (p. 848).

O'Neil & Bilimoria (2005) state that women's career development are quite different from men's one. As it was discussed before, women have a much more discontinuous career; fewer advancement opportunities, they are underrepresented at managerial positions, it is more difficult for them to access social network and mentoring programs and experience a differential impact of family responsibilities. Therefore, it can be assumed that women are still not able to have real a complete boundaryless career.

> Women, in general, may have less freedom than men to engage in physical mobility. For instance, a woman may reject an opportunity than requires relocation or increased travel because her husband may be unable or willing to move, she is caring for an ill dependent, or there is a lack of quality childcare in the local (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006, p. 26).

For instance, as employees become much more responsible for their career development in a boundaryless perspective, the social and informal networks gains a much more relevant role. Establishing networks is a fundamental competency to the realization of a satisfactory career progress; however, as it was previously presented, it is more difficult for women than for men to enter in these social networks (Ibarra, 1997). Hence, boundaryless career place women in an even more disadvantageous position, when comparing to men.

Due to labor market instability and the comprehension of career as boundaryless, the idea of career self-management became extremely important. Career self-management concerns to the linear progression within the work experiences, it is related to the increase of power, status and responsibilities, intra- and inter organizational mobility, knowledge accumulation and personal development. On the contrary of what could be thought, career self-management is not related exclusively to professional life, it includes also nonwork domains.

> However, careers have a personal as well as a vocational meaning for many people; a complete picture of career self-management needs to consider peoples' aspirations for their lives outside work, and to explore adjustment mechanisms which are intended to fit work in with family or leisure commitments (King, 2004, p.118).

Career self-management is not only related to surviving the labor market reconfiguration, it is also related to life satisfaction. Career-managing behaviors can be associated to the perception of control over career progression. Although there is a large literature about individual difference and desire of control (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986), it is known that having control over your own career is important to work performance.

2 Objectives

After presenting a general review about the present labor market configuration, how cultural aspects of our society influences women's career choice and the main obstacles faced by women to be accepted and respected in labor market, the following question was raised: *How do women manage their careers despite all obstacles they still have to face?* More specifically, this study aims to investigate how women manage their careers transition.

Work-Family Conflict and Career Transition Process Management

Work-Family conflict (WFC), as it was mentioned before, has been defined in several ways throughout the last decades. In the present study, we assume the definition of Mcelwain, Korabik and Rosin (2005) to whom, WFC consists in an unbalanced relation between work and family demands; therefore can affect both work and family spheres. Cinamon (2006) states that WFC can have destructive behavioural or emotional consequences on both work and family domains. We intend to reflect about how the level of WFC faced by women influences their career management during a transition process. How they perceived the control over their career transition, in which level they feel themselves committed to their work and if their career satisfaction is affected by work-family conflicts.

The following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1. Women who face less work-family conflict feel more secure in a career transition process than those who face higher level of work-family conflict.

More specifically:

(1a) They have more control over their career transition process;

(1b) They feel more independent to manage their career transition process;

(1c) They feel more confident to manage their career;

(1d) They feel they are ready to manage their career transition process properly

Hypothesis 2. Women who face less work-family conflict would feel more job involved than those who face more work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 3. Women who face less work-family conflict would perceive more job opportunities.
Hypothesis 4. Women who face less work-family conflict feel more job satisfied.

3 Methodology

3.1 Procedures

The data for this study was drawn from the research, conducted by the Centro per le Transizioni al Lavoro e nel Lavoro (CE.TRANS), in the Professional Formation Canter from Abbruzzo - Centri di formazione Professionale dell'Abruzzo, Italy. The research was proposed due to a reconfiguration of the organizational context, the category of workers involved were managers, tutors and coordinators and it gave a special attention to organizational behavior, attitude, motivation, representation and meaning of work.

The data were collected through a closed questionnaire containing a wide range of questions concerning career issue, which is described below. Each participant were asked to answer it due to the reconfiguration process which was happening at the organization.

3.2 Participants

Participants were 213 workers, 113 women and 100 men; however, to achieve the objective of the present study, only women's answers were analyzed. The women ranged in age from 23 to 70 years ($M = 38.57$, $SD = 9.20$). Information on participant's civil status was not obtained, however it can be inferred that this is a sample of mature women, who probably have great responsibilities with their families. Regarding women's instruction level, 6% did not specified their instruction level, 43% presented a high school degree and 67% presented a bachelor degree.

3.3 Instruments

The questionnaire was composed by 7 scales and two single items already presented in literature, on a 5 point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (lowest score – totally disagree) to 5 (highest score – strongly agree).

The first scale was a mono-dimensional scale adapted from Lodahl and Kejner (1965), which analyses Job Involvement. The authors define job involvement as the importance of

work and the relevance of other aspects in a worker's life, *job involvement is the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work or the importance of work in his total self-image* (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, p.24).

The second scale was the Protean Career Attitudes Scales, adapted from Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy DeMuth (2006). It is a bidimensional scale. It investigates the career self-management aspects and the influence of personal values in the process of choosing a career. It is related to the self-vocational behavior to achieve career success in opposition to career development by the organization. The authors state that *the scales related to protean career attitudes measure self directed career management and values-driven predispositions* (Briscoe, Hall & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006, p.30). For our study purpose it was used just one dimension, the self-directed career management.

The third scale was the Work-family Conflict, adapted from Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). It concerns how family's issues influence work and how work's issues influence family. The scale is a bi-dimensional scale, work-family conflict (WIF) and family work-conflict (FIW).

The forth scale was the Occupational Self-efficacy scale, adapted from Schyns and Von Collain (2002). It measures individuals' perception of their capability to perform a behavior and meet the situational demands. *Bandura defined the concept of self-efficacy as the conviction that one can successfully execute a given behavior required to produce certain outcomes* (Schyns & Von Collain, 2002, p.219). It is a mono-dimensional scale.

The fifth scale was Career Transitory Inventory, adapted from Heppner (1998). The inventory examines the psychological resources and barriers experiences during a career change, it considers factors, which are internal and external to individual.

The sixth scale was the Limitedness of Alternative Occupational Commitment adapted from Carson et al (1995), which analyzes how workers see their future occupation possibility. Blau (2003) *states limitedness of occupational alternatives taps the perceived lack of available options for pursuing a new occupation* (p. 385). It is a monodimensional scale.

Finally, to inquiry about Job satisfaction, it was used a single item adapted from Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wromely (1990). Job satisfaction concerns the pleasure originated from its occupation, it has extrinsic and intrinsic aspects, such as advancement, salary, and career development opportunities.

4 Results

We used the Cronbach's alpha to measure the reliability and the internal consistency of each scale (Martinez & Ferreira, 2007). In this study's scales, Cronbach's alpha ranged from .60 to .83. For the Lodahl and Keiner's Job involvement scale, alpha was .60. The self-directed career management dimension, extracted from the The Protean Career Attitudes Scales, presented .75 Cronbach's alpha. In the Work-Family conflict scale it was obtained a value of .80 Cronbach's alpha. For the Occupational Self-efficacy scale Cronbach's alpha was .83. To the four dimensions of Career Transitory Inventory, *readiness, confidence, control* and *independent decision*, Cronbach's alpha values were respectively: .76, .72, .61 and .60. The last scale, Limitedness of Alternative Occupational Commitment, presented a .74 value for Cronbach's alpha.

To investigate the relation between Work – Family conflict and career management the Work Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996) was used. Because the two dimensions of the Work Family Scale (WIF: $M = 2.06$, SD = .61 and FIW: $M = 1.70$, $SD = .66$) are significantly correlated ($r = .66$, $p < .001$), we created a unique variable by averaging both scores. This unique variable of conflict was named Work-Family-Conflict (WFC) ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .49$). WFC can be understood as form of inter role conflict, which renders difficult a good balance between work and family activity. It was considered the independent variable for the first part of the study.

Based on the scores distance to the WFC's mean, the sample was divided in two artificial groups. Participants who reported scores lower than WFC's mean were gathered in low WFC ($n = 67$); and participants who presented scores higher than WFC's mean were grouped in high WFC ($n = 46$). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the influence of Work-family conflict (WFC) on how women manage their career; WFC was considered our *independent variable*. In our study, we are interested in comparing high WFC and low WFC on the following items: *Job Involvement, Occupational Self-efficacy, Readiness, Confidence, Control, Independence, Occupational Alternatives, Self-direct career management* and *Job satisfaction.* The statistic test used to test whether there are differences between the means of high and low level WFC groups on the combination of the dependent variables was the Wilk's lambda.

To the group of answer regarding the 9 items, high WFC results are significantly different from low WFC's one according to the multivariate test MANOVA [$\Lambda = .77$, $F(2.897, 9) = 77$; $p < .01$]. The comparison between the two groups on each item with the univariate tests (cf. Table 1) shows that significant differences only on the control, [$F(1, 98) =$

8.49 $p < .01$] and on the independence [$F(1, 98) = 16.70$ $p < .01$] dimensions. On the rest of the 7 items, high WFC's means are not significantly different from low WFC's means, therefore it can be inferred that both groups behave similarly to the content of these items.

Table 2

Itens	Low WFC		High WFC		F (1.98)
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Job Involvement	4.24	.66	4.16	.51	.49
Occupational Self-efficacy	3.56	.59	3.46	.60	.68
Readiness	3.47	.53	3.61	.53	1.73
Confidence	3.67	.44	3.54	.48	1.63
Control	3.81	.56	3.49	.51	8.49*
Independence	3.74	.51	3.33	.45	16.70*
Occupational Alternatives	2.69	.78	2.81	.81	.58
Self-direct career management	3.15	.64	3.25	.47	.79
Job satisfaction	3.93	.778	3.68	.88	2.36

*$p < .01$

Based on the previous results, we can assume that, *Hypothesis 1* was only partially supported. Significant differences were found between the high and low WFC regarding control and independence dimensions, which means that *1a* and *1b* were supported. This indicates that women who experience low WFC feel more independent and perceived more control over their career transition process, than women who face high WFC.

However, no significant difference was found between the two groups concerning the confidence and readiness to manage a career transition process. Thus, *1(c)* and *1(d)* were not confirmed.

We found no support for *Hypothesis* 2, no significant difference concerning job involvement was found between the groups. Actually, both groups reported extremely high level of job involvement.

Regarding *Hypothesis 3,* no significant differences were found on how women see their future occupation possibility. Participants of both groups presented extremely low level of perceived available options for pursuing a new occupation. Hence, *H3* was no confirmed.

Finally, we concluded that *Hypothesis 4* was also not confirmed. There was no significant difference between the two groups either regarding job satisfaction.

On one hand it calls the attention to the low level of Occupational Alternatives, which is how women perceive their future job opportunities and on the other hand the level of Job involvement. These points will be better discussed later.

5 Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine if Work-Family conflict influences women's career self-management transition. Our result suggests that depending on how women experience Work-Family Conflicts (WFC), they succeed or not to manage their career transition properly.

H1 inquired if women experiencing low level work-family conflict feel more secure to manage their career transition, and it was only partially supported.

Primarily, it could be observed that women who face low WFC feel that they have more control over their career transition process than those who face high WFC. It can be assumed that the lack of work-family conflict helps women to perceive that their career transition is under their control. It can be imagined that an unstable environment experienced by high WFC prevent them to feel that they have control over their career transition, because they have already so many other issues to deal with.

According to Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) work-family balance refers to the extent to which an individual is equally engaged and satisfied with both family and work role, and it is associated to individual's quality of life and well-being. The authors state that an imbalanced environment contributes to level of stress, role overload and depression. It could be assumed that women who face low WFC have a more balanced life and therefore have more conditions to manage and control their career in an adequate way. However, women who face high WFC have an imbalanced life, face higher levels of stress and role overload, and thus have to keep under control other variables further than the career development. Consequently, they have more difficulties in controlling their careers, than their balanced counterparts.

Regarding the dimension independence, women who face low WFC feel more independent to manage their career transition than women who experience high WFC. Women who report to experience high WFC denotes that the spheres family and work are strongly overlaped, thus they need their family approval and also they must take into consideration the changes that consequences of a modification in their job design will have in

their family's balance. As it was said before, it could be assumed that women who face high WFC have a more unstable balance with their work and family activities. Changes in their jobs could not allow them to conciliate family duties and work responsibilities (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006; McBrier, 2004). On the other hand, women who face low WFC are freer to take decisions regarding changes in their career because the two dimensions family and work are well separated.

These results can be associated also to studies, which indicate that social support at home and at work are positively related to well-being and job satisfaction. Partner support is an important resource to women workers; it is associated to multiple roles and health outcomes (Bernett & Hyde, 2001). *[F]or women, the quality of experience in home role has an important direct effect on quality of experience in work roles* (p.795).Therefore, we could assumed that women who face low WFC have more social support of their families to manage their career, than women who face high WFC.

It was observed that women who face low WFC feel as confident about their career transition process as women who experience high WFC. It was expected that women who face high WFC would perceive themselves less confident to manage their career transition because of their unstable and precarious balance between their work and house activities.

And finally, regarding readiness dimension, it was expected that women who face low WFC would feel they are ready to manage their career transition process in a better way than women who face high level of WFC. However this was not supported. Our results showed that women, who face low level of WFC, do not feel they are ready to manage their career transition process in a better way than those who face high WFC.

These were considered odd results, which require deeper studies about the relation between WFC levels and readiness and confidence to manage a career transition process.

The *H2* concerns job involvement. Women facing low WFC would be more job involved than women facing high WFC was not confirmed. Both groups show a high level of job involvement. These results indicate that although women have also to take care of their families' activities, they are still involved with their jobs (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines & Deaux 2004). However, it is important to highlight the particularity of the moment in which the research was made. The professional center was being re-structured, it could be expected that people show a high level of job involvement to avoid a negative appraisal of their involvement, which could consequently lead to their demission.

H3 inquires about how women perceived their future job opportunities. The investigation followed from the assumption that women who face low WFC would identify more future job opportunities than those who experience high WFC. This hypothesis was not verified. Both groups were very pessimistic about their job opportunities. On the one hand this can be understood as a realistic analysis of the present labor market configuration. It is known that labor market now is passing through a crisis, the rate of unemployment is increasing more and more. However, this result could be analyzed also through the gender stereotype perspective. As it was noticed from the literature, women face a variety of obstacles to be accepted and recognized in labor market. For instance, they are seen as less competent and job committed (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Mandel & Semyonov 2006).

H4 expected that women who face low WFC would be more job involved that women who face high WFC, however it is only partially true. The data analysis shows that the level of involvement between the WFC is relatively the same. This can be associated to the fact that women who face high WFC cannot cope with hundred percent with both activities – motherhood and profession. Either they sacrifice their family, or their family's duties because of work; therefore they feel they are not fulfilling one of their women's obligations. If they privilege their families and don't invest in their career as much as they want, they will not be very satisfied with it.

On the other hand, women who face low WFC have made a choice in which area of their lives to invest more, either work or family, not allowing any kind of interference. However, they wouldn't be highly job involved because they know they are neglecting an important aspect of their lives. These findings are in accordance with the ideas of Prentice and Carranza (2002) about the influence of gender stereotype. Its prescriptive aspect dictates how women and men should behave. It is still expected from women to perform their home care role, women who do not do it are seen as violating gender stereotype prescription. This could bring to a negative appraisal from the others towards her, which could lead these women to develop guilty feelings about their behaviors (Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

These results could also be associated with the assumption that multiple roles performance is beneficial to the individual (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett &, 2001). Paid work has been associated with positive influence on women's life. Labor-force participation has been found to be positively associated with high self-esteem, purposefulness, self-efficacy and self-confidence. Barnett and Baruch (1985) states that *one consequence of the benefits of multiple role is that performance in each role is facilitated so that strong commitment to work does not preclude strong commitment to family and vice-versa* (p. 786).

Roxburgh (1999) found no significant differences between working mothers and non-mothers regarding job satisfaction. According to the author this can be associated to the fact that multiple roles performance buffers the effect of demands at home on well being. Although, we can not assumed the same relation to our study, these results are very enlightening, and allows us to hypothesize the same relation to the level of job involvement between working mothers and non-mothers.

Based on that, for our sample, we can assumed that despite the WFC level, women would still be more or less equally job involved, as a consequence of the benefits brought by their paid work to compensate the strains caused by WFC.

Another possible explanation is based on Lamber findings that (1991) job involvement is highly correlated to opportunities for promotion, financial rewards, social comforts, job security and safety. Thus, it can be inferred that despite the WFC women experience, they showed relatively the same level of job involvement due to the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Notwithstanding, it is intriguing that no significant difference was found concerning career self-management, it could be expected that women who face low WFC would present a high level of career self-management than women who experience high WFC. It would be also necessary to search accurately why this happened.

6 Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

In conclusion, women's career self-management is a topic that is influenced by various aspects. Although individual aspects, for instance, intrinsic motivation, have an important role, there are extrinsic variables, which are not under women's control, for example, gender stereotype or work-family conflicts. Women have to choose between investing on their career and not fulfilling society's expectation about what should be their women role or giving priority to their families' duties and sacrificing their careers. It is obvious that most women would feel they are loosing very important part of their lives, because both aspects professional career and family bring different, however important and significant, rewards.

As it was verified the level WFC, readiness and self-efficacy perception influences on how women administrate their career transition. It is important to help women to administrate properly their work and family duties, so it will not interfere in their work performance. It is also vital to develop training programs that give the necessary supply to them to feel ready to face this situation, so they can manage it adequately.

As it was previously highlighted, there is a lack of successful women in the labor market. Bandura (1994) states that modeling is another aspect that influences self-efficacy perception. Hence, our society faces a vicious circle concerning gender stereotypes. Because there are few successful women in the labor market, women do not have role models to stimulate them to dare to do something different from what is expected from them. And because women do not dare to look for new and different working possibilities for themselves, the number of role models is low. Consequently, labor market segregation is continuous.

As it was pointed in our conclusion, it would be interesting to study the relation between work family conflict and readiness and confidence to manage a career transition process. This is because, on the contrary of what could be expected, no significant differences were found between women who face high level WFC and readiness or confidence to manage a career transition process.

From what was presented, future research questions can be raised. Nielson, Carlson and Lankau (2001) state that a supportive mentor, perceived as role model, having similar work–family values, is useful for reducing WFC. Bandura (1994) affirms that role models are one source of self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be speculated if there is a relation between social support from the mentor and self-efficacy perception.

Another question to be addressed in future research would be to verify if there is any relation between career projects and career management. According to Bingham (1998), another way to prepare women to face properly a career transition process is helping them develop a Career Project. Career Projects are a series of actions made for career development, it occurs in a determinate period and it considers not only the professional sphere, but it comprehends also other aspects of an individual's life. It depends on the individual's biography, personal characteristics and internal motivations; gathering emotional and cognitive processes.

7 References

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