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# Professional Mothers' Loyalty To Their Employers

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PROFESSIONAL MOTHERS' LOYALTY TO THEIR EMPLOYERS

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2010

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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This thesis, submitted by Ashley Leschyshyn in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is hereby approved.

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Ashley Leschyshyn  
April 3, 2012

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## ABSTRACT

One major social change that has transpired in the United States over recent decades is the increasing movement of women into the paid labor force. The changes surrounding work and family life have made finding balance between these two domains difficult for women. These difficulties become more problematic because of a stalled revolution, as many workplaces do not accommodate family needs and women remain primarily responsible for household labor. Qualitative research on the supposed “opt out revolution” has shown that one main reason why some women are leaving the workplace is because they do not have a work environment that is supportive in terms of integrating work and family life. This is especially believed to be true in professional work environments in which employees are expected to dedicate the majority of their time to their careers. Few studies have concentrated on professional women and how the work-family interface is associated with such women’s loyalty to their employers. Specifically, this research examines how work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture are associated with professional mothers’ loyalty to their employers.

The data to be used in this research are from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). The NSCW is a nationally representative cross section of employed adults in the United States. The sample used in this study ( $N = 160$ ) consists of women whose occupational status is classified as professional who have at least one child under the age of 18 living at home.

Results indicate that supervisor support was positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. However, findings suggest that work-to-family conflict, coworker support, and supportive workplace culture were not associated with professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Changes surrounding work and family life have made finding balance between these two domains difficult, particularly for mothers. These difficulties become more problematic because of the stalled revolution, as many workplaces do not accommodate family needs and women remain primarily responsible for household labor. Qualitative research on the supposed “opt out revolution” has shown that one reason why some women are leaving the workplace is because their work environments are unsupportive of women’s efforts to integrate work and family life. This is especially thought to be true in professional work environments in which employees are expected to dedicate extensive time and energy to their careers. Given this situation, will professional women who work in environments characterized by supportive coworkers, supervisors, and a supportive workplace culture have higher levels of loyalty to their employers?

In order to deal with the ramifications of the stalled revolution some families decide that one parent, usually the mother, should reduce the number of hours they spend on work tasks and allocate their time primarily towards family responsibilities (Hill et al., 2006). Hill and colleagues note that in some instances, one parent, typically the mother, will temporarily or permanently leave the workforce in order to devote full attention to family responsibilities. Professional mothers who temporarily leave the workforce may be viewed as less committed by their work peers and this may result in negative career

outcomes, such as reduced pay or decreased chance of promotion, if they return to the labor force (Burchielli, Bartram & Thanacoody, 2008; Hewlett, 2007; Hoobler, Wayne & Lemmon, 2009). Regardless, many women do not leave the workforce. Those who do leave are often forced out by work environments that offer few resources for their employees who have families and do not make accommodations to the stressors associated with work and family.

The goal of this thesis is to provide a quantitative analysis of professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. I will contribute to the work and family literature by examining how the workplace environment shapes professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. In cases where women exhibit lower levels of dedication to their employers, is it because of workplace environments that do not support work-family integration? I argue that women with high levels of loyalty are less likely to leave the workplace. I incorporate into the analyses three major components of workplace social support (coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture), and I examine how they are associated with women's loyalty to their employers. This introduction describes changes in the work-family interface and how these changes connect to the notion of the "opt out revolution." Further detail is provided explaining why this research is important and how it contributes to the current work-family literature. After discussing the importance of this research, I propose the research question.

### *Purpose of the Study*

One major social change that has transpired within the United States over the last few decades is women entering the labor force in increasing numbers. This movement

has been described as “one of the most significant social and economic trends in modern U.S. history” (Hayghe, 1997, p. 210). In 1900, women comprised around 18 percent of the paid labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980). Today, nearly 47 percent of the paid labor force is comprised of women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). As a result of the increase in women’s labor force participation, the dual-earner family has largely replaced the traditional breadwinner-father/homemaker-mother family model (Hayghe, 1990). In 2001, dual-earner couples represented 54 percent of married couples in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The majority of mothers, even those with young children, participate in the workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). It was also shown that among couples with children, 64 percent of these couples were dual-earners (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Of employed women in 2009, approximately 27 percent were working in professional occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). According to the Department of Labor professionals include people working in a variety of occupations, including computer, mathematical, and legal occupations. Professionals usually have advanced college degrees and are generally well paid and highly valued employees.

The transformation encompassing work and family life over the past several decades has made finding balance between the work and family domains challenging, especially for professional women. This is attributed to the fact that many professional mothers are employed in occupations that require the majority of their time and energy to be allocated towards work duties, while they are simultaneously trying to dedicate time and energy towards their families. It is only since the 1970s that college-educated women have begun to combine work and family concurrently (Stone, 2007). Many

professional work environments have not incorporated resources these women need to successfully balance work and family needs. When professional women work in unsupportive work environments, their loyalty towards their employers may be reduced.

Work and family scholar Pamela Stone has discredited the recurring theme in the media that high-achieving, college-educated women are deciding to choose motherhood over their demanding careers and are therefore heading home (2007). Consistent with high labor force participation rates among women, approximately one in ten of all women do not work (Stone). Stone further explained that since the 1980s, the number of married, educated mothers who stay home has changed relatively little. In Stone's qualitative research on professional mothers, she found that among mothers who decided to quit their careers, their decisions were not because of family obligations, but because of work concerns. Previous research has suggested that those employed in supportive workplace environments experience less work-to-family conflict (Hill, 2005; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999). These findings make it important to ask whether professional mothers who work in supportive workplace environments have more loyalty to their employers.

Though the opt-out revolution has been analyzed qualitatively, little research has addressed this issue using a quantitative approach. Previous literature has focused on employees' intention to quit or their turnover intentions as outcome variables (e.g. Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996). However, few studies have concentrated on professional women and how the work-family interface is associated with such women's loyalty to their employers. Exploring this area of research is imperative because "professional women who choose to marry and have children find it difficult to create a

harmonious life in which they feel successful managing both work and family responsibilities” (Hill, Märtinson, & Ferris, 2004, p. 282). With this stated, this study’s contribution to the literature centers on an analysis of whether work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture are associated with professional mothers’ loyalty to their employers. By identifying factors that detract from such loyalty, I will elucidate variables that may make professional women more likely to leave the workforce.

#### *Organization of the Remainder of the Study*

In Chapter Two I will provide an overview of the relevant literature concerning this area of research, as well as an outline of role theory. In Chapter Three I will detail the methodological approach I use in this thesis, including the sampling procedures and the operationalization of all variables. In Chapter Four I will describe the results of the analysis. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the implications of these results, as well as the limitations of this study and areas for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

I begin this chapter by addressing the theoretical framework guiding this thesis. I then provide a detailed account of the literature in support of the proposed research question. Lastly, I propose hypotheses based on the supporting evidence I have provided from previous research. The research question examines whether work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support and supportive workplace culture are associated with professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Theoretical Perspective*

The conceptual framework for this study is based on a role theory perspective regarding work-family conflict. The basic premise of role theory maintains that people occupy more than one role at a time. Often these roles are incompatible because individuals can only put forth so much energy into each role. Essentially, the more roles an individual holds the more conflict that individual will face, potentially resulting in negative outcomes (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Juggling multiple roles is also associated with negative organizational outcomes, such as burnout and turnover intentions (Barnett & Gareis). Thus, maintaining multiple roles could have an impact on an individual's loyalty to their employer.

When mothers enter the paid labor force, the decisions they make are strongly influenced by cultural gender norms and expectations maintained in their workplaces.

Though gender role attitudes have become less traditional as women have entered the paid labor force, there is still an underlying assumption that the primary social role of women is to be homemakers, whereas men's primary social role is to be breadwinners (Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Chafetz, 1988, 1999; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991, 1994). As women entered the paid labor force, the separation between family and work has slowly diminished. Further, the additional work role assumed by women was thought to have a negative impact on women because all their time and energy was no longer being allocated solely to familial caregiving needs (Barnett & Gareis). This is especially true of mothers in professional jobs because these jobs require intense investment within the workplace, while gendered attitudes still require women to dedicate time to family responsibilities.

The dominant corporate culture continues to maintain that work and family are separate spheres. Consistent with this notion, corporate culture reinforces traditional views about the family responsibilities of workers. In this corporate environment, it is generally assumed that each worker has a homemaker taking care of familial responsibilities. Women must be able to adapt to this corporate culture to be taken seriously. For example, the amount of "face time" an employee dedicates to their employer is often regarded as a source of loyalty (Bailyn, 1993; Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Blair-Loy, 2003; Fried, 1998; Schor, 1991). Despite expectations at work, professional women still have family responsibilities. Being a professional worker and a mother would be easier in an environment that supports work and family. Given these pressures, professional women's loyalty to their workplaces may increase when they work in supportive environments.

In summary, gender role norms and expectations strongly influence professional mothers' decisions regarding work and family responsibilities. The number of roles these mothers maintain may impede loyalty to employers in the face of unsupportive workplaces. One way to increase the loyalty of professional mothers juggling multiple roles is to create work environments that support integration of work and family roles.

### *Conceptualization*

Previous research has focused on employees' organizational commitment (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005) burnout, and turnover intentions (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Researchers have proposed that employee commitment is an important variable to take into account when studying workplace dynamics because it helps in understanding employees' behavior within the work setting (Lavelle et al., 2009). This includes the individual's attachment, identification, or overall loyalty to the organization (Morrow, 1993). For the purpose of this thesis, an individual's loyalty to their employer is defined as the employee's commitment to stay with their current employer.

Work-family conflict is defined as a "form of interrole conflict in which the role pressure from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Work-to-family conflict is a specific form of work-family conflict that occurs when work responsibilities interfere with family life (Hill et al., 2006). For example, a mother may feel that her professional work inhibits her from spending time with her children. Work-to-family conflict is important to take into account because it has many stressors associated with it and if reduced, professional women may be more loyal to their employers.

Workplace support is conceptualized as the degree to which employees perceive their well-being is valued by their supervisors, as well as by the broader organizations in which they work (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011). Key sources of workplace support are coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture (Kossek et al.; Voydanoff, 2007). Coworker support is described as the extent to which individuals perceive their colleagues as being helpful and supportive of them (Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004). Supervisor support is defined as an individual's perception that their supervisor cares about their work-family well-being by helping resolve work-family conflicts (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner & Hanson, 2009) and supporting the worker's desire for work-family balance (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Previous scholars characterize supportive workplace culture as the extent to which the organization provides support in combining employees' work and family needs (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). Workplace support is important because these forms of support can reduce work-to-family conflict, thereby potentially increasing mothers' loyalty to their employers (Hill, 2005).

### *Literature Review*

#### *Work-to-Family Conflict and Loyalty to Employer*

Structural changes in work and family life have increased the likelihood of work interfering with family. Work-to-family conflict is an increasingly common stressor among employees (Aumann & Galinsky, 2009). Hochschild (1997) found that among working mothers and fathers, work-to-family conflict was on the rise among parents in professional occupations. Other research established that because of work-to-family

conflict women were pressured to leave firms because they felt incapable of working long hours and dealing with work off the job (Dalton, Hill & Ramsay, 1997).

In general, research has suggested that work-to-family conflict is directly associated with employees leaving the workplace (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Good, Sisler & Gentry, 1988; Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Collins, 2001; Netemeyer et al., 1996). One study found that work-to-family conflict was positively related to job turnover in those professions that require workers to have high levels of contact with their clients (Connor, Hooks & McGuire, 1999). This is important because many professional workers, such as doctors and accountants, are required to spend time with their clients. Along these lines, a study that analyzed accountants found a significant and positive relationship between work-to-family conflict and turnover intentions (Pasewark & Viator, 2006). This same study found that turnover was higher among female accountants. Based on previous findings that work-to-family conflict was directly associated with employees leaving the workplace (Anderson et al.; Good et al.; Greenhaus et al.; Netemeyer et al.), I propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: Work-to-family conflict will be negatively associated with professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Coworker Support and Loyalty to Employer*

Professional women who try to balance work and family may be more loyal to their employers if they have supportive coworkers. Coworkers have the ability to provide their peers with support that contributes to positive workplace experiences. These positives experience may lead employees to have greater organizational commitment (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Previous research has shown a positive relationship between

coworker support and organizational commitment (Mottaz, 1988; Mueller, Finley, Iverson & Price, 1999; Schaubroeck & Fink, 1998; Wallace, 1995). When professional mothers work with supportive coworkers they may be better able to integrate work and family and will therefore be more loyal to their employers. Based on previous research that showed a positive relationship between coworker support and organizational commitment (Mottaz; Mueller et al.; Schaubroeck & Fink; Wallace), I propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: Coworker support will be positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Supervisor Support and Loyalty to Employer*

It is important to take into account professional mothers' supervisor support because past literature has suggested that those employees who have supportive supervisors experience greater levels of commitment to their employers (Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayana & Schwartz, 2002; Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neil & Payne 1989; Hill, 2005; Jones, Smith & Johnston, 2005; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Many organizations have adopted family-friendly programs, but whether these programs are used is often based on the manager's discretion (Friedman & Johnson, 1997). Whether these family-friendly programs are implemented by the supervisors of professional mothers could have a large impact on their loyalty to their employers. As such, supervisor support has been shown to be positively associated with the employee's decision to use family-friendly benefits offered by their workplace, as well as the employee's intention to remain within the organization (Thompson et al.). When professional mothers have supportive supervisors who allow for the integration of

work and family, I propose these women will be more loyal to their employers. Based on previous research showing that supportive supervisors were associated with greater levels of organizational commitment (Baruch-Feldman et al.; Greenberger et al.; Jones et al.; Thomas & Ganster; Thompson et al.), I propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: Supervisor support will be positively associated with professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Supportive Workplace Culture and Loyalty to Employer*

A supportive workplace culture is characterized by organizational support for employees combining work and family (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). Research has consistently found a positive relationship between supportive workplace environments and employees' organizational commitment (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997; Hill, 2005; Nye & Witt, 1993; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Prior research has indicated that many workers who were interested in utilizing work-family policies hesitated in fear of career repercussions (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Scholars have suggested that the availability and use of work-family policies would lead employees to believe they are valued within the organization (Gittelman, Horrigan & Joyce, 1998; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Osterman, 1995). The availability and use of work-family policies shows that organizations are invested in their employees, thereby encouraging employee loyalty (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004). Professional women who work in an environment that is supportive of work-family balance may experience greater loyalty to their employers. Based on previous research that found a positive relationship between supportive workplace environments and employees' organizational commitment

(Cropanzano et al.; Hill; Nye & Witt; Settoon et al.; Wayne et al.), I propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: Supportive workplace culture will be positively associated with professional mothers' employer loyalty.

#### *Control Variables*

There are also a number of control variables that I take into account when analyzing the relationship between the independent variables and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. These variables include job autonomy, job pressure, number of hours worked per week, education, race, age, dual-earner household, and presence of children under the age of six. I analyze job autonomy because many professional workers have the ability to decide when and where they do their work (Freidson, 1988). Job autonomy allows for professional mothers to have more flexibility over their job commitments therefore potentially increasing workplace loyalty. Job pressure is included because many professional workers are in occupations that involve many stressors. These high pressure workplaces may reduce professional mothers' loyalty to their workplaces. Number of hours worked per week is also analyzed because the greater the hours professional women are devoting to work, the greater the amount of stress they may be under, thereby reducing their loyalty to their employers. It is also possible that if professional women are working fewer hours they may be under less stress and therefore be more loyal to their employers.

I also take into account several demographic variables. Education is controlled for because it might increase professional women's access to resources that reduce stress, therefore increasing their loyalty to their employers. Race is controlled for because white

workers may have more support within the workplace. Age is controlled for because professional women may have access to different resources and encounter different stressors across the life course. For example, women who are older may have been with their workplaces longer and therefore may have greater seniority. Whether the professional woman is part of a dual-earner household is also controlled for because often both individuals work in professional jobs. Having both partners in the paid labor force contributes to higher incomes therefore allowing for more resources when dealing with family matters. However, dual-earner households may also experience increased stress from balancing two jobs with family responsibilities, including work-to-family conflict. Whether professional women have children under the age of six is also taken into account because younger children may lead to greater stressors at home that may increase work-family conflict, thereby potentially reducing professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Summary and Organization of the next Chapter*

This chapter detailed many aspects of work and family that have an impact on professional women's loyalty to their employers. Taking into account professional women's work-to-family conflict is important in understanding professional mothers' loyalty because it is a stressor. I hope to provide further evidence that women are not choosing to leave the workforce, but rather are pushed out due to unsupportive work environments. When women work in environments that are supportive of integrating work and family dynamics, I argue that they will be more loyal to their employers.

In Chapter Three I will outline the methodological approach to this thesis. I will provide a detailed account of how the data was collected. I will then describe the

operationalization of all the variables that are used. I will also explain the analytic strategy I will use to answer the proposed research question.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I discuss the methodology used to examine the research question. The purpose of this thesis is to employ a quantitative approach to examine the relationships between work-family variables and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. In this chapter I first provide a detailed account of how the data was collected. I then describe the operationalization of all the variables that are used. Lastly, I explain the analytic strategy I will use to answer the proposed research question.

#### *Data*

To examine the research question I use data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). This survey was developed by the Families and Work Institute (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky & Prottas, 2003). The NSCW is a nationally representative cross section of paid employees who were 18 years or older in the United States at the time of the interview. The interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The sampling method employed was random-digit-dialing. The response rate was approximately 52% of eligible participants (Bond et al.). The interview centered on gaining information about working adults' work and family lives, and the dataset is comprised of 3,551 employees. Because the focus of this research is professional mothers, I only include professional women with children under the age of 18 within the home in the analyses ( $N = 160$ ).

## *Measures*

### *Dependent Variable*

*Loyalty to employer* was measured with one item that asked respondents how loyal they felt to their employers. Responses ranged from *extremely loyal* (1) to *not loyal at all* (5). The scores were then reverse coded so that higher scores demonstrate greater loyalty. Though loyalty to employer is only measured with one item, it is still able to provide a general sense of professional mothers' overall loyalty to their employers.

### *Independent Variables*

The five-item scale of *work-to-family conflict* was created by summing and dividing by five. Previous research has used this same five-item scale to measure work-to-family conflict (Cook & Minnotte, 2008; Hill, 2005; Maume & Houston, 2001; Voydanoff, 2005). Respondents were asked how often the following occurred: “(a) How often have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?; (b) How often have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?; (c) How often has work kept you from doing as good a job at home as you could?; (d) How often have you not been in as good a mood as you would like to be at home because of your job?; and (e) How often has your job kept you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?” Responses ranged from *very often* (1) to *never* (5). The scores were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect more work-to-family conflict. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .88.

The five-item scale of *supervisor support* was created by summing and dividing by five. Previous research has used this same scale (Cook & Minnotte, 2008; Sahibzada, Hammer, Neal & Kuang, 2005). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: “(a) My supervisor is fair and doesn’t show favoritism in responding to employees’ personal or family needs; (b) My supervisor or manager accommodates me when I have family or personal business to take care of - - for example, medical appointments, meeting with child’s teacher, etc.; (c) My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work; (d) I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues with my supervisor or manager; and (e) My supervisor or manager really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life.” Responses ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The scores were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect more supervisor support. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .88.

The three-item scale of *coworker support* was created by summing and dividing by three. This measure has been used in previous research (Cook & Minnotte, 2008; Maume & Sebastian, 2007). Respondents were asked their level of agreement with the following statements: “(a) I feel I am really a part of the group of people I work with; (b) I have the support from coworkers that I need to do a good job; and (c) I have support from coworkers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life.” Responses ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The scores were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect more coworker support. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .78.

The four-item scale of *supportive workplace culture* that has been used in previous research was created by summing and dividing by four (Cook & Minnotte, 2008; Sahibzada et al., 2005). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: “(a) There is an unwritten rule at my place of employment that you can’t take care of family needs on company time; (b) At my place of employment, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably; (c) If you have a problem managing your work and family responsibilities, the attitude at my place of employment is: “You made your bed, now lie in it!”; and (d) At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.” Responses ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The items were reverse coded so that higher scores depict greater levels of supportive workplace culture. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .69.

#### *Control Variables*

The analysis also takes into account several control variables including age, race, education, dual-earner household, presence of children under the age of six, work hours, job autonomy, and job pressure. *Age* was measured in years. *Race* was a dummy variable where (0) indicated a race other than white and (1) indicated white. *Education* was measured at the ordinal level with (1) indicating less than a high school diploma, (2) indicating a high school diploma/GED, (3) indicating some college, (4) indicating a four year college degree, and (5) indicating a postgraduate degree. *Dual-earner household* was a dummy variable in which (0) indicates the respondent is a single earner and (1) indicates the respondent is a part of a dual-earner household. *Presence of children under*

*the age of 6* within the household was a dummy variable where a (0) indicated that the respondent had no children under the age of 6 and a (1) indicated that the respondent had a least one child under the age of 6 living in the home. *Work hours* was measured by including the total hours the respondent worked per week at all jobs held at the time of the interview. The three-item scale of *job autonomy* was created by summing and dividing by three. Respondents were asked their level of agreement with the following statements: “(a) I have the freedom to decide what I do on the job; (b) It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done; and (c) I have a lot of say about what happens on my job.” Responses ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The scores were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate more job autonomy. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .72. The three-item scale of *job pressure* was created by summing and dividing by three. Respondents were asked their level of agreement with the following statements: “(a) My job requires that I work very fast; (b) My job requires that I work very hard; and (c) I never seem to have enough time to get everything done on the job.” Responses ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The scores were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate more job pressure. The alpha reliability coefficient for this construct is .50. This measure has been used extensively in past research (e.g. Cook & Minnotte, 2008; Hill, 2005; Minnotte, 2012; Voydanoff, 2005).

### *Analytic Strategy*

To answer the research question, I will first present descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. Next, I will perform bivariate correlations. For the multivariate analysis, I will use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Due to

the small sample size, mean substitution is used to replace missing values in the analysis. A total of thirty missing cases were retained because of mean substitution. The model will include the primary independent variables as well as the control variables.

*Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter*

In this chapter I described the dataset that will be used to address the research question. I then provided the operationalization for each of the variables. This chapter ended with a discussion focusing on the analytic strategy I will use to test the hypotheses. In Chapter Four I will discuss the major findings of this thesis. I will provide the reader with descriptive statistics and discuss the results pertaining to the OLS regression model.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I discuss the major findings of this research. I will first provide descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations. Subsequently, I will discuss the bivariate correlations. I will then describe results from the multivariate analysis that I conducted using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Lastly, I will discuss whether the results provide support for the hypotheses.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Loyalty to employer is the dependent variable in this research. The independent variables are work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture. I also take into account several control variables for this analysis including age, race, education, dual-earner household, presence of children under the age of six, work hours, job autonomy, and job pressure. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. These women, on average, were roughly 40 years of age ( $M = 39.63$ ,  $SD = 8.66$ ). The majority of these women were white (84%) and on average, had some college education or a four year college degree ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). Most mothers were part of dual-earner households (95%) and most did not have children six years of age or younger (36%). These professional mothers worked an average of approximately 42 hours per week ( $M = 42.17$ ,  $SD = 14.33$ ). These women, on average,

had moderate levels of job autonomy ( $M = 3.15, SD = .68$ ), as well as moderate levels of job pressure ( $M = 3.05, SD = .64$ ).

The professional mothers, on average, indicated that they felt very loyal to their employers ( $M = 4.11, SD = .85$ ). The mothers, on average, indicated that they rarely experienced work-to-family conflict ( $M = 2.60, SD = .82$ ). Regarding the quality and the value of their coworker support, these professional mothers, on average, reported that they felt a moderate to high level of coworker support ( $M = 3.48, SD = .59$ ). When asked about their supervisors, these professionals indicated, on average, that they somewhat agreed they received support from their supervisors ( $M = 3.33, SD = .71$ ). Regarding workplace culture, these professional women reported, on average, that they felt moderate levels of supportive workplace culture ( $M = 3.05, SD = .64$ ).

#### *Bivariate Correlations*

I performed bivariate correlations to examine how the variables in this research are related to one another. The results of the bivariate correlations are provided in Table 2. Here I will focus on the variables that were significantly related to loyalty to employer.

Overall, the correlations suggest all of the key independent variables except for work-to-family conflict were significantly associated with the dependent variable. Professional mothers' loyalty to their employers and coworker support were significantly and positively related to one another ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ). Supervisor support and loyalty to employer were positively and significantly related to one another ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ). The relationship between supportive workplace culture and loyalty to employer was also found to be significant and positive ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ). Further, race was positively and

significantly related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ), which means that whites reported significantly more loyalty than those of other races. Women in dual-earner households also reported significantly higher levels of loyalty than other women ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ). Lastly, it was found that professional mothers' job autonomy was positively related to loyalty to their employers ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics ( $N = 160$ )

Variables	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Loyalty to employer	1 - 5	4.11	.85
Work-to-family conflict	1 - 5	2.60	.82
Coworker support	1 - 4	3.48	.59
Supervisor support	1 - 4	3.33	.71
Supportive workplace culture	1 - 4	3.05	.71
Age	21 - 66	39.63	8.66
Race <sup>a</sup>	0, 1	.84	
Education	1 - 5	3.81	.97
Dual-earner household <sup>b</sup>	0, 1	.95	
Presence of children under six <sup>c</sup>	0, 1	.36	
Work hours	1 - 108	42.17	14.33
Job autonomy	1 - 4	3.15	.68
Job pressure	1 - 4	3.05	.64

<sup>a</sup> The mean is the proportion of cases in which the respondent is white. <sup>b</sup> The mean is the proportion of cases in which the respondent has a partner or spouse who is employed.

<sup>c</sup> The mean is the proportion of cases with at least one child of this age.

### *Regression*

I performed OLS regression to assess the relationships between professional mothers' loyalty to their employers and work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture. The results of the regression are provided in Table 3. In this sample of professional mothers, 16 percent of the variance in loyalty to employer is explained by this set of independent variables.

First, I will discuss the significant relationships pertaining to the control variables. Race was significantly and positively ( $\beta = .155, p < .05$ ) related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. As such, in this sample of professional mothers, whites experienced greater levels of loyalty to their employers. It was found that the dual-earner household variable was significantly and positively ( $\beta = .158, p < .05$ ) related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers, which indicates that professional mothers who are part of dual-earner households experience greater levels of loyalty to their employers.

Job autonomy was also found to be significantly and positively ( $\beta = .239, p < .01$ ) related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers, which indicates that professional mothers who have greater levels of job autonomy experience greater levels of loyalty to their employers.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that work-to-family conflict will be negatively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. The findings indicate that there is not a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations (N = 160)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Loyalty to employer	*												
2. Work-to-family conflict	-.08	*											
3. Coworker support	.26**	-.32***	*										
4. Supervisor support	.33***	-.32***	.55***	*									
5. Supportive workplace culture	.22**	-.30***	.48***	.57***	*								
6. Education	-.06	.22**	-.06	-.07	.01	*							
7. Race	.22**	.08	.14	.07	.14	.04	*						
8. Age	.01	.12	.04	-.06	-.02	.21**	.10	*					
9. Presence of children under six	.00	.03	-.05	-.02	-.03	.08	.02	-.52***	*				
10. Dual-earner household	.17**	-.04	.15	-.05	-.07	-.12	.15	-.04	.11	*			
11. Hours worked	.02	.37***	-.13	-.21*	-.15	.16*	-.06	.15	-.08	-.12	*		
12. Autonomy	.33***	-.10	.19*	.33***	.37***	.01	.03	-.05	.07	-.06	.01	*	
13. Pressure	.02	.44***	-.09	-.22**	-.26**	.23**	.06	.05	.04	.01	.32***	-.10	*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3. OLS Regression for Variables Predicting Professional Mothers' Loyalty to their Employers

(N = 160)

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
Work-to-family conflict	-.029	.088	-.030
Coworker support	.069	.124	.051
Supervisor support	.288*	.117	.231
Supportive workplace culture	.005	.115	.004
Age	.001	.008	.008
Race	.337*	.165	.155
Education	-.044	.066	-.053
Dual-earner household	.302*	.147	.158
Presence of children under six	-.028	.149	-.017
Work hours	.004	.005	.077
Job autonomy	.284**	.093	.239
Job pressure	.110	.107	.087
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.16		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2 predicts that coworker support will be positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. The results do not provide support for this hypothesis, as there is not a significant association between coworker support and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that supervisor support will be positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. The results provide support for this hypothesis. The analysis indicates that supervisor support is significantly and positively ( $\beta = .231, p < .05$ ) related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that supportive workplace culture will be positively related to professional mothers' loyal to their employers. The results do not provide support for this hypothesis, as there is not a significant relationship between a supportive workplace culture and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. Overall, then, only one of the four study hypotheses was supported in the analysis.

#### *Summary and Overview of Next Chapter*

In this chapter I discussed the major findings of this research. I provided the descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations. Bivariate correlations were also presented. The results of the multivariate analysis indicated that supervisor support, race, dual-earner household, and job autonomy were significantly related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

In Chapter Five I will provide a summary of the results and relate the findings to the work-family literature. I will then explain how the research contributes to the current literature and discuss the implications the research has for professional mothers. Lastly, I will report the limitations of the research and elucidate the areas I think future research should explore regarding professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provide a summary of the results and relate the findings to the work-family literature. I also discuss how this thesis contributes to the current literature and comment on the implications this research has for professional mothers. Lastly, I report the limitations of the research, and then I discuss the areas I think future research should explore regarding professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

#### *Discussion*

The present research examined whether work-to-family conflict, coworker support, supervisor support, and supportive workplace culture are related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. To guide this research I used a role theory perspective regarding work-to-family conflict and I created four hypotheses. I tested the hypotheses using OLS regression with data from the 2002 NSCW. I included several control variables in the model, and I found that whites and members of dual-earner couples had significantly higher levels of loyalty to their employers. Job autonomy was also significantly and positively related to the dependent variable. Further, this research showed work-to-family conflict, coworker support, and supportive workplace culture were not significantly related to the dependent variable. This study indicated that supervisor support was significantly and positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers.

The results showed that supervisor support was significantly and positively related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests employees who have supportive supervisors experience greater levels of commitment to their employers (Baruch-Feldman et al., 2002; Greenberger et al., 1989; Hill, 2005; Jones et al., 2005; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). This may be because when professional mothers have supportive supervisors who allow for the integration of work and family, these women are more likely to be loyal to their employers. This explanation is consistent with previous research by Thompson and colleagues who explained that supervisor support has been shown to be associated with employees feeling comfortable using family-friendly benefits offered by their workplaces, as well as employees' intentions to remain within the organization. Professional women who are comfortable discussing work-family issues with their supervisors may feel valued and appreciated, which may contribute to their loyalty. This finding also supports Stone's (2007) research on the opt-out revolution which showed that working mothers are not choosing to leave the workplace, rather they are being pushed out because of unsupportive workplaces. This research highlights the critical role played by supervisor support in particular.

I found that among professional women coworker support was not significantly related to loyalty to employer. This finding is inconsistent with prior research that has shown a positive relationship between coworker support and organizational commitment (Mottaz, 1988; Mueller et al., 1999; Schaubroeck & Fink, 1998; Wallace, 1995). It may be that because these women are working in professional positions, they work independently from their colleagues. The relatively high levels of job autonomy reported

by these professionals (an average of 3.15 on a scale of 4) supports such an interpretation. These professionals may not need the support of their coworkers that other workers may rely on to stay invested within the organization. Another explanation for this finding centers on the notion that professional positions are demanding and intense. It may be that these women are in competition with their peers and therefore do not rely on their coworkers for support. Addressing work-family needs with other coworkers may hinder the professional's image regarding work ethic and investment in the organization.

The results from this research showed there was not a significant relationship between supportive workplace culture and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. This finding contradicts previous research that showed a positive relationship between supportive workplace environments and employees' organizational commitment (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Hill, 2005; Nye & Witt, 1993; Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997). Perhaps the larger workplace environment does not have as great an impact on professional women as the supervisors these women deal with on a regular basis. Supervisors are often gatekeepers to resources and policies that may directly enhance loyalty, whereas the larger workplace culture does not necessarily have an impact on employee use of resources and policies. Further, the supervisor is more directly representative of the organization, so dissatisfaction with a supervisor may lead to decreased loyalty. The workplace environment may offer different types of support mechanisms, but workers may only gain access to these mechanisms when they have a supportive supervisor.

This research showed that there was not a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. This finding

contradicts previous research that has shown that work-to-family conflict was directly associated with employees leaving their workplaces (Anderson et al., 2002; Good et al., 1988; Greenhaus et al., 2001; Netemeyer et al., 1996). These findings may differ from the previous literature based on a few contributing factors. First, prior research did not specifically look at professional mothers who may have higher levels of job autonomy. Among the professional women in this research, autonomy was found to be positively and significantly related to these women's loyalty to their employers. Professional women who have higher levels of job autonomy may be better able to manage the work-to-family conflict they do encounter. These professional mothers may have more say over when, where, and how they decide to do their work, thereby reducing work-to-family stressors that workers in other occupations encounter. It may also be that these professional women are heavily invested in their jobs and they accept working outside of the workplace as part of what it takes to succeed in professional fields.

Another explanation for why there was not a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and loyalty to employer among professional women is that these women may have access to resources that may alleviate such conflict. Greater access to resources may be especially true of those professionals in dual-earner households. Professionals may utilize resources, such as daycare and home cleaning services, which can reduce the hours these women spend on child and home care, therefore reducing conflict. Hence, work-to-family conflict may not be viewed as a reason to become disloyal to their employers.

One further explanation as to why there was not a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and loyalty to employer among these professional women may

connect back to their perceived levels of supervisor support. The results of the bivariate correlations showed that supervisor support was significantly and negatively associated with work-to-family conflict ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ). Supervisors who support women's efforts in balancing work and family may play a key role in diminishing work-to-family conflict among these professionals. Women who have the support of their supervisors may not feel that work matters impinge upon their time spent with their families. For this reason, work-to-family conflict may not be viewed as a reason for these women to become disloyal to their employers.

This research indicated there was a positive significant relationship between race and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. Professional mothers who are white have greater loyalty to their employers. This finding is consistent with previous literature which suggested that retention rates among minority employees in firms were lower than the retention rates of white employees (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). One explanation as to why minorities are less loyal to their employers may be because minorities experience less favorable racial environments in firms than white employees (Foley, Kidder, & Powell, 2002; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). If work environments are comprised of predominantly white employees, minority women may not feel comfortable or accepted within these workplaces, therefore decreasing loyalty to their employers.

This research further indicated a positive and significant relationship between professional mothers being in dual-earner households and professionals' loyalty to their employers. Previous research has noted that among professionals in dual-earner households, their spouses also tend to be in the professional workforce (Hill et al., 2006).

Professional mothers who have husbands that are professional workers may be more loyal to their employers because their spouses may be a source of support concerning their professional status. Having a husband that understands the stressors accompanying professional work demands may help reduce stress among mothers, thereby increasing their loyalty to their employers.

The results of this research contribute to the existing work-family literature in a few different ways. Previous literature has concentrated on employees' intention to quit or their turnover intentions as outcome variables, but few studies have focused on professional women and how the work-family interface is associated with such women's loyalty to their employers. This research affirms previous findings that supervisor support is related to employee's workplace loyalty among professional women. It is not supportive workplace cultures or coworkers that increase loyalty, but rather the supervisors within the organizations. Supportive supervisors are particularly important among professionals in comparison to other workers because professional environments are characterized by an emphasis on "face time." Supervisors who are supportive in integrating work and family may be vital regarding mothers' retention in professional occupations because of these more intense pressures they encounter.

#### *Implications*

This research suggests several important implications for professional organizations. First, supportive supervisors are important in regard to maintaining the loyalty of professional mothers. Supervisors who support women's efforts to balance work and family are not only benefitting workers, but also the organization. Hence, it is important for these mothers to find organizations that have supportive supervisors. Also,

it is imperative for organizations to train their supervisors to be sensitive to work and family issues. As the composition of employees in the professional workforce changes, supervisors must be willing to accommodate the needs of this workforce in order to retain employees. Supervisors who adapt to the changing needs of the workforce will benefit the organization because they will reduce turnover costs.

The finding that work-to-family conflict was not a factor in these professional mothers' loyalty to their employers is also important for organizations to take into account. It is not the workload or demands that make professional mothers more or less loyal to organizations. Rather, it is the support these women received from their supervisors that is associated with their loyalty. These mothers are not disloyal to their workplaces because they cannot cope with the stresses accompanying the professional world. They may become disloyal if their supervisors are not supportive of their efforts to balance work and family. Organizations need to be aware that unlike the media coverage of the supposed opt-out revolution, working mothers are not choosing to leave the workplace. Rather, there are forces within the organization that are pushing these women out.

The findings suggest that job autonomy is an important factor in maintaining the loyalty of professional mothers. It is important for supervisors in these professional work settings to allow their employees more freedom regarding when, where, and how they do their work. For example, if a professional mother is able to decide what time she starts work each day so she can attend to the needs of her children before school, this may potentially increase her loyalty to her employer. Further, if a professional mother has a child who is home sick, knowing that she has the ability to take her work home with her

and complete it there may also increase her loyalty to her employer. Workplace environments that allow professional mothers more autonomy on the job may have more loyal employees because these women may feel that their workplaces care about their work-family needs and trust that these women are capable of organizing their own work tasks.

In connecting the findings from this research to role theory it becomes apparent that working mothers can successfully integrate multiple roles. Being a mother does not make professional workers less committed to their organizations. In the context of role theory, the findings regarding professional women show that simultaneously juggling the roles of mother and worker is less stressful when work environments have supervisors that support the integration of work and family. When supervisors are willing to integrate work and family into professional environments, the traditional views maintained by corporate culture may erode leading professional women to have higher levels of loyalty to their employers.

These findings provide further support for dismissing the opt-out revolution that centers on the notion that professional women chose to leave the workforce in preference for the home. Professional mothers are loyal employees and this can largely be attributed to supportive supervisors who allow for the integration of work and family. Professional mothers who feel they have the support of their supervisors in exercising both their roles as workers and mothers are not selecting to leave their workplaces. As the composition of employees within the professional workforce has changed, the values of the workplace environment must also be willing to change. With the increase of professional women in

the workforce, allowing for the integration of work and family is one crucial way to retain these valuable workers.

### *Limitations and Future Research*

There are some limitations of this research that should be taken into consideration. First, I did not have a large sample of professional women with children to answer the research question. Because of the small sample size, I used mean substitution. In doing so, data with missing values were given the mean value, which may result in a decrease in the variance of scores. It is also important to note that the dependent variable, loyalty to employer, was measured using only one item. Because this variable was measured using a single item, it may not be as reliable as a measure comprised of multiple items.

I think it is important for future research to take into account professional men. Though the focus of the opt-out revolution centers on women, men need to be studied to see if the variables that matter for women are also important in men's loyalty to their employers. Taking into account professional men may allow for a deeper understanding of the role gender plays in the work-family interface and professionals' loyalty to their employers.

Race is another area that future research should explore in a more complex manner. The findings from this study indicated there was a significant relationship between race and professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. Future research should avoid analyzing only whites and non-whites. By taking into account more

specific racial categories and comparing their levels of loyalty, we will gain a more nuanced understanding of how race comes into play.

Future research should also consider the types of work-family policies that organizations offer to their employees. This thesis has confirmed that the support of supervisors is critical in establishing professional mothers' loyalty, but the types of work-family policies that these professional workplaces offer needs to be further explored. In doing so, it would be interesting to see whether professional women make use of these policies and how these policies are associated with loyalty to their employers.

### *Summary*

The findings from this thesis suggest that supervisor support, race, being part of a dual-earner household, and job autonomy are all related to professional mothers' loyalty to their employers. Women in professional jobs are required to invest an intense amount of time within the workplace, while gendered attitudes still require women to dedicate time to family responsibilities. With the increase of women into the paid labor force, as well as the increasing number of women in professional jobs, it is imperative that organizations take into account the needs of working mothers. These mothers are loyal to their organizations when they have the support of their supervisors in integrating work and family.

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