SPILLOVER: EMPIRICAL UTILIZATION OF THE CONCEPT. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC CORPUS FROM 2004 TO 2014

Gábor Király[1], Beáta Nagy, Zsuzsanna Géring, Márta Radó , Yvette Lovas , Bence Pálóczi

Abstract In recent decades, spillover has become a highly influential concept which has led to the initiation of new theoretical and methodological approaches that are designed to understand how people attempt to reconcile their work and private lives. The very notion of spillover presupposes that these spheres are connected, since the people who move between them bring certain 'less visible' content with them such as cognitive or affective mental constructs, skills, behaviors, etc. This paper attempts to create fresh insight into the different areas, themes and methodologies related to how spillover has been addressed over the last ten years. Four main categories are discussed based on the 76 academic articles that were selected: (1) general spillover research, (2) job flexibility and spillover, (3) individual coping strategies, and (4) the spillover effect on the different genders. The final section of the paper provides a tentative synthesis of the main conclusions and findings from the examined papers.

Keywords spillover, work-life balance, flexibility, gender differences, coping strategy, empirical review

INTRODUCTION

Spillover, as a highly influential concept, has contributed to the initiation of new theoretical and methodological approaches attempting to understand the reconciliation of work and private life. The underlying presupposition is that the people who travel between these domains bring certain 'less visible' elements with them. Depending on the theoretical approach, the elements that are identified range from positive or negative cognitive content, such as thoughts and affective elements, to certain behaviors and skills.

Accordingly, the first question about spillover can be phrased as what is it that 'travels' between the spheres? In a similar fashion, one can also inquire which direction these instrumental or affective elements travel in, and whether they have a positive or negative effect on the 'conveyors' and their environment. These questions have instigated different theoretical concepts and branches of study such as conflict theory (Rantanen, 2009), enrichment theory (Greenhaus et al. 2006) and boundary management or the border approach (Clark, 2000; Dén-Nagy, 2013), among others. Although various definitions of the exact meaning of (positive and negative) spillover have been formulated, through our review we found the following wording to be the most appropriate:

> *"Spillover refers to effects of work and family on one another that generate similarities between the two domains. (…) These similarities usually are described in terms of work and family affect (i.e., mood and satisfaction), values (i.e., the importance ascribed to work and family pursuits), skills, and overt behaviors (Edwards–Rothbard, 2000: 180)."*

While this is highly interesting, the authors of this paper do not seek to discuss such theoretical concerns in detail but rather to provide an overview of the different areas, themes and methodologies in the academic discourse related to the concept of spillover. In order to do this, the authors empirically reviewed papers from the academic social science corpus of the last decade. In other words, this review provides a detailed picture of the empirical use of the concept and the main conclusions and results of the studies that were processed, thereby serving as a useful starting point for those interested in the topic.

Our paper consists of three parts. The first part describes the methodology used for searching, collecting and pre-processing the relevant articles and outlines the parameters of the database that was built from them. This database was the origin of the content in the main section of paper: the

discussion of the studies themselves. This main part can be further divided into subsections which focus on issues such as general spillover research, job flexibility and spillover, individual coping strategies and, last but not least, gender differences with the spillover effect. The final section highlights and compares the articles' main findings in order to clearly articulate the most robust messages from the last decade of spillover research.

REVIEW METHOD

Spillover as a concept is widely used, appearing in several theoretical fields and various disciplines. The extensive use of this term is indicated by the richness and diversity of the empirical literature that is related to the construct. The notion of spillover is utilized in sociology, gender studies, psychology, organizational, human resources and management studies. This paper does not attempt to provide an all-inclusive, systematic review of these multifaceted academic fields. In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the use of the construct, however, the authors of this paper thoroughly examined a corpus of articles from the last ten years (2004-2014). The reason for this specific period of time was that the authors attempted to capture the most recent interpretations of and topics related to the concept. Identification of relevant articles and the construction of the database occurred during the spring of 2015. Specific keywords (such as work-life balance, positive and negative spillover, flexibility, gender, financial wellbeing, and general wellbeing) were search for in full texts and abstracts contained in two academic research databases; namely, EBSCO's Academic Search Complete and Business Search Complete. The table below summarizes the criteria employed for identifying articles, together with the names of the databases within which the search was conducted.

Table 1. *Search criteria and research databases employed*

Search Parameter	Search Criteria
Search terms	- work-life balance - spillover (positive spillover, negative spillover) - flexibility - (financial) wellbeing - gender
Time period	Between 2004 and 2014
Databases	EBSCO: Academic Search Complete, Business Search Complete
Language	English
Search mode	Boolean/Phrase

Using these criteria, 76 articles were identified as being closely related to the topic of investigation. The main aim was to create a database containing the most relevant publications about the chosen research field, with no claim to being comprehensive.[2] In the next subsection we describe the basic features of these articles, focusing on issues such as their length, research field, geographical area and methodology applied.

Basic features of the articles

In terms of the length of the articles, they range widely from 4 to 40 pages; the mode length was 16 pages (9.2% of all articles). The 76 articles together comprise 1351 pages. From Figure 1 it can clearly be seen that more than half of the papers are between 11 and 20 pages. Accordingly, most of the studies written about the topic – at least those contained in our database – are of medium length.

The institutional affiliation of the first author was examined to identify the geographical provenance of the papers in the sample.[3] 40.0% of the authors were affiliated with a European institution, while 38.6% were employed in North America.[4] While our sample is not representative in a general sense, based on our search activity we cautiously claim that this result is in line with the general publishing trend; in other words, the majority of research activity related to the topic indeed takes place on these two continents (Figure 2).

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2 Regarding the methodology used for searching, after defining the time period for collecting published studies several search iterations were made by entering different combinations of predefined expressions into the search box (each time using two or three expressions). From the results displayed the studies deemed most relevant were included into our database. At this point it is important to mention that this empirical literature review was conducted under the auspices of a broader research project designed to investigate dilemmas and strategies for reconciling family and work (OTKA K104707).

3 We checked the affiliations of the first authors of every selected article and identified the country in which each institution was based. By doing so, we were able to categorise 70 articles by country and continent.

4 It is striking that 47.1% of all articles were either written in the USA or the United Kingdom. This fact highlights the impact of Anglo-Saxon countries on the discourse. Since our sample was designed to be based on topic-based relevancy, it does not allow for general claims to be made about trends. However, the Anglo-Saxon dominance in our sample may be connected to the inner organisation of the field of social science publications. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate this issue further, or to discuss its implications.

Figure 1. *Distribution of articles by length (N= 76)*
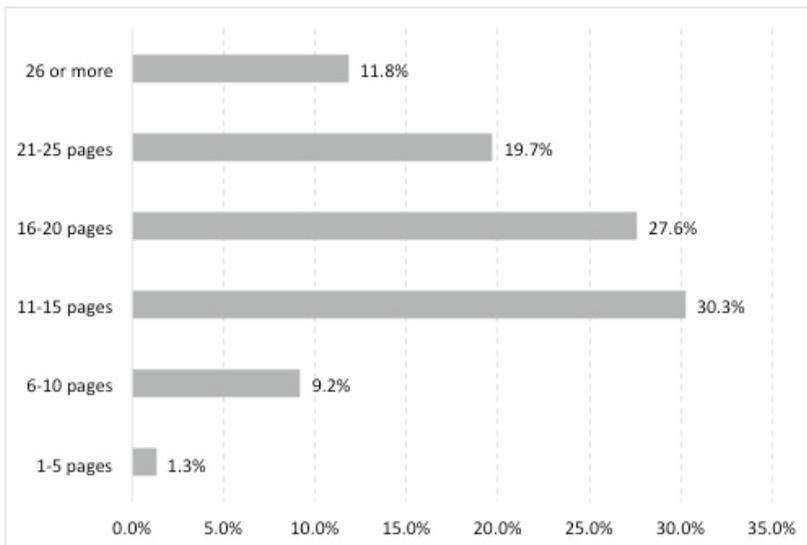
Source: Own calculation based on the database created.

Figure 2. *Distribution of articles by geographic provenance (N= 70)*
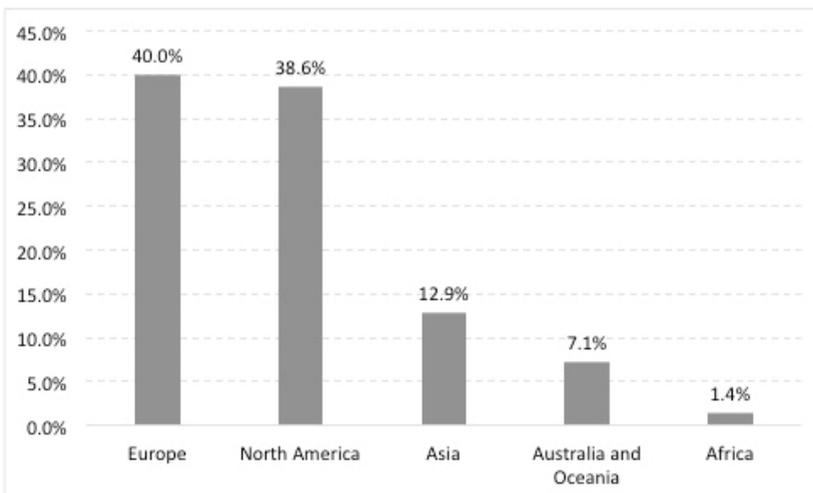
Source: Own calculation based on the database created.

Focusing exclusively on European countries, authors were most likely to be affiliated with an institution located in the United Kingdom (37.%); a relatively high proportion compared to the other European countries (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distribution of European articles by country (N= 29)[5]
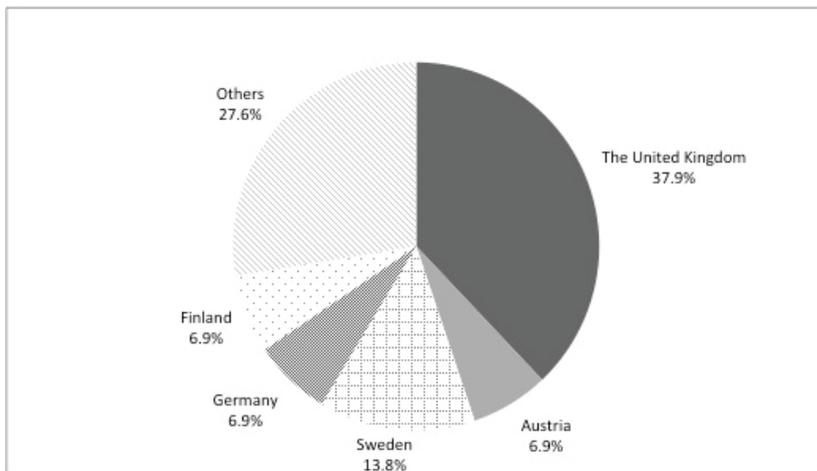
Source: Own calculation based on the database created.

Another interesting characteristic of the articles examined is their disciplinary background (Figure 4). Analysis of our sample shows that the two most common disciplines behind the articles in our database are sociology (32.9%) and psychology (26.3%). However, other disciplines and research areas such as management (11.8%), gender studies (7.9%) and economics (7.9%) were also represented.

As for the research methods utilized in the sample papers, Figure 5 shows that more than half of the articles (53.9%) were based on the findings of quantitative research projects, while one quarter (25.0%) employed a qualitative methodological approach. A mixed methods research approach was used in 13.2% of all papers.

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5 The 'others' group included countries from which only 1 article was identified; namely, Denmark, France, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, The Netherlands and Turkey.

Figure 4. *Distribution of articles by discipline. (N= 76)*
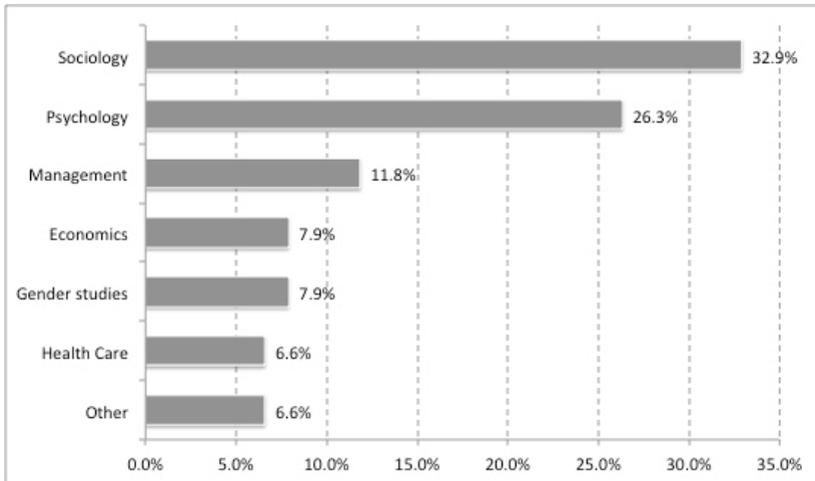
Source: Own calculation based on the database created.

Figure 5. *Distribution of articles according to research methodology (N= 76)*
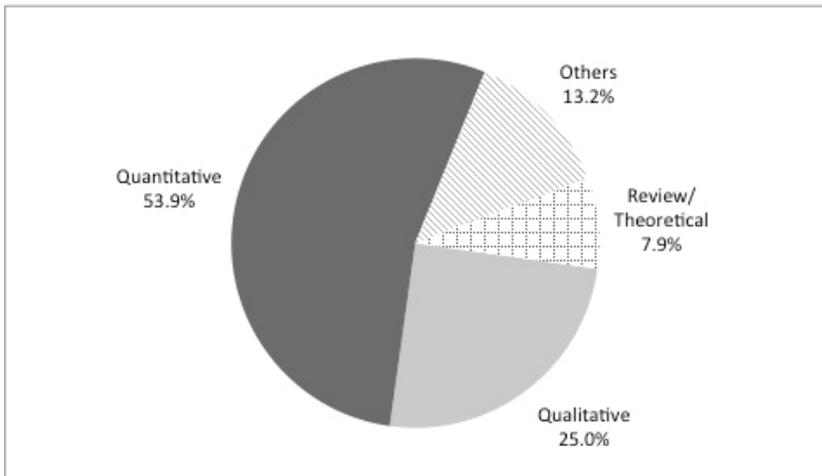
Source: Own calculation based on the database created.

Closer examination of the quantitative category reveals that out of 42 quantitative studies, 27 were built on primary data (64.3%), while 15 studies analyzed data (35.7%) gathered during previous research activities.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW[6]

Moving beyond the description of the parameters of the papers in our database, the aim of the review was to thematically map spillover research from recent years. After reading through the abstracts of the sample papers, the following thematic areas were identified: general spillover research, job flexibility and spillover, coping strategies, and gender differences in the spillover effect.[7] After this primary process of categorization the articles were then closely read with a special focus on identifying their main findings and, if applicable, any methodological innovation. Based on this activity, the following section discusses the key findings from spillover research based on these four categories.

General spillover research

Some research was designed to specifically investigate the phenomenon of spillover using a generalist perspective. These studies primarily investigate whether spillover between different life domains occurs at all, and, if it does, what is 'travelling' (and in which direction) between these spheres. The most comprehensive investigation of this issue, for example, was based on a meta-analytical examination of the relationship between *job satisfaction and subjective well-being* (Bowling et al. 2010). This research project involved a review of 223 articles that were published between 1967 and 2008. Using statistical meta-analysis the authors conclude that, in line with the spillover hypothesis, there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and subjective well-being, as well as other well-being measures (e.g. happiness, positive affect, etc.). Moreover, citing longitudinal research, the paper presents evidence that while a reciprocal relationship might exist between the variables under scrutiny, the effect of subjective well-being on job satisfaction seems to be stronger than the other way around. According to the authors, this supports a dispositional explanation. This type of explanation suggests that individuals have a general tendency to experience particular positive or

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6 Although the corpus discussed above consists of 76 items, this overview focuses on the most important articles and results only.

7 As can be seen below, this division is somewhat analytical since certain aspects (for example, gender) appear in other thematic sections as well since they were often included in the analysis as control variables, or were considered to be important. As a result, the thematic structure reflects the different emphases of the papers and is not intended to be a clear-cut categorisation.

negative emotions. This individual predisposition, in turn, affects specific aspects of life such as life and work (Bowling et al. 2010: 924).

Georgellis and Lange (2012) also examined the *relationship between job and life satisfaction* using data from the European Values Survey. By using multivariate analysis they found that these variable are positively correlated for the majority of employees, a fact which appears to verify the presuppositions of spillover theory. After dividing employees into different groups (characterized by spillover, compensation or segmentation strategies)[8], the authors estimated the proportions of people who utilize these specific strategies in different societies. The results of their analysis place emphasis on the role played by salient cultural values and beliefs (such as interpersonal trust), which can mitigate the strength of interaction between job and life satisfaction. In other words, the data demonstrates that cross-cultural variation significantly alters how spillover effects appear in the lives of employees. The paper also highlights the fact that gender significantly affects whether an individual segments work and private life, and whether spillover occurs. There is a greater propensity for men to non-segment if they are the main earners in the household, but a greater likelihood that they will segment work and private life if they have a part-time job or have pre-school children. The authors emphasize that these differences in gender preferences cannot be fully explained by cultural variation (Georgellis et al. 2012: 451).

Other small-scale research projects also examined the interrelationship between work and private life. Rathi (2009) found a correlation between quality of work life and psychological well-being utilizing a small sample survey (n=144) in India. Prottas and Hyland (2011), based on data collected from 356 working adults (through an online survey of business school alumni), demonstrated that significant involvement in both work and home domains lead to positive spillover in both directions (work to home; home to work). More specifically, involvement in work is positively correlated with affective and instrumental work-to-home spillover effects. Similarly, high levels of involvement are also positively correlated with other directional (home to work) spillover (Prottas et al. 2011: 44).

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8 Researchers identified the different groups by cross-checking their scores for job and life satisfaction. If individuals occupied different positions in the two distributions, the analyst concluded that they segment their life spheres; that is, they belong in the segmented group. After deduction of the segmented sample, the rest of the population can be said to belong either to the spillover or compensation group. If the correlation between life and job satisfaction was negative, respondents were categorized into the compensation group. If the correlation was positive, they were identified as members of the spillover subgroup (Georgellis et al. 2012: 442-443).

Using a similar research set-up, Kinnunen and colleagues (2006) examined positive/negative spillover effects among Finnish employees (n=202) in both directions. In line with their expectations, they found that negative work-to-family spillover is strongly correlated with both low well-being at work and low general well-being. Similarly, positive work-to-family spillover had a positive relationship to well-being at work, as well as general well-being. Negative family-to-work spillover could be correlated to low well-being at home. Interestingly, the authors did not find a direct relationship between family-to-work spillover and any of the well-being indicators under scrutiny (Kinnunen et al. 2006: 160). The authors emphasize that their data demonstrate that positive and negative family-to work spillover are not two sides of the same coin. Instead, individuals may experience both types of spillover at the same time. Furthermore, their analysis also highlights the fact that the boundaries between work and home are asymmetrically permeable. If the work-family culture is based on a 'male model of work' (full time job, preference for work to family, doing overtime) then employees perceive positive work-to-family spillover more often than positive family-to-work spillover (159).

It is important to mention here that some papers not only cover work-to-family spillover effects (with a focus on the same person 'traveling' through different domains) but they also investigate 'crossover' effects (emotions and moods that are transferred from one family member to another). For example, using diary data Lawson and colleagues (2014) found a positive correlation between mothers' moods after work and their children's affective and health indicators (e.g. sleep quality, sleep duration). Other papers describe research into the effects of spillover and crossover among couples (Demerouti et al. 2005; Shimazu et al. 2011; Sanz-Vergel et al. 2013; Wunder et al. 2013). These studies generally verify the existence of crossover effects between family members, although there are significant gender differences as concerns how these transfers actually take place through family dynamics. The following subsection describes studies which attempted to correlate job characteristics in general, and flexibility in particular, to different types of spillover effects.

Job flexibility and spillover

Among the articles collected from the literature search those which specifically dealt with the issue of flexibility were most numerous. These papers could be grouped into two main categories according to their approach to flexibility. One contains papers with a particular focus on the effects on

employees' lives of organizational policies that are designed to increase workplace flexibility. The second category of papers approaches the issue by investigating individual coping strategies for balancing work and life, and their effectiveness (Walker et al. 2008; Neal et al. 2009; Mellner et al. 2014; McDowall et al. 2014).[9]

In line with these thematic groups, the following parts of this paper firstly detail research findings from projects that dealt with the organizational aspects of flexibility, and then move on to addressing individual coping strategies. As for papers that have a focus on organizational policy, findings are presented in the next two subsections according to whether researchers identified positive effects for flexibility, or were ambivalent/critical.

The positive effect of flexibility in organizations

A significant number of studies found that workplace flexibility at an organizational level can contribute to reconciliation of work and private life and decrease negative spillover effects between different life domains. Jang and colleagues (2012), for example, examined the effect of employer initiatives for addressing negative spillover from work to family. Their results indicate that *schedule flexibility* decreases employee stress in general. Moreover, flexibility might more strongly reduce the negative work-family spillover of specific groups: namely, women, single parents and those who are burdened with heavier (family) workloads (Jang et al. 2012). Lourel et al. (2009) in a research project focused on French employees (n=283) also found that perceived stress partially mediates the relationship between both work-home and home-work interference and job satisfaction. As a result, they argue that organizations that have work-life balance policies benefit from greater employee commitment (Lourel et al. 2009).

Furthermore, in a study based on 18 semi-structured interviews Pedersen and Jeppesen (2012) argue that schedule flexibility can enrich both work and private life by acting as a boundary-spanning resource. The involvement of employees at work can be enhanced by increasing their 'agency potential' which, in turn, enables them to more fully engage with their personal lives.

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9 It is also important to mention here that three occupational groups were investigated in the literature: software developers (Scholarios et al. 2004; Kvande, 2009), academics (Rafnsdóttir et al. 2014; Bell et al., 2012; Miller et al 2005) and police staff (McDowall et al. 2014; Gächter et al. 2014). While it would have been justifiable to address these occupations individually in a separate section of this paper, the authors decided to incorporate them into the general discussion about flexibility.

Any potential benefits, however, may not be experienced by all workers the same way but are largely shaped by the different *individuals' boundary management strategies* and their level of family flexibility (Pedersen et al. 2012: 354-355). Eek and Axmon (2013) also investigated whether flexibility and workplace benefits have an effect on working parents' subjective stress and well-being. Their results showed that being flexible and having a positive attitude to parenthood both benefit wellbeing and work involvement. While these effects are valid for both genders, they seem to be stronger for working mothers than fathers (Eek et al. 2013).

Ambivalence or critique of flexibility in organizations

A number of articles highlight the ambivalence or the negative impact flexible working arrangements have on employees' lives. Some papers stress that, even if flexible working conditions are offered by organizations, there are a number of factors that hinder employees from taking up these opportunities.

Fursman and colleagues (2009), based on large-scale mixed-methods research in New Zealand, argue that flexibility can create significant benefits such as reductions in stress and pressure and greater opportunities for family members to spend time together. However, they also highlight the fact that flexibility can have negative consequences, such as work permeating into family life, feelings of guilt about taking on flexible working arrangements, and/ or the constant difficulty of juggling different responsibilities. Furthermore, choosing to take advantage of flexible working conditions can also lead to the situation that an employees' skills are underutilized. So, making use of these arrangements can also *harm one's career prospects, income or an individual's reputation* for being a committed employee (Fursman et al. 2009: 53).

In line with these findings, Joyce and her colleagues (2010) also make a distinction between *different types of flexible working arrangements* when investigating employee well-being and health effects. On the one hand, flexible interventions that increase employee control and choice (for example, self-scheduling or partial retirement) may be beneficial to health. On the other hand, interventions designed to further organizational interests (i.e. fixed term contracts or involuntary part time employment) seem to affect employee health negatively (Joyce et al. 2010).

Kvande (2009) discusses the difficult situation software-developer fathers have to face in organizations that operate according to a flexible time regime. While in Norway there are family-friendly policies and incentives in place to help parents spend more time with their children (for example, parental leave

for fathers), flexible time regimes and the nature of globalized knowledge work are elements of powerful structural forces that drive people to spend increasing amounts of time at their workplaces. Moreover, Kvande emphasizes that if the act of taking advantage of family-friendly policies is understood to be made at the individual level, then employees who attempt to create a better work-life balance might become marginalized in their organizations as *time deviants*. Flexibility can thus encroach on family life if boundaries between work and family are not defined and strengthened collectively, and if organizations leave their employees to their own devices to create a balance between their different spheres of life (Kvande, 2009: 70).

Scholarios and Marks (2004) draw very similar conclusions in their paper about UK-based software developers. Based on data gathered by surveying software developers at two companies they demonstrate that even software developers who can be interpreted as being ideal-type 'knowledge workers' (with individualized attitudes, highly marketable skills and increasingly blurred boundaries between work and family life) are seriously affected by the intrusion of work into their private lives. In line with Kvande's argument, they also stress that *organizational policies are needed* not only to guarantee flexibility, but also to help workers maintain the boundary between different spheres. These policies, in turn, can act to decrease negative spillover, strengthen organizational trust and increase organizational attachment (Scholarios et al. 2004).

Furthermore, some articles strongly emphasize that there are stark differences in understanding the work-life balance concept between employees and employers. Todd and Binns (2013) studied the implementation of work-life balance policies in Western Australian public sector agencies. The authors conclude that managers typically attempt to 'manage' work-life-balance issues. Moreover, they do this while attempting not to disturb the 'normal' mode of operation in their organizations. While senior management see work-life balance initiatives as a way of attracting and retaining staff, the authors were critical about whether this approach could lead to greater levels of organizational responsiveness to employee interests. They emphasize that the impact of dealing with work-life balance in a highly individualized manner without addressing the structural barriers that hinder people from utilizing flexible working arrangements may be limited (Todd et al. 2013: 228-230). Other papers support this proposition and report on conflicts between organizational discourses and the reality experienced by employees (Thompson et al. 2005; Doble et al. 2010; Stella et al. 2014).

Individual coping strategies

A considerable number of the sample publications (26 articles) cover the issue of how to deal with conflicts, which arise due to the consequences of negative spillover processes. These articles primarily describe the most effective solutions or coping strategies for mitigating perceived conflicts, and sometimes propose individual and organizational measures to alleviate such situations. These suggestions very often highlight the above-mentioned flexibility issue; however, self-employment is also suggested as a possible remedy. Moreover, coping strategies target both individual and organizational-level interventions.

Based on case studies with female entrepreneurs in the Philippines, Edralin (2013) argues that *self-employment* gives individuals a range of opportunities for coping with work-life problems. The women interviewed were able to balance their lives through strategies of personal planning and time management, maintaining a flexible work schedule and the delegation of certain tasks to family members. Furthermore, the support of husbands and other family members as a basic resource for completing non-work activities was also mentioned. Beside these strategies (stress and time management and family support), other methods and tactics were also emphasized, such as social networks and assertive communication (Edralin, 2013).

Similarly, Walker et al. (2008) suggests that self-employment is good practice based on an Australian investigation concerning home-based businesses. The respondents' main drivers for choosing to become self-employed included prospective flexibility and the opportunity to maintain work-life balance. The authors stressed the point that the decisive factor in starting a business was not gender *per se*, but the existence of dependents. On the other side of the coin, they highlight the fact that running a financially unsuccessful businesses increases stress and this disadvantage may outweigh the positive outcomes of self-employment (Walker et al. 2008).

A recent piece of Canadian research (Hilbrecht et al. 2014) provides a detailed account of the positive outcomes of self-employment as a coping strategy. Based on their interviews with 22 parents of small children, the authors found that self-employment as a strategy was less ideal for the respondents than reported in earlier research. Although being 'in control' and being flexible contributed to having a better work-life balance, the *need to 'always be available'* led to ongoing time pressure. Furthermore, the researchers also reported that parents were strongly influenced by traditional gender expectations.

Dependents also played an important role in the case of the *sandwich*

generation, as investigated by Neal and Hammer (2009) over a two-year period in the US. Through their qualitative and quantitative investigation the authors analyzed the work and family coping strategies of dual-earning couples who had caring responsibilities for both children and parents. They differentiated between the effects of behavioral, emotional and cognitive strategies on well-being. Rich emotional resources and cognitive coping strategies (such as prioritization) were shown to have a positive effect, whereas low social involvement had a negative effect on well-being. Furthermore, the authors also concluded that high work schedule flexibility and job autonomy may contribute to the well-being of the population under investigation (Neal et al. 2009). Similarly, in an Austrian investigation of female physicians in leadership positions, the allocation of different resources (such as time, money, physical, emotional and social resources) was identified as being an essential prerequisite for a decent work-life balance. The article pointed out that having these resources was especially necessary for women with small children (Schueller-Weidekamm et al. 2012).

As far as employees in general are concerned, Jang et al. (2012) in a study based on a national representative sample of US working adults also argued that work-related stress and negative work to family spillover can be reduced through offering employees with particularly heavy family responsibilities (i.e. single parents and women) more flexibility.

Besides the allocation of different resources and the adaptation of flexibility, the *separation or integration of work and personal life domains* (that is, the demarcation or crossing of borders) might also be decisive for working people in general. Mellner et al. (2014) investigated boundary management preferences, perceived boundary control and work-life balance among professionals doing knowledge-intensive, flexible work at a Swedish telecommunications company. They found a strong preference for separating work and personal life; however, compared to women, men were more liable to have higher boundary control and a better work-life balance. These findings highlight the fact that having significant boundary control is crucial for obtaining and maintaining good work-life balance in the population under scrutiny.

McDowall and Lindsay's (2014) research focused on UK police officers' approaches to self-managing their work-life balance. Using a mixed method approach they looked for solution-focused behaviors and strategies. In line with the findings of the articles discussed above, the authors conclude that several *competences are required to improve self-management*. These skills are, among others, the ability to manage boundaries, manage flexibility and manage expectations, all of which can be associated with border theory (Clark,

2000). Shaer and colleagues followed a rather unique research approach by focusing on couple-oriented prevention programs at workplaces (Schaer et al. 2008). 150 couples participated in an investigation into the effects of three different groups: couple-oriented intervention, individual-oriented coping intervention, and a 'waiting-list' control group. Remarkably, couple-oriented coping interventions were more effective at creating a better work-life balance in terms of both individual (burnout, irritation) and relationship variables (communication). Even 5 months after the investigation, members of this group reported to having greater life satisfaction and well-being than most people involved in the other groups (Schaer et al. 2008).

Spillover and gender

A number of papers focus specifically on the relationship between *gender beliefs* and positive and negative work-life interference. Gender beliefs, which can differ from country to country, not only determine employees' perceptions of work-life-balance (Lyness, 2014), but they can also relate to how primary female earners who are successful in traditional male domains are penalized (Triana, 2011). Moreover, at a micro level, the husband's gender ideology can moderate the relationship between family-to-work conflict and marital satisfaction for both spouses (Minnotte et al. 2013).

One of the papers most comprehensive about the role of gender in relation to spillover was written by Powell and Greenhaus (2010) who make an explicit distinction between sex and gender in their analysis. The authors studied full-time managers and professionals in the American population (n=528) and found that *those who scored higher on femininity* (interpersonal orientation and communal personality traits) also experienced *higher positive spillover*. Women, consequently, proved to be more feminine than men but the relationship between sex and gender was not totally straightforward. The reason for this, according to the authors, might be due to the nature of the population that was examined (highly educated managers and professionals). Another interesting finding was that those who scored higher on family role salience (importance of the role of the individual to the family) experienced lower levels of conflict between work and family. Nevertheless, one of the key findings was that a strategy of *segmentation* (creating a strict boundary between life domains) could lead to *less conflict*, but also *impede the experience of positive spillover* (Powell et al. 2010: 525-529).

Other articles investigated 'what travels' across spheres and how, and how gender affects these spillover effects. For example, Offer (2014)

studied *gender differences in parents' mental labor* (understood as planning, organization and management of everyday activities) and the emotional stress accompanying these mental activities. By applying an experience sampling method ($n_{mothers}$=402; $n_{fathers}$=291), the researcher examined how often parents in dual-earner (middle-class) families think about job-related issues. While the results showed that fathers are almost as likely to engage in mental labor as mothers, fathers on average spent more time thinking about work-related issues than mothers. Moreover, these thoughts were less likely to spill over to non-work related domains. In contrast, mothers think more often about work during non-work activities. This phenomenon, argues Offer, is due to the fact that it is mothers who usually have to adapt and tailor their working schedules to their family's needs. Consequently, they more often feel the need to 'catch up' with work (Offer, 2014: 931). Furthermore, there is another important gender difference concerning the emotional consequences of 'mental spillover'. Offer emphasizes that while mothers and fathers are equally likely to think about family matters, these *thoughts only generate stress for and harm the emotional well-being of mothers*. So, even if the increased involvement of fathers is apparent in the data, these findings demonstrate that mothers remain the primary caretakers and bearers of moral responsibility as far as family life and the well-being of children are concerned (Offer, 2014: 932-33).

Stevens and her colleagues (2006) were also interested in the spillover dynamics among dual-earner couples (156 couples; n= 312). They attempted to trace the gender differences in the relationship between work-to-family spillover and family cohesion. Interestingly, for both genders, the higher work-family spillover estimated for a partner, the lower the assessment of family cohesion. In other words, a partner's perception of the other partner's spillover was a better predictor of the quality of family life than a personal, direct estimation. The authors relate this finding to the issue of control, since one may feel relative control over one's own spillover, but not over a partner's (Stevens et al. 2006: 433).

Furthermore, Stevens and her colleagues emphasize that the two genders are also affected differently by the characteristics of their jobs. While work-related characteristics do not seem to greatly modify men's perceptions of family cohesion, they can dramatically alter women's assessments of family life (Stevens et al. 2006: 434). Results indicate that if women have more control over their time through increased flexibility, they can also manage and organize family life better and, in turn, feel more competent in that domain as well (Stevens et al. 2006, 434-435).

In line with this finding, based on the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Keene and Raynolds (2005) studied married employed

individuals (n=1,015) to understand how family and workplace factors influence gender differences in relation to negative family-to-work spillover. The researcher concludes that, compared to men, women are twice as likely to report that family demands interfere with their workplace performance (family-to-work spillover). The reason that women experience a higher level of negative family-to-work spillover is that they make more adjustments to their workloads by rearranging hours, refusing overtime and declining work assignments. Another conclusion of the paper was that having a demanding job means greater family-to-work spillover for both genders, but having greater flexibility (i.e. having control over one's scheduling) primarily mitigates the negative consequences of increased family demands among married female employees (Keene et al. 2005: 293-294).

These papers suggest that the more control women have over their own work schedules, the less stressful their lives are, and the more effectively they can juggle their family and job responsibilities. Some papers are quite critical about the notion of flexibility because the authors claim that it has the potential to engender further inequalities along gender lines. Schultz (2010), for example, argues that pushing flexibility as a panacea for employees' concerns without acknowledging its pitfalls comes with serious risks. It can be said that all organizations have norms that describe the 'ideal-worker'. Allowing certain individuals, mainly women, to opt out from these norms does not automatically change these norms. Accordingly, the interrelationships and dynamics between gender and flexibility should be taken into account when solutions to work-life balance problems are considered. The author argues that, while flexibility might allow for greater control over scheduling, the goal should instead be to strive to provide reasonable and predictable working hours which can benefit men and women alike (Schultz, 2010: 1220-1221). Other authors highlight the risk of assuming a gender-blind perspective when promoting workplace flexibility (Smithson et al. 2005), noting that flexible working arrangements might recreate and strengthen traditional gender hierarchies (Zbyszewska, 2013; Rafnsdóttir et al. 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the chapters above, there is a multiplicity of topics, methodologies and disciplines related to the spillover concept. This paper offered a thematic categorization of them to provide a clearer picture of the utilization of this theoretical construct. In this section we offer a tentative synthetizes of the main conclusions and results of the papers that were

discussed. These key points from the empirical literature are detailed below in connection with *three topical questions* from spillover research.

The first question concerns the issue of responsibility; that is, whose responsibility is it to manage employee spillover and, thereby maintain a sound balance between work and private life? Is this an organizational policy issue or is it better addressed by promoting individual coping capabilities and skills? Most of the papers that attempt to offer an answer suggest that it is both (Pedersen et al. 2012; Joyce et al. 2010). Organizational policy approaches and individual skills and solutions are deeply intertwined. The reason for this is that certain coping strategies and behaviors can be only utilized without risking careers and/or normative sanctions if the institutional and social context legitimize them. In other words, the behavioral responses and skill sets available to individuals for coping with and controlling spillover effects are often radically limited by the organizational and social context (Todd et al. 2013). Furthermore, these (social and organizational) contexts might even contradict each other. For example, even if corporate policies permit flexible working arrangements, they are less likely to be taken advantage of by employees if their fellows and direct supervisors disapprove of them. So, while skills, decisions and behaviors relate to the individual, several of the papers discussed here show that the social validation and, in turn, the diffusion of these (skills, decisions, behaviors) is a collective issue, not a personal one (Fursman et al. 2009).

The second question concerns flexibility; or, in other words, flexibility of the worker or the work? As the empirical literature demonstrated, flexibility is crucial in terms of managing spillover and the reconciliation of work and private life. However, flexibility is a loose term and making someone's work flexible can either ameliorate or deteriorate life and job satisfaction depending on how the specific measure is applied in the organization (Joyce et al. 2010). As the papers show, the difference may be due to the degree of individual control over the spillover effects that the specific arrangement allows for. If organizational policy measures about flexibility empower and entitle the individual worker to manage her or his responsibilities in a flexible way, then they can be of profound help, assisting individuals to cope with the 'juggling trick' of dealing with work and family needs on a daily basis (Scholarios et al. 2004). However, if organizational policies that promote flexibility are first and foremost geared to promoting the greater flexibility *of* work, then it is more likely that workers shall experience negative work-to-family spillover effects (Kvande, 2009).

Thirdly, how gender mitigates spillover effects is also a crucial question. As the literature review has highlighted, the genders are affected differently

due to their different positions in the labor market, organizational positions and family responsibilities (which still appear to be significantly unbalanced). Since family responsibilities are still mainly considered the domain of women, as primary caretakers (Triana, 2011), studies also show that women are more affected by spillover effects (Stevens et al. 2006; Offer, 2014; Keene, 2005). Moreover, it is highly interesting that similar spillover effects can affect men and women differently. As formerly described, for example, although both parents think about their families approximately as often while at work, these thoughts are more likely be charged with negative emotions in the case of mothers (Offer, 2014). Moreover, investigation of the intersect between sex (males/females) and gender (degree masculinity/femininity) leads to interesting findings, such as the fact that positive spillover is more likely to occur among those highly skilled and educated professionals who scored higher on femininity (Powell et al. 2010).

These observations are relevant academically but can also be used to instigate and inform new research initiatives. Since the majority of papers that were processed for this review are part of a swathe of topics, methodologies and disciplines but typically examine a single specific geographical area or target population, the blind spots where spillover research might be fruitful in the future are evident.

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