Suppression Effects in Social Stress Research and Their Implications for the Stress Process Model

Chapter · October 2009

DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4419-1021-9_4

1 author:

Scott Schieman
University of Toronto
108 PUBLICATIONS **4,110** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Chapter 4
Suppression Effects in Social Stress Research and Their Implications for the Stress Process Model

Scott Schieman

Leonard Pearlin's "The Sociological Study of Stress", a classic piece, published in the 1989 issue of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, has inspired two decades of research. One of the central messages in that paper is that the *sociological* study of stress aims to document patterns between social status or dimensions of stratification and indicators of physical or mental health (Pearlin 1989, 1999). Other scholars have pursued this line of inquiry by documenting a social distribution or epidemiology of stress exposure and their subsequent links to health outcomes in large community-based or nationally representative surveys (e.g., Mirowsky and Ross 2003a, b; Turner et al. 1995). So, for example, women tend to report higher levels of depression; age is inversely associated with levels of anger; the well-educated tend to report fewer physical symptoms and so on. In addition, researchers have then sought to *explain* the reasons for variations in health outcomes across social status or dimensions of stratification (Mirowsky 1999). These explanations are often linked to the unequal distribution of exposure to various forms of adversities (among other things) (Aneshensel 1992; McLeod and Nonnemaker 1999; Wheaton 1999).

This basic orienting framework of the stress process model has guided my own research over the past decade. As Pearlin (1983) has observed, some of the most common chronic stressors occur in the main social roles of daily life – especially work and family (or their intersection). The broad scope and utility of the stress process framework is especially notable here. For example, scholars in the sociology of religion have sought to apply its concepts and predictions to describe the religion–mental health association (Ellison 1994). Thus, in addition to work and family contexts, there has been recent interest in linking the activities and beliefs embedded in the *religious role* with stress and mental health processes.

With respect to work-related processes and their implications for work—family conflict and health outcomes, I have observed that several conditions that are typically associated with a more advantaged status – such as schedule control, job authority, and creative work – sometimes have associations that are inconsistent

S. Schieman (✉)
Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: scott.schieman@utoronto.ca

W.R. Avison et al. (eds.), *Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process: Essays in Honor of Leonard I. Pearlin,* DOI 10.1007/978-1-4419-1021-9_4,

with core predictions of the stress process model (Pearlin 1999). This central theme guides my main argument here – status positions often convey disadvantages as well as advantages. Generally speaking, these patterns belong to a class of associations that can be described as *suppression effects*. This chapter describes some of the ways that these statistical patterns can help to challenge and refine theoretical views about status inequality and stress processes; I will outline examples from my own and others' research that exemplify these patterns. Although my interest lies in the theoretical implications of suppression effects, rather than the statistical details and nuances, I will provide a brief definition.

Suppression Effects in Social Stress Research

In a paper titled "The Logical Status of Suppressor Variables" in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Morris Rosenberg (1973) described the importance of suppression effects in survey research. He observed: "Despite the fact that X is not statistically associated with Y at the zero-order level, it may still be responsible for Y. The reason offered is that some test factor, called a suppressor variable, is concealing the true relationship between the independent and dependent variables" (p. 360). One of Rosenberg's main points was that a conclusion about an initial *null* association may be misleading – and that social scientists should pay careful attention to these "zero correlations." Similarly, Conger (1974) contends that a "suppressor variable is defined to be a variable which increases the predictive validity of another variable (or set of variables) by its inclusion in a regression equation. This variable is a suppressor only for those variables whose regression weights are increased" (pp. 36–37).

A common suppression scenario occurs when an independent variable is associated positively with another independent variable *and* associated negatively with a dependent variable (Masseen and Bakker 2001). Although sociologists are typically cognizant of spurious associations – that is, an association that is attributable to an extraneous or antecedent variable – Rosenberg emphasized the need for more attention to the "apparent absence of an effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable." The main message that can be fruitfully applied to the study of stress processes is the following: If a null correlation is observed between a particular status or condition and either a stressor or health outcome, we should not rush to the conclusion that X is *not responsible* for Y (or reject a "true hypothesis"). It is possible that the association is concealed or masked by the presence of a suppressor variable. As McFatter (1979) urges, however, "the interpretation of any obtained 'suppressor' effects (and, in fact, any regression equation) depends critically upon the causal structural model that is at least implicitly assumed to underlie the data" (p. 123). Although this is an essential point that deserves consideration, space limitations restrict my attention to the conceptual and theoretical nuances and methodological approaches to dealing with causal ordering issues in this chapter. Instead, I present several examples that demonstrate suppression effects and explore

their implications for the conceptual and theoretical ideas of the stress process model. It is worth noting that my first example is a much more "classic" case of suppression. By contrast, the other examples that I describe could be viewed as elaborations of indirect causal effects.

Example 1: Religion and Two Personal Resources: Mastery and Self-Esteem

Mastery. An example that illustrates one of the most common suppression scenarios involves religion and the sense of personal mastery. The conceptual and empirical relevance of mastery as a personal resource in the stress process model is well-established (Aneshensel 1992; Turner and Roszell 1994). In fact, Pearlin's conceptual and empirical innovations in this area has helped make the sense of mastery one of the most prominent (and commonly-investigated) features of the stress process model. The sense of mastery, which shares conceptual ground with other constructs including the sense of personal control, self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and instrumentalism, is a learned, generalized expectancy that is largely shaped by social conditions (Mirowsky and Ross 2003a; Pearlin 1999; Wheaton 1985). Individuals who possess a high sense of mastery claim that, in general, they determine the positive and negative events and outcomes in their lives (Pearlin and Schooler 1978). By contrast, individuals with low mastery cluster at the other end of the continuum, experiencing powerlessness, and the sense that chance, luck, fate, powerful others the direction of their lives (Ross and Sastry 1999).

Researchers in the sociology of religion have increasingly become interested in the links between religion and different components of the stress process model (Ellison et al. 2001; Schieman 2008; Schieman et al. 2005; Schieman et al., 2006a, b). A central issue involves the link between religious involvement and personal resources (Krause 2005; Schieman et al. 2003). For my purposes here, I ask the following question: Is private religious devotion, as indexed by the frequency of praying, associated with the sense of mastery? In a 2005 survey of 1,800 American adults, I initially observed a *null association* between the frequency of praying and the sense of control. This initial model included a wide range of controls for sociodemographic characteristics, religious affiliation, and a variety of other conditions. However, it did *not* include an index that assesses individuals' beliefs about God's causal relevance in everyday life – what my colleagues and I have referred to as "the sense of divine control" (Schieman and Bierman 2007; Schieman et al. 2005, 2006a, b). The sense of divine control involves the extent to which an individual believes that God exercises a commanding authority over the course and direction of his or her own life. Individuals who sustain a belief in divine control perceive that God controls the good and bad outcomes in their lives, that God has decided what their life shall be, and that their fate evolves according to God's plan. They tend to rely heavily on God in their decision-making and more fervently seek His

guidance for solutions to problems. When I subsequently adjusted for the sense of divine control in a second model, the effect of praying on mastery becomes *positive* and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. (An interaction between praying and divine control is also plausible, although that is beyond the scope of my conceptual and empirical arguments here.)

Setting aside the obvious concerns about causal ordering in these cross-sectional analyses, there are potentially important conceptual and theoretical implications of this simple pattern portrayed in Fig. 4.1. First, on the basis of this evidence, it would be erroneous to conclude that a core activity in the religious role – *praying* – is unrelated to one of the key concepts in the stress process model: *mastery*. Second, there is a burgeoning literature that seeks to document the mental health implications of religion (e.g., Ellison 1994; Ellison et al. 2001; Flannelly et al. 2006; Pargament 1997). Analyses of the ways that elements of the religious role influence key components of the stress process model, especially personal resources, directly inform those efforts. Third, this simple pattern prompts additional questions that can further enhance our understanding of the nature of key concepts in the stress process framework. Moreover, it illustrates the ways that stress research is informed by and can stimulate conceptual and theoretical innovations in other areas such as the sociology of religion and social psychology. For example, do individuals who believe that God represents a highly determinative force in everyday life actually have a lower *generalized* sense of personal mastery? Or, is it possible that divine control beliefs are conceptually and practically different than a low sense of personal mastery? These distinctions can help clarify the nuances among different sources of external control.

Jackson and Coursey (1988, p. 399) have argued that "a common secular perspective on religion assumes that believing God is an active agent in one's life

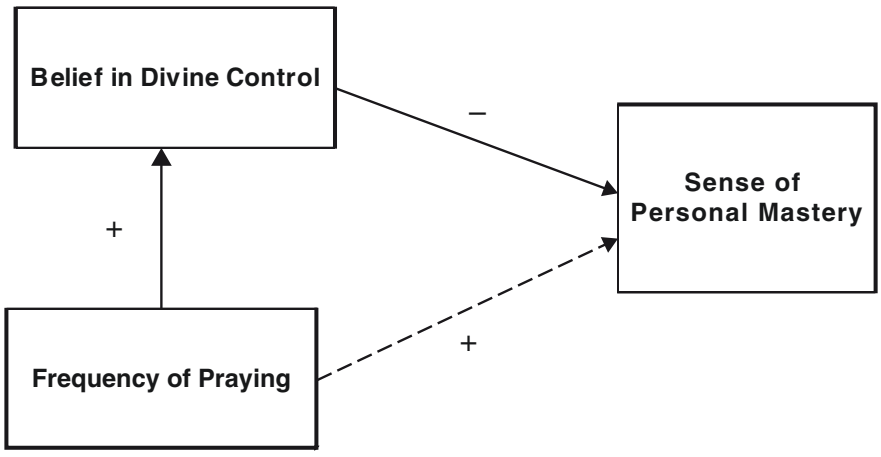


Fig. 4.1 The association between belief in divine control, praying, and sense of personal mastery. Note: *Dashed line* represent suppression effect. Results based on 2005 Work, Stress and Health survey of 1,800 American adults

requires relinquishing a sense of personal or internal control." Moreover, conceptual specifications of the *external* pole of Rotter's (1966) I-E scale differentiate the "chance" and "powerful other" dimensions from the "God control" dimension (Jackson and Coursey 1988; Levenson 1974; Kopplin 1976). Although some researchers have delineated between the "powerful other" and "God" dimensions of external control, Mirowsky and Ross (2003a) contend that the external attribution of control to God acts "as a logical opposite of internal control: either I control my life or control rests elsewhere" (p. 201). The process of surrendering control to a powerful other challenges a key conceptual tenet of personal control theory: The individual – *not a powerful other* – determines the events and outcomes in their own lives. If we can presuppose that the causal attribution to God represents processes similar to attributions to other external forces such as fate, change, luck, or powerful others, then individuals who profess a sense of divine control should tend to report lower levels of personal mastery or control.

Although these issues cannot be resolved here, they do underscore at least three things: (1) the importance of religion's complicated influence in stress and health processes; (2) the more specific ways that social conditions may influence important personal resources in the stress process model; and (3) the ways that discoveries in research on the stress process can stimulate new questions and insights that go beyond the bounds of stress-specific research. Advances along these lines, for example, can contribute to social scientific inquiry about the nature of religious beliefs and their connections to social and cultural life. In sum, given the clear positive association between being highly devoted and committed to the religious role and the profession of belief in God as a causal agent, I argue that any analyses of the interrelationships among religious involvement, stressors, personal resources, and mental health should attempt to carefully take these religious beliefs into account. Their potential influence will likely be discovered at multiple points in the stress process.

Self-esteem. Like mastery, self-esteem is another central self-concept that is highly relevant in the stress process model (Pearlin 1999). Moreover, it has garnered attention in some of the recent work on the links between religious involvement and mental health (Ellison et al. 2001; Schieman 2008). In contrast to mastery, self-esteem is "the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself or herself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval toward oneself" (Rosenberg 1965, p. 5). Stress researchers have observed that self-esteem is a key personal resource in the stress process model because of its potential to help people avoid or manage stressors (Turner and Roszell 1994). As Rosenberg (1982) has argued, the self – as a social product – develops through interactions with agents of socialization. Religious institutions, with their associated teachings, symbols, and rituals, have provided a core source of socialization across cultures and societies (Sharot 2001). By extension, it seems reasonable to suspect that participation in religious activities and institutions may be influential.

Ellison's (1993) research provides an excellent example of the ways that religiosity is influential for explaining gender differences in self-esteem – drawing particular attention to the relevance of *religious participation*. Specifically, he analyzed data

from the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA), a household probability sample conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan during 1979–1980. A core part of his analyses uncovers an important suppression effect in the associations among gender, religious involvement, and self-esteem. In the first model, Ellison reports results from an OLS regression of self-esteem (the dependent variable) on gender, age, urban residence, education, income, employment status, and several other measures of physical attractiveness and skin color. In this initial model, the unstandardized coefficient for gender (with women coded "1") is −0.005 and is not statistically significant. However, in the second model, the statistical adjustments for public and private dimensions of religiosity increases the size of the negative unstandardized coefficient to −0.045, and the coefficient becomes statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Public religious participation is indexed as the frequency of attendance at religious services and frequency of participation in other church-related activities; private devotional activity is assessed as the frequency of reading religious books or other religious materials, the frequency of religious television or radio consumption, and the frequency of personal prayer.

If Ellison (1993) had *only* examined model 1, then he would have reported that black women and men report *similar* levels of self-esteem – an inaccurate conclusion. After the inclusion of religious participation in the model, however, the focal association between gender and self-esteem changes dramatically: Black women report a significantly lower level of self-esteem than black men *net of public and private forms of religious participation*. Figure 4.2 illustrates these suppression influences of public and private religious participation. Why did the coefficients

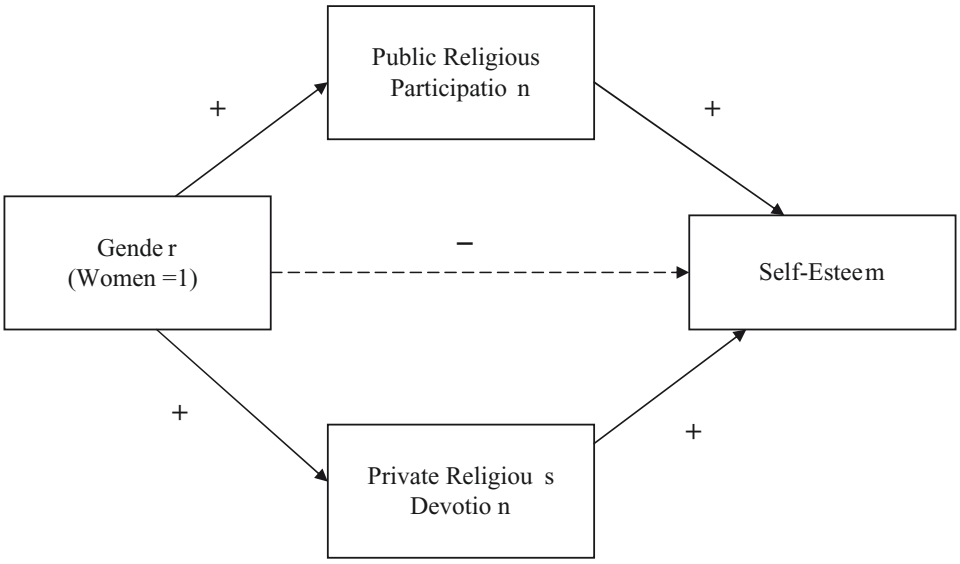


Fig. 4.2 The association between gender, religious participation, and self-esteem (adapted from Ellison 1993) Note: Results based on the 1979–1980 National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA). The *dashed line* represents the suppression effect of gender's negative association with self-esteem

change so dramatically across these two regression models? There are several pieces of the puzzle to consider. First, black women tend to report significantly *higher* levels of public religious participation and private religious devotion compared to black men. Second, public religious participation and private religious devotion are both associated *positively* with self-esteem. Putting these pieces together produces the suppression effect. Ellison interprets these patterns as follows: "Once variations in these aspects of religiosity are held constant, black females report significantly lower levels of global self-worth than black males" (Ellison 1993, p. 1037).

In a third model, Ellison's (1993) analyses proceed to explain away this net gender gap in self-esteem. After adjustment for chronic illnesses and negative life events, the gender difference decreases to statistical nonsignificance. These explanatory effects are due to the fact that women report more chronic illnesses and negative life events which, in turn, are associated negatively with self-esteem. Taken together, these observations nicely exemplify competing effects – were it not for their greater public religious participation and private religious devotion, black women would report lower self-esteem than black men. Moreover, black women's greater likelihood of experiencing chronic illness and negative life events explains why they report lower self-esteem than men (*net of religious participation*). Ellison concludes by asserting that "the apparent female deficit in self-esteem…reflects primarily the fact that, on average, females experience a greater number of stressful life events than males with comparable background characteristics" (p. 1037). This point is especially salient – without public religious participation and private religious devotion in the model, there would have been no focal association to explain away; that is, there would not have been an observed gender difference in self-esteem. Collectively, these findings underscore one of Pearlin's (1999, p. 398) essential concerns: "the statuses of people are potentially connected to virtually every component of the stress process". Here, the ways that gender links to a core personal resource – self-esteem – is influenced by components of the religious role *and* common stressful experiences.

Example 2: Job Authority and Health

Shifting gear away from religion and the stress process, the next two examples involve the influence of conditions in the work role. As Pearlin (1989, 1999) and other social stress researchers have long touted, disparities in physical and mental health are often linked to social stratification and inequality in the population (McLeod and Nonnemaker 1999; Mirowsky and Ross 2003a, b). Many scholars have established the special relevance of work conditions in these patterns (Fenwick and Tausig 2007; Tausig 1999). In particular, higher-status conditions (e.g., well-paying jobs with non-routine and autonomous work) are generally associated with more favorable levels of health and well-being (Mirowsky and Ross 2007). Yet, one particular higher status condition in the workplace – *job authority* – presents an unresolved paradox.

In their description of its health consequences, Mirowsky and Ross (2003a) contend that the positive and negative elements of job authority cancel each other out; this results in a *null association* between authority and health. Based on that evidence, should we simply conclude that job authority is one of those status advantages that, for some reason, do not translate into more favorable health? If so, then perhaps we should consider modifications to some of the underlying predictions about status advantages in the stress process model. According to Pearlin (1999), "people's standing in the stratified orders of social and economic class, gender, race, and ethnicity have the potential to pervade the structure of their daily existence and the experiences that flow from it" (p. 398). The general proposition is that advantages with respect to power, privilege, and prestige yield favorable outcomes in the stress process framework (i.e., more personal resources, fewer exposures to stress, and better mental health). In this section, I argue that a deeper investigation of the cross-cutting mechanisms that produce the null association between job authority and health can contribute to and enhance conceptual and theoretical dimensions of the stress process framework, especially in the ways that we tend to view social inequality and status advantages. That is, some social-structural conditions in the workplace that are typically viewed as favorable, advantageous, and desirable may have not-so-hidden downsides.

Job authority is an especially good candidate for a favorable condition that might also generate chronic stress. For example, Mirowsky and Ross (2003a) identify interpersonal conflict as the core negative aspect of job authority. Similarly, researchers have also documented elevated levels of another stressor – interference between work and nonwork domains – among workers with more job authority (Schieman et al. 2006a, b). In contrast to these negative elements, however, there are many benefits or resources associated with job authority, such as higher earnings, job autonomy, schedule control, and nonroutine work that should improve health (Mirowsky and Ross 2003a). These hypothesized competing suppression and explanatory influences are illustrated and labeled as the *stress of higher status* versus the *resources of higher status* hypotheses in Fig. 4.3.

Collectively, the ideas embedded in this conceptual framework can help to illuminate the paradox of the overall null association between job authority and health. Moreover, they also elaborate on and refine the "stress of higher status" theoretical perspective. The careful attention to suppression effects like those predicted here can broaden our conceptual, theoretical, and empirical understanding of workplace inequality, stress processes, and health. Specifically, the stress of higher status hypothesis proposes that higher levels of interpersonal conflict and work-to-home interference among those with more job authority should suppress the negative association between authority and different health outcomes. Job authority delineates the parameters of power and status because it affords sanctioning, supervising, and decision-making control over others. The power to distribute rewards and punishments, and dictate the work of others, will likely incite some degree of interpersonal discord. Similarly, the stress of higher status thesis also maintains that positions of responsibility and importance at work may increase blurring of borders between work and nonwork life. By extension, this border blurring has been shown

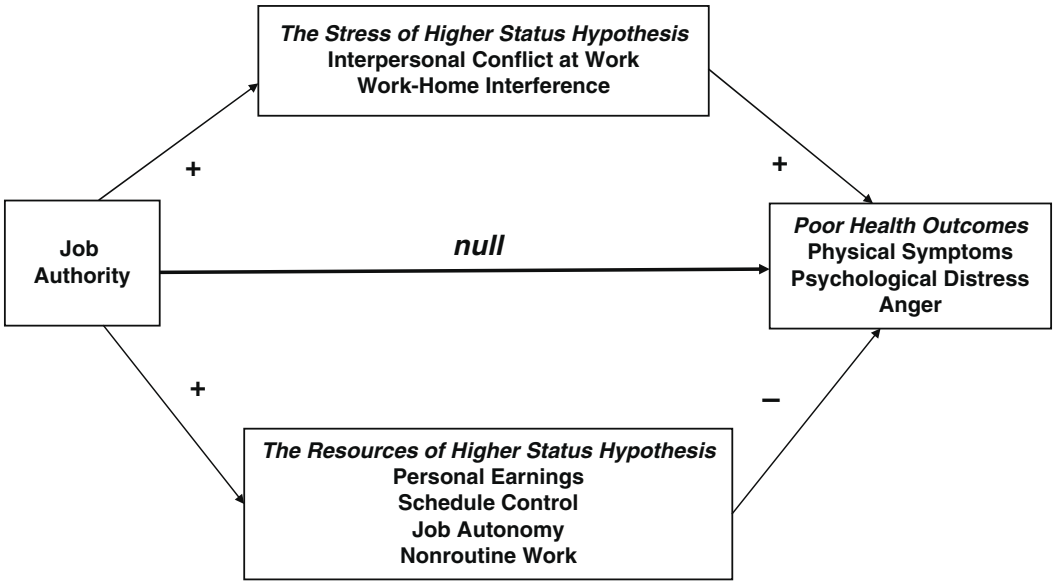


Fig. 4.3 Conceptual framework for the association between job authority and poor health outcomes. Note: Results based on 2005 Work, Stress and Health survey of 1,800 American adults

to increase the risk of tension and conflict between the roles of family and work (Voydanoff 2007). In contrast to the predictions of the stress of higher status hypothesis, the "resources of higher status" hypothesis is based on the claim that people with more job authority tend to enjoy greater earnings, autonomy, nonroutine work, and schedule control. These conditions, in turn, should *contribute to* fewer health problems among those with more authority.

By seeking more dynamic conceptual and data analyses strategies that attend to potential suppression effects, it is possible to bring greater attention to intervening mechanisms that might have not otherwise been sought. This orientation can also help to elaborate on and refine the stress of higher status theoretical perspective and illuminate the paradox of the null association between job authority and health. Moreover, it provides a conceptual template for documenting suppression effects in a manner that might broaden our understanding and interpretation of status inequality and its link to stress processes. Why does job authority *not* improve health? It may be that the costs of workplace authority offset the benefits. Does this mean that job authority is an unfavorable or deleterious condition that people should avoid? Certainly not, but it does underscore the importance of the potential downsides to higher status (i.e., stressors) and the ways that these downsides might inform broader stratification-based health disparities in the population. Indeed, we might assert that health disparities between those with power or prestige and those without would be even greater were it not for the stressors associated with the expectations and responsibilities of higher status positions, especially in the work role. Collectively, these ideas broaden the perspective of status-related stressors in the

stress process model in ways that expand our analysis of the full gradient of advantage and disadvantage. The third and final example illuminates this argument further.

Example 3: Creative Work and the Work–Family Interface

One of the main assumptions of the stress process model is that "social stress is not about unusual people doing unusual things and having unusual experiences" (Pearlin 1999, p. 396). Stressors occur in the normative arrangements and conditions of everyday life (Aneshensel 1992; Pearlin 1989). Most people spend the bulk of their daily lives engaged in activities linked to the work and family domains (Bianchi et al. 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that the conditions in these roles provide many opportunities for exposure to stressors that, in turn, can undermine well-being (Pearlin 1983; Pearlin and Johnson 1977). Moreover, conflict between these roles represents one of the most salient stressors in the stress process model (Pearlin 1999; Wheaton 1999). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has identified work–home interference or conflict as one of the most pervasive and problematic workplace stressors (Kelloway et al. 1999), underscoring its deleterious effects on health outcomes and family-related processes (Bellavia and Frone 2005). Work-to-family conflict involves the extent to which individuals perceive that work interferes with the responsibilities and expectations of family, competing for the individual's finite amounts of time and energy (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1987; Kopelman et al. 1983).

How do conditions in the workplace influence exposure to work-to-family conflict? Although I have underscored the potential stressors embedded in the work role, there is little doubt that the workplace often allows for skill- and self-enhancing activities. For example, creative work activities provide individuals with opportunities to learn new things, solve problems, and develop skills (Mirowsky and Ross 2007). According to Voydanoff (2007), work activities that cultivate *creativity* represent "within-domain resources" that presumably help individuals avoid or minimize conflicts between work and nonwork life. Here, I seek to elaborate on and challenge that proposition by describing a more complex set of processes that may link creative work to stress exposure in the work–family interface. Specifically, in contrast to the resource view, it is possible that creative work is associated with higher levels of two forms of *demands* – within-domain and boundary-spanning demands. "Boundary-spanning demands" involve the frequency of receiving work-related communications outside of normal work hours from an array of sources, including coworkers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients (Voydanoff 2007).

Unlike within-domain demands, which typically involve the sense of being overwhelmed by an excessive workload, boundary-spanning demands represent a new form of role blurring in which the temporal and physical boundaries separating work and nonwork roles become less defined. In turn, it is reasonable to suspect

that within-domain and boundary-spanning demands increase the frequency of multitasking, which involves how frequently individuals take on work- and family-related activities simultaneously when they are at home (Voydanoff 2007). A work–home configuration that encourages multitasking exemplifies the concept of role blurring because it is difficult to demarcate where one role ends and the other role begins. Taken together, demands and multitasking are likely to be associated with higher levels of work-to-family conflict. These patterns yield the prediction that the demands of creative work and their links to multitasking should *suppress* the resource benefits of creative work for the work–family interface. These propositions are outlined in Fig. 4.4 to provide a framework for thinking about conceptual innovations and their interrelationships in the stress process model.

Despite the fact that the publication of Pearlin and colleagues' stress process model (Pearlin et al. 1981) is now approaching its 30th anniversary, it remains flexible and adaptable to accommodate dramatic changes in the nature of core, institutionalized social roles and novel consequences in which those roles may intersect. Structural, cultural, and technological forces have substantially altered the ways that workers traverse work and family borders (Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Valcour and Hunter 2005), which, in turn, generates the need for conceptual refinements of a broader array of work–family interface processes such as role blurring (Clark 2000). Given the salience of role-related stressors in the stress process model, I believe it is critical to consider innovations in ways that these broader social changes trickle down to influence meso- and micro-level processes and experiences in the stress process. For example, new forms of communication technologies are fostering the ever-increasing span of workplace demands and the ways organizations call upon

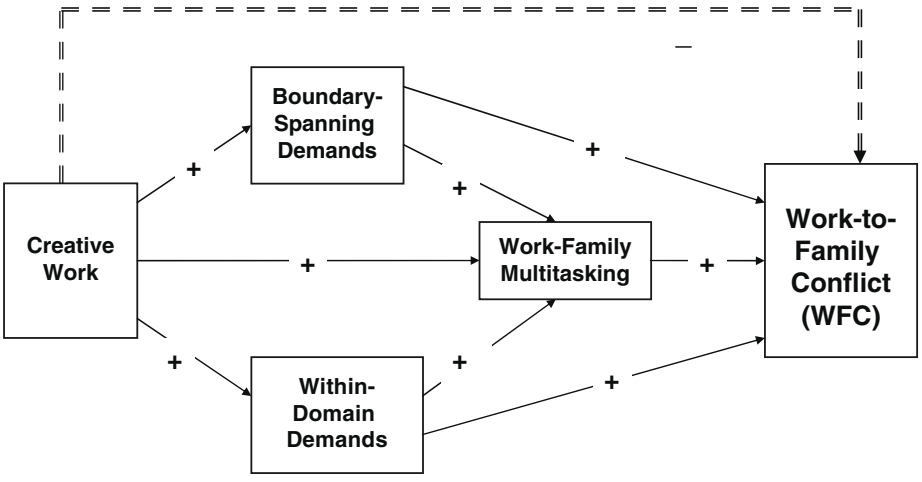


Fig. 4.4 Conceptual framework of creative work and the work-family interface. Note: The *dashed line* represents the hypothesized suppression effect of creative work's negative association with work to family conflict

workers to satisfy responsibilities. In this respect, the frequency of boundary-spanning demands may represent new ways that work intrudes into the family domain, but they can also help workers manage and navigate pressures on the job; these processes underscore the potentially stressful versus resourceful nature of demands. These changes require social scientists to consider the ways that conditions that may conventionally be considered *resources* – like access to and utilization of sophisticated communication technologies (i.e., "Blackberry") – often simultaneously generate new pressures and demands regarding time, attention, and work–family boundary management.

Structural arrangements can also influence psychological processes in the work–nonwork interface. For example, the simple act of *thinking* about work outside of normal work hours may represent boundary-spanning thoughts that are undesired and stressful. Intrusive thoughts about work represent another way that work creeps into nonwork life. These processes, however, require careful attention to the possibility that some work-related resources (i.e., creative work) will actually increase the frequency of boundary-spanning thoughts. These patterns further accentuate the ways that "central participants" in the workplace, often higher status workers themselves, experience a more permeable work–family border (see Blair-Loy 2003; Clark 2000). When one frequently thinks about work issues outside of the workplace, the interference may have negative consequences.

On the other hand, as the stress process model suggests, creative work may also function as a resource in the following way: Individuals with creative work may be less likely to appraise these thoughts as stressful. Creative work may foster productive processes that include a sense of being able to effectively manage work-related tasks. Creative work is often enjoyable and engaging, so individuals may desire to think about work outside of the usual spatial and temporal parameters of the workplace. These nuanced meanings of potential stressors and their implications underscore the need for caution in the way scholars think about processes at the work-family border. The stress process model can help us elaborate on, for example, the influence of resources in the workplace and whether "thinking about work outside of normal work hours" is uniformly stressful for workers.

To conclude, as the stress process model predicts, when work interferes with family life the effects are likely to be detrimental for health and well-being (Kinnunen and Mauno 2008). Although that fact is well-established (Bellavia and Frone 2005), less is known about the relevance of work activities for the work–family interface. I have proposed the possibility of important suppression effects that would demonstrate the ways that creative work can be a resource *and* a source of demands that shape work–family role blurring and levels of inter-role conflict. By seeking to explicate in greater detail the consequences of creative work for demands and multitasking, these ideas can contribute to the ways that we view status advantages and inequality as core components of the stress process model. Moreover, they may help us better understand the changing nature of stressors that are associated with the "greedy institution" of work (Coser 1974).

A Final Word

In writing this chapter, one of the things that I have realized is another unique contribution of Leonard Pearlin's conceptual, theoretical, and empirical work – they provide a seemingly bottomless well of ideas. With the examples presented above, I recognize that contribution and the ways they have inspired numerous and diverse research directions. In particular, my focus suggests a call for greater recognition of a broad class of "suppression" patterns in the relationships among social status, role conditions, stressors, and health. With respect to the workplace conditions and the "stress of higher status" view, two points are critical to underscore here. First, the stress of higher status thesis is not suggesting that those with more power at work, or control over the timing and pace of their work, or those with more economic resources are somehow worse off than those not in possession of such resources. This view is not proposing that "those poor *advantaged* people have it so tough!" Rather, it simply encourages a more dynamic analysis that reflects the realities of everyday life: That status advantages are often associated with excessive pressures and demands – conditions that can tax the adaptive capacities of individuals in ways that go against the grain of the "status advantage" view of stress and health disparities in the stress process model.

The second critical point is that the stress of higher status hypothesis can help expand the way we think about status inequalities and their effects on social disparities in health. For example, the well-educated would report *even lower levels* of anger were it not for their significantly higher levels of work–nonwork interference. Compared to lower status peers, professionals would report even lower levels of anxiety were it not for their greater likelihood of feeling rushed for time in everyday life. Individuals with more control over the timing of their work would report more satisfaction with work–life balance – were it not for the fact that they tend to engage in more work-nonwork role blurring. And so on…In each case, we can observe an analytic orientation that is different from the typical "What explains X's association with Y?"

Collectively, the types of focal associations and suppression patterns illustrated here are salient reminders of the sociological value of stress research. As Pearlin observed in his highly cited and influential "The Sociological Study of Stress" in the 1989 volume of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, this type of research "presents an excellent opportunity to observe how deeply well-being is affected by the structured arrangements of people's lives and by the repeated experiences that stem from these arrangements…Many stressful experiences don't spring out of a vacuum but typically can be traced back to surrounding social structures and people's locations within them. The most encompassing of these structures are the various systems of stratification that cut across societies, such as those based on social and economic class, race and ethnicity, gender, and age" (p. 241). These systems embody the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, but this unequal distribution is in both directions. It is here that a closer, more careful consideration of the different forms and implications of suppression effects in social stress research may contribute to the sociological study of stress.

Acknowledgment A grant award from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health at the Centers for Disease Control supports this study (R01 OH008141; Scott Schieman, Principal Investigator).

References

Aneshensel, C. A. (1992). Social stress: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology, 18*, 15–38.

Bellavia, G. M., & Frone, M. R. (2005). Work-family conflict. In J. E. Barling, K. Kelloway & M. R. Frone (Eds.), *in Handbook of work stress* (pp. 113–148). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bianchi, S. M., Robinson, J. P., & Milkie, M. A. (2006). *Changing rhythms of American family life*. New York: Russell Sage.

Blair-Loy, M. (2003). *Competing devotions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations, 53*, 747–770.

Conger, A. J. (1974). A revised definition of suppressor variables: A guide to their identification and interpretation. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 34*, 35–46.

Coser, L. (1974). *Greedy institutions*. New York: Free Press.

Ellison, C. G. (1993). Religious involvement and self-perception among Black Americans. *Social Forces, 71*, 1027–1055.

Ellison, C. G. (1994). Religion, the life stress paradigm, and the study of depression. In J. S. Levin (Ed.), *Religion in aging and health* (pp. 78–121). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ellison, C. G., Boardman, J. D., Williams, D. R., & Jackson, J. S. (2001). Religious involvement, stress, and mental health: Findings from the 1995 Detroit area study. *Social Forces, 80*, 215–249.

Fenwick, R., & Tausig, M. (2007). Work and the political economy of stress: Recontextualizing the study of mental health/illness in sociology. In W. R. Avison, J. D. McLeod & B. A. Pescosolido (Eds.), *Mental health, social mirror* (pp. 143–167). : Springer.

Flannelly, K. J., Koenig, H. G., Ellison, C. G., Galek, K., & Krause, N. (2006). Belief in life after death and mental health: Findings from a national survey. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 194*, 524–529.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Parasuraman, S. (1987). A work-nonwork interactive perspective of stress and its consequences. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management, 8*, 37–60.

Jackson, L. E., & Coursey, R. D. (1988). The relationship of God control and internal locus of control to intrinsic religious motivation, coping and purpose in life. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 27*, 399–410.

Jacobs, J. A., & Gerson, K. (2004). *The time divide: Work, family and gender inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kelloway, K. E., Gottlieb, B. H., & Barham, L. (1999). The source, nature, and direction of work and family conflict: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 4*, 337–346.

Kinnunen, U., & Mauno, S. (2008). Work-family conflict in individuals' lives: Prevalence, antecedents, and outcomes. In K. Naswall, J. Hellgren & M. Svergke (Eds.), *The individual in the changing working life* (pp. 126–146). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kopelman, R. E., Greenhaus, J. H., & Connolly, T. F. (1983). A model of work, family, and interrole conflict: A construct validation study. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 32*, 198–215.

Kopplin, D. (1976). *Religious orientations of college students and related personality characteristics*. Washington, D.C: Paper presented at American Psychological Association.

Krause, N. (2005). God-mediated control and psychological well-being in late life. *Research on Aging, 27*, 136–164.

Levenson, H. (1974). Activism and powerful others: Distinctions within the concept of internal-external control. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 38*, 377–383.

Masseen, G. H., & Bakker, A. B. (2001). Suppressor variables in path models: Definitions and interpretations. *Sociological Methods and Research, 30*, 241–270.

McFatter, R. (1979). The use of structural equation models in interpreting regression equations including suppressor and enhancer variables. *Applied Psychological Measurement, 3*, 123–135.

McLeod, J. D., & Nonnemaker, J. M. (1999). Social stratification and inequality. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 321–344). New York: Kluwer.

Mirowsky, J. (1999). Analyzing associations between mental health and social circumstances. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 105–123). New York: Kluwer.

Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. E. (2003a). *Social causes of psychological distress* (2nd ed.) New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. E. (2003b). *Education, social status, and health*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. E. (2007). Creative work and health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 48*, 385–403.

Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. Guilford Press: New York.

Pearlin, L. I. (1983). Role strains and personal stress. In H. B. Kaplan (Ed.), *Psychosocial stress: Trends in theory and research* (pp. 3–32). New York: Kluwer.

Pearlin, L. I. (1989). The sociological study of stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 30*, 241–256.

Pearlin, L. I. (1999). The stress process revisited: Reflections on concepts and their interrelationships. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 395–415). New York: Kluwer.

Pearlin, L. I., & Johnson, J. S. (1977). Marital status, life-strains, and depression. *American Sociological Review, 42*, 704–715.

Pearlin, L. I., Lieberman, M. A., Menaghan, E. G., & Mullan, J. T. (1981). The stress process. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 22*, 337–356.

Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19*, 2–21.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenberg, M. (1973). The logical status of suppressor variables. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 37*, 359–372.

Rosenberg, M. (1982). The self-concept: Social product and social force. In M. Rosenberg & R. H. Turner (Eds.), *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Ross, C. E., & Sastry, J. (1999). The sense of personal control: Social-structural causes and emotional consequences. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 369–94). New York: Kluwer.

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal vs. external control of reinforcements. *Psychological Monographs, 80*, 1–28.

Schieman, S. (2008). Personal resources and the education-contingent association between religiosity and health. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*, 706–720.

Schieman, S., & Bierman, A. (2007). Religious activities and changes in the sense of divine control: Dimensions of stratification as contingencies. *Sociology of Religion, 68*, 361–381.

Schieman, S., Kurashina, Y., & Van Gundy, K. (2006a). The nature of work and the stress of higher status. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 47*, 242–257.

Schieman, S., Nguyen, K., & Elliot, D. (2003). Religiosity, socioeconomic status, and the sense of mastery. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 66*, 202–221.

Schieman, S., Pudrovska, T., & Milkie, M. (2005). The sense of divine control and the self-concept: A study of race differences in late-life. *Research on Aging, 27*, 165–196.

Schieman, S., Pudrovska, T., Pearlin, L. I., & Ellison, C. (2006b). The sense of divine control and psychological distress: Variations by race and socioeconomic status. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 45*, 529–550.

Sharot, S. (2001). *A comparative sociology of world religions: Virtuosos, priests, and popular religion*. New York: New York University Press.

Tausig, M. (1999). Work and mental health. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 255–274). New York: Kluwer.

Turner, R. J., & Roszell, P. (1994). Personal resources and the stress process. In W. Avison & I. H. Gotlib (Eds.), *Stress and mental health: Contemporary issues and prospects for the future* (pp. 179–210). New York: Plenum Press.

Turner, R. J., Wheaton, B., & Lloyd, D. A. (1995). The epidemiology of social stress. *American Sociological Review, 68*, 223–250.

Valcour, M. P., & Hunter, L. W. (2005). Technology, organizations, and work-life integration. In E. E. Kossek & S. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 61–84). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Voydanoff, P. (2007). *Work, family, and community: Exploring interconnections*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Routledge Publishing.

Wheaton, B. (1985). Models for the stress-buffering functions of coping resources. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 26*, 352–365.

Wheaton, B. (1999). Social stress. In C. S. Aneshensel and J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *The Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 277). New York: Kluwer.

William R. Avison · Carol S. Aneshensel
Scott Schieman · Blair Wheaton
Editors

Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process

Essays in Honor of Leonard I. Pearlin

Springer

Editors
William R. Avison
Departments of Sociology
Paediatrics and Epidemiology &
Biostatistics
Children's Health Research Institute
Lawson Health Research Institute
The University of Western Ontario
London, ON
Canada

Carol S. Aneshensel
Department of Community Health Sciences
University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA
USA

Scott Schieman
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON
Canada

Blair Wheaton
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON
Canada

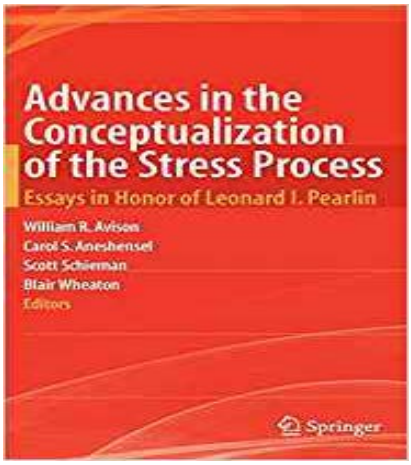
ISBN 978-1-4419-1020-2 e-ISBN 978-1-4419-1021-9
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4419-1021-9
Springer New York Dordrecht Heidelberg London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009938703

Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process: Essays in Honor of Leonard I. Pearlin 2010th Edition

by William R. Avison (Editor), Carol S. Aneshensel (Editor), Scott Schieman (Editor),

Look inside



ISBN-13: 978-1441910202
ISBN-10: 1441910204
Why is ISBN important?

Kindle	Hardcover	Paperback	Other Sellers
$26.16 - $108.11	$64.54 - $96.24	$122.09	from $64.54

In 1981, Leonard Pearlin and his colleagues published an article that would ra- cally shift the sociological study of mental health from an emphasis on psychiatric disorder to a focus on social structure and its consequences for stress and psyc- logical distress. Pearlin et al. (1981) proposed a deceptively simple conceptual model that has now influenced sociological inquiry for almost three decades. With his characteristic penchant for reconsidering and elaborating his own ideas, Pearlin has revisited the stress process model periodically over the

‹ Read more

Editorial Reviews

From the Back Cover

The stress process paradigm has been one of the most dominant conceptual models of health and illness over the past three decades. The contributions to this volume chart a new course for the stress process, extending the paradigm conceptually, methodologically, and substantively. Written in honor of Leonard I. Pearlin, the leading proponent of the stress process, the contributions to this volume provide a new direction for stress process research.

Featuring contributions from leading researchers, and an afterword by Leonard I. Pearlin, this comprehensive volume covers three major sections:

-Conceptual and methodological extensions of the stress process

-The roles of family and work in the stress process, throughout the life course

- Psychosocial factors that impact health outcomes

This volume will be an invaluable resource for researchers in sociology, social psychology and public health, all seeking to understand the pervasive role of stress on social disparities in health and illness.

Read more

Product details

Hardcover: 261 pages
Publisher: Springer; 2010 edition (December 17, 2009)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1441910204
ISBN-13: 978-1441910202
Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.7 x 9.2 inches
Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item
Amazon Best Sellers Rank: #3,817,886 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)
#2039 in Viral Diseases (Books)
#1168 in Infectious Diseases (Books)
#2180 in Communicable Diseases (Books)

Would you like to **tell us about a lower price**?
If you are a seller for this product, would you like to **suggest updates through seller support**?

Related video shorts (0) Upload your video

Be the first video
Your name here

Start reading Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process instantly on your Kindle Fire or on the free Kindle apps for iPad, Android tablet, PC or Mac. Don't have a free Kindle app? Get yours here

No customer reviews

5 star	0%
4 star	0%
3 star	0%
2 star	0%
1 star	0%

Review this product

Share your thoughts with other customers

Write a customer review