Is it my job? Leaders' family-supportive role perceptions

Allison M. Ellis

Management, Human Resources, and Information Systems,
California Polytechnic State University,
San Luis Obispo, California, USA

Tori L. Crain

Psychology, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA, and

Shalyn C. Stevens

Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

Abstract

Purpose – Despite a burgeoning literature on family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), it is unclear whether supervisors view these behaviors as in-role or discretionary. We proposed a new cognitive motivational construct, FSSB role perceptions (FSSB-RP; that is the extent to which supervisors perceive FSSB as an expected part of their job) and evaluated it as a mediator of the relationship between supervisors' own work–family experiences and FSSB.

Design/methodology/approach – We used an online survey of 245 US based supervisors.

Findings – We find that FSSB role perceptions is a unique but related construct to FSSB, and that approximately half of our sample of 245 supervisors either do not believe that FSSB is a part of their job or are unsure as to whether it is. Path analyses revealed that supervisors' own experiences of work–family conflict and enrichment are related to engaging in FSSB through role perceptions, especially when a reward system is in place that values FSSB.

Practical implications – These results may influence the design, implementation and dissemination of leader family-supportive training programs.

Originality/value – The factors that drive supervisors to engage in FSSB are relatively unknown, yet this study suggests the novel construct of FSSB role perceptions and supervisors' own work–family experiences are important factors.

Keywords Family supportive supervisor behavior, Work–family, Role perceptions, Nonwork support, Leadership, Well-being

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Substantial evidence shows that the inability to effectively juggle work and nonwork responsibilities remains a significant stressor for employees (Amstad *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, organizational research on factors impacting employee's work–family experience has burgeoned in the last decade (e.g. Allen and Martin, 2017). Although early research tended to focus on the provision of family-friendly workplace policies and employee perceptions of workplace supports, growing attention has been placed on the role of supervisors in providing family-specific support (i.e. family-supportive supervisor behaviors, or FSSB; Crain and Stevens, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2017). Enactment of FSSB has been shown to relate

to decreased work–family conflict among followers (e.g. Hammer *et al.*, 2013; Kelly *et al.*, 2014). More broadly, FSSB is related to critical work outcomes for employees, including increased job satisfaction, work engagement and performance (e.g. Odle-Dusseau *et al.*, 2012; Rofcanin *et al.*, 2016; Straub *et al.*, 2019), as well as indicators of employees' health, such as decreased stress and exhaustion (e.g. Koch and Binnewies, 2015; Yragui *et al.*, 2016).

Notably, efforts to train supervisors on FSSB have yielded positive results (e.g. Hammer *et al.*, 2016; Hammer *et al.*, 2011), indicating that supervisors are an important lever for reducing employees' experience of work–family conflict, while also improving well-being (Kossek *et al.*, 2011; Michel *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, analysis of intervention efforts that include a focus on FSSB have demonstrated a positive return on investment (Barbosa *et al.*, 2015). In all, research indicates that FSSB has important implications for both organizational productivity as well as employee well-being.

Despite successful interventions, an understanding of what motivates supervisors to engage in FSSB at the individual, supervisor level remains unclear. To date, FSSB research has tended to focus on the outcomes of family-supportive supervision (Straub, 2012), and studies that do examine antecedents have tended to look at organizational factors (e.g. flexible policies) or cultural factors (e.g. family-supportive organization perceptions), while more proximal, cognitive-motivational states of supervisors themselves have been absent from this investigation. An understanding of motivating factors at the individual level would serve useful in promoting a pre-training climate conducive to supervisor buy-in and behavioral change (e.g. Crain and Stevens, 2018). Beyond this, focusing efforts to better understand supervisors' motivations for engaging in FSSB is only becoming more critical. The COVID-19 pandemic has blurred the boundaries between work and nonwork for many (e.g. Sinclair *et al.*, 2020), and at the same time, organizational factors promoting work–family support (e.g. onsite childcare, family supportive cultural norms) may be unavailable or out of sight for employees, making leaders' role in providing support more critical.

Thus, the current research is focused on supervisors' perceptions of FSSB, and more specifically, whether they believe such behavior is an expected part of their role as a leader or outside the scope of their formal responsibilities, given the ambiguous nature of providing support for something that spans time outside of work. We also test what factors influence these perceptions and in turn, their relation to actual supportive behavior (Figure 1). We draw on role theory and prior research indicating that the way an individual cognitively defines
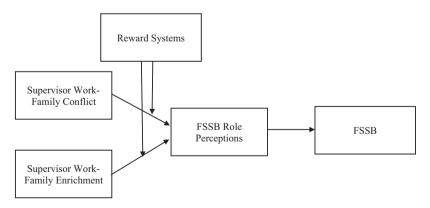

Figure 1.
Hypothesized
moderated
mediation model

Note(s): Analysis controlled for gender, partner status, number of children, and elder care

their role (i.e. role definitions) can influence their engagement in certain work behaviors, especially those deemed discretionary or voluntary (McAllister *et al.*, 2007).

By addressing these questions, this research contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, we examine FSSB through the lens of supervisors themselves. Most FSSB research to date has been conducted from the employee's point of view (Crain and Stevens, 2018), leaving us without a solid understanding what drives supervisors to engage in FSSB. Second, we look at antecedents of FSSB role perceptions and their association with FSSB addressing a notable gap in this literature (Crain and Stevens, 2018). Doing so enables integration of existing research on work–family conflict, enrichment and FSSB, and examination whether supervisors' own experiences of conflict and enrichment are associated with FSSB role perceptions. Further, we assess whether experiences of conflict and enrichment interact with organizational reward systems which should theoretically incentivize supervisors to engage in FSSB. Finally, this research has practical implications; understanding the factors that drive FSSB would contribute to the development of interventions given that training content should explicitly address these factors (e.g. if role perceptions are found to relate to FSSB, then intervention content should explore with trainees barriers to perceiving FSSB as being in-role). It may also shed light on how the organizational context may help or hinder supervisors from engaging in FSSB, thereby explaining why an intervention may have differing levels of success when implemented across multiple settings.

FSSB role perceptions

FSSB role perceptions (FSSB-RP) refers to the extent to which supervisors believe the provision of work–family support (i.e. FSSB) is considered within the bounds of one's role and an expected part of their job. Hammer *et al.* (2009) defined FSSB as the provision of family-specific support from supervisors to their employees, and acknowledged the lack of formality surrounding this type of support in most organizations, in addition to the notable discretion supervisors have in enacting such support. Given these behaviors are not likely to be included in typical descriptions of supervisory positions, or formally rewarded by the organization, they may be considered extra-role to many supervisors, and therefore subject to the ways individual supervisors define their roles.

Early studies differentiating between in-role work behaviors and those that fall outside of one's formal task requirements, or extra-role behaviors (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990), have suggested that employees show significant variability in how they define their individual roles (Morrison, 1994). Role-making theory (Graen, 1976) emphasizes that individuals will change and create roles that fit their personal strengths and preferences, while social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) suggests that individuals' conceptions of their roles develop in response to social cues present in the environment. This led Morrison (1994) to argue that in order to garner an understanding of what drives extra-role behaviors, researchers, "…must first understand how job incumbents conceptualize their responsibilities and whether they define given behaviors as in-role or extra-role" (p. 1544). Along this line, Katz and Kahn's (1978) role theory proposed that role definitions underpin role behaviors, and subsequent research has found that employees who define certain behaviors as in-role are more likely to demonstrate those behaviors (Jiao *et al.*, 2013). Thus, we expect that there is variation in how supervisors define their role with respect to FSSB, and those who broadly consider FSSB as part of their role will also engage in family-supportive behaviors to a greater extent.

H1. FSSB-RP will be positively related to FSSB.

Work–family conflict, enrichment and FSSB role perceptions

To the extent that FSSB-RP relate to the provision of supervisor support, it is helpful to understand what factors influence these role perceptions. Role theory suggests that the ways in which we define our roles are a function of cues in the social environment, as well as considerations of our personal preferences, abilities and identity (Katz and Kahn, 1978). One set of personal factors potentially relevant to how supervisors define their responsibilities to employees around work–family challenges is their own level of work-to-family conflict (WTFC) and work-to-family enrichment (WTFE) (Straub, 2012). WTFC is defined as a form of interrole conflict where the work role is incompatible and interferes with the nonwork role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), and is conceptualized as a workplace stressor. Conversely, research has shown that the work role may in some cases benefit the nonwork role, contributing to employee perceptions of WTFE (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

Although both WTFC and WTFE have traditionally been conceptualized as employee-level outcomes of FSSB, Straub (2012) theorized that the degree to which leaders experience WTFC would be positively associated with their propensity to engage in FSSB. This relationship was expected to occur via enhanced leader perceptions of felt responsibility. That is, when leaders experience their own difficulties managing work and family demands, they may be more empathetic to their followers' struggles, and more inclined to provide assistance and support. However, research to date has not tested this proposition, and consideration of FSSB-RP provides reason to believe that the relationship between WTFC and FSSB may actually be negative – that is, those experiencing greater WTFC may define their roles more narrowly leading to less frequent FSSB.

There are at least two reasons why this may be the case. First, those experiencing stress may take concerted action to reduce their responsibilities and protect important energetic and psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Although they did not examine role perceptions directly, in their meta-analysis, Eatough *et al.* (2011) showed that role stressors were negatively associated with OCB, a type of extra-role behavior. They reasoned that stressors may cause conservation efforts where expenditures on discretionary behaviors like OCB are not warranted. In the same way, FSSB may be seen as requiring extra effort, time, or energy on the part of supervisors, and therefore less likely to be incorporated into personal role definitions under conditions of high WTFC.

Second, evidence suggests that role definitions will be based to some extent on whether employees feel confident to expand their role and integrate new tasks and responsibilities (Parker, 1998). For example, Morgeson *et al.* (2005) showed that employees' job-related skill was associated with expanded role definitions, and other research has linked role-breadth self-efficacy (i.e. "the extent to which people feel confident that they are able to carry out a broader and more proactive role, beyond traditional prescribed technical requirements"; Parker, 1998, p. 835) to discretionary behaviors (e.g. Ohly and Fritz, 2007). Following this logic, a supervisor experiencing high WTFC may feel less confident in their ability to appropriately manage their personal work and home demands, and therefore less assured in their ability to support followers, resulting in a reduced likelihood of incorporating FSSB into their conception of their role. Taken together, we expect that supervisors with high WTFC will report narrower FSSB-RP, and thus, lower levels of FSSB.

H2. FSSB-RP will mediate the negative relationship between supervisor WTFC and FSSB.

Conversely, we expect that experiences of WTFE will be associated with expanded definitions of supervisors' roles. Broadly, WTFE occurs when a person's experiences in one domain (i.e. work) improve the quality of life in a second domain (i.e. home) (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Indeed, research has found that work and family roles can mutually enhance one another through the transmission of positive affect across work and home domains, the

development of relevant skills and/or through the promotion of psychosocial resources (e.g. security, accomplishment; Carlson *et al.*, 2006). Straub (2012) reasoned that supervisors who benefit from participation in work and family roles themselves will see the importance of supporting such balance among their employees and, therefore, hold more positive attitudes toward FSSB. That is, because supervisors may understand the benefits of WTFE to their personal work life, they appreciate its instrumental value and are therefore inclined to help employees achieve their own degree of WTFE.

More broadly, research supports the predictive role of positive employee experiences on role definitions and participation in extra-role behaviors. For example, Bachrach and Jex (2000) showed that participants in a positive mood were more likely to label extra-role tasks as part of their job. Finally, consistent with our arguments above, the extent to which one feels confident to perform certain duties may make it more likely that they incorporate such additional responsibilities into their role definition (Parker, 1998; Morgeson *et al.*, 2005). Supervisors who experience greater WTFE should feel better equipped to personally manage their own work and family demands, and therefore more confident in their ability to support followers, leading them to incorporate such behaviors into their role definition, and thus engage in greater levels of FSSB.

H3. FSSB-RP will mediate the positive relationship between supervisor WTFE and FSSB.

Reward systems as moderators

Besides a sense of personal responsibility or capability that individual supervisors might feel toward demonstrating FSSB behaviors, their perception of whether FSSB is in-role or extra-role should also rely on environmental cues from the organization. Role theory posits that roles are defined in part through personal attributes of the role occupants, as well as the messages received from the organizational context about what is important (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Supervisors may rely on social and environmental cues, such as whether they believe these behaviors are considered in performance reviews and/or rewarded by the organization. In this way, reward systems that directly or indirectly reinforce supervisor support for work–family challenges should make it more likely that supervisors feel responsible for such behavior and incorporate it into their notions of their supervisory role regardless of their personal levels of WTFC and WTFE. We propose that it is not necessary that FSSB be formally written into supervisor performance evaluations or directly rewarded, but rather that supervisors perceive that implicitly or explicitly they are rewarded for performing such behaviors. Conversely, in the absence of such environmental cues, supervisors may revert to personal experiences and beliefs about their obligations, responsibilities, or capabilities as discussed in the previous sections. As such, we hypothesize that reward systems that are perceived to reinforce FSSB will moderate the indirect relationship between WTFC, WTFE and FSSB via FSSB-RP.

H4. When reward systems are perceived by supervisors to reinforce FSSB, (a) the negative indirect relationship between WTFC and FSSB via FSSB-RP will be weaker, and (b) the positive indirect relationship between WTFE and FSSB via FSSB-RP will be stronger.

Method
Sample and procedure
Recruitment for this study occurred via a paid Qualtrics® service, in which interested parties created a user profile. Eligible participants were then able to access the study online with a

unique URL. All variables were measured with a single online survey, taking approximately 20-min. Participants were compensated by Qualtrics® either monetarily or via a point system, as per their preference indicated on their profile. The sample was limited to individuals in the United States, who worked at least 30 h per week, who self-identified as a supervisor with at least one direct report and who had worked at their organization for at least six months. Participants were excluded if they did not finish the survey, completed less than 75% of the survey, or failed the three attention checks that were included throughout the survey. This approach was more appropriate than sampling a single organization, as we were interested in how variation in individual and contextual factors might influence FSSB-RP.

The final sample included 245 participants. On average, participants had worked with their organization for 7.60 years (SD = 4.37) and worked 42.80 h per week (SD = 8.14). Job types in our sample were diverse, including restaurant owner, nursing supervisor, retail store manager, engineer and principle consultant. Participants supervised an average of 20.13 direct reports (SD = 25.02; Median = 10.00), with 29% of the sample categorizing themselves as a frontline manager, 40% a mid-level manager and 31% an executive leader. The sample was 47% male and 53% female and 77% of the sample self-identified as white.

Measures

Responses were provided on a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree scale unless otherwise indicated below. Reliability estimates for each scale, along with descriptive information, and bivariate correlations are provided in Table 1.

FSSB. FSSB was assessed with four items by Hammer *et al.*'s (2013) short-form measure. An example item is "I make my employees feel comfortable talking to me about conflicts between work and nonwork".

FSSB Role Perceptions. Following work by McAllister *et al.* (2007) on role breadth perceptions, we took each of Hammer *et al.*'s (2013) 4 FSSB short form items and evaluated the extent to which supervisors believed them to be in-role. Using the same FSSB short form item provided as an example above, the corresponding role perception item and instructions were as follows: "The next item refers to the following supervisor behavior: 'I make my employees feel comfortable talking to me about conflicts between work and nonwork'. This behavior is an expected part of my job". Thus, participants reported on 4 FSSB role items that corresponded to each of the 4 FSSB short form items, but with a role prompt added to the end.

Work-to-family conflict (WTFC). WTFC was assessed with 9 items from Carlson *et al.*'s (2000) measure. An example was "I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family".

Work–family enrichment (WTFE). WTFE was assessed with 9 items from Carlson *et al.*'s (2006) measure. An example was "My involvement in my work makes me feel happy and this helps me be a better family member".

Reward systems. We assessed rewards for FSSB behavior with a single-item. Participants were asked, "Are you rewarded for your performance related to supporting employees' nonwork life?" Responses were 0 = No or 1 = Yes.

Supervisor demographics. Participants also provided data on gender, marital/partner status, number of children and elder care (Table 1). Based on previous work–family research, these variables were included in the analyses as covariates.

Common method variance. We addressed potential common-method bias statistically by employing Harman's (1976) single-factor test. The four items for FSSB-RP, four items for FSSB, nine items for WTFC, nine items for WTFE and one item for reward systems were analyzed using unrotated principle component factor analysis, with the number of factors extracted constrained to be one. The result yielded five factors, with the first factor explaining 37.60% of the variance. Given that a single factor that accounts for the majority of variance

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1) Gender	0.53	0.50	–								
(2) Partner status	0.67	0.47	0.21**	–							
(3) Children	0.96	1.18	0.05	0.34**	–						
(4) Elder care	0.34	0.47	0.16*	0.14*	0.16*	–					
(5) WTFC	3.08	0.97	−0.09	0.00	0.02	0.00	(0.90)				
(6) WTFE	3.96	0.73	−0.12	−0.08	0.11	0.15*	−0.08	(0.92)			
(7) Reward system	0.36	0.48	−0.11	0.08	0.20**	0.18**	0.10	0.24**	–		
(8) FSSB-RP	3.85	0.74	0.13*	0.13*	0.16*	0.10	0.04	0.33**	0.17**	(0.75)	
(9) FSSB	4.09	0.64	0.13*	0.14*	0.14*	0.11	−0.02	0.31**	0.12	0.64**	(0.78)

Note(s): $N = 245$. Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female); Partner (0 = Single, 1 = Married/Partnered); Children = Number of children living at home; Eldercare (0 = No eldercare, 1 = Eldercare); Reward System (0 = No system in place that rewards FSSB; 1 = System in place that rewards FSSB. FSSB-RP = FSSB Role Perceptions; FSSB = Family-supportive Supervisor Behavior; Cronbach's alpha provided on the diagonal
$*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics
and correlations
among variables

(i.e. >50%) did not emerge, we concluded that significant common method bias was not present.

Results

FSSB role perceptions and FSSB

Before testing our hypotheses, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses to determine whether FSSB-RP was distinct from FSSB, given the high bivariate correlation between the two constructs (i.e. $r = 0.64$). First, the variance inflation factor statistic was in the acceptable range (i.e. 1.21). Next, a one-factor CFA with all eight items loading onto a single factor was compared to a two-factor CFA with the four FSSB-RP items and the four FSSB items loading onto separate, but correlated factors. To evaluate overall model fit, we relied on work by Raykov and Marcoulides (2011) and Hu and Bentler (1999) [1]. A chi-square difference test comparing the two-factor to the one-factor model indicated that the two-factor model fit the data significantly better ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 23.59, p < 0.05$). Thus, we proceeded with our hypothesized analyses.

On average, participants reported a mean score of 3.85 (SD = 0.75) on the FSSB-RP scale. Interestingly, approximately 9% of our sample reported FSSB-RP scores below three (2 – "disagree" or 1 – "strongly disagree"), indicating that FSSB was not an expected part of their job, and 37% reported scores of three ("not sure"), indicating that it was unclear to them whether FSSB was an expected part of their job. Approximately 54% of our sample reported FSSB-RP scores above three (4 – "agree" or 5 – "strongly agree"), indicating they agreed that engaging in FSSB was an expected part of their job.

Indirect effects

All analyses were conducted using Mplus 7.4 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2015). Results are provided in Table 2. Hypotheses 1 through 3 were tested using a fully-saturated path model. We examined the indirect effects using bias-corrected bootstrapped estimates (Efron and Tibshirani, 1993) based on 1,000 bootstrapped samples, which provides a powerful test of mediation (Fritz and MacKinnon, 2007). Statistical significance was determined by 95% confidence intervals that did not contain zero.

When evaluating the b path direct effect, FSSB-RP was significantly and positively associated with FSSB ($b = 0.51$, SE = 0.07, $p < 0.001$), providing support for Hypothesis 1. Direct effects from the a path indicated that WTFC was not significantly associated with

| Predictor | Mediator (FSSB-RP) | | Outcome (FSSB) | | Indirect effects | | |
	b	(SE)	b	(SE)	ab	(SE)	95% CI
Gender	0.23**	(0.09)	0.06	(0.07)			
Partner	0.09	(0.10)	0.09	(0.07)			
Child	0.05	(0.04)	0.00	(0.03)			
Eldercare	−0.00	(0.10)	0.02	(0.07)			
FSSB-RP			0.51***	(0.07)			
WTFC	0.06	(0.05)	−0.02	(0.04)	0.03	0.03	(−0.03, 0.14)
WTFE	0.36***	(0.07)	0.11	(0.07)	0.18	0.04	(0.13, 0.29)

Note(s): $N = 245$. Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female); Partner (0 = Single, 1 = Married/Partnered); Child = Number of children living at home; Eldercare (0 = No eldercare, 1 = Eldercare). ab = unstandardized indirect effect. ab, SE, and 95% CI were obtained from 1,000 bootstrap samples. FSSB-RP = FSSB Role Perceptions; FSSB = Family-supportive Supervisor Behavior
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Table 2.
Results of bootstrapping tests for estimating indirect effects with 95% confidence intervals

FSSB-RP ($b = 0.06$, SE $= 0.05$, $p = 0.24$), but that WTFE was significantly and positively associated with FSSB-RP ($b = 0.36$, SE $= 0.07$, $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals revealed that there was no significant indirect effect of WTFC on FSSB through FSSB-RP (indirect effect $= 0.03$ [-0.02, 0.09]), indicating no support for Hypothesis 2, however, the indirect effect of WTFE on FSSB through FSSB-RP was significant (indirect effect $= 0.18$ [0.11, 0.28]), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Conditional Indirect Effects

Hypotheses 4a and b proposed a moderated mediation with reward systems moderating the indirect effect of WTFC and WTFE, respectively, on FSSB through FSSB-RP. A fully saturated path model was run to evaluate reward systems as a moderator of the *a* path in the larger mediation model, and we grand mean centered the predictors of WTFC and WTFE before creating the interaction term with the binary (0, 1) variable of reward systems. We controlled for gender, marital status, number of children and elder care.

The path analysis revealed significant conditional indirect effects. With conflict as the predictor, confidence intervals revealed that when supervisors were not rewarded for engaging in FSSB (i.e. a reward system was not in place), the indirect effect WTFC → FSSB-RP → FSSB was not significant (0.01 [-0.07, 0.09]). However, when supervisors were rewarded (i.e. a reward system was in place), the indirect effect of WTFC → FSSB-RP → FSSB was positive and significant (0.06 [0.01, 0.13]) [2]. This provides partial support for Hypothesis 4a, because although we anticipated a significant indirect effect under conditions of a reward system being in place, we also expected this indirect effect would be *negative*. In contrast, our results indicate that when systems are in place to reward supervisors for engaging in FSSB, supervisors' own experiences of conflict were associated with more expansive FSSB-RP, and thus, greater FSSB.

When evaluating enrichment as a predictor in the moderated mediation, confidence intervals revealed that when supervisors were not rewarded for engaging in FSSB (i.e. a reward system was not in place), the indirect effect WTFE → FSSB-RP → FSSB was positive and significant (0.16 [0.08, 0.25]). Additionally, when supervisors were rewarded (i.e. a reward system was in place), the indirect effect of WTFE → FSSB-RP → FSSB was also positive and significant, (0.21 [0.07, 0.40]), but stronger than when no reward system was in place. This indicates that supervisors' own experiences of enrichment are associated with FSSB through FSSB-RP, but that a system of reward for FSSB serves to strengthen this effect. These results supported Hypothesis 4b.

Discussion

In contemporary workplaces, supervisor support for employee's work–family experience is critical. Taking a supervisor-centered approach, the current study aimed to identify and evaluate the role of one cognitive motivational factor (i.e. FSSB-RP) as an antecedent to FSSB. Our findings indicate that supervisors' cognitive perceptions of whether FSSB falls within their job role represent a unique construct from demonstrated family-supportive behaviors. We find it promising that approximately half of our sample indicated that engaging in FSSB was an expected part of their job. However, there was significant variation in these perceptions. In turn, FSSB-RP were strongly associated with FSSB. This suggests that when supervisors see FSSB as in-role, they are more likely to feel called to action and provide family-specific support to their employees. Although work–family research has historically relied on role theory to explain the WTFC phenomenon, our broader integration of the theory which includes a focus on role perceptions, expands our understanding of how role conflict or enrichment relates to downstream supervisor behaviors. Our results are in line with role

theory, showing that how an individual defines their role is related to their propensity to engage in those behaviors (McAllister *et al.*, 2007).

By integrating role theory, we also tested and expanded upon existing models of antecedents of FSSB (Straub, 2012). We hypothesized supervisors' own experiences of conflict and enrichment would be important factors related to role perceptions, and found that FSSB-RP mediated the effect of enrichment on FSSB, but not conflict on FSSB. These findings suggest that supervisors' positive experiences related to the work–family interface, rather than negative experiences, are particularly critical for viewing FSSB as a part of one's role. Prior research has found that role definitions may be expanded when individuals feel competent and able to enact a broader scope of work (Morgeson *et al.*, 2005) or when they experience more positive emotions (Bachrach and Jex, 2000). Our findings replicate and extend these findings in a work–family context and point to work–family resources as potential antecedents to role definitions, and subsequent FSSB.

We also found that role perceptions act as a mediator of the conflict – FSSB relationship when a reward system is in place, and that within this conditional indirect effect, WTFC, too, is associated with expanded FSSB-RP. This was somewhat surprising as we had anticipated that the WTFC – role perceptions – FSSB mediation would be negative, but weakened under conditions of a reward system being in place, given that supervisors who are experiencing WTFC should be motivated to conserve their resources and not engage in other-focused support, in line with resource-based theories (Hobfoll, 1989). Our results suggest that supervisors who are experiencing their own work–family demands are likely to be more empathetic towards employees' work–family issues, see it as a part of their job to support employees, and actually engage in the supportive behaviors, when they have the external motivation to do so from the organization, in the form of cues regarding what is rewarded. Although in contrast to resource-based theoretical rationales, Straub (2012) did propose that supervisors who experience their own negative work–family experiences are likely to empathize with employees, and therefore feel responsible to assist. Thus, our results are more in line with these propositions, yet also suggest some nuances in that context plays an important role in leaders' role definitions. Future research should replicate these results and perhaps expand to additional contextual variables (e.g. family-related policies, work–family climate).

Limitations and future research directions
Given that this study uses single-source, self-reported data from supervisors, common method bias was a potential concern (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). However, scholars have noted that common method variance may not produce bias, or bias that is practically meaningful, especially under certain conditions (e.g. Fuller *et al.*, 2016; Spector, 2019). To prevent potential bias, the primary variables of interest (i.e. FSSB-RP and FSSB) were separated by other measures in our survey. Additionally, with the exception of reward systems, which is an unambiguous question that is less likely to suffer from response bias, all measures in our study were composed of multiple items. However, we suggest that future studies explore this construct more in depth by assessing how supervisors may be rewarded for these behaviors with qualitative data collection methods. A potential concern related to common method bias would be inflated correlations due to social desirability. However our results indicated that the sample was approximately split in terms of their endorsement of FSSB-RP, therefore social desirability did not appear to be an issue in this sample. Nevertheless, as has been suggested (e.g. Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), employee reports, in addition to supervisor reports, of FSSB should be included in future studies. Lastly, our statistical analyses did not show substantial evidence of common method bias.

It is also worth noting that while our theoretical arguments and hypothesis tests infer mediation, the nonexperimental, single survey design precludes our ability to make causal

inferences (Shadish *et al.*, 2002). Thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that our findings represent mere associations rather than true causal relationships, or that the mediator itself may be a confounding variable. Future research based on experimental methods would bolster confidence in the proposed causal relationships among the variables we investigated.

Finally, this study was conducted with a sample of supervisors from the US. Recent findings show that in other cultural contexts, employees respond differently to FSSB (Bosch *et al.*, 2018). Presumably, supervisors themselves have varying degrees of FSSB-RP and subsequent behavior depending on cultural norms and expectations in their society. Thus, it would be helpful for future research to replicate our study globally. Additionally, this study evaluates work–family experiences, FSSB-RP and FSSB from the supervisors' point of view, but it would be beneficial to include follower perceptions of FSSB in future studies. Investigation into both supervisors' and employees' opinions of whether FSSB is in-role or discretionary may be critical to understanding whether and how discrepancies between the two parties emerge.

Practical implications
Our results point to important implications for managerial practice. First, supervisors and leaders themselves should be mindful of how they define their role with regard to supporting employees' work–life management, and understand how this may influence their own decision-making, communication and behavior toward followers. We encourage leaders to consider and observe instrumental links between the provision of effective work–family support and employee outcomes including productivity, job attitudes and well-being. Further, our results indicated that supervisors' own positive work–family experiences are especially important for viewing FSSB as in-role. We encourage supervisors to evaluate their own degree of work–family conflict and enrichment, take measures to reduce stressors that may spillover into their nonwork life, as well as find ways to enhance opportunities for positive spillover. For example, supervisors may consider taking advantage of developmental opportunities that generalize to both work and home contexts (e.g. communication trainings, self-directed learning opportunities), and participating in events or initiatives that increase positive affect and provide recognition for accomplishments.

The finding that approximately half of our sample either does not believe or is unsure whether FSSB is an expected part of their job suggests that organizations hoping to foster a family-supportive culture need to make this expectation of supervisors clearer through documentation, communications from top leadership, and throughout the performance review process. Indeed, our results also show that the presence of a reward system that encourages FSSB is important for whether supervisors will engage in actual family-supportive behaviors. This is also impetus to formalize programs and benefits that provide leaders with opportunities to support their employees, such as flexwork policies, additional paid time off and family leave, and autonomy with project completion deadlines. This finding also means that some supervisors who take part in FSSB training may first need convincing that FSSB is an expected part of their job. If this sentiment is not acknowledged and accepted by supervisors prior to engaging in training, training effectiveness may be quite limited. On the whole, our research opens the door to examining cognitive-motivational factors critical to understanding what drives leaders' support of employee well-being.

Notes

1. Detailed fit statistics are available from the second author.

2. Note that all analyses were also run without control variables. This is the only effect that was lost when control variables were not included in the model.

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Corresponding author
Allison M. Ellis can be contacted at: aellis09@calpoly.edu