

**It is a Balancing Act:
How Copreneurs Craft Work-Life Balance.**

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Publications

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- Busch, C., Dreyer, R. (2022). *Online-Coaching*. In: Bamberg, E., Ducki, A., Janneck, M. (eds) *Digitale Arbeit gestalten*. Springer, Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34647-8_19
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- Busch, C., Dreyer, R., & Janneck, M. (2022). Blended Health Coaching for Work-linked Couples: Coaches' Intervention Fidelity and Empathy Matter!. *Coaching| Theorie & Praxis*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1365/s40896-022-00065-9> (*)
- Dreyer, R., & Busch, C. (2021). At the heart of family businesses: how copreneurs craft work-life balance. *Journal of Family Business Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-12-2020-0113> (*)
- Dreyer, R., & Busch, C. (2022, under review). Honey, let's have a Date Night! Actor and Partner Effects in Crafting Work-Life Balance. (*)

(*) References marked with an asterisk indicate studies that are part of this dissertation.

productivity is not how much
work i do in a day
but how well i balance
what i need to stay healthy

Being productive is knowing when to rest – rupi kaur (2020, p. 115)

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Abbreviations

COR = Conservation of Resource Theory

CQTC = Couple Quality Time Crafting

SBO = Small Business Owner

WLB = Work-Life Balance

WLI = Work-Life Interface

Abstract

Copreneurs are small business owners who co-work with their spouses. They share a professional and a romantic partnership. As a result, (1) copreneurs' work-life boundaries are blurred and (2) they find it difficult to psychologically detach from work. Both factors jeopardize a satisfying work-life balance (WLB). Although existing research has already elaborated the benefits of WLB for small business owners, concrete solutions involving the active creation of balance that consider the interdependencies of copreneurs' partnership remain surprisingly scarce. To address these gaps, the course of action entails a multi-method approach (interview, diary, and evaluation study) that includes both partners in all three studies. I aim to find theory-based, practical gateways for how copreneurs can create WLB. As a theoretical foundation, I merge the conservation of resources theory and the WLB crafting concept. Following a qualitative approach, the first study explores copreneurs' WLB crafting strategies in-depth. The results show that copreneurs WLB crafting behaviors are complex, ranging from individual to dyadic actions that manage aspects of their WLB. Especially creating (joint) recovery opportunities is a vital approach to crafting WLB. Therefore, I chose a diary study to focus on copreneurs' crafting of couple quality time as a day-level phenomenon. I investigate its intra- and interindividual relations to WLB and state of recovery. Couple quality time crafting enhances intra-individually both men's WLB and women's WLB. State of recovery as a resource enables crafting behavior only for the male participants. The third study evaluates the mechanisms and outcomes of a couple coaching intervention. The intervention was effective in enhancing copreneurs' WLB and recovery from work. The findings of these three studies suggest that creating WLB is an active process and that the spouse plays a significant role.

Zusammenfassung

Copreneure sind Kleinunternehmer:innen, die mit ihren Ehepartner:innen zusammenarbeiten. Sie teilen sowohl ihr Privat- als auch ihr Berufsleben. Daher sind (1) die Grenzen zwischen ihren Lebensbereichen kaum existent, und (2) es fällt ihnen schwer, mental von der Arbeit abzuschalten. Beide Umstände beeinträchtigen eine zufriedenstellende Work-Life-Balance (WLB). Obwohl die Relevanz von WLB für Kleinunternehmer:innen bereits gut beforscht ist, fehlt es an konkreten Lösungen, die die aktive Gestaltung der WLB adressieren und die die Interdependenzen der Partnerschaft berücksichtigen. Um diese Forschungslücken zu schließen, habe ich drei Studien durchgeführt, die sich mit unterschiedlichen Methoden folgender Frage widmen: was können Inhaberpaare konkret tun, um ihre WLB zu gestalten. Als theoretische Grundlage dient die Theorie der Ressourcenerhaltung und das WLB-Crafting-Konzept. In der ersten Studie habe ich Interviews geführt, um die WLB-Crafting Strategien von Copreneuren detailliert zu untersuchen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass ihr WLB-Crafting-Verhalten von individuellen bis hin zu dyadischen Handlungen reicht. Insbesondere das Schaffen von (gemeinsamen) Erholungsmöglichkeiten ist ein wichtiger Ansatz zur Gestaltung von WLB. Daher betrachtet die zweite Studie in einem Tagebuch die tagtägliche Gestaltung von gemeinsamer Quality-Time der Paare und untersucht intra- und interindividuelle Zusammenhänge zu WLB und dem Erholungszustand am Morgen. Das Craften gemeinsamer Quality-Time steigert intra-individuell die WLB. Der Erholungszustand am Morgen dient als Ressource und wirkt sich positiv auf das Crafting-Verhalten der männlichen Teilnehmer aus. Die dritte Studie evaluiert die Wirkmechanismen und Ergebnisse einer Paar-Coaching-Intervention. Das Coaching wirkt, sodass die Paare ihre WLB steigern und besser von der Arbeit abschalten konnten. Die Ergebnisse der drei Studien legen nahe, dass die Schaffung von WLB ein aktiver Prozess ist und dass der:die Partner:in eine Schlüsselrolle in der Gestaltung einnimmt.

Introduction

Tom and Anna have been working together in their own business for ten years now. Tom is a craftsman at heart and passionate about his job. He learned sanitation when he first started in his parents' business. Later, he took over the family business. He met Anna on a holiday, and they fell in love. Anna never had contact with craft businesses before. She worked as a medical assistant when they met. However, from early on in their relationship, Anna was involved in Tom's work and officially joined the business after their second child was born. She took over the accounting and office management. Today, their intertwined life domains are omnipresent in their daily lives: They discuss business investments over breakfast and rarely have undisturbed holidays or weekends because of the emergency services offered to their customers. Both, Anna and Tom, sometimes feel triggered by their partner for business-related thoughts. Increasingly, they feel more relaxed when they do not spend time together after work. When Tom has a critical situation at work, he appreciates his spouse, who entirely understands what he is going through. Anna likes her husband's work-related support and the autonomy she has as an office manager. Yet, at times, Anna worries about Tom's health and his extensive working hours. Sometimes, she wishes to be a "normal" couple again, being able to go on holidays together or just for a Saturday stroll – without being reminded of their business. Tom wishes he could be more available to his family but has not yet found a good way to combine his role as a business owner, partner, and father in a healthy way. But after all, they are both happy being business owners together because they love each other and their business. However, they are not satisfied with how they manage the balancing act of their work and private life.

Tom and Anna are not real people but prototypical of many romantic couples who run a small business together. Couples that share commitment to and responsibility for their business are also referred to as copreneurs (Barnett & Barnett, 1988; Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Danes & Lee, 2004). 50%-75% of small businesses in the German craft

industry are run by copreneurs (UFH, 2021; Zoch, 2010). Small businesses play an important role in growing economies by creating jobs, innovations, and infrastructure (European Commission, 2020; Van Praag & Versloot, 2007). Therefore, keeping the owners healthy and productive is of paramount importance for their families, partners, and employees, as well as for industry and society as a whole. For copreneurs, creating a healthy balance between their work and family life represents an important challenge that remains under-researched. This dissertation aims to tackle the question: How do these couples create work-life balance when every line is blurred?

Work-life balance (WLB) is an individual's evaluation of the fulfillment of different roles and goals in all life domains (Syrek et al., 2011). WLB is identified as a subjective indicator of business success (Wach et al., 2016) and is linked to small business owners' well-being (De Clercq et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2020; Nguyen & Sawang, 2016). Inherent in the WLB definition is the creation of recovery from work as a counterweight to heavy work demands (Syrek et al., 2011). Recovery from work, particularly psychological detachment, helps restore personal resources and well-being during non-work time (Sonnentag et al., 2010). For successful recreational experiences, individuals actively need to carve out time for the creation of recovery opportunities, such as breaks, sports, or sleep (de Bloom et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2014).

For copreneurs, the two systems of family and business are inevitably linked (Jennings et al., 2013; Michael-Tsabari et al., 2020), making them high integrators with permeable, flexible boundaries between their life domains (Ashforth et al., 2000; Desrochers & Sargent, 2004). This challenges previous research that has emphasized strong, non-permeable borders between life domains to facilitate WLB (Clark, 2000) and recovery experiences (Kinnunen et al., 2016). Therefore, creating structures and experiences to ensure recovery and WLB is an active, self-directed, and ongoing task. This is especially crucial for copreneurs, due to their unique work situation and blurred work-life interface (WLI). To

advance scholarship in this field, this represents an inviting opportunity to integrate, adapt, and further develop established theories and concepts from the broader WLB literature.

In this thesis, I merged the conservation of resources theory (COR, Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) and the WLB crafting concept (Sturges, 2012) to provide an advanced theoretical foundation when studying the WLI of copreneurs. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) individuals are active agents that strive to protect, conserve, and accumulate their valued resources. This premise forms the link to the WLB crafting concept, which assumes that individuals act proactively to gain control over relevant aspects of their WLB (Sturges, 2012). WLB Crafting describes goal-oriented, self-initiated behavior that aims at managing boundaries between life domains, optimize demands, and create recreational experiences to ensure WLB (Caringal-Go et al., 2022; Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018).

Although WLB crafting is so far conceptualized as individual actions, activities to enhance WLB in copreneurs may be socially interdependent (Hirschi et al., 2019; Tims et al., 2013). Copreneurs' spousal social support and their knowledge about the partner's work situation were found to be helpful resources in managing WLB and enhancing the subjective well-being of the small business owners (Gudmunson et al., 2009; Helmle et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2020; Powell & Eddleston, 2017). Spouses can facilitate their partner's recovery experiences through their support (Hahn & Dormann, 2013; Park & Fritz, 2015; Park & Haun, 2017; Walter & Haun, 2020). To date, research focusing on the dyad by including data of both partners and considers the interdependencies between partners' actions to craft WLB and recovery remains surprisingly scarce.

To address these shortcomings, I searched for effective ways on how copreneurs create WLB by exploring their WLB crafting (study I and II) and by evaluating a couple coaching intervention (study III; Busch & Dreyer, 2020). The first study follows a qualitative approach, investigating which WLB crafting behaviors copreneurs use and which strategies are helpful to craft aspects of their WLB. In the second study, I used a diary design to focus

on copreneurs' crafting of couple quality time and its intra- and interindividual relations to its antecedents (state of recovery) and outcome (WLB). In the third study, we used a mixed-method approach to evaluate the mechanisms and outcomes of a couple coaching to foster WLB and recovery.

Across the three studies in this dissertation, I contribute to the literature in several ways. First, I shed light on the blurred WLI of copreneurs and examine WLB crafting strategies to enhance WLB. Second, I combined two streams of the wider WLB literature: COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) and the WLB crafting concept (Sturges, 2012), to introduce a theoretical framework to the special context of small business copreneurs, as recently demanded by Michael-Tsabari et al. (2020). Third, I offer insights into the interdependent qualities of strategies that shape the WLB of copreneurs. Fourth, I provide practical implications for business counselors and interventionists on how to design interventions and offer a discussion on which strategies are promising to enhance WLB. Ultimately, these studies help copreneurs to change their habits creating better WLB.

The current state of literature

In the following chapter, I will present and integrate the current state of literature. It starts by describing the context of copreneurs. Next, I introduce the definitions of the central concepts and link them to the relevant theories. Based on this, I present two different approaches to increasing WLB. The chapter concludes with a summary of the three studies.

The Context – Small Craft Business Copreneurs

The skilled craft sector is one of the mainstays of the German economy and creates a wide variety of jobs. The economic situation in the skilled trades is still booming. Many companies are reporting an increase in sales and rising order volumes. At the same time, the skilled craft trades face some major challenges: an aging workforce, a lack of talents and successors, a poor image, high physical demands, and raising psychological demands

(Baumann et al., 2015; Runst & Thomä, 2021). In addition, it is crucial to make the business owner's job attractive to future generations (Daiber, 2014). To approach these challenges, keeping the owners healthy, improving working conditions, and providing access to health interventions, represent core elements.

A *small business owner (SBO)* is a person who actively manages a business with “fewer than 50 employees and has either an annual turnover and/or an annual Balance Sheet total not exceeding €10m” (European Commission, 2003). SBOs have various responsibilities and demands in their business, experience an administrative burden, face concerns about their business’ finances, and are dependent on customers and suppliers (Annink et al., 2016; Fernet et al., 2016; Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn et al., 2000; Prottas & Thompson, 2006). Being confronted with so many different responsibilities and job demands can cause harm to health, and eventually lead to burnout (Fernet et al., 2016; Shepherd et al., 2010). At the same time, previous research has shown that SBOs’ jobs are characterized by resources, such as autonomy and flexibility (Kirkwood & Tootell, 2008; Prottas & Thompson, 2006; Stephan, 2018), and SBOs report high life satisfaction and well-being (Stephan, 2018). However, the greater pressure associated with owning a small business may diminish the benefits of having high job resources making small business ownership a double-edged sword in terms of well-being (Bredehöft et al., 2015).

Couples who run their own business are the smallest unit of a family business and are referred to as copreneurs (Barnett & Barnett, 1988). In the US, at least one quarter of small- to medium-sized businesses are run by couples (Dennis, 2002) and scholars stress that the number of couples starting a business together has recently increased (El Shoubaki et al., 2022). Copreneurs often adhere to traditional gender roles as a way to divide work and define areas of responsibility (Marshack, 1993). Copreneurial household managers with childcare responsibilities are more likely to be women (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019). Women in copreneurial businesses rank good family relationships as

their priority, whereas men rank profit before family relationships. However, both groups report a balance between work and family to be their third most important goal (Danes & Lee, 2004).

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance (WLB) is a widely used, albeit imprecise and confusing term. It encompasses a broad field of research that focuses on the relationship and interplay between work and private life. Its connections to job satisfaction (e.g., Haar et al., 2014), well-being (e.g., Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Leung et al., 2020), recovery from work (e.g., Taris et al., 2006), and family satisfaction (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2016) have been widely explored.

The "work" component usually refers to paid employment. The "life" component refers to all other areas of life such as family, friendships, health and recreational behavior, education, or voluntary engagement. Some researchers, therefore, use more precise terms, such as work-family, to signify which domain is being considered or refer to the broader term of life-domain balance (Ulich, 2007). Many critics argue that the term "work-life" implies a dichotomy of work versus life. Suggesting that work is not part of life and "work" is attributed as something negative in terms of well-being, i.e., as something that needs to be limited (Grawitch et al., 2010). This present dissertation pursues the approach that all life domains (e.g., work, leisure, family) can place demands on a person, and all life domains can be a source of identity and resource gains. The term "work-life" simply signals that there are different domains and their interplay in the interest of the researcher.

Here, I define, WLB as an attitude towards one's life situation, specifically satisfaction with and perceived success in balancing roles and goals across different areas of life (Syrek et al., 2011; Bauer-Emmel, 2007). *Roles* include, for example, being a father, a business owner, and the president of the local tennis club. They are structural positions but also influence how individuals see themselves, how they behave, and also how one's

behavior is perceived by others. *Goals* refer to the ambitions, values, and beliefs connected to these role behaviors and determine the resource investment needed for fulfillment (Anglin et al., 2022). For example, the goal of expanding the business will require more resources than maintaining the business as it is. Assessing satisfaction with one's WLB is linked to assessing resource allocation across life domains (Grawitch et al., 2010). For example, individuals evaluate on how one's time is divided across life domains or if resources are sufficient to meet demands (Wayne et al., 2022).

The definition of WLB (Syrek et al., 2011; Bauer-Emmel, 2007) builds on the effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). According to the effort-recovery model (Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006; Meijman & Mulder, 1998), recovery is a process of psychophysiological relaxation (e.g., breaks at work, sleep, reading a book), which is the opposite of the activation of the psychophysiological systems during effort-related activities. After successful recovery, the psychophysiological system returns to the initial level before the exertion. COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) assumes that individuals strive to protect, conserve, and build up their resources. Resources are seen as a means to attain goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Individuals are proactively driven to invest resources in activities that meet their preferences and produce a resource gain. To conclude, when applying these theories to WLB, balancing stressful and restful activities and the importance of building up resources is vital for achieving satisfaction with WLB (Syrek et al., 2011).

Recovery from Work

For a satisfying WLB, Bauer-Emmel (2007) emphasized regularly counterbalancing demanding and challenging times with times of resting and relaxing. Recovery from work describes the process of temporarily removing oneself physically and/or psychologically from work demands to replenish resources that were used during stressful times (Meijman & Mulder, 1998; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) established four

recovery experiences: Psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control. Psychological detachment and relaxation are effective in restoring personal resources, such as energy and self-regulatory resources (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Having a sense of mastery and control during off-job time permits new personal resource gains, such as self-efficacy (Hobfoll, 1989). Recovery processes protect against the negative effects of heavy job demands, such as health complaints, exhaustion, and impaired job performance (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2014). Besides mentally distancing from work, engaging in physical exercise and sleep are important recovery activities, resulting in a state of feeling recovered. A state of recovery is the result of “having one’s resources successfully replenished after a period of rest” (Binnewies et al., 2009, p.67). Studies have shown that feeling highly recovered in the morning facilitates engaging in proactive and productive work behavior, as it provides resources, such as energy or self-regulatory resources (Binnewies et al., 2009; Hahn et al., 2012). Unfortunately, when individuals face high levels of job demands, they tend to ruminate after work is done, engage in compensatory work effort, or skip important recovery opportunities. The recovery paradox describes that recovery processes are neglected when needed most, i.e. when work demands are high (Bennett et al., 2018; Sonnentag, 2018). Sonnentag (2018) calls for researching concrete behaviors, strategies, and influencing factors to resolve the recovery paradox.

Spouses have a strong influence on recovery experiences (Park & Fritz, 2015), especially when being work-linked (Park & Haun, 2017; Walter & Haun, 2020). Receiving recovery support from one’s partner (e.g., “to relax or do relaxing things” or “to forget about work”) is positively related to the other partner’s recovery experiences (psychological detachment, relaxation, and mastery experiences). According to COR, providing resources to the spouse is seen as a strategic long-term resource investment to stabilize the partnership and pave the way for further resource gains (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2002).

WLB and Recovery in Copreneurs

SBOs face different challenges in creating a WLB than employees due to the diverse contextual characteristics of their work and their family life. First, they do not have a supervisor who is often seen as a facilitator for WLB (Clark, 2000). Second, they do not have any organizational requirements regarding break times and working hours. Creating a WLB is therefore a self-managed task for SBOs. Having flexible and permeable boundaries while being able to decide where and when to work can be beneficial to WLB, as it helps to allocate resources across life domains and enables spillover of resources from the private to the work domain. For example, several studies have shown that spousal or family support is a resource that facilitates the work-family balance and subjective well-being of SBOs (Gudmunson et al., 2009; Helmle et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2020).

However, owning a business is also a threat to well-being, when recovery experiences, such as being able to detach, are systematically neglected (Taris et al., 2006). Having high levels of autonomy also involves taking a number of decisions (e.g., deciding where, when, and how to work) and can turn into an additional demand that drains personal resources (Bredehöft et al., 2015). Generally, small business research highlights that an “always-on” mentality is not conducive to health and well-being-related outcomes (e.g., Wach et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2019). Copreneurs may have an even more difficult time detaching (Helmle, 2009; Helmle et al., 2014), as their partner can become a trigger for business-related thoughts.

Psychological detachment (Karabinski et al., 2021) and WLB (Althammer et al., 2021; Michel et al., 2014) can successfully be trained. However, small business owners are difficult to reach for health interventions (Hogg et al., 2021) and suitable solutions to address the challenges of this particular target group are lacking (Williamson et al., 2021). Therefore, Williamson and colleagues (2021) recently demanded “to move the focus of

scholarly inquiry from *documenting* the well-being of entrepreneurs, toward identifying and implementing *solutions* to help people thrive” in their own business (p. 1310).

Ways to enhance WLB and Recovery

In the following section, I present ways on how copreneurs can enhance their WLB and their recovery. First, I present the concept of WLB crafting and introduce a theoretical framework on how to study copreneurs WLB crafting. Next, I propose a couple coaching as a suitable intervention for copreneurs.

WLB Crafting

Studies that focus on individuals as active agents crafting their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), their leisure (Petrou & Bakker, 2016), their non-work time at home (Demerouti et al., 2020), their general off-job recovery-related experiences (de Bloom et al., 2020) or their WLB (Caringal-Go et al., 2022; Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Sturges, 2012) are on the rise. Crafting strategies are self-initiated, goal-oriented, and proactive, aiming at more meaningful experiences in the respective domain. The original concept of job crafting is already well established in the current literature (for a review see Zhang & Parker, 2019) and perceives individuals as proactive agents within their professional role, altering their tasks, cognitions, and social relations to create an environment that fits their personal preferences (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

A new strand of literature suggests that crafting occurs not within just one domain, but also across life domains (de Bloom et al., 2020; Demerouti et al., 2020; Sturges, 2012). Sturges (2012) introduced *WLB crafting* as proactive, goal-oriented, and self-initiated activities to shape boundaries and manage WLB experiences within and across various life domains. She distinguishes between physical, cognitive, and relational WLB crafting. Physical crafting entails adjusting temporal and locational aspects, for example, expanding or shortening one's working day when required or protecting private time. Cognitive crafting involves individuals redefining their concept of WLB. They tend to give meaning

to their work or set priorities that determine their time and energy invested. Relational WLB crafting refers to managing and using relationships at work and at home to secure and reinforce WLB. Examples include delegating tasks in work-related relationships or receiving understanding and support from family in friends in out-work relationships (Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Sturges, 2012).

A concept akin to WLB crafting is *boundary work tactics* (Kreiner et al., 2009). Boundary work is concerned with how people negotiate the demands between work and home by integrating or separating roles. Hence, it evinces overlaps with physical and cognitive WLB crafting when individuals limit their work time or change the location to work without interference. When a person engages in WLB crafting, boundary work tactics might be used to create a segmentation between a work and a nonwork domain or a certain activity. However, WLB crafting goes beyond and emphasizes creating meaningful or counterbalancing experiences according to one's needs and preferences.

The original work of Sturges (2012) on WLB crafting has its theoretical foundation in the role and identity-based job crafting approach of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). De Bloom and colleagues (2020) built upon this work by suggesting studying off- and on-job Crafting in an *integrative needs model of crafting* by using the two-process model of needs (Sheldon, 2011) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) with need satisfaction as a driver for crafting efforts. The second large crafting research stream, including job crafting (Tims et al., 2012), leisure crafting (Petrou & Bakker, 2016), and home crafting (Demerouti et al., 2020) has its foundation within the job-demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Studying WLB through a resource lens is already well-practiced (e.g., Grawitch et al., 2010; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) and suggested to be suitable for SBOs (Michael-Tsabari et al., 2020). Therefore, I propose using COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) as the theoretical foundation of Sturges' (2012) WLB crafting concept for copreneurs. First, because of the proposition of people being active

agents and motivated to invest resources in behavior to protect, conserve, or gain resources. The concept therefore corresponds well to SBOs. They design their own work activities and have the necessary autonomy to craft conditions that facilitate WLB. According to COR, people proactively build a resource reservoir to help them enter positive gain spirals. Individuals with greater resources are more capable of orchestrating resource gains. Positive outcomes regarding WLB are expected when individuals and groups find a way to nurture their resources through individual or joint activities (Hobfoll, 2001), for example, through WLB crafting.

Second, COR theory emphasizes the social context in which resources are invested. Spouses act interdependently and harmonize their actions to protect and accumulate individual and shared resources (Hobfoll & Hobfoll, 1994). When copreneurs engage in WLB crafting, it does not happen in a social vacuum. Copreneurs not only share work but also family goals. As business partners, they jointly decide how to organize and handle work demands. As romantic partners, copreneurs establish strategies to create meaningful experiences together in their family domain. Thus, activities to create WLB may also happen in social collaboration (Hirschi et al., 2019). Further, a person's crafting is presumed to seek and use resources. Others, such as the spouse, may lose those resources and face temporal detriments (e.g., less support or less time for recovery).

Copreneurs unique WLI offers an inviting research opportunity to advance our knowledge of how couples craft WLB. Yet, WLB crafting has only been examined in employees and has not been adapted to SBOs. Research exploring the dyadic actions in creating WLB is also missing. This dissertation, therefore, investigates in two studies the concept of WLB crafting in copreneurs and aims to investigate which strategies they are effectively using to create WLB. First, I propose using an explorative qualitative approach, in which both partners are interviewed and invited to tell and discuss their strategies to manage demands, set boundaries, and ensure recovery. To this end, WLB crafting in all its

complexity can be investigated and a wide variety of strategies can be uncovered. Second, I suggest studying more specifically a particular WLB crafting behavior and its interdependencies in an analytic framework, that captures intra- and inter-individual effects in the couple's partnership: the actor-partner-interdependency model (Kenny et al., 2006). As crafting behavior is likely to fluctuate from day to day (Petrou et al., 2012) and to identify short-term resource-gains, a diary study is a useful approach to reflect the dynamics over time.

Couple Coaching for Copreneurs

When recovery-related behaviors are not yet well-habituated, coaching can be a suitable intervention to develop a mindset and entrain behavioral intentions to reach self-set goals. The International Coaching Federation (2022) defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential". Greif (2008) defines coaching as systematic and intensive facilitation of results-oriented problem-reflection and self-reflection. Individuals or groups are counseled to achieve self-congruent goals or deliberate self-development. The counseling and psychotherapy of mental disorders are excluded from coaching.

The effectiveness of coaching in the organizational context is well-researched and leads to various positive outcomes, such as well-being and performance (Jones et al., 2016, (Theeboom et al., 2013). Although the coaching effectiveness research has significantly been professionalized within the past years, only a few studies paid attention to the context and mechanisms of change that facilitate coaching success. Jones and colleagues (2016) highlighted boundary conditions for coaching success within organizations, for example, coaching was more effective when blending face-to-face with e-coaching. Furthermore, inspired by psychotherapy research, the working alliance between coach and client was found to be a vital success factor for effective coaching (Graßmann et al., 2019).

In times of increasingly blurred boundaries for many working individuals, coaching topics have evolved from pure business coaching to life coaching issues. Life coaching involves working on professional activities in the overall context of life. This includes topics such as life management for dual-career couples and WLB (Schreyögg, 2013).

For SBOs finding suitable interventions to enhance recovery from work and WLB are demanded (Williamson et al., 2021). WLB and recovery experiences affect both the professional and private domains. Setting goals to enhance, for instance, recovery, is highly individual and dependent on the current life circumstances. Thus, an individualized approach via coaching instead of standardized training or group counseling is suggested. It suits SBOs because of their psychological characteristics, such as the need for autonomy and achievement and their action-oriented and goal-setting behaviors (Conte, 2002; Kotte et al., 2020). Since SBOs often work together with their spouse in their own business, reaching recovery-related goals, for example unwinding during lunch breaks or together in the evenings, is dependent on how well the spouses collaborate and support each other (e.g., Hobfoll & Hobfoll 1994; Nowack, 2017; Park & Haun, 2017). Therefore, we propose a couple coaching to be a suitable intervention format in the context of copreneurs.

Summaries of the studies

The core of this dissertation contains three studies conducted with small business copreneurs. They are linked by the following assumptions. First, I build on COR theory, assuming that personal and interpersonal resources are important when creating WLB and recovery. Second, WLB and recovery are not something that happens by accident. Work-life balance and recovery opportunities can be actively crafted through certain actions and promoted by a coaching intervention. Third, people do not craft their WLB in a social vacuum. Their initiation of changes happens in the interdependence of their partnership.

Study I - At the heart of family businesses: how copreneurs craft work-life balance

With an interview study, I explored WLB crafting strategies that copreneurs use to establish a satisfactory WLB. It was found that couples optimize their work practices and conditions as well as craft recovery opportunities. Moreover, these strategies were individually reported but also jointly developed. Spousal social support, both at work and during leisure time, appears to be a key resource in crafting (joint) recovery opportunities for satisfying WLB. The article documents examples and frequencies for physical, cognitive, and relational crafting on both, individual and dyadic levels. The next steps were to examine if specific strategies are indeed related to WLB.

Study II - Honey, let's have a date night! Actor and partner effects in crafting work-life balance

The second study built upon the findings of the interview study and examined the creation of joint recovery opportunities. In a diary study, I investigated couple quality time crafting (CQTC) as a WLB crafting strategy. Further, I examined whether CQTC is influenced by the resource state of recovery (SREC) in the morning. Considering the interdependencies in copreneurs' strategies, actor and partner effects of SREC on CQTC and CQTC on WLB were examined. It was found that both men's and women's WLB benefitted from their CQTC on a general and daily basis. However, on days when men show CQTC, it decreases women's WLB. Only when men feel recovered in the morning, do both partners report more engagement in CQTC on that day. The findings indicate gender-specific effects and that couples could improve in organizing their valuable shared time together for the sake of their private relationship as well as their business.

Study III - Blended Health Coaching for Work-linked Couples: Coaches'

Intervention Fidelity and Empathy Matter!

In the third study, we examined the implementation process and outcomes of a blended couple coaching intervention to promote recovery and work-life balance. The

evaluation used a mixed-method approach and an adapted study design approach (Randall et al., 2007). Generally, the intervention was effective in enhancing copreneurs' detachment and WLB after the coaching has ceased. When the coaches delivered the intervention as intended, their clients' intervention receipts, affinity for technology, spousal support, result-oriented self-reflection, and positive affects predicted their coaching success. Therefore, the study not only describes an effective way for copreneurs to increase their WLB, but also provides clarity about the circumstances (coach behavior) under which the intervention works. To our best knowledge, this is the first intervention study offered in the context of occupational health promotion that include the life partner.

The three studies are enclosed in the appendix. Due to copyright reasons, the articles are presented in their final manuscript version and not in the formatted print version of the journal.

General Discussion

Over the past decades, research has shown that WLB and recovery have various positive connections to job performance, well-being, and family satisfaction for SBOs. Yet still, research that considers the social context of SBOs, i.e., the spouse, and ways to enhance WLB and recovery in SBOs are scarce but highly demanded (Williamson et al., 2021). The present dissertation aimed to tackle the question of what small business copreneurs can do to enhance WLB and recovery from work. I utilized established theories and concepts from general WLB and coaching literature and applied them to the context of small business copreneurs. This dissertation provided answers by following two approaches: first, I applied and sharpened the concept of WLB crafting in boundaryless environments. The different WLB crafting strategies were explored in an interview study, and the original concept of WLB crafting was expanded and adapted for copreneurs. The diary study focused on crafting behavior within the partnership and showed for whom

couple quality time crafting is enhancing WLB. Second, we studied if and why couple coaching is a suitable measure to enhance WLB and recovery for copreneurs.

The following section discusses the theoretical and practical implications. I continue by highlighting the practical implications of all three studies. This dissertation closes with an outlook and recommendations on how to proceed in studying copreneurs WLB and recovery.

Theoretical Implications

I first present the theoretical implications for WLB crafting and illustrate examples with Tom and Anna. Second, I discuss the theoretical implications for the presented couple coaching.

WLB Crafting

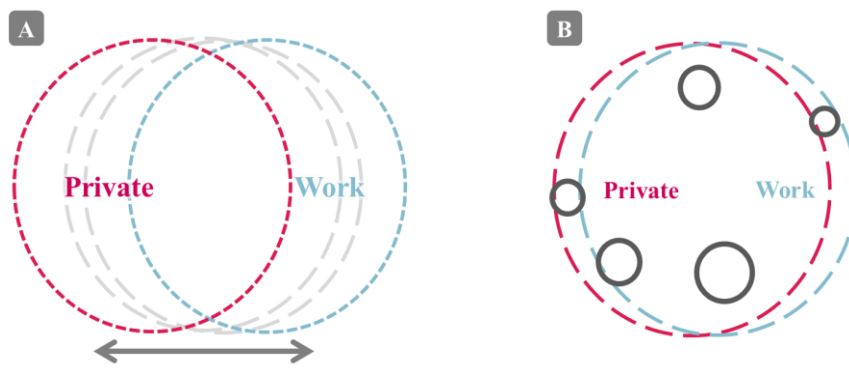
By applying COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), I provided a theoretical framework that guides our understanding, of how and why people engage in WLB crafting. This theoretical approach also allowed to study the interdependencies in strategies and exchange of resources (Hobfoll & Hobfoll, 1994; Hobfoll, 2001, 2002). The first study sharpened the concept of WLB crafting in boundaryless environments by following a qualitative, explorative approach. The second study built on this and examined a promising strategy in more detail: couple quality time crafting. I investigate its intra- and interindividual relations to WLB and state of recovery in a diary study, to capture its short-term dynamics.

Copreneurs' WLB Crafting is complex. WLB crafting contains strategies to (a) set boundaries to protect against resource drain and (b) create opportunities in the work and nonwork domain to conserve and nourish resources (Figure 1). Copreneurs engage in setting boundaries between domains to reduce conflicts between work and non-work life by stopping spillovers and role blurring. For example, Tom and Anna agreed to stop talking about the business after 8 pm and regularly remind each other if work-related talk slips out. Further, on Sundays, Tom automatically redirects emergency calls to another

business in his neighborhood. Study I also highlights the blurring of boundaries to enable resource spillover (e.g., spousal support) or combine pleasant with less preferred activities. For example, once a month Tom and Anna are going out for a nice dinner to talk about work-related affairs. Those strategies are in line with boundary work tactics (Kreiner et al., 2009) and boundary management aiming to integrate or separate the work and non-work domain (Ashforth et al., 2000; Ezzedeen & Zikic, 2017).

Figure 1

Macro- and Microdomain WLB Crafting



However, WLB crafting is more than boundary management (Sturges, 2012) and WLB is more than the absence of conflicts (Carlson et al., 2009). Besides separating or integrating domains, creating opportunities for meaningful experiences at work and during leisure were found. Copreneurs reported that while being physically and mentally in one domain, they engage in crafting undisturbed working phases or undisturbed relaxing experiences (microdomain crafting). For example, when Tom is in the business and need focus time, he hangs out a sign at his door and redirects phone calls to Anna or his employees. Creating those microdomains is not just a preventive measure for interference other domain interference, it is also a protection of the same domain and same role resource drain. And beyond that, it creates an opportunity for resource conserving and gaining experiences. The spouse can act as a gatekeeper and support the partners microdomains. For example, Anna likes to do online yoga classes every Monday and

Thursday evening. She makes sure that her phone is turned off and she asks Tom to entertain their kids during her practice.

Study II highlights the importance of creating joint recovery opportunities for WLB and contributes to understanding the role of resources in the daily process of resource conservation and accumulation. The diary study showed that WLB can be increased via CQTC intra-individually for both men and women. For example, when Tom suggests having a date night, his WLB was also higher on that given day. However, Anna's WLB was lower on that particular day, indicating that she is more satisfied with her WLB when (1) engaging in activities that she planned and where she is in control or (2) when she is doing something without Tom.

The conceptualization of CQTC as a day-level phenomena allowed to show that feeling fresh and recovered in the morning lead to CQTC as it indicates available resources to be invested in other resource gaining activities (Binnewies et al., 2009). When Tom feels recovered in the morning, he is more likely to plan a date night which in turn was found to be vital to his WLB. However, this hint of a positive resource gain spiral was only found for the male copreneur. Resource gain spirals develop very slowly (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In order to fully depict gain spirals in the sense of COR theory, other evaluation methods and a longer time frame are needed to prove that resources are lower at the beginning than at the end of the assessment period.

The study has also shifted the focus from work-related behavior to relationship behavior in WLB crafting. Until now, the focus of WLB crafting has mainly been on shaping conditions and cognitions at work (e.g., reducing working hours) under the assumption that this will release resources for leisure or relationships. However, this approach neglects that recreational time, whether individual or quality time with the family, also needs to be shaped. A mere decline of work demands does not automatically lead to resource-building activities, but at most to resource restoration (Meijman &

Mulder, 1998). For example, even if Anna manages to get out of the office in time and is not talking with Tom about business-related topics, crashing every day on the couch watching Netflix is not satisfying her desire to feel close to Tom and experience something new and exciting together.

Interdependence in strategies

So far, WLB Crafting is conceptualized as individual practice, benefitting the individual (Caringal-Go et al., 2022; Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Sturges, 2012). Based on the present findings, I suggest that WLB Crafting in couples is not just individual but can be differentiated on two continuums: First, from individual actions to dyadic actions, i.e., who is taking the action. Second, who is the target of the crafting and experiencing the result of the action (resource drain, protection, or accumulation).

Figure 2.

Independencies and Interdependencies in WLB Crafting

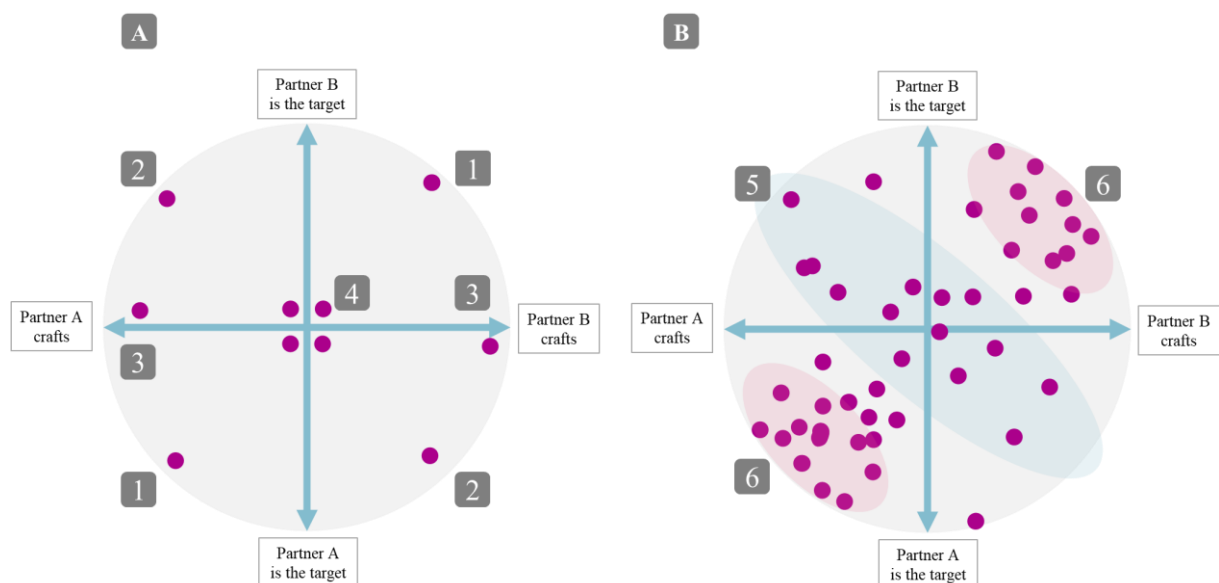


Figure 2 represents the two dimensions along which crafting strategies can be distinguished. The horizontal line depicts the crafting behavior of partner A or B. In the middle, both partners act. Towards both ends, the crafting actions become increasingly individual. The vertical line represents the person who is the target of the crafting. Again,

the middle represents that both are affected, towards the end, only one person is affected. In the left picture (A) the numbered dots represent different kinds of crafting behavior. (1) One partner is acting, and the same person is targeted, which is typical for physical or cognitive WLB crafting, for example, Tom is setting recovery higher on his priority list or starting early in the morning to work to avoid disruptions and finding his flow. (2) One partner is acting, and the other is affected by either being asked for support, for example when Tom asks Anna to block telephone calls (relational crafting,) or one partner is acting, and the other benefits by receiving support, for example, when Tom offers to entertain the children during Anna's yoga sessions (supportive crafting,). (3) One person is acting, but both are affected, for example when Anna initiates and plan a date night (couple quality time crafting). (4) Both partners are acting with the same goal, and both are affected (dyadic crafting). For example, when Tom and Anna divide their labor according to strengths and preferences or agree on not talking about the business after 8 pm. Part B of the picture highlights the individual and inter-personal actions, with (5) being the more interdependent to dyadic strategies and (6) the more individual ones.

Different crafting strategies may also lead to different outcomes at the WLI. The latest research on WLB stresses the balance construct to be multidimensional, including (a) *balance satisfaction* as a self-centered attitude toward resource allocation and (b) *balance effectiveness* as an interdependent self-evaluation of fulfilling of role-expectations and behaviors that are negotiated and shared with one's partner or family (Casper et al., 2017; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Wayne et al., 2017, 2022). Future research could deepen our understanding of which strategies leads to which specific outcome of WLB. The individual WLB crafting actions could be stronger linked to WLB satisfaction, as they compromise mainly self-centered cognitive crafting and individual work and recovery-related adjustments. When others are involved, and strategies are interdependent WLB crafting could be more strongly related to WLB effectiveness.

Couple Coaching

The couple coaching presents a highly demanded, innovative coaching approach for copreneurs that increases WLB and psychological detachment. The evaluation of the coaching is based on a realist evaluation approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), which intends to provide answers such as why are interventions working, for whom, and under which circumstances. Applying the implementation process model (Nielsen & Randall, 2013) we investigated coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy as implementation process factors. When the coaches delivered the intervention as intended, the assumed mechanism of change (result-oriented self-reflection, spousal support, and positive affects) predicted the clients' coaching success.

The coaching was successful when coaches stimulated result-oriented self-reflection in their clients. *Self-reflection* describes conscious reflection related to the client's self-concept, values, goals, strengths and weaknesses, and individual behavior and experience. *Result-orientation* describes that the focus is always on pursuing a concrete outcome, for instance, new insights or plans for changing one's feelings and actions (Greif, 2008; Greif et al., 2012). Especially the fourth coaching session is crucial to develop concrete strategies to reach WLB-related goals. When the coach delivered the fourth session as intended, clients were first asked to report on their goal-promoting behavior that were already successful. Secondly, new strategies for challenging situations were subsequently developed and clients were encouraged in planning WLB crafting behavior.

The coaching also works, because of its social embeddedness. Although the coaching aims to individually enhance recovery and WLB, the changes happen in the presence, support, and coordination with one's partner. Drawing upon goal systems theory in relationship research (Orehek & Forest, 2016) and the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002) spousal social support during coaching was the most significant mechanism of change (Busch et al., 2021). Involving the partner in WLB enhancing activities is prone to enhance

transfer. When coaches delivered the intervention as intended, they actively engaged the partners to support each other and to plan actions to facilitate the other partners' WLB-related activities.

When coaches delivered the intervention as intended, the clients' positive affect predicted goal attainment and coaching satisfaction, i.e., clients were more successful in pursuing their WLB-related goals. When setting a goal, a strong positive affect indicates self-congruence or intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kuhl et al., 2015). One reason for the recovery paradox to occur is that high state negative affect throughout the day hinders individuals to ultimately engage in recovery related activities (Sonnentag, 2018). Therefore, setting and pursuing goals that induce high positive affects can provide an affective counterbalance and help individuals to pursue their goals even under unfavorable conditions.

Practical Implications

The present dissertation addresses issues that are highly relevant for consultants and intermediaries, policymakers, organizations, and, of course, copreneurs and couples in boundaryless environments. Family business consultants are already aware of the unique work dynamics of coworking partners in their working relationship. The results of the present studies suggest that they should focus on the couple dynamics and integrate the resources spouses can provide. A good couple's relationship is also likely to positively affect their business and may enhance business success (McDonald et al., 2017). The spouse can also be used as a driver for innovation, especially when entering an established business. Family business consultants could challenge the traditional division of labor and focus more on a dynamic division according to preferences and strengths. Further, spouses can function as boundary keepers and help each other to create opportunities for working efficiently and for creating recovery opportunities. Therefore, it is preferable to cultivate an open dialog about their needs, wishes, and desires regarding WLB.

Couple consultants, who are already good at helping couples express their needs, collaborate, and make compromises, should be aware of the unique challenges at the WLI when having a romantic and professional partnership. They can instrumentalize the partners as a transfer-enabling resource in behavior change and they could apply the idea of creating individual or shared recreational microdomains in collaboration. Further, consultants or coaches should be aware of core components and theoretical foundations of their coaching approach.

Providers of health interventions for small businesses can draw inspiration from the results, especially concerning the reach of SBOs and the design of interventions. We reached craft businesses through organizations and individuals they trusted. Important incentives were the overall program in which the coaching was embedded. This included a psychological risk assessment and a team training. Although women could not be empirically confirmed as a door opener, the concept involving the partner did prove to be a significant impact factor (Busch et al., 2021). Health insurance funds and other providers of health intervention services should therefore pay more attention to the social context of interventions and embed them in individuals working or private life, especially to enhance transfer and adherence.

Chambers and official representatives of the skilled crafts sector have already recognized WLB as a success factor for future generations and as an answer to counteracting the shortage of skilled workers (Daiber, 2014). Nevertheless, there is a need for highly visible role models. A regional mentoring program could promote the exchange of experience between the old and new generations of owners. To ensure that health promotion is not the responsibility of individual companies, regional alliances could be formed, e.g., company neighborhoods, to address health promotion issues in collaboration.

Insight from the interviews and the coaching recordings made it obvious that one reason for SBOs' high work demands is related to high bureaucratic requirements.

Policymakers should promote digitalization, the expansion of the broadband network, especially in rural areas, lean processes for controlling and personnel administration, and support businesses in the acquisition and use of supporting software.

Introducing WLB measures are a core task of human resources departments in larger companies. Enabling structures to make work more flexible, introducing technologies that disable e-mail notifications and phone calls after work hours, and offering sports and wellness activities at the workplace are just a few examples. WLB crafting can be seen as complementary individual actions that supports the implementation of the organizational guidelines and that make use of the offers. Ultimately, it stimulates new bottom-up ways on how organizations can shape WLB.

The presented coaching, as well as WLB crafting can be an answer how to overcome the recovery paradox (Sonnentag, 2018). Copreneurs can become aware of their strategies and compare them with the reported ones. They can also start a conversation about possible joint strategies or support wishes if they see their partner as a key figure in their WLB. Couples who want to embark on the adventure of becoming copreneurs should take their relationship and their recovery seriously right from the start by embracing it as a success factor in their life and their business.

The results of our studies also have implications for dual-earner couples in general. Because of the increased use of home-office as a measure to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus and remote work as the new normal, the work-life boundaries of dual-earner couples become increasingly blurred. Scholars investigating the impacts of the “new normal” work on WLB, recovery, and health should take into consideration what we already know about couples who are accustomed to working together. Couples experiencing this boundaryless situation may find inspiration in the reported WLB crafting strategies.

Avenues for future research

Research on WLB crafting has moved on over the past few years resulting in several concepts and different theoretical foundations (Caringal-Go et al., 2022; de Bloom et al., 2020; Demerouti et al., 2020; Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018). Integrating and differentiating the research streams is a challenge for upcoming research projects.

In all studies, we had a homogenous sample. The couples were middle-aged, had grown-up children, and divided their work traditionally. Those characteristics are typical for the majority of the current copreneurs in the craft trade. However, generalizability to the new upcoming generation of copreneurs could be limited. Therefore, research on younger couples, with childcare responsibility and non-traditional gender-stereotypical roles is required. The theoretical approach of WLB crafting as well as the coaching concept can be transferred to other target groups, e.g., couples who are experiencing a similar boundary dissolution. To address this issue, I have conducted a diary study on 49 couples during the COVID-19 lockdown measures in 2020. I hypothesize that working from home together with your partner is negatively affecting detachment from work. However, when couples proactively engage in CQTC, it may buffer the negative effects.

The results of the presented diary study still leave many questions open in terms of the gender-specific effects in the antecedents and outcomes of WLB crafting. In order to avoid a male-dominated view on how SBOs create WLB, future research should keep the following questions in mind: How do women better benefit from the support of their partners? Do individuals in the owner role use different WLB crafting strategies? Does the same WLB crafting concept fit all genders, but different patterns emerge depending on which role is dominant?

The latest studies on WLB (Wayne et al., 2022) propose a separation of WLB satisfaction and WLB effectiveness. In our definition, the construct integrated both aspects and is based on the definition and a scale that has been well tested in Germany (Syrek et

al., 2011). Nevertheless, WLB effectiveness seen as being interdependent and therefore a suitable outcome for couples experiencing high interdependencies in their life.

The literature on success factors in coaching is still in its infancy. Therefore, building on the presented blended couple coaching, many interesting research questions emerge. First, planning future behaviors that overcome the status quo is a key success factor in coaching. If coaches guide their clients to formulate crafting strategies in terms of their WLB or recovery goal, this should have a positive impact on coaching outcomes, i.e., goal attainment or change in WLB. Research suggests that different crafting strategies appear to complement each other (Kreiner et al., 2009; Sturges, 2012). Hence, it is assumed that a greater diversity of strategies is a better mechanism of change rather than very homogeneous strategies. Currently, I am rating episodes of the coaching in which successful strategies are reported and future strategies to reach the goal are planned. Second, the working alliance between coach and coachee is already well-established as a mechanism of change (Graßmann et al., 2019). Couple therapy research has already acknowledged, that the working alliance changes when there is a third person involved (Anderson & Johnson, 2010; Pinsof, 1989). Therefore, future research on couple coaching should investigate the working alliance in triadic coaching settings. Scholars may examine the different qualities in the two coach-coachee working alliances and compare them to the coachee-coachee working alliance and test the links in coaching outcomes. Further, a fine-grained behavioral analysis approach by using video data could inform which behaviors signify the working alliance in a triadic setting (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015).

Third, in times of increasing digitalization and automatization in coaching and interventions in general, the couple coaching is also now available in a purely online version. Future research should examine the effectiveness and the mechanisms of change in an online setting and compare it to the blended version.

To conclude, given the results found in this dissertation and the most current research trends, a great variety of new research opportunities are emerging. Concerning the developments in society (e.g., demographic change and diversity) and the changing nature of work (e.g., digitalization and remote work), finding effective and health-promotive approaches on how organizations, teams, families, and individuals can deal with those challenges remains a major mission for researchers.

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Appendix

- I. Study I - At the heart of family businesses: how copreneurs craft work-life balance
- II. Study II - Honey, let's have a date night! Actor and partner effects in crafting work-life balance
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**At the heart of family businesses:
How copreneurs craft work-life balance**

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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to understand how experienced copreneurs of small family businesses (SFB), as the smallest unit and heart of SFB, may create work-life balance (WLB). Copreneurs evince highly intertwined life domains and often struggle to respire while managing their high business demands.

Design/methodology/approach - In this couple interview study with 18 experienced copreneurial couples of SFB ($N= 36$), we investigated strategies copreneurs use to create their WLB by merging a resource perspective (Hobfoll, 1989) with the concept of WLB crafting (Sturges, 2012).

Findings – A key strategy in copreneurial couples was the structural establishment of microdomains, such as periods of personal resource recreation within a macrodomain (e.g. work) via individual physical and cognitive WLB crafting. Copreneurs used relational WLB crafting with a strong emphasis on seeking support and mainly to protect their microdomains by relying on their spouses as boundary keepers. Women more often expressed the importance of health and time for respite, as cognitive WLB crafting, and they were more active in creating (joint) recovery opportunities. Dyadic WLB crafting strategies were used when goal congruency for work or private activities was high.

Originality/value - This research applies WLB crafting research to the smallest unit of small family businesses, namely copreneurs. The study provides in-depth insights into the strategies copreneurs of SFB use to create a satisfying WLB.

Keywords

copreneurs, family business, Work-life balance crafting, WLB, resources, couple interviews, qualitative research, small businesses

Research Paper

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Co-working couples who run their own business (Copreneurs, Barnett and Barnett, 1988) are a special form and the smallest unit of a family business (FB). Copreneurs share decision-making responsibilities, commitment to business success, and blur the boundaries between private and professional life (Fitzgerald and Muske, 2002). The management of their work-life interface (WLI) as being relevant for business success has gained attention in the last decades (Michael-Tsabari *et al.*, 2020; Venter, 2009; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Marshack, 1993). Some advantages of the highly intertwined life domains of copreneurs are the exchange of resources (e.g., spousal social support) and a better understanding of the working situation (Powell and Eddleston, 2016), which facilitates balancing life domains and subjective well-being for small family business owners (SFBO) (Gudmunson *et al.*, 2009; Helmle *et al.*, 2014; Leung *et al.*, 2020). We know from work-life balance (WLB) research that strong borders between life domains facilitate WLB satisfaction (Clark, 2000). However, this assumption reached fast its limits for people living in boundaryless environments (Ezzedeen and Zikic, 2017), as copreneurs do. In this paper, we present an interview study about how copreneurs of well-established small family businesses (SFB) create WLB. Along the recent call of Michael-Tsabari and colleagues (2020) to push the boundaries of our theoretical thinking when studying the WLI of SFBO, we explore proactive strategies to create WLB through two lenses, the crafting, and the resource lenses.

We contribute to the current FB literature and practice in three ways. First, we study how copreneurs of SFB create their WLB regarding the conservation, restoration, and exchange of resources by building on the WLB crafting concept of Sturges (2012) and the Conservation of Resources theory (COR, Hobfoll, 1989). COR is a prominent stress and motivational theory, linking resource investments to well-being and WLB (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). Second, we study gender differences in the use of individual WLB crafting strategies (Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Jurik *et al.*, 2019) following the suggestions of Micheal-Tsabari and colleagues (2020) to have a closer look at gender relations

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and when studying a sample with traditional gender roles (Busch *et al.*, 2010). Third, we study dyadic WLB crafting strategies considering the often dyadic or small group characteristic of work and family goals (Hirschi *et al.*, 2019).

How to craft work-life balance in Family Businesses?

General WLB research has highlighted the positive connections between WLB and well-being (e.g. Gravador and Teng-Calleja, 2018; Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003), recovery experiences (e.g. Barber *et al.*, 2019), and mental health (e.g. Haar *et al.*, 2014). WLB refers to one's satisfaction with all requirements arising from different life domains being fulfilled equally well. Stressful and restful activities to restore resources should be balanced (Syrek *et al.*, 2011). For copreneurs who share a professional and a romantic relationship within their own business, their roles are highly intertwined. Working interactions for copreneurs are also family interactions and vice versa. The pervasiveness of their business in both their work and nonwork lives may hinder their ability to enjoy replenishing activities (Wach *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we focus on behaviors and goals in daily life which are prone to be beneficial to create WLB, such as managing demands as well as enabling recovery experiences. Recovery experiences (e.g. detachment from work) are seen as powerful experiences to restore resources that have been used up during stressful times (e.g. Sonnentag, 2003; 2018). Insights from dual-earner couples identified the spouses' influence on well-being and recovery experiences (Park and Haun, 2017). Entrepreneurship research highlight that an 'always on' mentality is not conducive to health and well-being related outcomes (e.g. Williamson *et al.*, 2019, Wach *et al.*, 2020), but we still know little about how FBOs create structures and opportunities to ensure such experiences recurrently.

The WLB crafting concept

Using the job crafting concept (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), Sturges (2012) introduced the concept of WLB crafting by investigating young employed managers. WLB crafting describes proactive, goal-oriented, and self-initiated activities to shape boundaries

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and manage WLB in physical, cognitive, and relational ways. Physical factors can be shaped via temporal and locational adjustments, e.g. expanding or shortening one's working day, choosing an employer, or protecting private time. Individuals who craft their WLB cognitively tend to redefine their concept of WLB and prioritize one life domain. Relational WLB crafting refers to managing and using work-related and out-of-work relationships that provide resources, e.g. understanding or support (Sturges, 2012). A first cross-sectional study underpins the connection of these proactive behaviors (protecting private time and working efficiently) to subjective well-being (Gravador and Teng-Calleja, 2018). Several studies that conceptualize off-job crafting behavior (e.g. home crafting) in employee settings promise new perspectives on how to proactively create more meaningful experiences apart from the work domain (Demerouti *et al.*, 2019; De Bloom *et al.*, 2020).

SFBO face different challenges in crafting WLB than employees due to the distinct contextual characteristics of their work and their family life. SFBO do not have a supervisor, who is often seen as a gatekeeper of the WLI (Clark, 2000), nor do they have any predefined organizational requirements regarding break times and working hours. However, business owners, in general, demonstrate a high degree of resources, such as autonomy and flexibility (Stephan, 2018) and copreneurs access to spousal social support (Helmle *et al.*, 2014) may help to craft WLB.

The resource perspective on WLB crafting

We propose to merge the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) with the WLB crafting concept. People are motivated to conserve their current resources and to obtain new resources through investment (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). According to COR theory, resources can be anything that a person values: a) objects (e.g. a car), b) personal characteristics (e.g. self-efficacy), c) conditions (e.g. marriage), and d) energies (e.g. time). People proactively create circumstances that make resource gains more likely rather than waiting for a stressor to occur, forcing them to invest resources (Hobfoll,

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1989; 2002). In doing so, a resource reservoir can be built to help individuals enter a positive gain spiral. Thus, resources are seen as a means for goal attainment (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014), here, WLB. People are proactively driven to invest resources in preferred activities and diminish resource investments in nonpreferred tasks. Copreneurs may engage in proactive, goal-oriented behavior to manage their demands and enable resource replenishing activities for their own and their business' sake.

Copreneurs show high interdependencies in their goals and high exchange of interpersonal resources, such as support, open communication, and trust (Barnett and Barnett, 1988; Marshack, 1993), which may be beneficial for creating WLB (Michael-Tsabari *et al.*, 2020). Spousal social support offered to the owner of a copreneurial business is positively related to WLB (Helmle *et al.*, 2014) and beyond that conducive to the owner's job, family and life satisfaction, and mental health (Nguyen and Sawang, 2016; Leung *et al.*, 2020). As a result of copreneurs' romantic and professional partnerships, the exchange of spousal social support is expected to be a crucial resource in WLB crafting. Thus, our first research question is the following:

Research Question (RQ) 1: Which individual WLB crafting behaviors do copreneurs of SFB use?

Gender in WLB Crafting

The cultural context and kind of industry in which the couple establishes their business may also determine their resource investment, their distribution of labor, or management of work and home responsibilities (Busch *et al.*, 2010). Within copreneurs, who often follow a traditional division of labor, it is mostly men who are the official leaders and in charge of important business decisions, while women shoulder more home responsibilities (Jurik *et al.*, 2019). Research on gender differences in FB suggests that women struggle more in resource allocation by combining multiple roles compared to men and were more likely to intertwine tasks (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2001; Michael-Tsabari *et al.*, 2020). Job crafting literature stresses that

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women engage in increasing structural and social job resources more often compared to men (Rudolph *et al.*, 2017).

The benefits of spousal social support at the WLI may also differ by gender (Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Michael-Tsabari *et al.*, 2020). Male SBOs are more likely to be relieved of many obligations outside the business through the support of their spouse than female SBOs (Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Jurik *et al.*, 2019). Some women in copreneurial couples reported outsourcing of their home responsibilities as a helpful strategy (Jurik *et al.*, 2019). Thus, our second research question is:

RQ2: How do differences in the use of WLB crafting strategies between female and male copreneurs look like?

Dyadic WLB crafting

Copreneurs share not only work goals but also family goals which indicates a reciprocal relationship between the two domains (Combs *et al.*, 2020). As business partners, they jointly decide how to organize and address work demands which also impact their family life. As romantic partners, copreneurs establish strategies together in the family domain which is likely to impact their business relationship as well.

Thus, strategies to craft WLB may also occur in social collaboration (Hirschi *et al.*, 2019). Collaborative crafting, as a mutually reinforcing process towards achieving a shared goal, involves communication and negotiation about work organization and performance (Leana *et al.*, 2009). Those collaborative actions in crafting WLB could evince similar characteristics of other copreneurial decision-processes. Couples who are “on the same page”, i.e. have a high goal congruency and communicate about their ideas, actions, and problems, demonstrate higher venture quality (Jang and Danes, 2013). As family related-conflict management strategy within FB a recent review suggested collaboration as a win-win strategy (Qiu and Freel, 2020). Collaboration, however, is based on mutual trust, support, and notable time investment, thus it might be impractical as a quick response to a conflict but helpful as a

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proactive strategy in reaching family goals. To improve WLB, couples may establish a goal congruency and create conditions at work and at home that optimize their time use, recovery phases, and quality time with their family. Copreneurs' dyadic WLB crafting may be characterized by joint decision-making and support of actions, but both spouses do not necessarily demonstrate the actual crafting behavior (Tims *et al.*, 2013). This leads to our third research question:

RQ3: How do dyadic WLB crafting strategies among copreneurs of SFB look like?

Method

Qualitative research was indicated to understand the complex phenomena of how copreneurs of SFB create WLB (Micelotta *et al.*, 2020).

Participants

The first author interviewed 18 copreneurial couples ($N=36$) in a face-to-face setting with both partners together at the same time and place. After 15 couple interviews saturation of content was reached, which was verified by three additional couple interviews. Thus, we stopped further data collection. Table 1 illustrates the participants' characteristics and demographics. In 13 of 18 cases, businesses were owned and led by men; in five cases, ownership was shared. The average age of the participants was 55 years (male = 56, female = 54). All couples had children ($min = 1$, $max = 5$), while only two couples had underage children. Men reported more weekly working hours (60.2 hours) and working days (6.2 days/week) than their wives (43.3 hours and 5.3 days/week). Five women stated they worked part-time at the business (8 to 35 hours/week), two of whom were also yoga teachers (5, Jasmin; 11, Jennifer), and one of whom had another paid job (5, Jasmin).

Procedure

Copreneurs were recruited by associations of craftsmen and guilds in west and south Germany, who were part of a health intervention research project for SFB^[1]. All copreneurs were informed about the aim and the procedure of the interview study in advance. Participants

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agreed to partake in a 90-minute face-to-face interview focused on WLB. We used a semistructured episodic interview format (Flick, 2000). Participants were invited to talk about a series of personal situations, strategies, and problems in their work and private life domains. The questions focused on the individual and the couple's working life (e.g. demands, resources, collaboration, and conflicts at work). The second part covered their individual and shared leisure activities and family time. Additionally, strategies to engage in leisure activities and secure time for oneself and how these strategies were supported by the partner were investigated. At the end of the interview, participants were asked for advice on WLB for young couples and interventions related to health and WLB^[2].

Data analyses

Transcribed interviews were analyzed on a mixed procedure of deductive and inductive coding (Saldaña, 2013). The first coding cycle was aimed at identifying strategies the copreneurs used by inductively coding the material using process coding (Saldaña, 2013). While coding the interviews, we deductively sorted the identified codes for the initial framework based on the WLB crafting categories (Sturges, 2012): physical, cognitive, and relation crafting. After each interview, the codes were organized into subcategories. The subcategories were defined, combined, and redefined after each interview. This procedure was continued until each interview was coded with the final coding system^[3] (Saldaña, 2013).

The strategies coded within the physical crafting category were composed of two subcategories according to their goal: *optimizing the way of working* and *creating recovery experiences*. The subcategories of cognitive crafting needed to be adapted to the target group and describe the balancing act between the omnipresence of the business (*accepting being business owners*) and the need to indulge in recovery phases and valuing of resources (*emphasizing health, resources, and recovery*). We decided to divide relational crafting at the individual level into *providing social support* and *using social support*. We sorted the strategies mentioned by the person speaking to identify men's and women's strategies.

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Further, we added dyadic crafting categories. Dyadic physical, cognitive, and relational crafting entails strategies that involve collaborative actions. A strategy was considered dyadic if the other person was directly affected (e.g. having lunch together); if the interviewee used the plural form (“we”); or if the strategy concerned a shared attitude, goal, or behavior, as indicated by favorable verbal statements of the partner.

Twenty-five percent of the material was intensively edited together by the authors. The interrater reliability was .62 to .71 when all subcategories (containing individual and dyadic strategies) were included. All further interviews were coded by the first author. Demographics and context variables were assessed via a questionnaire before the interview started (table I).

Table I. Selected characteristics of participants.

	Couples	Age (m/f)	Years in Business (m/f)	Work h/week (m/f)	Trade	Empl oyees	FB+	H&O
1	Aaron ¹ & Tanja	50/49	17/16	60/20	Electrician	16		
2	Alex ¹ & Elisabeth	57/53	30/26	56/40	Construction	17	yes	yes
3	Daniel ¹ & Barbara ¹	52/49	16/16	60/60	Butcher	9	yes	yes
4	David ¹ & Alice ¹	50/46	20/20	60/60	Sanitation	11		yes
5	Eric ¹ & Jasmin	49/51	18/18	50/8	Electrician	7		
6	Jason ¹ & Olivia	61/54	33/5	60/20	Construction	5		
7	Kevin ¹ & Sarah	55/55	25/22	60/50	Construction	10	yes	
8	Lucas ¹ & Julia	51/55	23/23	60/60	Construction	8	yes	yes
9	Markus ¹ & Anna	56/54	24/24	60/50	Carpenter	14		
10	Max ¹ & Emma ¹	58/61	35/29	55/40	Locksmith	11	yes	yes
11	Mike ¹ & Jennifer ¹	57/55	28/45	70/60	Baker	14	yes	yes
12	Paul ¹ & Cathy ¹	54/53	39 ^a /39 ^a	55/58	Glass/Wood	20	yes	
13	Peter ¹ & Clara	63/64	35 ^b /35	65/45	Butcher	3	yes	yes
14	Rick ¹ & Sally	53/49	22/22	80/55	Sanitation	15		yes
15	Richard ¹ & Laura	60/53	33 ^c /33	50/20	Locksmith	10	yes	yes
16	Simon ¹ & Amber	60/60	33/21	65/35	Interior decorator	4		yes
17	Tim ¹ & Rebecca	66/64	41/41	60/40	Electrician	32	yes	
18	Thomas ¹ & Rita	59/56	34 ^d /34	58/55	Sanitary	18	yes	yes

Note. All names have been changed. Years in Business: the smaller number indicates the duration of copreneurship. FB+: other family members are employed in the business; H&O: Home & office same location.

¹ Legal owner of the business.

^{a,b,c,d} Legal owner since (a) 13 years; (b) 29 years; (c) 27 years; (d) 26 years.

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Findings

We first report the individual, self-targeted physical (a), cognitive (b) and relational (c) WLB crafting strategies differentiated between men (m) and women (w) (RQ1 & RQ2) Then, we report the findings towards RQ3, i.e. we present the dyadic physical (a), cognitive (b) and relational (c) WLB crafting strategies.

Individual WLB crafting of copreneurs of SFB differentiated by gender (RQ1 & RQ2)

Physical WLB crafting (a)

Participants adjusted physical and structural aspects by *optimizing the way of working (a1)* and *creating recovery opportunities (a2)*, to craft their WLB.

Optimizing the way of working (a1). The interviewees actively decided when, where, and how to work to manage task fulfillment and reduce demands. Only men expressed the necessity of isolating themselves during regular business hours. Working without disturbances comprised establishing boundaries for efficient time use, including by blocking customer calls (m:2,5,7,8), blocking off time slots in their calendar (m:8,10), or sealing themselves off by “*locking the doors*” (1, Aaron; 11,14).

An overall reduction in working hours in the business was used only by women to have enough resources to engage in paid and unpaid work (see table 1). Sally (14) decided to avoid stressful customer calls by shifting her working hours. However, her strategy does not result in a reduction of working hours:

I work long hours in the evening. I don't think it's too bad, because I'm not a morning person. We have an accountant who starts working at 7.30 a.m. and I usually don't start until 10 a.m. But I'm often working till 10 or 11 p.m. (14, Sally)

Expanding the resource invest in the business by working longer in the evening or on weekends to get work done with less distraction was a strategy frequently used by both women and men (f: 8,9,14,15; m: 2,9,10,14,15,17).

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I can only get things done here in the evening. Unfortunately, this has almost become common practice, because then there is no permanent disturbance. (2, Alex)

Further, participants consciously blur life domains by combining preferred activities (e.g. going on holiday) with less preferred activities (e.g. answering phone calls), otherwise, as Richard (15) stated: “going on a three-week holiday is not feasible”. The use of mobile devices allowed them to work anywhere they wanted (e.g. in the garden or on holiday).

On vacation, whether I'm at the beach or skiing or wherever, I have the phone with me. So I am permanently on standby. (1, Aaron)

Interviewees reported consciously broadening their areas of responsibility through additional training (f:4,7,8,9; m:1,8,16) and searching for new tasks and resources within the business (f:2,4,8). Women also noted pursuing an education that was unrelated to the business, such as yoga teacher training (5,11) or working as a consultant (11,17).

Participants adjusted physical and structural aspects not only by optimizing the way of working but also by *creating recovery opportunities*, to craft their WLB.

Creating recovery opportunities (a2). Creating circumstances that supported taking a break from work or engaging in relaxing or leisure activities were reported as necessary for increasing the likelihood of recovery experiences. In general, scheduled activities, such as having fixed dates for engaging in leisure activities, seemed to be a suitable solution to find time for respite.

Leisure activities only work with fixed dates. Otherwise, it is not feasible. When I know that a date is scheduled, I can arrange other events around it. (4, David)

Stable routines, choosing a sports class or group to attend on predefined days, or engaging in volunteer work helped the copreneurs to restore resources in their daily lives (f:1,2,5,6,8,11,12,14,17,18; m:2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,17,18). Participants found it helpful to establish commitments with friends and family as a form of creating recovery opportunities (f:4,5,6,12; m:5,11,12,17). For example, Alice (04) described how she uses her daughter's

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horse-riding lessons as a chance to get away from the business and spend time with her daughter. For Paul, the main motivation to engage in leisure is being picked up by his friends.

Every Saturday at 2 o'clock my friends will pick me up to cycle in the mountains, otherwise, I would stay at home. (12, Paul)

Some participants decided to reduce their engagement in leisure activities or voluntary work (f:3,15; m:3,5,9,15), to find some time to relax.

I was also in the choir once, which I decided to cancel because it was in the evening. That was too stressful for me. (3, Barbara)

Within this category, we also found interdependencies in the use of strategies. Women reported arranging childcare, domestic work, or leisure activities around the obligations of their husbands (1,2,5,6,18) to ensure they would spend the evenings together, whereas men reported ensuring they were present by consciously switching off their phone and not checking email (5,8,9). Participants also stated that they went on holiday alone (f:5,7,12; m:4,6,12). Others reported taking a nap and communicating their unavailability to the team during breaks (7,11). In addition to the physical crafting, which involved deciding when to leave work and how to manage workload during this time, relational crafting was also needed and a mindset, that features health and well-being as a priority.

Cognitive WLB crafting (b)

Participants individually crafted their WLB cognitively by *accepting being a business owner (b1)* and *emphasizing health, resources, and recovery (b2)*.

Accepting being a business owner (b1). Participants described cognitive adjustments that involved accepting the blurring of life domains and the demands of their work rather than constantly becoming agitated about these elements of their work (f:3,7,8,11,13,14; m:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,14,17,18).

The company is present at every meal which I don't find too bad. (8, Julia)

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Furthermore, they made compromises by sacrificing or postponing an “ideal” WLB in return for future benefits (f:14,16,17; m:14,17). Both men and women described the omnipresence of the business in their lives. In particular, men stated that since they decided to become a business owner (2,5,17,18), they must also solve the problems that arise and accept the high workload. Whereas some women noted, that they only work in the business to support their husband but not because it’s the job they learned or chose (2,5,13,14,16). Jasmin (5) reported that she did not like her task in the business at all (calculating and cleaning), but she gave meaning to these tasks by considering that she performed them for her husband and their business, which was similar to a “*child whom they developed and shaped together*”.

Emphasizing health, resources, and recovery (b2). Within this category, we identified two groups: participants who wanted to do more for their health but did not engage in such behavior, and those who translated their behavioral intention into actual behavior. Interviewees reported the importance of finding quality time for themselves and establishing strong boundaries (f:1,2,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,17; m:2,5,7,8,10,16,18).

It’s also important to do something for yourself. If you’re constantly together, you just need a different topic to talk about because at some point you’re so fed up, no matter how much you enjoy working together. (12, Cathy)

Some people knew that it was important but did not engage regularly in activities that would protect their health and replenish their resources (f:3,4,13,15,16; m:3,4,5,11,12,13,15). Jennifer and Mike (11) talked about finding your own safe space, “*a recreational island*” (11, Jennifer) where you can escape your stressful daily life. Whereas Jennifer uses various strategies to enter her island, her husband has not found a strategy yet.

It is easy to realize that you have to make a change but leaving the business behind and detaching is the difficulty. (11, Mike)

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Relational WLB crafting (c)

Relational crafting is characterized by *Using and providing spousal social support (c1)* and by *Using and providing (non-spousal) work-related support (c2)*. The individual strategies in each subcategory are described separately for the husband as the provider and the wife as the recipient of support, and vice versa.

Using and providing spousal social support (c1). Male owners asked their wives to take over leadership of the business while they participated in a solo holiday, leisure activity, or business trip (1,4,5,6,8,12,13). Women provided support beyond blocking phone calls and organizing information (6,8,10,14) and thereby acting as a gatekeeper for the partners' recovery experience or undisturbed working phases.

When the phone rings during our lunch break, I answer it, because the fewest calls are actually for me, and then I say: "He's not in the office" so that he can continue eating." (8, Julia)

All women performed the bulk of domestic work and some encouraged their husbands to take care of their health (5,8,17). They also asked for support to go on solo holidays (5,6,8,12) and engage in serious leisure (15) or training (4,5,11,17). Some women delegated nonpreferred tasks to their husbands (9,11,12). Men provided feedback and knowledge (2,5,6,7,9) and supported their wives in domestic work (1,3,4,8).

Due to my training, I had to leave for three to four days every month. David took on additional tasks and handle household duties. (4, Alice)

Using and providing work-related support (c2). The male interviewees reported delegating tasks to their employees to ensure their WLB and noted that they could rely on their teams (1,3,4,5,6,14,16). Networks were particularly useful to stay up to date (1,6,8,13,17,18), acquire new customers (2,5,10) and optimize work processes (2,9,14). Regarding providing support, men empowered their teams so that they could work more independently (1,2,5,8,16).

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I believe that strengthening the internal cooperation and the team, results in a much better workforce, meaning that you have the resources to do all the tasks. And therefore I have much less stress and need a little less recovery. (1, Aaron)

Some women described how they acted as a “feel-good manager” by listening to employees’ problems and taking care of health and social issues (2,5,8,14,15,16,17,18).

Dyadic WLB crafting strategies of copreneurs of SFB (RQ3)

Physical dyadic WLB crafting (a)

Optimizing the way of working (a1). Interviewees described designing the work itself. This strategy focused on cultural development or joint decision making about how to design the working day according to their needs.

We have now developed the strategy that we do not make any appointments before 9.00 a.m. [...] and during our lunch break before 2.00 p.m. We have to create these free time slots for ourselves. (10, Max & Emma)

The butcher shop owners closed their shop once a week in the afternoon to complete paperwork (2,13). Other strategies to manage life demands, compromising hiring a cleaning service (4,8), writing weekly schedules for lunch or tasks (3,10), or working together as a couple in general (6,14). For example, Jason started his business on his own while Olivia was working elsewhere in a leadership position. They reported how exhausting the evenings were when both had many things to talk through. They decided that Olivia would enter the business as a part-time employee.

It was important that my wife learn calculus as soon as possible to have a work area that she could complete independently without my supervision. (06, Jason & Olivia)

All couples reported they divided labor according to skills and preferences. Respecting the partner’s responsibilities was an ongoing task that was essential to save time and avoid conflicts. Participants adjusted their locations, such as by living close to the office to reduce

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travel time (see table 1), whereas other couples planned to move (4) or had already moved (16) to create more distance between work and home.

Creating recovery opportunities (a2) Copreneurs ensured that they could find respite every day by scheduling breakfast or lunch with the family or the whole team (1,2,8,10,12,14,18), spending time with their dog (4,7,8,9,10,12,14,15,16,18) or engaging in leisure activities together (2,9,10,15,18,17).

We are members of two orchestras. We have rehearsals twice a week, and on weekends, we also have concerts. (17, Tim & Rebecca)

For some couples, going on an annual holiday (1,2,5,8,11,14,17) or a short trip with their adult children (3,5) was high on their list of priorities. Engaging in these activities was a conscious, active decision and had to be planned. For example, Mike and Jennifer (11) needed to close their bakery to be able to take a week off together. Even if couples created conditions that made recovery more likely, rules to segment life domains (2,3,8,9,12,14,18) or protecting “*their reserved Sunday*” (5,10,11,16), were necessary to ensure recovery experiences.

We have a rule: not to speak about work after 7 pm. Occasionally if my wife is stressed, talk about work slips out, but then I say, “7 pm - no more work discussions for today”. (9, Marcus & Anna)

Cognitive dyadic WLB crafting (b)

Accepting being a business owner (b1) included goal congruency between spouses and expressed commitment and contentment with the terms and conditions under which they were working (1,2,3,4,7,8,11,14,15,16), indicating a shared copreneurial identity.

Many couples run small businesses as a team which is the only way to achieve 200 percent. It's simply more effective. (14, Rick & Sally)

Emphasizing health, resources, and recovery (b2). The couples reported a shared view of the importance of health and recovery experiences. The couples described such experiences

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as taking breaks from work (2,3,8,9,14,16,18), reducing the workload (5,6), or maintaining their mental tranquility (2,9) and saw it as relevant for their own, family, and business sake.

Alex: "You can work 24 hours round the clock if you want to, but you will not achieve more than if you work as we currently are. Therefore, we have to set limits to maintain our own private lives."

Elisabeth: "You have to fight for this." (2)

Relational dyadic WLB crafting (c)

Using and providing spousal social support (c1). Dyadic relational crafting included both the use and provision of resources but was further reported as taking the form of goal congruency or expressed reciprocity, and both spouses benefited from these strategies. Dyadic strategies involved pursuing the same goals and highlighted spouses' profound mutual trust (1,2,6,8,11,15,16,18). The partners supported each other by sharing their knowledge or acting as debate partners to discuss problems (1,5,6,9,11,12,15,16,17).

Problems with employees have a great impact on me. I take these problems home with me because I know we can talk about it and find solutions. That is a very valuable help. (5, Eric & Jasmin)

Some couples supported each other to spend time apart, either so that the business could continue operating (4,6,7,8,12) or so that the spouses would have something new to tell each other (3,5,11).

Using and providing work-related support (c2). Dyadic strategies entailed the couples providing resources to their teams by sending them to training, involving them in decision-making processes, or conducting teambuilding activities (1,4,5,12,16,17,18).

If we are busy at work or have private appointments, we know another business in our network whom we can ask to do our emergency service. (4, David & Alice)

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Copreneurs build up and nourish their professional networks to delegate tasks and share knowledge, tools, and material (1,4,8,9). Some couples asked other family members from time to time to help out in the business (2,3,8,10,14,16).

Discussion

In this present couple interview study with copreneurs of SFB, we investigated strategies that they use to create a satisfying WLB by drawing upon the WLB crafting concept (Sturges, 2012) and a resource perspective (Hobfoll, 1989). The copreneurs in our study reported using individual and dyadic physical and cognitive WLB crafting to segment their macro life domains (work and nonwork domains) and, particularly significant, to create microdomains, as opportunities for personal recreation, within their macrodomains.

Concerning relational WLB crafting, the results showed a strong emphasis on seeking support and building stable relationship bonds. Copreneurs used relational crafting mainly to protect their microdomains and relied on their spouses as boundary keepers. Copreneurs used dyadic WLB crafting strategies when goal congruency for business or private activities was high. Dyadic WLB crafting was characterized by joint decision making and the mutual support of actions.

Crafting microdomains as a key to create WLB in copreneurs of SFB

Several WLB crafting strategies aim at separating areas of life, for example establishing rules, such as not answering the phone in the evening, and involve the establishment of nonpermeable boundaries (Ezzedeen and Zikic, 2017). However, many interviewees reported that a general separation of macro life domains (e.g. work and family) was hardly possible. Work, family, and recreational goals can be achieved through the creation of small areas within a macrodomain, which we call microdomains. These microdomains can be, for example, undisturbed working phases as well as breaks from work that are truly used for recreation. Physical crafting is aimed at structurally establishing these microdomains through the planning of fixed times for activities and communication about one's availability. It seems

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vital for individuals to first develop a mindset (cognitive crafting) that engaging in activities to protect or build up new resources is important. Relational crafting is often used by the copreneurs to protect these microdomains.

Using and providing social resources – individual relational crafting

Relational WLB crafting was defined by Sturges (2012) as managing work and nonwork relationships to facilitate WLB, which includes, among others, delegating tasks and reducing or intensifying interactions with colleagues. Within our copreneur sample, we observed a strong emphasis on seeking spousal support and building stable relationship bonds. We found that copreneurs used relational crafting mainly to protect their microdomains and relied on their spouses as boundary keepers. For example, men described relying on the support of their wives in blocking phone calls. Requests for social support can improve the allocation of personal resources to foster WLB (Grawitch *et al.*, 2010). A business owner's realization that there is support available is itself beneficial for WLB since this realization cultivates relationship bonds and contributes to positive emotions (Hobfoll, 2002). The provision of support for the spouse is seen as a strategic resource that is invested to stabilize the partnership and pave the way for further resource gains. We suggest that for copreneurs, spousal support is a key factor in crafting WLB. A recent study on SME owners supports this notion, particularly concerning emotional support (Leung *et al.*, 2020). In relational crafting, business owners proactively seek the type of support they need in a given situation.

Gender-specific WLB crafting

The interviewed women who worked part-time were responsible for household and childcare. In the case of couples who managed their companies on equal footing (3,4,10,11,12), both persons worked over 40 hours a week, yet the housework was still the woman's responsibility, indicating the couples' adherence to traditional gender roles and division of labor (Michael-Tsabari *et al.*, 2020, Jurik *et al.*, 2019). Besides, these women had well-defined, limited roles in the business accounting department and were more likely to

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note that they support their husband not because it's the job they chose or loved but because they see it as their duty and result of their shared copreneurial identity (Danes & Jang, 2013).

Further differences between the owner and the supportive employed spouse were found regarding the necessity of an isolated microdomain to be able to work without disturbances which were only used by men. Research on adjustment strategies in FB, when business demands are higher than normal, reported that men were less likely to intertwine tasks, i.e. focusses more on business tasks. WLB Crafting strategies to manage business demands (e.g., working without disturbances in the evening) seem comparable but were described as a planned prevention measure rather than an acute reaction to too high business demands.

When it comes to resource-saving or replenish activities, women more often expressed the importance of health and time for respite, as cognitive WLB crafting. In terms of creating recovery opportunities, women appeared to be more active overall and seemed to be the driving force behind joint activities. Owners, on the other hand, found it more difficult to ensure participation in joint activities because of their ultimate responsibility for their business. However, as already claimed by earlier studies on gender differences in FB (Niehm *et al.*, 2009; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2001), it is probably less the biological gender but rather the multiple role burdens associated with the social gender that provokes the use of different strategies.

Dyadic WLB crafting

Our study results contribute to the literature by identifying dyadic WLB crafting behavior. Couples jointly engage in crafting their boundaries, e.g. establishing rules when business talk is allowed, and create conditions (microdomains) at work and at home that enable efficient time use at work, recovery phases, and quality time with their families. Couples carry out these strategies in collaboration and proactively plan them, which may prevent conflicts (Qiu and Freel, 2020) and enhance WLB. Dyadic physical crafting describes how work is

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organized and it entails joint decisions to change and distribute demands. Couples create facilitating factors, such as by forming a culture within the business that fits the couples' concept of WLB.

Compared to individual crafting strategies, dyadic strategies additionally contain a relationship-nourishing element, as they involve negotiation about strategies and eventually spending more time with one's partner. Couples engage in leisure activities, such as dancing classes, together and encourage each other not to cancel the activity. Copreneurs should tackle their WLB issues with the same strategic and proactive mindset as their monetary resource investments and thus, engage in high-quality communication, mutual trust, and shared decision making (Jang and Danes, 2013; Venter, 2009). Copreneurs should embrace the mindset via cognitive crafting that taking care of their business success involves taking care of their well-being and health (e.g. Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn *et al.*, 2000).

WLB crafting helps to overcome the recovery paradox

The recovery paradox (Sonnentag, 2018) indicates that engaging in recovery activities is difficult when they are needed most. Sonnentag recommended that researchers examine "if specific recovery habits may help in starting recovery processes even under unfavorable affective and energetic circumstances" (Sonnentag, 2018; p. 178). WLB Crafting strategies, such as scheduling lunch breaks, may prevent negative activation and resource depletion during the day. Creating recovery opportunities, as a structural change, can be seen as a starting point for recovery processes. For example, fixing recurring dates for leisure activities can reduce the hurdles of engaging in those activities after or during a stressful day. Establishing recovery opportunities is important to restore personal energy resources to stay healthy, be able to face life demands (Sonnentag, 2018; Grawitch *et al.*, 2010), and continue engaging in proactive behavior (Sonnentag, 2003).

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Practical implications

Our study results have practical implications for the current covid-19 crisis. A proactive mindset is needed, involving innovative, entrepreneurial behavior to keep the business running (Ratten and Jones, 2020). These behaviors demand a notable invest of resources, such as time, energy, and cooperation. Resource-replenishing activities, established via WLB crafting strategies, are helpful in this respect (Sonnentag, 2003). The results of our study have also implications for dual-earner couples in general. Because of the increased use of home-office as a measure to control the spread of the covid-19 virus, the life boundaries of dual-earner couples are non-existent anymore. Scholars investigating the impacts on WLB, recovery, and health of this new situation due to covid-19 crises should take into consideration what we already know about couples who are accustomed to working together.

Scholars noticed a rise in copreneurial activities over the past few years (Ratten and Jones, 2020). Copreneurs WLB Crafting strategies aiming at reducing and managing demands are dependent on stakeholders and legal requirements. Policymakers may externally support the FBO by reducing requirements or facilitating digitization. This measure, in itself, could reduce FBO workload and help them to stay engaged and focus on their core business. Moreover, it could motivate couples to embark on this adventure together, combining work and life interests.

The reported behavioral strategies that copreneurs use to craft their WLB can be disseminated through publications, training, or coaching. Couple coaching could be a suitable intervention (Busch *et al.*, 2020) to further develop WLB crafting strategies for a satisfying WLB to nurture the heart of family businesses.

Limitations and future research

The generalizability of the results is limited. We investigated middle-aged, well-established copreneurs of small German craft industry firms. Future research could confirm and further develop WLB crafting strategies by applying them to different contexts and

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characteristics of FB, such as industry or venture stage (Ratten and Jones, 2020). From a family perspective, scholars should also examine different family characteristics and compositions, such as age, care responsibilities, cultural background, or sexual orientation (Combs et al., 2020). For instance, taking care of young children places additional demands on daily life and affects recovery (Hahn and Dormann, 2013) or the provision of support (Park and Haun, 2017).

Due to the dyadic interview setting, participants may have been intimidated by their partners' presence. Using a semistructured interview schedule, we ensured that each person initially answered only for himself or herself and his or her situation. For questions about cooperation or leisure organization, we explicitly asked both partners to discuss the topic. The dyadic setting allowed us to obtain direct feedback about whether one partner agreed with the other. Future research should take these insights as a starting point to deepen our understanding of dyadic strategies, how they are developed and maintained over time.

Our understanding of the creation and protection of microdomains, which relate to a certain goal or activity (e.g. leisure activity), should be advanced. The behavioral strategies presented in this study could inform the design of a questionnaire. Sample items could include "I use fixed (regular) private dates to engage in a leisure activity" (*creating recovery opportunities*); or, "I ask my spouse to provide back up so I can engage in a leisure activity" (*relational crafting*).

Participants used strategies that may be relieving in the short term, such as working late in the evenings. If those strategies result in a depletion of energy resources, e.g. sleep problems, it may impair performance or well-being (Stephan, 2018; Williamson *et al.*, 2019). Future research using different methods, such as diary studies, is necessary to examine the daily effects of crafting behavior on short-term resource gains and losses, such as recovery experiences, or WLB. Longitudinal studies should focus on long-term effects for individuals and couples by incorporating dyadic data.

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Conclusions

In this paper, we investigated how experienced copreneurs of SFB create WLB regarding the conservation, restoration, and exchange of resources. We merged a resource perspective (Hobfoll, 1989) with Sturges's (2012) concept of WLB crafting. WLB crafting primarily purposes to create resource-saving or replenishing microdomains (e.g. restful breaks) within a macrodomain (e.g. work). By engaging in relational crafting, social support as a resource serves as protection of these microdomains. Women more often expressed the importance of health and time for respite, as cognitive WLB crafting, and were more active in creating (joint) recovery opportunities. Dyadic WLB crafting strategies were used when goal congruency for business or private activities was high. Our study provides in-depth insights into the strategies copreneurs use to create a satisfying WLB. Future research should examine the effects of WLB crafting behavior on the copreneurs' recovery experiences or WLB.

Notes

[1] The interview study was part of a research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. We thank our project partners for recruiting the participants. We thank the participating copreneurs to be part of our study.

[2] The interview guideline is available from the first author upon request.

[3] The code book is available from the first author upon request.

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Supplementary files

- I) Interview guideline
- II) Code book

I) Interview guideline

Content enclosed in square brackets is provided to better understand the interview procedure.

Questions in italics were optional questions. Not all couples were asked these questions. Either because they were already answered before, or because of time constraints.

[After providing a general introduction about the aim of the interview, we started with part I. One person first answered the questions. After replying we asked the second person the same questions]

Part I: Work-related questions

[Only one person answers]

Please tell me about a typical working day. What tasks do you have?

Which tasks also put you under pressure? Can you give me an example?

- How do you notice that? How do you feel about it?
- And what helps you?
- What strategies do you have to prevent this kind of situation from recurring?

[Switch to the second person and repeat the questions]

[Both]

Now I would like to invite you to reply both to the following questions and discuss your answers. The following questions are about how you divide the work and how you both communicate in your business.

- How do you divide your labor? Who then takes over what and why? Do you have a typical situation you can tell me about?
- How do you deal with occasional difficulties in cooperation? Do you have a situation you can tell me about?
- *What have you done to prevent such a situation?*
- How do you make sure that the collaboration works?

Part II: Work-related social support

Our next topic is your social support within your work-domain.

[Start with person 1]

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Do you remember a situation or problem at work where you asked your partner for support? What happened, what did your partner do?

- *How did you feel about it and was it helpful?*
- *Can you tell me about this using an example?*

Person2: Would you like to add anything else? Do you have another example where you have supported your partner? What did you do?

Person 1: What kind of support would you like your partner provide for your work tasks? Is there anything you would like to ask for in the future?

[Switch partners and repeat the questions]

Part III: Non-work time and leisure activities

[Start with person 1]

As already mentioned in the introduction, the interview is about your ways to create work-life balance. Where does work end, where does leisure begin for you?

- *Can you tell me when and how you notice that you are off work? Do you have certain strategies to leave work behind?*
- *Do you also talk about work in your free time? And if so, about what? How do you feel about it?*

Please tell me about a typical day in the last week, what did you do outside of work? What tasks and also what hobbies do you have in everyday life?

- *And what tasks outside of work do you share with each other? How do you divide household tasks? Which activities do you do together?*
- *What kind of hobbies do you have? How do you make sure that you go to your there as well?*

[Switch partners and repeat the questions]

[Both]

How do you organize your leisure time so that everyone can pursue their hobby or do something fun? Can you give me an example?

Part IV: Non-work-related social support

Our next topic is your social support within your non-work-domain.

[Start with person 1]

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Do you remember a situation or problem at home or during your leisure time where you asked your partner for support? What happened, what did your partner do?

- *How did you feel about it and was it helpful?*
- *Can you tell me about this using an example?*

[Person 2] Would you like to add anything else? Do you have another example where you have supported your partner? What did you do?

[Switch partners and repeat the questions]

Both [Not all couples answered the following questions]

When you recall what you have just heard and said, do you have the feeling that you support yourself differently at home than at work? If you like, you can think about it out loud together.

Imagine you meet a young entrepreneurial couple who want to run a business together. What advice would you like to give this couple in terms of collaboration and work-life balance? You are welcome to discuss your answers.

Part V: (Digital) Interventions

As the last topic, I would like to briefly address the topic of training and consulting.

I would like to know what you think about the following three topics. Are they relevant for you and for the craft business sector? You are also welcome to talk to each other.

1) Improving your work-life balance together

2.) Learning to relax and switch off from work

3.) Strengthen the internal cooperation, i.e. the teamwork

- *Why do you think this topic is relevant?*
- *Have you already attended similar training courses? What did you particularly like about it?*
- *Could you also imagine doing some exercises online? How would that have to be designed?*
- *How important is further training in your company?*

STUDY I - HOW COPRENEURS CRAFT WORK-LIFE BALANCE

II) Code book

Categories	Definition and Strategies	Examples – Individual-level	Examples – Dyadic-level
<p>Physical WLB crafting is aimed at managing physical boundaries, structures, and circumstances in such a way that demands are reduced and recovery phases are established.</p>			
Optimizing the way of working	<p>Deciding where and when to work and how work is performed to use time efficiently and to reduce demands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing microdomains (e.g. reducing disturbances) ▪ Prioritizing preferred tasks ▪ Using communication technologies ▪ Planning and dividing labor ▪ Extension of working hours ▪ Consciously intensify blending 	<p><i>Working (at home) in the evenings</i> I do the bookkeeping at home now due to the lack of peace and quietness in the daily business. (7, Sarah)</p> <p><i>Choosing preferred tasks</i> Meanwhile, I only do the work in the office that I still enjoy, which advances me, and where I also receive a good overview (9, Anna)</p>	<p><i>Changing location</i> At the end of the year, we do a review and set new goals. For this, we spend a weekend in a hotel, away from the business. (1, Aaron and Tanja)</p> <p><i>Organizing work tasks</i> We use Outlook on all our devices to keep our appointments under control. Appointments which are entered on the phone will also appear on the computer due to synchronization on all the connected devices. (8, Lucas and Julia)</p>
Creating recovery opportunities	<p>Creating free times slots and conditions to have a break, shared time together and enable recovery experiences (microdomains).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having fixed dates for leisure and family activities ▪ Engaging in relaxing activities involving the dog or another person ▪ Establishing rules to segment macrodomains ▪ Reducing leisure activities 	<p><i>Creating structures to recover</i> This year, I started to walk to the business in the morning and back home in the evening. (...) It is helpful to mentally switch off. (12, Cathy)</p> <p><i>Having fixed dates</i> I love to sing. I am the president of a choir. We rehearse every Tuesday. Singing creates the great feeling of being freed. (18, Thomas)</p>	<p><i>Segmenting macrodomains</i> We have a rule: not to speak about work after 7 pm. Occasionally if my wife is stressed, talk about work slips out, but then I say, “7 pm - no more work discussions for today. (9, Marcus and Anna)</p> <p><i>Having fixed dates</i> Once a week we go dancing together. That is a highly important date. (10, Max and Emma)</p>

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Categories	Definition and Strategies	Examples – Individual-level	Examples – Dyadic-level
Cognitive WLB crafting involves one's attitude towards the importance of WLB and one's health, optimistic and positive feelings towards work, and acceptance.			
Accepting being a business-owner	<p>Accepting the circumstances and demands that come along with being business owners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accepting their working relationship ▪ Making compromises ▪ Determining that separating domains is not feasible 	<p><i>Making compromises</i></p> <p>I think it is a pity, but I have accepted that now and think, 'Okay, I will just have to wait until we do not have the business anymore, and then I will do something for me'. (16, Amber)</p>	<p><i>Accepting the unique working relationship</i></p> <p>We have to stick together, and we have to be aware that this is what we wanted. (11, Mike and Jennifer)</p>
Emphasizing health, resources, and recovery	<p>Highlighting the importance of recovery and taking breaks from work to protect health and family life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protecting micro- and macrodomains ▪ Relying on strengths ▪ Knowing how to disconnect or relax ▪ Valuing the resources or conditions at work 	<p><i>Emphasizing recovery</i></p> <p>You have to switch off at some point, (...); on weekends, one should mentally disconnect from work, not like my son who tends to ruminate about his problems even on the weekend. (8, Lucas)</p> <p><i>Enjoying social responsibility</i></p> <p>Work is also enriching, especially the cooperation with employees. You also have a social responsibility. I think that is nice. (12, Cathy)</p>	<p><i>Protecting breaks</i></p> <p>We want to use our break to be mindful and attentive for 45 minutes. In the past, my husband used to make phone calls during meals which is a loss of quality of life. (2, Alex and Elisabeth)</p> <p><i>Keeping a calm mind</i></p> <p>Peace of mind is more important to us than suing the customer. We even started to pray for our customers which gives us the peace of mind we need. This is of more importance than an additional 5.000 euros on the account. (9, Marcus and Anna)</p>

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Categories	Definition and Strategies	Examples – Individual-level	Examples – Dyadic-level
Relational WLB Crafting entails using support and providing support to ensure engagement in behavior that is conducive to WLB.			
Spousal support	<p>Using social support from the spouse and providing social support to the spouse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking for protection of one’s microdomains ▪ Delegating tasks (work/household) ▪ Using or providing recovery-related support ▪ Sharing knowledge ▪ Engaging in high-quality and respectful communication 	<p><i>Asking to protect microdomains</i> You can concentrate on the problem. So, someone calls, and my wife says, ‘No, my husband is not available at the moment’; this is the support I need. (6, Jason)</p> <p><i>Supporting autonomy</i> He has no problem in changing things completely, even if the structures are old. If I come up with new ideas, which have potential, then he approves them. Acceptance and support are important. (2, Elisabeth)</p>	<p><i>Pushing each other to leisure activities</i> Occasionally, we send each other home when it’s not so busy. (3, Daniel and Barbara)</p> <p><i>Communicating in appreciative ways</i> My grandmother used to say: “Before you fall asleep, make sure you talked everything through that you won't have to worry about it the next day”. So if you do this properly, and the mutual appreciation and support is high, you should continue these principles in your business. And we do it every day. (18, Thomas and Rita)</p>
Work-related support	<p>Using support from one’s team, colleagues, friends or networks and providing support to one’s team, colleagues, or networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing workload, delegating tasks ▪ Using networks (information or submission of orders) ▪ Asking family members to help out ▪ Seeking feedback 	<p><i>Acting as a feel-good manager</i> I spread positive energy. I always have some sweets in the office. Then, the employees always like to come in. We also organize barbecues and a Christmas party. (15, Laura)</p> <p><i>Asking friends for advice</i> When I meet my friends, who are employees, I like to talk about difficulties I have with my employees (..) that is highly valuable, because you get a completely different perspective on the matter. (1, Aaron)</p>	<p><i>Asking colleagues to take over orders</i> If we are busy at work and are unable to go, we know another business in our network whom we can call and ask, ‘Can you do the emergency service?’ (4, David and Alice)</p> <p><i>Asking family for support</i> If we have a big order/event, I am talking about serving 300-400 people, (...), my husband’s seven siblings are always on standby to help out. (03, Daniel and Barbara)</p>

Honey, let's have a Date Night!

Actor and Partner Effects in Crafting Work-Life Balance

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(currently under review)

STUDY II - COUPLE QUALITY TIME CRAFTING FOR COPRENEURS

Objective: This study investigates the intra- and interindividual effects of couple quality time crafting (CQTC) on the work-life balance (WLB) of couples whose work-life boundaries are extremely blurred: copreneurs of small family businesses. The state of recovery in the morning (SREC) is considered as a resource and antecedent of CQTC.

Background: CQTC is introduced as a strategy for crafting WLB based on conservation of resources theory. SREC is a resource that can be invested in the resource-gaining activity of CQTC.

Method: Using diary data over five days from 41 copreneurs, actor-partner interdependence models were tested to analyze the effects of SREC on CQTC and CQTC on WLB.

Results: Both men's and women's WLB benefitted from their own CQTC on a general and daily basis. However, on days when men showed CQTC, women's WLB decreased. Only when men felt recovered in the morning did both partners report more engagement in CQTC on that day.

Conclusions: CQTC could be an important gateway for enhancing WLB. The gender-specific mixed partner effects may be due to traditional gender roles to which small family business owners and their spouses often adhere.

Implications: Our findings provide family business counselors with strategies and interventions for couples to enhance their WLB. Couples can use and organize this valuable shared time together to improve their private relationship as well as their business.

Keywords: (6)

copreneurs, conservation of resources theory, crafting, gender, quality time, work-life balance

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Achieving a satisfying balance between work and nonwork roles and goals is an aspiration for many working individuals and families. Research on the work-life interface (WLI) has received tremendous attention over the past decades. Its connections to job satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014), well-being (Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Leung et al., 2020), recovery from work (Taris et al., 2006), and family satisfaction (Ferguson et al., 2016) have widely been explored. Work-life balance (WLB) is an individual's evaluation of the fulfilment of different roles and goals in all life domains. WLB involves engaging in activities to restore energy and other resources as a counterbalance to resource-draining life demands (Syrek et al., 2011).

Small family business owners and their coworking spouses (copreneurs; Barnett & Barnett, 1988) are extreme couples with regard to blurred work-life boundaries (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Leung et al., 2020). They face long working hours and high demands (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2015) and have difficulty mentally distancing themselves from work (Kollmann et al., 2019), which jeopardizes their satisfaction with WLB (Clark, 2000). The partner triggers work-related thoughts, and because of their frequent interactions during the day, their drive to spend quality time together in the evening, such as by having a date night or pursuing a shared hobby, may be reduced (Dreyer & Busch, 2021). However, spending quality time with one's partner is related to relationship quality and satisfaction (Berg et al., 2001; Milek et al., 2017; Shafer et al., 2014a) and work-family balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). In this study, we investigate couple quality time crafting (CQTC) as a WLB crafting strategy for copreneurs of small family businesses (Sturges, 2012; Dreyer & Busch, 2021).

In line with conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989), couples tend to withdraw socially when their resources have been drained throughout the day and thus tend not to engage in shared leisure time (Milek et al., 2017). The extent of the resources available might influence CQTC on a given day. The state of recovery (SREC) in the morning is a

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resource that can be invested in CQTC as a resource-gaining activity (Binnewies et al., 2009).

The way this resource investment is used might differ between the members of a dyad given their gender roles (i.e., their predominant life-domain roles and (work) responsibilities)

(Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

The present study makes several contributions. First, we address a call by Michael-Tsabari and colleagues (2020) to shed light on the blurred WLI of family business owners. We examine the daily influences of CQTC on the WLB of couples who experience boundaryless environments. Second, we highlight the role of resources in engaging in WLB crafting behavior based on COR theory (Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Third, by examining the actor (i.e., intraindividual) and partner (i.e., interindividual) effects in the antecedents and outcomes of CQTC, we contribute to the emerging literature that acknowledges the interdependence among couples' strategies to shape WLB. Fourth, by differentiating between male and female actors and partners, we shed light on the gender-specific use of strategies and relations between SREC, CQTC, and WLB. This is of particular interest because small family business owners and their spouses often adhere to traditional gender roles (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019; Dreyer & Busch, 2021).

Family business owners and their spouses

Family businesses are characterized by interdependencies between the family and business systems (Sharma, 2004). Couples who run their own business are the smallest unit of a family business and are referred to as copreneurs (Barnett & Barnett, 1988). They share a commitment to and responsibility for their business and intertwine their work and family life (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Danes & Lee, 2004). In the US, at least one-quarter of small- to medium-sized businesses are run by couples (Dennis, 2002), and scholars note that the number of couples starting businesses together has recently increased (El Shoubaki et al., 2021). The involvement of spouses in copreneurial businesses includes being equal co-

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owners, being actively and officially involved in the business, or offering support through unpaid and often unseen contributions such as household management, access to networks, and specific expertise (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002). Although a spouse may spend very few hours working in the business, he or she may still have power over management and work organization and may facilitate the alignment of business activities with personal and family needs (El Shoubaki et al., 2021; Smith, 2000; Dreyer & Busch, 2021).

Copreneurs of established family businesses often adhere to traditional gender roles; consequently, copreneurial household managers with childcare responsibilities are more likely to be women (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019; Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Women in family business rank good family relationships as their priority, whereas men rank profit before family relationships. However, both groups report a balance between work and family to be their third most important goal (Danes & Lee, 2004).

The two systems of family and business are inevitably connected for copreneurs, which can create tensions and conflicts at the WLI and offers a unique opportunity to investigate successful strategies to manage extreme blurring (Danes & Lee, 2004; Jennings et al., 2013; Michael-Tsabari et al., 2020). Scholars have found copreneurs' spousal social support and their knowledge about their partner's work situation (Powell & Eddleston, 2017) to be helpful resources in balancing life domains and enhancing subjective well-being (Gudmunson et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2020; Helmle et al., 2014). The foundation for the business activities of copreneurs lies, to a considerable extent, in the good relationship between the members of a couple (McDonald et al., 2017). This study examines whether couples who run a family business can improve the balancing act of their intertwined family and business systems by focusing on their romantic relationship.

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WLB crafting as a resource-gaining activity

WLB is the result of successful resource allocation across life domains. COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) has been introduced to WLB research in general (Grawitch et al., 2010; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) and, recently, to family business research more specifically (Michael-Tsabari et al., 2020). According to COR theory, people are motivated to conserve their current resources and to obtain new resources through investment (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). Resources can be anything a person values, including a) objects (e.g., a car), b) personal characteristics (e.g., feeling recovered in the morning), c) conditions (e.g., marriage), and d) energies (e.g., time). People proactively build a resource reservoir to help them enter positive gain spirals. Individuals with greater resources are more capable of orchestrating resource gains. Thus, resources are seen as a means of goal attainment (Halbesleben et al., 2014)—in this case, WLB. Positive outcomes are expected when individuals and groups find a way to nurture their resources through individual or joint activities (Hobfoll, 2001), such as WLB crafting.

WLB crafting describes individual proactive, goal-oriented, and self-initiated activities to shape boundaries and manage WLB in physical, cognitive, and relational ways (Sturges, 2012). A recent study of WLB crafting among experienced family business copreneurs showed that creating microdomains, such as establishing undisturbed time for individual or couple activities, is important for these couples' WLB. Creating recovery opportunities involves proactive behaviors of separating leisure and recovery-related activities from business or family demands (Dreyer & Busch, 2021). In the present study, we focus on daily individual behaviors that are intended to create recovery opportunities through shared couple time. These behaviors support the private life domain, specifically couples' romantic relationship, which is often neglected but may foster WLB satisfaction.

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Couple quality time crafting to improve WLB

Couples who, beyond their romantic relationship, are tied together through their business experience highly intertwined life domains. Mixing life roles may also impede their ability to carve out time for their romantic partnership. To date, scholars who investigate couple quality time have focused on relationship outcomes. For example, the quality of time spent between partners is positively related to relationship quality and satisfaction (Berg et al., 2001; Milek et al., 2017; Shafer et al., 2014a). Greenhaus and colleagues (2003) found that quality time between partners benefits work-family balance. Couples nourish their romantic relationship through time spent with each other, trust, open communication, and social support. These interpersonal resources have been found to be crucial for copreneurial businesses (Franco & Piceti, 2020; Venter et al., 2009) and may result in stable relationship bonds and satisfaction (Hobfoll, 2002). In particular, emotional support has been found to be crucial for business owners' well-being mediated by WLB (Leung et al., 2020).

We define couple quality time crafting (CQTC) as proactive, goal-oriented, and self-initiated individual behavior that ensures that individuals spend time with their partners to improve their WLB. Based on the rationale that spending quality time with one's partner is an important life goal and that shared experience may counterbalance copreneurs' heavy work demands, creating such experiences should result in a positive evaluation of WLB. Thus, our first hypothesis is the following:

H1: Individuals' CQTC is positively related to their WLB.

CQTC is conceptualized as crafting behavior that likely fluctuates from day to day (Petrou et al., 2012). On a daily basis, CQTC may help to counterbalance work demands and refuel valuable individual and interpersonal resources, which is crucial for both men and women in a relationship. Efforts to maintain the relationship have been found to be beneficial for both men's and women's relationship quality (Shafer et al., 2014b). Thus, we assume that

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each partner's individual WLB benefits from crafting shared couple quality time with the partner (actor effects). Our hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Daily individual CQTC is positively related to one's own WLB for both men (a) and women (b).

When planning and engaging in couple time together, the partner is affected as well. CQTC involves planning and taking action for oneself and one's partner by engaging in shared quality time to counterbalance work activities. When one partner shows CQTC, this may relieve the other partner by allowing to devote resources to other tasks. Furthermore, this self-initiated behavior nurtures the couple's relationship as an important part of their life; thus, individual CQTC affects the partners' WLB. Women tend to be the captains of leisure time and are responsible for planning the majority of family and couple activities (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Craig & Mullan, 2013). However, since shared couple time has been found to be especially valuable for women (Milek et al., 2017) and features highest on the priority lists of women in family businesses (Danes & Lee, 2004), we argue that both men and women benefit from their partner's CQTC, which leads us to the following hypothesis:

H3: Daily individual CQTC is positively related to the partner's WLB for men (a) and women (b).

Feeling recovered in the morning as a resource for engaging in CQTC

According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), SREC is the result of "having one's resources successfully replenished after a period of rest" (Binnewies et al., 2009, p.67). Feeling unrecovered implies that resources to meet life demands are limited or lacking (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007). When employees feel highly recovered in the morning, their daily proactive and productive work behavior is also higher (Binnewies et al., 2009). Hahn and colleagues (2012) found that high levels of positive affect enable business owners to maintain self-regulatory efforts to engage in task-oriented and relationship-oriented personal initiative, a form of

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work-related proactive behavior. Thus, feeling fresh and recovered might also influence nonwork-related proactive behavior because resources are available to invest in preferred, resource-gaining activities (Hobfoll, 1989).

The way SREC is used might differ between the members of a dyad given their gender roles (i.e., predominant life domain roles and (work) responsibilities). According to social identity theory (Burke, 1991; Frone et al., 1995), individuals can hold different social roles that translate into a variety of social identities. Some roles are more central to the self-concept than others (Thoits, 1991). When one role is more salient (e.g., the male copreneur is highly identified with his owner role), an individual devotes more time, energy, and emotions to that role while diverting resources from other domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Studies show that the role perceptions of experienced copreneurs are, on average, rather traditional, with men's resources primarily pooled in the work domain and women's resources primarily invested in the nonwork domain (El Shoubaki et al., 2021; Fitzgerald and Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019; Marshack, 1994; Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Due to copreneurs' traditional division of labour, men and women may have different daily agendas regarding where to invest the vast majority of their resources throughout the day. When a male copreneur does not feel recovered in the morning, the resources he invests in nonwork-related activities may be reduced as he uses resources to fulfil goals in his business (his more salient role). Based on this rationale, we expect CQTC to be higher for men when they feel recovered as they may invest resources in their less salient roles and associated activities, i.e., in initiating shared couple time.

H4a: Daily SREC in the morning is positively related to CQTC for men.

In couples with traditional gender roles, women's more salient role is in the nonwork domain. Even when they experience a copreneurial identity, women are more likely than their husbands to feel responsible for planning couple and family activities (Ciciolla & Luthar,

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2019; Craig & Mullan, 2013; Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Generally, crafting across life domains results from a mismatch between desires or needs (e.g., a relaxing date night with one's partner) and reality (e.g., no plans have been made) for a meaningful experience in line with a person's role identity (de Bloom et al., 2020; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Thus, independent of their SREC, women might be more eager to invest resources in the family and leisure domains to facilitate the quality couple time required to satisfy their needs. We hypothesize the following:

H4b: Daily SREC in the morning is not related to CQTC for women.

As copreneurs tend to interact throughout the day because of their work relationship, one partner's SREC might become noticeable to the other (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Westman, 2001) and may motivate his or her spouse to demonstrate CQTC. Park and Haun (2017) found that SREC promoted partners' work engagement in the upcoming week by allowing them to better utilize or reinvest resources for each other from their private to their work domain, regardless of gender. However, as described above, we assume that partners have different priorities in terms of resource investment; thus, we also expect differences in partner effects according to their gender.

Women are likely to show more efforts to plan couple activities than men (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Craig & Mullan, 2013; Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Therefore, men's SREC may act as a resource boost to women, resulting in more CQTC for women (partner effect). When their husbands lack energy, women might not try to carve out time for shared experiences as they know that their husbands' limited resources are pooled in the work domain.

H5a: Men's daily SREC is positively related to women's CQTC.

Male copreneurs are likely to invest most of their resources in the work domain. They adjust the level of social support they give to their spouse based on their work demands (ten Brummelhuis and Greenhaus, 2018). Therefore, men are likely to invest their resources in the

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work domain before engaging in CQTC regardless of their partner's resources. We expect their engagement in CQTC to be unrelated to women's SREC, and we hypothesize the following:

H5b: Women's daily SREC is not related to men's CQTC.

Methods

Our methodological approach is structured in two steps. The first step involves a general survey in which we validate the CQTC concept with a close construct, spousal recovery support (SRS), and investigate the relation of CQTC with WLB (H1). The second step involves a diary study in which we investigate the daily actor and partner effects of CQTC on WLB (H2 and H3) and of SREC on CQTC (H4 and H5) in two actor-partner interdependence models (Kenny et al., 2006).

Procedure

Half of the participating couples were recruited from a coaching intervention to promote recovery and WLB offered by a German health insurance company (Dreyer & Busch, 2021). The other half were recruited by the authors, through associations of craftsmen and guilds in west and south Germany, or by regional health insurance companies¹. Data collection took place in 2018 and 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic started. All participating couples were given detailed, personal explanations of the procedure and the aim of the study before they agreed to participate. Participants who were not part of the coaching program received an extra 50 € gift voucher as a reward. All participants received a personalized report and written advice on how to create WLB and recovery opportunities.

Participants received a survey package consisting of a general questionnaire and a diary with daily questionnaires to be completed each evening and morning over five working days. The general and evening questionnaires could be completed either online or offline, whereas the morning questionnaire was always analogue. The online option was primarily

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used by couples who participated in the coaching. Before starting the coaching, participants completed the general survey online. After their first meeting with the coach, they were asked to start with the diary survey and to follow a link in the evening before going to bed to answer the daily questions on WLB and CQTC. In the morning, participants completed the survey on their SREC on a separate sheet (offline).

The offline survey package contained detailed instructions, the general survey, clearly marked separate diary booklets that included the evening and morning questionnaires as well as questions about weekdays and daytime, and a stamped and addressed return envelope. To ensure anonymity and match the responses, participants created a code and were asked not to place their names on the return envelope. To receive their personalized feedback and the voucher, participants were asked to provide an (Dreyer & Busch) email address.

Sample

A total of 56 couples agreed to participate and fill out the general survey. For five participants, no partner could be matched; thus, they were removed from the sample. One couple was removed from the sample due to nonvalid answers.

Accordingly, the sample for the general survey analyses included 50 couples. The average duration of marriage was 19.13 years ($SD = 10.12$), and 68% of the couples had at least one child under the age of 14. Thirty-seven couples had worked together officially for an average of approximately 17 years. We tested for differences between copreneurs who worked together officially and those who did not. No significant differences in age, duration of the marriage, children, or working hours were found; thus, they remained in our sample. On average, men were 51.8 years old ($SD = 6.65$) and worked 54 hours per week ($SD = 12.76$). Women were, on average, 49.54 years old ($SD = 8.55$) and worked 34 hours per week ($SD = 13.35$).

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For the diary study, of the 50 couples who correctly completed the general survey, eight did not complete their diary booklets. Another couple was removed because they completed their diaries in different weeks. Online and offline time stamps were checked, and if the diaries were not filled out correctly, data were deleted for that day. Couples who had at least two correctly completed diary entries on matching days were included in the analyses.

Accordingly, our sample for the diary study included 41 matched couples. The average duration of marriage was 19.03 years ($SD = 10.27$), and approximately 26% of the couples lived with at least one child under the age of 14 years. On average, husbands were 52.56 years old ($SD = 6.22$) and worked 54 hours per week ($SD = 10.57$). Thirty-eight of the 41 men stated that they were the business owner. One man was employed by his wife, and two men worked elsewhere but were occasionally involved in their wives' businesses. Men had worked in the business for approximately 19 years ($SD = 9.21$), while women had done so for nearly 15 years ($SD = 8.69$). Women were, on average, 50.54 years old ($SD = 8.03$) and worked 33 hours per week ($SD = 10.57$). Eight women indicated that they owned the business. In 24 cases, women were employed by their husbands. One woman supported her husband without having a contract, and eight other women had another main job but were occasionally involved in their husbands' businesses.

Measures

Copreneurs responded to a general questionnaire covering demographic and control variables (gender, children, duration of the marriage, and work time), CQTC, WLB, and SRS to validate the new CQTC scale. Then, they were asked to complete a daily diary questionnaire on five consecutive working days with a short morning questionnaire covering SREC and an evening questionnaire covering WLB and CQTC. The diary questionnaires were adjusted to fit the daily context by starting the questions with "Today,..." and changing the verbs to past

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tense, for example, “Today, I made an effort so that my partner and I could spend undisturbed time together”.

Couple quality time crafting. CQTC was measured in the general and evening questionnaires with a 3-item scale based on previous studies on WLB crafting (Gravador & Teng-Calleja, 2018; Sturges, 2012; Dreyer & Busch, 2021). The items were as follows: “I make an effort... (1) so that my partner and I can spend undisturbed time together”, (2) “so that my partner and I can do something pleasant together”, and (3) “so that my partner and I have a shared activity to counterbalance work”. Participants responded on a 5-point scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha of the general questionnaire was .93, and the average Cronbach’s alpha of the daily questionnaires was .91.

Spousal recovery support. SRS was assessed in the general survey using the 4-item scale by Park and Fritz (2015) to validate the new CQTC scale. We asked participants to rate the general level of recovery support they provided to their partner on a 5-point scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*): “I provide support or assistance for my spouse...” “to relax or do relaxing things”, “to forget about work”, “to take time for leisure”, and “to learn new things”. Cronbach’s alpha was .89.

Work-life balance. WLB was measured in the general and evening questionnaires using the 5-item scale by Syrek et al. (2011) (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). Sample items were “I am satisfied with the balance between my work and private life” and “I succeed in achieving a good balance between stressful and restful activities in my life”. Cronbach’s alpha for the general questionnaire was .92, and the average Cronbach’s alpha of the daily questionnaires was .91.

State of recovery. SREC in the morning was measured using a 4-item scale by Binnewies and colleagues (2009). Participants indicated their SREC in the morning on a 5-point scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) by stating “Today, I feel...,” “mentally

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recovered”, “physically refreshed”, “well-rested”, and “full of new energy”. The average Cronbach’s alpha of the daily questionnaires was .92.

Time use. The evening questionnaire also assessed time spent on work, time spent engaging in sports, time spent with the partner, and time spent on chores on a 5-point scale (from 1 = *less than one hour* to 5 = *more than four hours*) because we wanted to explore the relation of used time with CQTC and WLB.

Control variables. In the general survey, we collected information on gender, children, duration of the marriage, and work time as control variables. Taking care of young children was found to be related to the provision of recovery support (Park and Haun, 2017). The duration of marriage is a commonly used control variable in couple studies (e.g., Milek et al., 2017). Work time is an indicator of resource investment in the work domain; it has also been found to be important in work-family balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003) and is linked to time invested in relationships and relationship quality (Unger et al., 2014). We assessed daily work time and controlled for its influence on daily WLB.

All mean values and intercorrelations of the general survey data are presented in Table 1. All mean values and intercorrelations over the five days in which the constructs were assessed in the diaries are presented in Table 3.

Analytic strategy

We used the data from the general survey to determine the convergent validity of the CQTC items. We expected CQTC and the well-established SRS scale (Park & Fritz, 2015) to be independent factors (i.e., empirically distinct from each other), and we tested this prediction with confirmatory factor analyses (CFA, TYPE = COMPLEX) using Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). Based on 50 clusters ($N = 100$ individuals), we tested whether a single-factor model or a two-factor model represented the data best due to the conceptual closeness of CQTC and SRS. The two-factor model offered a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 12,233$; $df = 13$; p

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=.509; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA =.000; SRMR =.028) and was a better solution than the single-factor model ($\chi^2 = 166.880$; $df = 14$; $p = .000$; CFI =.543; RMSEA =.330; SRMR =.144). We further calculated correlations and performed a multiple regression (WLB on gender, work time, children, duration of marriage, and CQTC) using Mplus TYPE COMPLEX to adjust for the standard error within dependent data.

For the diary survey, the intraclass correlation (ICC1) values were .538 for CQTC and .457 for WLB, indicating the appropriateness of multilevel modelling (Hox et al., 2010). We checked for discriminant validity using a multilevel CFA (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012) with days nested within individuals (82 clusters). We compared a single-factor model in which SREC, CQTC, and WLB loaded on one factor with a three-factor model in which SREC, CQTC, and WLB had their own factors on both between and within levels. The three-factor model showed a good model fit for the data ($\chi^2 = 109.785$; $df = 102$; $p = .282$; CFI =.997; RMSEA =.014; SRMR_{within} =.03; SRMR_{between} =.06) and fit the data better than the single-factor model ($\chi^2 = 1326.952$; $df = 108$; $p = .000$; CFI =.452; RMSEA =.167; SRMR_{within} =.214; SRMR_{between} =.286).

We used actor-partner interdependency modelling (APIM, Kenny et al., 2006) following the procedure suggested by Laurenceau and Bolger (2012) to adjust for the repeated measures and dyadic data structure distinguished by gender (i.e., husband and wife). We used Mplus 7.4 (TYPE = TWO LEVEL) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012).

To distinguish within-person variation from between-person variation, we calculated a cluster mean variable (grand mean-centred) that represented the average score of the predictor throughout the week. To assess the daily variation effects of the predictor on the outcome, we used group mean centring at the within-person level; therefore, the within variables contained only daily variation from an individual's mean level. We controlled for time trends by adding the day of the week (1–5) at the within level. We did not find any significant linear trends;

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therefore, we excluded this variable from our models for parsimony². Daily work time at the within-couple level was used as a control variable and remained in our final models.

Results

General survey

Descriptive data and intercorrelations among the study variables of the general survey are presented in Table 1. CQTC correlates positively with WLB. There are no significant differences between men and women in CQTC or WLB. However, they differ in their weekly working hours ($M_{men} = 53,6$; $M_{women} = 34$; $p = .000$). The bivariate correlations between men and women are $r = .31$, $p = .028$ for WLB and $r = .26$, $p = .072$ for CQTC.

Our first hypothesis predicts that CQTC is positively related to WLB. The results ($b = .385$, $p = .005$) support Hypothesis 1 (Table 2).

Table 1

Descriptive data and intercorrelations among the study variables of the general survey

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age	50.67	7.70	-						
2 Gender ^a	1.50	0.50	-.19**	-					
3 Children ^b	0.51	0.80	-.47**	-.02	-				
4 Marriage	19.13	1.12	.53**	.01	-.37*	-			
5 Owner ^c	1.43	0.50	-.08	.87**	.03	-.05	-		
6 Work hours	43.90	16.28	-.04	-.73**	-.07	-.03	-.78**	-	
7 CQTC	3.43	1.01	.07	.09	-.18	-.18	.04	-.12	-
8 WLB	4.01	1.14	.18	.01	-.13	.14	.13	-.12	.37**

Note. $N = 100$, 50 clusters.

^a 1 = male, 2 = female. ^b Number of children under age 14. ^c 1 = yes, 2 = no

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

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Table 2

Regression analysis summary of CQTC predicting WLB

Effect	Estimate	SE	p
Gender ^a	-0.086	0.103	0.423
Children ^b	-0.002	0.137	0.972
Marriage	0.203	0.111	0.066
Work time	-0.108	0.132	0.412
CQTC	0.337	0.125	0.003
R ²	0.144	0.071	0.044

Note. N = 100, 50 clusters, MLR.

^a 1 = male, 2 = female. ^b Number of children under age 14.

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Daily survey

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the key and control variables from the daily survey are presented in Table 3.

Men's CQTC is positively related to their WLB and SREC and to the time they spend with their partner, while it is negatively related to their daily work time. Furthermore, men's CQTC is significantly related to women's CQTC and time spent with their partner and is negatively related to women's work time. Women's CQTC is positively related to their WLB and time spent with their partner. Women's WLB is also positively related to time spent with their partner. Women's CQTC is positively linked to their husbands' CQTC, WLB, and time spent with their partner. Having children under age 14 is negatively linked to men's daily work time but not to women's work time.

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Table 3

Descriptive data and intercorrelations among the study variables of the diary survey

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Marriage	19.15	10.37	--												
2 Children ^a	0.39	0.70	-.39**	--											
Men															
3 CQTC	2.35	1.12	-.03	-.11	--										
4 WLB	4.02	1.19	.13	-.27**	.45**	--									
5 SREC	3.52	0.91	.07	-.28**	.23**	.43**	--								
6 Work time	9.48	2.41	-.19**	.07	-.21**	-.15*	.03	--							
7 Time partner	2.80	1.34	-.10	-.06	.52**	.29**	.28**	-.23**	--						
8 Time chores	1.25	0.48	-.08	.10	.13	.05	-.04	-.05	.00	--					
Women															
9 CQTC	2.29	1.22	.04	-.15*	.34**	.24**	.15	-.08	.38**	.00	--				
10 WLB	4.20	1.04	.19*	-.07	.13	.21**	.21**	-.14	.18*	-.22*	.33**	--			
11 SREC	3.34	0.91	.00	-.12	.01	.22**	.18*	-.16*	.10	-.06	-.01	.29**	--		
12 Work time	6.90	2.53	-.07	-.14*	-.17*	-.06	.08	.16*	-.02	.16	-.08	-.14	-.13	--	
13 Time partner	2.84	1.39	-.10	.00	.38**	.19**	.23**	-.25**	.69**	.05	.49**	.27**	.15	-.06	--
14 Time chores	2.14	1.14	.08	-.11	-.05	-.03	-.12	.18*	-.06	-.06	.07	-.05	-.09	-.14	.07

Note. $N = 82, 41$ clusters.

^a Number of children under age 14.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

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APIM – CQTC and WLB

An essential step in the APIM analysis for distinguishable dyads is to test a more parsimonious model against the saturated model by constraining actor and partner effects (Peugh et al., 2013). According to Hypotheses 2 and 3, we did not expect differences between male and female actor and partner effects. First, we constrained all four effects ($A_{\text{women}} = A_{\text{men}} = P_{\text{women}} = P_{\text{men}}$) to equality. This model had a significantly worse model fit ($\chi^2 = 23.384$, $df = 6$, $p = .001$, $CFI = .681$, $RMSEA = .119$, $SRMR_{\text{within}} = .057$, $SRMR_{\text{between}} = .082$). Next, we compared the saturated model to a model that constrained actor effects ($A_{\text{women}} = A_{\text{men}}$) and partner effects ($P_{\text{women}} = P_{\text{men}}$) separately to equality (where $A \neq P$). This model also had a significantly worsened model fit ($\chi^2 = 14.047$, $df = 4$, $p = .001$, $CFI = .816$, $RMSEA = .111$, $SRMR_{\text{within}} = .046$, $SRMR_{\text{between}} = .050$). In the third model, we allowed partner effects to vary freely at the within level. This model had an acceptable model fit that was not worse than that of the saturated model ($\chi^2 = 6.249$, $df = 3$, $p = .100$, $CFI = .94$, $RMSEA = .073$, $SRMR_{\text{within}} = .027$, $SRMR_{\text{between}} = .050$). We used this parsimonious model to test our hypotheses. Figure 1 presents the results of the final APIM model.

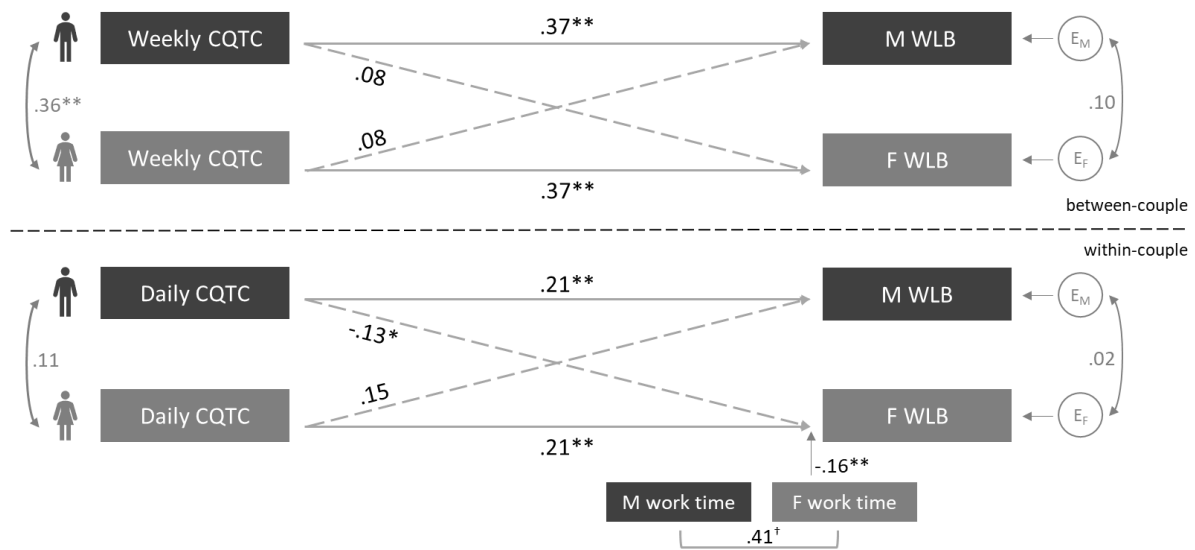
Hypothesis 2 predicts that daily individual CQTC positively relates to individuals' WLB for men and women. Our results show that on days when men and women made a point of spending quality time with their spouse, their own satisfaction with WLB was also higher on that day ($b = .21$, $SE = .04$, $p = .000$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 proposes that daily individual CQTC is positively related to the partner's WLB for men and women. The results show that on days when men show CQTC, their wives' WLB is lower ($b = -.13$, $SE = .06$, $p = .000$). There is no significant partner effect for women's CQTC on their husbands' WLB ($b = .15$, $SE = .10$, $p = .126$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is not supported for men or women.

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Figure 1

Restricted APIM of CQTC and WLB



Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Actor effects are in solid lines, and partner effects are in dashed lines. Not depicted are the intercorrelations of the control variable daily worktime (m,f) with each CQTC and nonsignificant paths from daily worktime (m,f) to WLB (m,f).

$^\dagger p < .10$, $* p < .05$, $** p < .01$.

APIM – SREC and CQTC

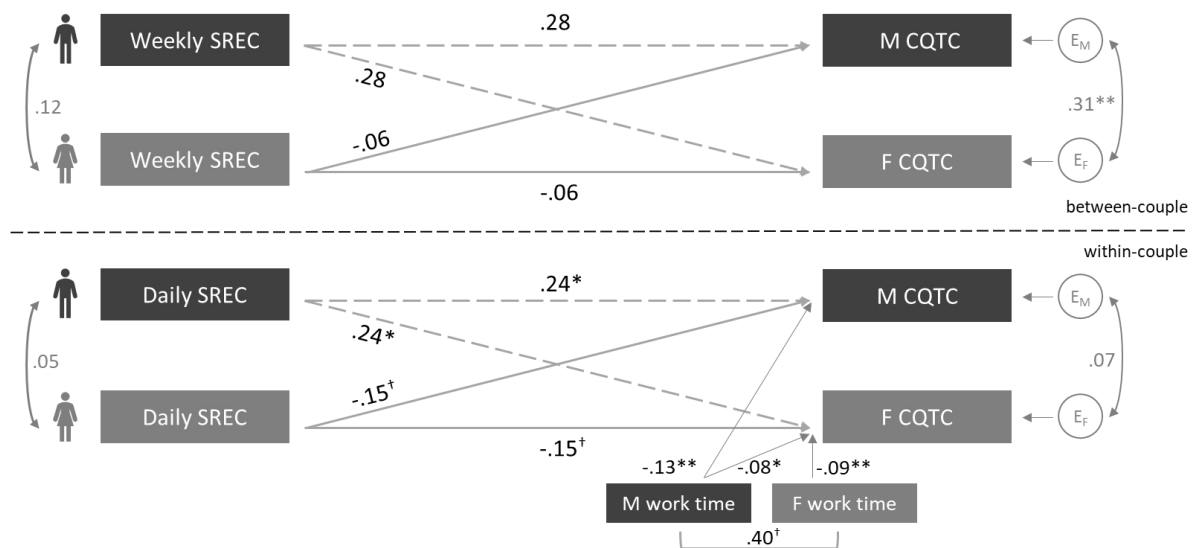
Before testing H4 and H5, we again tested a more parsimonious model (Peugh et al., 2013). We compared the saturated model with a constrained model. First, we constrained all four effects ($A_women = A_men = P_women = P_men$) to equality. The model showed a worse model fit than the saturated model ($\chi^2 = 13.618$, $df = 6$, $p = .034$, $CFI = .751$, $RMSEA = .079$, $SRMR$ within $= .054$, $SRMR$ between $= .077$). Next, we compared the saturated model to a model that constrained actor effects ($A_women = A_men$) and partner effects ($P_women = P_men$) separately to equality (i.e., where $A \neq P$), which tested the assumption of similarity between the two genders. The model also did not provide a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 11.286$, $df = 4$, $p = .024$, $CFI = .762$, $RMSEA = .094$, $SRMR$ within $= .053$, $SRMR$ between $= .067$). In the

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third model, in line with our hypotheses, we allowed men's and women's paths to be different (women \neq men). Furthermore, we set men's actor and partner effects ($A_men = P_men$) and women's actor and partner effects ($A_women = P_women$) to be equal. This model showed a good model fit that was not worse than the saturated model fit ($\chi^2 = 1.896$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.755$, $CFI = 1$, $RMSEA = .000$, $SRMR$ within $= .013$, $SRMR$ between $= .032$). We used this parsimonious model to test H4 and H5. Figure 2 presents the results of the final APIM model.

Figure 2

Restricted APIM of SREC and CQTC



Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Men's effects are in dashed lines, and women's effects are in solid lines. Not depicted are the intercorrelations of the control variable daily worktime (m,f) with each SREC and the nonsignificant path from daily worktime (f) to CQTC (m).

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Hypotheses 4a and b predict an actor effect of daily SREC in the morning on CQTC for men but not for women, while Hypotheses 5a and b predict a partner effect of daily SREC in the morning on CQTC for women but not for men. Our results show that on days when men

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feel recovered in the morning, both partners report more CQTC ($b = .24$, $SE = .11$, $p = .022$).

H4a and H5a are therefore supported. However, when women are recovered in the morning, both partners show less CQTC in the evening, although this negative relationship is slightly nonsignificant ($b = -.15$, $SE = .08$, $p = .051$). Therefore, H4b and H5b are also supported.

Discussion

Balancing the intertwined systems of business and family is important for copreneurs of small family businesses, who are particularly vulnerable. The ubiquity of the business requires counterbalancing activities, such as CQTC for a satisfying WLB. Based on COR theory, we investigated CQTC as a WLB crafting strategy and examined whether CQTC is influenced by SREC in the morning as a resource. We considered the interdependencies in small family business copreneurs' strategies by examining the actor and partner effects of SREC on CQTC and CQTC on WLB. Our results confirmed our hypotheses that CQTC is positively associated with one's own WLB, in general and on a daily basis, for both men and women. Our results did not support the hypothesized partner effects of CQTC on WLB; men's effort to spend quality time with their wives was negatively related to women's WLB. When women engaged in CQTC, no relation to their husbands' WLB was found. Furthermore, we investigated the valuable individual resource of SREC in the morning for CQTC considering gender-specific actor and partner effects. Our results confirmed our hypotheses that on days when men felt recovered in the morning, both partners reported more engagement in CQTC. The partner effects did not exist when women felt recovered in the morning. In the following sections, we first discuss how to enhance WLB and then discuss the mixed partner effects.

How to enhance WLB: Couple quality time crafting

The results of this study show that CQTC is linked to WLB in general and on a daily basis for copreneurs of small family businesses. Engaging in shared couple quality time as a counterbalance to work results in a positive evaluation of WLB. Our results are in line with

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prior findings that these interactions between spouses are positively linked to favourable marital outcomes (Hill, 1988; Milek et al., 2017) and to work-family balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). On days when men and women showed more CQTC than usual, their individual WLB was also higher, even when we controlled for working hours on that specific day. Our findings support the WLB crafting concept on the basis of COR theory for small business-owning couples: establishing microdomains (e.g., sharing undisturbed time together) within a macro domain (e.g., family) seems to be a promising resource-gaining strategy to improve WLB. COR theory proposes that when individuals find a way to nurture their resources through individual or joint efforts, they can establish a rich resource reservoir or resource gain spirals (Hobfoll, 2001), which helps them allocate their resources across life domains to ensure WLB.

The well-established border theory (Clark, 2000) conceptually reaches its limits due to copreneurs' highly integrated life domains with permeable boundaries. The focus in WLB crafting is to create occasions where goal pursuit and valuable experiences, such as recovery, are more likely to occur by installing strong, temporary boundaries between a particular activity and other resource-draining events from the same or another domain (Dreyer & Busch, 2021). Crafting WLB can be a helpful tool in managing one's borders (de Bloom et al., 2020) and therefore, with some effort, in maintaining (temporal) event-related boundaries for a satisfying WLB, even in highly integrated life circumstances (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004).

Mixed partner effects and interdependencies in CQTC

Our findings showed mixed partner effects for the relation between CQTC and WLB. When women engaged in more CQTC than usual during the week, there was no relation to men's report of WLB on that specific day. In contrast, on days when men showed more CQTC than usual, their wives reported decreased satisfaction with WLB. These gender effects may be

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explained by the traditional gender roles followed by the copreneurs in our study. Research suggests that men have the evening hours for themselves after finishing their workday, while women, despite also working during the day, continue to perform household labour and childcare (Craig & Mullan, 2013). Men's efforts to spend quality time with their spouses as a couple might interfere with women's duties, and women might have to postpone their scheduled duties to spend quality time with their husbands. Thus, women might struggle to choose between leaving tasks incomplete or saying no to their husbands' efforts to create couple quality time. Both paths may result in an unsatisfactory WLB. Second, the partners might have different preferences or needs regarding how to spend time together but might compromise for their partner's sake, which prevents positive effects on their WLB. We assessed both variables in the evening and could not draw causal conclusions. Men showed less CQTC than usual when women were satisfied with their WLB. Women might have planned different activities, resulting in their husbands' decreased CQTC. Future studies should incorporate measures at different time points throughout the day (e.g., early evening and late evening) and incorporate other variables, such as household duties or characteristics of the evening activity, to clarify the causal relations of CQTC and WLB. Furthermore, the CQTC efforts must be noticed by the partner to have effects. Shafer and colleagues (2014) found that a partner's perception of efforts to maintain the relationship had more influence on relationship quality than the direct partner effect. Future research could examine whether crafting attempts are lost in translation between the partners and if partner A's perception of CQTC matches partner B's actual crafting efforts. Thus, copreneurs may benefit from disclosure about their efforts and communicating their needs.

We found a positive relation between men's and women's evaluations of their WLB in the general survey. This finding is in line with other research that found WLB satisfaction (e.g., Schnettler et al., 2020) or life satisfaction (e.g., Park & Fritz, 2015) to be positively

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related between romantic partners. The positive relation between partners' WLB was not significant on a daily basis. WLB is an individual evaluation, but it also depends on general life circumstances (Guest, 2002). These general circumstances (e.g., being married, having children, holidays, weekend activities) might be more salient for a general evaluation than for a daily evaluation of the balancing act between different roles and goals within a workweek. When investigating ways to create WLB, the social embeddedness of couples' strategies should be taken into consideration. CQTC as a WLB crafting strategy depends on one's partner and produces different consequences for the WLB of the partner.

SREC in the morning as a resource for CQTC

Our study results showed that on days when men felt unrecovered in the morning, both partners reported less engagement in CQTC. Due to men's high number of working hours and official owner position (in 93% of the cases) and the well-known traditional gender roles for family business copreneurs (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019), men invest the vast majority of their time and energy in their business. When men do not feel recovered in the morning, they might focus even more on achieving business tasks that day instead of caring about couple quality time and considering its effects on their WLB satisfaction. The partner effect demonstrates that when men feel more recovered than usual, it signifies to their wives that their crafting attempts might be more successful than on days when their husband does not feel so well-rested, which is in line with the assumed crossover of resources via empathy (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Westman, 2001). According to the gain spiral proposed in COR theory, men use their SREC to invest resources in other resource-gaining activities outside the business. Our results showed that CQTC was also positively related to men's WLB. Thus, CQTC might be a pathway for male copreneurs to enter a positive gain spiral by broadening the scope of their resource investment to an area that is not their predominant target of resource investment but is likely to contribute to their resource reservoir. However, these

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insights are based on a daily perspective of a short-term gain cycle. A better understanding of resource investment and gain spirals requires more fine-grained analyses focusing on actions and resource gains in a full cycle as well as time-lagged diary or longitudinal studies to investigate how individuals enter and maintain resource gain spirals.

As hypothesized, women engage in CQTC regardless of their resource level and their partners' resource level for several reasons. First, according to copreneurs' traditional division of labour (El Shoubaki et al., 2021; Fitzgerald & Muske, 2002; Jurik et al., 2019), women may have a different agenda regarding where to invest most of their resources throughout the day. Second, shared couple time seems to be a higher priority for women than for men (Milek et al., 2017) and therefore is more likely to be initiated by women. Third, women are more likely to be responsible for planning couple and family activities (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Craig & Mullan, 2013; Dreyer & Busch, 2021); thus, these activities are more routine and require less effort (Rebar et al., 2014; Sonnentag, 2018). WLB crafting behavior is a goal-oriented, self-initiated, and intentional behavior (Sturges, 2012) that requires less effort (i.e., resource investment) when it is well established (i.e., it is a habit). For example, it is conceivable that it costs couples less effort (resource investment) to go dancing, to set aside time for it, to motivate each other to attend and to ensure their availability if this behavior has been practiced for several years than if it is a new hobby or occasional activity (Rebar et al., 2014). However, crafting undisturbed couple time may be a gateway to overcome the so-called recovery paradox, in which recovery processes are impaired when they are needed most because individuals face high levels of job demands and establish and protect habits (Sonnentag, 2018). Future research should examine how women and men benefit in terms of recovery from couple quality time. Social identity theory (Burke, 1991; Frone et al., 1995) and its concept of identity centrality (e.g., Settles, 2004) seem to be useful approaches to guide future studies on why men and women, when adhering to traditional gender roles,

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invest their resources in different ways or benefit in different ways. Using identity centrality as a moderating factor can shed light on the assumed roles and thus show the boundary conditions that determine when and for whom WLB crafting is beneficial.

Limitations and future research avenues

The generalizability of our results is limited. We investigated middle-aged, well-established copreneurs of small family businesses in the German craft industry. Future research should incorporate different contexts and characteristics of small family businesses and should include different family characteristics, such as age, care responsibilities, or cultural background (Combs et al., 2020).

Our sample size impacted the models we were able to run. Copreneurial couples of small family businesses are difficult to reach for extensive surveys. Thus, using a sample of 82 valid responses in a diary study is a first attempt to shed light on the interdependencies in crafting strategies to shape WLB and their social embeddedness. Researchers targeting this group might incorporate extensive survey data in other settings and approach copreneurs via network activities and trusted persons, offer solid compensation (e.g., knowledge, special offers, or money), or use short questionnaires and user-friendly, easily accessible tools.

Since both CQTC and WLB were assessed at bedtime, we cannot draw causal conclusions regarding whether CQTC leads to higher satisfaction with WLB. CQTC is likely to occur throughout the day. Therefore, it was assessed at the beginning of the evening questionnaire. The evaluation of WLB was framed as an end-of-the-day review and was assessed at the end of the bedtime survey. Future studies should incorporate multiple measures during the day or use time-lagged designs. Researchers should examine whether relationship quality serves as a between-level moderator or include additional variables, such as positive affect or stressful work events, which could influence the effects of CQTC on WLB.

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Practical implications

Couple counsellors often suggest regular date nights to nurture a relationship (Gottman et al., 2019). However, little research has examined how periods of undisturbed couple time are implemented, who plans this time, and whether this time is helpful beyond creating a romantic bond. With WLB as an outcome, the concept is now conceived not only as a potentially relationship-nourishing element but also as a counterbalance to copreneurs' high business demands. The results show that it is indeed individually meaningful for partners to show interest in spending time together. However, the inconclusive partner effects indicate that couples could improve on the use and organization of this shared time together. Sharing their thoughts about their needs, preferences, and role expectations in a structured setting, such as couple coaching to promote recovery and WLB (Busch et al., 2021), could be a valuable intervention.

Couples in other boundaryless environments, such as couples working from home during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, may also benefit from our insights, especially since lockdowns and their related measures can threaten couples' romantic bonds (Ahuja & Khurana, 2021) and individuals' WLB (e.g. Hjálmsdóttir et al., 2021). Scholars and practitioners should consider the existing knowledge about couples who are accustomed to working, living, and loving in boundaryless settings and integrate knowledge from copreneurial literature into more general research on WLB.

Small family business owners and their spouses take their couple experiences, shared resources, feelings for each other, and conflicts to work with them. For their business to prosper, copreneurs should cultivate their romantic relationship. Experiencing couple quality time is an important factor for their WLB, which is likely to spill over to their business success. Family business networks, consultants, and health insurance companies should keep in mind the family systems behind (successful) business owners.

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Conclusion

Achieving a satisfying WLB is a desirable goal for many working individuals. Copreneurs of small family businesses evince a unique overlap of life domains that challenges their creation of WLB. Based on COR theory, we investigated the actor and partner effects of CQTC as a WLB crafting strategy on WLB. SREC in the morning was considered as a resource and antecedent of CQTC. Both men's and women's WLB benefitted from their own CQTC on a general and daily basis, but we found gender-specific partner effects. Women's WLB decreased when their husbands showed CQTC. Furthermore, CQTC was more likely to occur on days when men felt recovered in the morning. The results of this study suggest a resource gain spiral for these men and indicate the positive role of CQTC for a better WLB for both partners. The mixed partner effects indicate that couples who follow traditional gender roles could improve in using and organizing this valuable shared time together for the sake of their private relationship as well as their business.

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[2] Detailed results for this control variable can be obtained from the first author upon request.

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**Blended Health Coaching for Work-linked couples:
Coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy matter!**

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Abstract

Purpose:

Small business owners often work together with their spouses in their business. They blur work-life boundaries and find it difficult to psychologically detach from work, which both jeopardize a satisfying work-life balance (WLB). This paper aims to investigate the mechanisms and outcomes of a coaching intervention for couples to foster their detachment and WLB. We study the role of coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy. A blended coaching format was chosen, i.e., we combined face-to-face with tele-sessions and online courses, thereby using digitalization to keep the coaching flexible to the couples' life situations and for digital support between sessions.

Methods:

Coaches' behavior in regard to intervention fidelity was observed. Based on these ratings, the clients' sample (N=42) was partitioned into two intervention groups ("high intervention fidelity" vs. "low intervention fidelity") using the adapted study design approach. We also observed coaches' empathy and assessed clients' self-reports at different times up to 4 months after the coaching intervention ended regarding the hypothesized mechanisms of change of the coaching concept and coaching outcomes. We also assessed clients' affinity for technology (ATI) because of the blended format of the coaching.

Results:

Two-factor ANOVAs with repeated measures showed large effects ($d = 1$) for detachment ($p = .002$) and middle effects ($d = .7$) for WLB ($p = .042$) up to 4 months after the intervention ended without any interaction effect. Only in the "high intervention fidelity" group did the mechanisms of change and ATI ($p = .000$ to $p = .036$) predict general coaching outcomes 4 months after the

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coaching had ceased. Coaches' empathy predicted goal attainment ($p = .004$) in the "high intervention fidelity" group.

Originality:

The couple coaching was highly effective in boosting clients' detachment and WLB independent of coaches' intervention fidelity. The assumed change mechanisms of the coaching concept and the ATI were only effective when there was a high degree of intervention fidelity. Coaches should be aware of the conceptual foundations and the core components of their coaching approach.

Keywords: coaching, detachment, work-life balance, intervention fidelity, empathy, mixed-method approach

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Zusammenfassung

Ziel:

Kleinunternehmer arbeiten häufig mit ihren Lebenspartnern zusammen im Betrieb. Sie erleben eine extreme Vermengung ihres Arbeits- und Privatlebens und haben häufig Probleme, von ihrer Arbeit abzuschalten. Dies ist jedoch für ihre Zufriedenheit mit der Work-Life Balance entscheidend. In diesem Beitrag untersuchen wir mit dieser Zielgruppe ein Coaching zur Förderung des Abschaltens von der Arbeit und Work-Life Balance (WLB). Dabei setzen wir einen Fokus auf das Coachverhalten hinsichtlich Interventionstreue und Empathie. Wir wählten ein Blended Coaching Format, d.h. wir kombinierten Face-to-face mit Tele-Sitzungen und Onlinekursen, um die Digitalisierung für mehr Flexibilität und Unterstützung zwischen den Sitzungen zu nutzen.

Methode:

Wir beobachteten das Coachverhalten in Bezug auf die Interventionstreue und teilten darauf basierend die Klienten (N=42) im Sinne des „adapted designs“ in zwei Interventionsgruppen auf. Wir beobachteten zudem die Empathie der Coaches. Mittels Fragebögen erfassten wir die Veränderungsmechanismen des Coachingkonzepts und Ergebnisse aus Sicht der Klienten bis zu 4 Monate nach Beendigung des Coachings. Aufgrund des Blended Formats untersuchten wir zudem den Einfluss der Technikaffinität (ATI) der Klienten auf den Coachingerfolg.

Ergebnisse:

Zweifaktorielle ANOVAs mit Messwiederholungen bis zu 4 Monate nach Ende des Coachings zeigten große Effekte für Abschalten von der Arbeit ($p = .002$) und mittlere Effekte für eine zufriedenerere WLB ($p = .042$) ohne Interaktionseffekte. Nur in der Interventionsgruppe mit hoher Interventionstreue sagten die angenommenen Veränderungsmechanismen und der ATI ($p = .000$

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bis $p = .036$) die Wirksamkeit vier Monate nach Coachingende voraus. Die Empathie der Coaches bestätigte sich als Prädiktor für die Zielerreichung in der Gruppe mit hoher Interventionstreue ($p = .004$).

Originalität:

Das Paar-Coaching war unabhängig von der Interventionstreue der Coaches hochwirksam. Die angenommenen Veränderungsmechanismen des Coachings und der ATI kamen ausschließlich bei einer hohen Interventionstreue zur Wirkung. Coaches sollten sich der konzeptionellen Grundlagen und der Kernkomponenten ihres Coaching-Ansatzes bewusst sein.

Schlüsselwörter: Coaching, Abschalten, Work-Life-Balance, Interventionstreue, Empathie, Mixed-Methods-Ansatz

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Due to the general and pandemic-driven trends of digitalization, home office and the associated blurring of work-life boundaries people find it difficult to ‘switch-off’ after work which impedes a satisfying work-life balance (WLB)(Carlson & Frone, 2003). People particularly struggle to psychologically detach from work (hereafter, detachment) when they are faced with high job demands (Steed et al., 2021; Sonnentag, 2018). Detachment has been identified in the literature as the most powerful recovery experience (Bennett et al., 2018; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007, 2015). Detachment means refraining from work-related activities during off-job time (e.g., reading work emails), mentally leaving work behind and gaining distance from one’s job demands (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Scholars and practitioners have recognized that detachment can be enhanced through intervention programs. A recent meta-analysis with 30 (mostly training) detachment intervention studies showed small to medium effects in increasing detachment ($d = 0.36$) on average (Karabinski et al., 2021).

In the present study, we investigated a detachment and WLB coaching intervention in an extreme context in regard to blurred work-life boundaries and detachment: small business owners (SBOs) and their spouses, who often work together in their business (Jurik et al., 2019). They actively manage a business with fewer than 50 employees (European Commission, 2020). SBOs live for and with their business (physically and mentally), blur work-life boundaries (Helmle et al., 2014), and show enormous difficulties to detach from their business (Kollmann et al., 2019). At the same time, prevention providers hardly reach them for mental health interventions (Hogg et al., 2021). Small businesses have low take up of health promotion programs, in general (Hasle & Limborg, 2006; McCoy et al., 2015).

The coaching has three theory-driven conceptual foundations. First, it is a couple coaching to consider the context of SBOs and their spouses as work-linked couples when setting

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goals (Orehek & Forest, 2016) and when fostering individual behavior change toward detachment and WLB (e.g., Hobfoll & Hobfoll, 1994; Nowack, 2017; Park & Haun, 2017). Second, the coaching is based on the result-oriented coaching concept (Greif, 2008) which stresses result-oriented self-reflection as the coaching mechanism of change. Third, it is based on the Zürich Resource Model (ZRM; Storch & Krause, 2017). The latter is a self-management training concept based on neuroscientific theories and findings (Storch, 2004). These three conceptual foundations will be outlined in the coaching concept section of this article. Furthermore, we applied a blended format (3 face-to-face and 2 video-based tele-sessions, 3 online courses and an online diary) to offer sustainable coaching in a time of increased technology use. A recent 8-month wait-list evaluation study of this blended coaching concept with SBOs and their spouses showed that participants in the intervention group experienced more detachment and were less exhausted than those in the control group four months after the intervention had ceased. Spousal support during coaching was the main mechanism of change. Beyond that, the working alliance between coach and client did not play a success-predictive role (anonymous, 2021).

In this study we look at the implementation processes (Nielsen & Randall, 2013), i.e. coaches' behavior in relation to intervention fidelity (the extent to which the coach delivers the intervention as intended (Murphy & Gutman, 2012)) and in relation to empathy (Will et al., 2016). We study the influence of coaches' intervention fidelity on the coaching mechanisms of change (e.g., spousal support during coaching) and coaching outcomes (e.g., goal attainment). Furthermore, we study the influence of coaches' empathy on coaching outcomes. As intervention-specific outcomes we integrate clients' intervention receipt (whether the client

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comprehends and uses the intervention skills during the session) (Borrelli et al., 2005), detachment and WLB.

Our study seeks to make several important theoretical and methodological contributions to the coaching literature. First, we contribute to coaching research by investigating implementation processes and coaching mechanisms of change that impact coaching effectiveness. Second, we focus on coaches' behavior and the under-investigated intervention fidelity (Gearing et al., 2011) and empathy of coaches (Will et al., 2016). Third, we follow the call for transferring the ZRM to coaching research (Storch, 2004) and for researching digitalized health interventions (Howarth et al., 2018) and online coaching (Berninger-Schäfer, 2018). Fourth, we contribute to coaching research by using the adapted study design approach (Randall et al., 2005), and by using mixed methods (observational and self-report data, Bryman, 2006). Last, we answer the call for worksite health promotion research in small businesses (Gerhardt et al., 2019) and with entrepreneurs (Stephan, 2018). We hope to guide future coaching intervention studies that aim to contribute to the literature.

In the following section, we first introduce coaches' behavior with regard to intervention fidelity and empathy as implementation process factors before we present the conceptual foundations of the couple coaching intervention and its mechanisms of change. Finally, we introduce the general and intervention-specific coaching outcomes.

1 Coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy

When researching interventions, scholars ideally investigate context, mechanisms and outcomes, as it is outlined in the realist evaluation approach (Tawson & Pilley, 1997) and implementation processes (Nielsen & Randall, 2013; anonymous, 2021). The implementation process model for organizational health interventions by Nielsen and Randall (2013) distinguishes between design

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and implementation, e.g., coaches' intervention fidelity (Murphy & Gutman, 2012) and coaches' empathy (Will et al., 2016), and participants' mental models, e.g., clients' affinity for technology in the implementation of a digital intervention (Schueller et al., 2017). In this section, we first outline coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy as implementation process factors before we present clients' affinity for technology as participants' mental models in the next section.

Intervention fidelity is the extent to which core components of the intervention are delivered by the interventionist as it was intended by the authors of the intervention (Gearing et al., 2011). Careful consideration of intervention fidelity is needed when mechanisms of change are being investigated. Further it helps to accurately interpret study findings, revise interventions for future studies, and increase internal validity, statistical power and effect size by reducing unintended variability. Enhancing intervention fidelity also has the effect of increasing external validity, as a high degree of intervention fidelity is needed for both study replication and for generalization of the intervention to other contexts (Borrelli et al., 2005). According to Gearing et al. (2011) four core components should be considered: (1) the first component is the use of intervention manuals as a means to improve the integrity of interventions and provide interventionists with intervention protocols, as well as parsing intervention integrity into the interventionists' adherence and competence. Intervention manuals are necessary to ensure that multiple providers administer the same intervention in the same manner. Theories, goals and strategies are outlined in an intervention manual, including how a program should be organized and delivered, and the role and responsibilities of the providers. (2) The second component of fidelity is training the interventionist. For an intervention to be implemented with fidelity, adequate training and supervision of interventionists during the course of the intervention are required. (3) The third core component of fidelity is intervention delivery. It is the heart of

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fidelity, as it involves the measurement of fidelity during the course of the intervention with a focus on the interventionists' behavior. Behaviors that are unique to the intervention and essential to the specific intervention are of special interest (i.e., asking the clients to engage in spousal social support during coaching). (4) The fourth component is the monitoring of the clients' intervention receipt. This component incorporates elements that focus on whether participants comprehend and use the intervention skills during the sessions and the extent to which participants are engaged and adherent with the content of the intervention. We see intervention receipt as the immediate goal of the coaching or as the most proximal specific outcome (Greif, 2017; Semmer, 2011; see also Kirkpatrick's evaluation framework, 1976) rather than as a component of intervention fidelity. Only when a coach manages to deliver the intervention in the expected way, clients will be able to enhance the intended intervention skills. Thus, intervention receipt can also be seen as a "manipulation check", if the intervention reaches its goals based on the chosen theoretical concepts and methods. This leads us to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: When coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity, their clients' intervention receipt is higher compared to clients' intervention receipt when coaches demonstrate low intervention fidelity.

Coaches ideally not only deliver the coaching concept according to the manual, i.e., to the theoretical foundations, components and methods, but coaches should also show empathic behavior. Coaches' empathy is vital for establishing a trusting coach-client relationship and essential for effective communication (Nicolai et al., 2007), for a strong working alliance (Baron & Morin, 2009; de Haan et al., 2011) and coaching success (Will & Kauffeld, 2018; Will et al., 2016). Empathy is generally seen as a two-dimensional concept with affective and cognitive

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components. Empathy in coaching is focused on the cognitive aspect of understanding the client's perspective and the behavioral ability to communicate this understanding to the client (Nicolai et al., 2007; Will & Kauffeld, 2018; Will et al., 2016). Initial findings from a recent study evaluating the couple coaching stressed that the working alliance between coach and clients is not success-predictive (anonymous, 2021). Thus, we did not have a hypothesis about coaches' empathy in this couple coaching intervention but wanted to investigate its role as a coaching success factor:

Research question 1: Does coaches' empathic behavior have any influence on coaching outcomes?

2 Clients' affinity for technology interactions

With regard to the implementation process model (Nielsen & Randall, 2013), participants' mental models play a predictive role in occupational health interventions. Our blended coaching mixes face-to-face elements with digital offers, such as tele-coaching and online courses.

Therefore, we see clients' affinity for technology interaction (ATI) as the crucial clients' mental model (anonymous, 2021). It is a person's propensity to naturally interact with technical systems (Franke et al., 2017; Karrer et al., 2009). In a recent evaluation study of this coaching format, SBOs and coaches reported in interviews that when the SBOs experienced increasing workload, the online courses were the first part of the coaching that they skipped or postponed.

Furthermore, some of the participants had problems connecting to the internet or problems with the interface (anonymous, 2021). However, participants with a higher affinity for technology or a generally more positive attitude toward technology, are more likely to succeed in online intervention formats and to be able to solve possible technical problems (e.g., Backhaus et al. 2019, Chen, 2017, Niels et al. 2019). If the coaches deliver the coaching as intended, the coaches

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had made the relevance of the online courses and the online diary clear and built upon the knowledge and exercises of the online courses and diary during the following coaching sessions. Thus, we expected clients' ATI to be a predictive factor for coaching outcomes when the coaches deliver the intervention as intended.

Hypothesis 2: When coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity, client's ATI predicts coaching outcomes.

3 The coaching concept and its mechanisms of change

The coaching intervention in this study has three theory-driven conceptual foundations. First, the present couple coaching intervention follows an individual approach in working on individual goals while the spouse being present and supportive. Small business owners and their spouses face highly integrated life-domains and evince interdependencies in setting and pursuing health-related goals (Anonymous, 2021). Spouses in general have strong influences on individual recovery experiences (Park & Haun, 2017; Park & Fritz, 2014), WLB (Helmle et al., 2014) and behavior change in general (Nowack, 2017). As Hobfoll and Hobfoll (1994) outlined from the perspective of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), spouses act interdependently and coordinate their actions to protect and build up individual and shared resources, such as detachment experiences. Haun et al. (2017) found that the resource of a partner's social support attenuated the relationship between time pressure and detachment. When the coach manages to deliver the intervention as intended, the coach stimulates spousal support during coaching. Counseling research supports to consider the social support climate of clients for engaging in behavior change (Nowack, 2017). Relationship researchers have long recognized the importance of spousal social support for shaping goal pursuits on the basis of goal systems

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theory (Orehek & Forest, 2016). Thus, we expected the coaching intervention to work successfully when delivered as intended by activating spousal social support.

Hypothesis 3: When coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity, client's spousal social support during the coaching process predicts their coaching outcomes.

Second, the coaching intervention is based on the result-oriented coaching concept, which defines coaching as an intensive and systematic promotion of result-oriented self-reflection to improve the achievement of self-congruent goals or for conscious self-change and self-development (Greif, 2008, S. 59). Result-oriented are self-reflections "if the person thereby develops consequences for future actions or self-reflections" (Greif, 2008, S. 40). They help developing self-congruent goals and predict goal attainment (Behrendt & Greif, 2018; Grant & O'Connor, 2018; Greif, 2007, 2008). Reflecting and ruminating on personal thoughts and feelings is negatively related to constructive problem-solving and goal attainment and positively related to anxiety and stress reactions (Grant, 2003; Grant et al., 2002). Thus, we expected the coaching intervention to work successfully when delivered as planned by activating result-oriented self-reflection.

Hypothesis 4: When coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity, client's result-oriented self-reflection predicts their coaching outcomes.

Third, we transferred the neuroscientific based self-management training concept of the ZRM (Storch, 2004) to this couple coaching. With regard to defining and setting self-congruent goals and actions, the ZRM refers to the somatic marker hypothesis (Damasio, 1994). This hypothesis postulates that we use emotion-based signals generated from the body when appraising different response options for a decision. The emotional memory of an experience with its somatic markers represents the self-system (Kuhl et al., 2015; Storch, 2004). Decisions

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for setting goals that include somatic markers are self-congruent, and these goals lead to success more frequently than goals with lower self-congruence. The strong positive affect that reveals a somatic marker is indicative of self-congruence or intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kuhl et al., 2015). Thus, we expected the coaching intervention to work successfully when delivered as planned through activating positive affect:

Hypothesis 5: When coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity, client's positive affect predicts their coaching outcomes.

4 Coaching outcomes

Coaching scholars distinguish general and intervention-specific coaching outcomes. Coaching satisfaction and the degree of goal attainment are general and key outcome measures in coaching research (Greif, 2017; Greif, 2007; Spence, 2007). Intervention-specific outcomes assess the substantive objectives of interventions (Greif, 2007, 2017) and are divided into proximal and distal outcomes (Semmer, 2011). Intervention receipt as the most proximal specific outcome was referred to above and led us to develop our first hypothesis. More distal outcome measures for this couple coaching intervention are detachment and WLB.

SBOs and their spouses participate in the coaching to better detach from their business and for a satisfying WLB (Carlson & Frone, 2003). WLB is an individual's evaluation of the fulfilment of different roles and goals in all life domains. Activities to refuel resources as a counterbalance to resource-draining life demands are beneficial to satisfaction with WLB (Syrek et al., 2011). Individuals are seen as active creators of their detachment experiences (de Bloom et al. 2020) and of their WLB (Sturges, 2012). Based on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Hobfoll, 1994), spouses act interdependently and coordinate their actions to protect and build up individual and shared resources, such as detachment experiences. When a coach delivers the

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intervention as intended, clients change their attitude and behaviors to counterbalance their high job demands by integrating individual or joint detachment experiences into their daily life that is aligned with their partners needs and supported by their partners. Thus, when the coach demonstrate high intervention fidelity, the coaching is expected to help participants better detach from work and to be effective in increasing their WLB:

Hypothesis 6: When the coach delivers the intervention as intended, clients will show an increase in detachment over time in contrast to those clients whose coach demonstrate low intervention fidelity.

Hypothesis 7: When the coach delivers the intervention as intended, clients will show an increase in WLB over time in contrast to those clients whose coach demonstrate low intervention fidelity.

5 Methods

5.1 Design and Procedure

We considered the context of SBOs and their spouses by involving the regional networks in which SBOs regularly act, in particular regional prevention providers and trade guilds of small businesses. SBOs and their spouses were invited by their trade guilds to attend an information session. Coaches of the prevention providers and the people of the trade guilds provided information about the couple coaching intervention. We ran an online or paper-pencil pretest before the beginning of the intervention (Time 1 (T1)), an online or paper-pencil posttest four months after the intervention ended (Time 2 (T2)), and a paper-pencil follow-up test in the transfer session four months after T2 (Time 3 (T3)). The participants were asked to fill out paper-pencil questionnaires at the end of each session (Times (T) 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5). We videotaped each session to be able to observe coaches' behavior and clients' intervention receipt.

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Participants were informed that study participation was voluntary and that their anonymity would be protected. They gave their informed consent to participate in this research. The local ethics committee assessed the research as acceptable. We used an adapted design (Randall et al., 2005) that incorporated the measurement of intervention fidelity to partition the participant sample into two intervention groups (IG1 vs. IG2). Clients in the coaching intervention that was delivered by the coaches as intended belong to IG1, the “high intervention fidelity” group while the other belong to IG2, the “low intervention fidelity” group.

5.2 Intervention Manual and Train-the-Coach Workshop

We developed a written coaching manual that includes theories, descriptions of the sessions, strategies, methods, materials and links to the online courses and the online diary. The number, lengths and spacing of sessions are described in the manual (anonymous, 2020). The blended couple coaching starts with a one-hour first-contact session to establish contact and to provide information about the coaching (tele-) sessions, online diary, courses, questionnaires and videotapes. The first coaching session is a three-hour face-to-face session followed by an online diary to stimulate result-oriented self-reflection. Sessions two and five are also face-to-face sessions. Sessions three and four are designed as tele-sessions. Four months later, a short face-to-face transfer session is designed to remind the participants of their coaching goals and to allow them to complete follow-up tests (Time 3 (T3)). Figure 1 offers an overview of the blended couple coaching concept. The variables and measurement points in Figure 1 will be outlined in the measures section (see Figure 1).

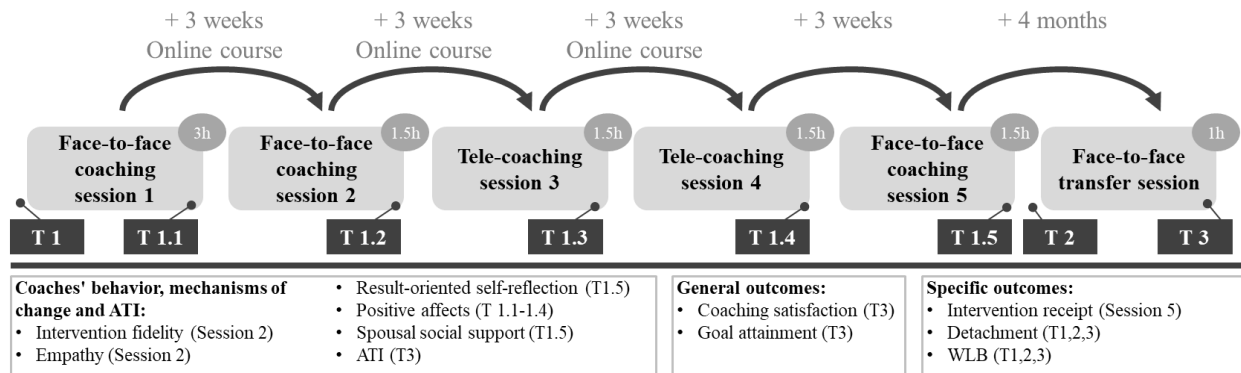
Sessions two, three and four are combined with online courses. The online courses cover information and interactive exercises that help the participants reflect on their situation, behaviors and goals. We designed a stereotypical couple of “personas” (Cooper et al., 2003) to

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provide examples and inspiration. To illustrate the next step within coaching, the persona-couple set health-related goals, seek resources and plan specific behavior. Thus, the participants are prepared for the coaching sessions and are asked to apply the methods to develop their goals.

Figure 1

The Blended Couple Coaching with variables and measurement points



The involved 11 (six female) coaches were experienced self-employed coaches that worked for the involved prevention provider on a contract basis. They participated in a one day “train-the-coach” workshop provided by the first and second authors and were supervised by an experienced interventionist of the prevention provider and the first and second authors throughout the whole course of the intervention. In IG1 were four female coaches and one male coach while in IG2 were two female coaches and four male coaches.

5.3 Participants

The study included 42 participants (or 21 couples). The mean age was 52 years (SD = 6.6, ranging from 32 to 66 years). The participants were married for 18.5 years on average (SD = 9.4, ranging from 3 to 32 years). The participating owners employed 13.7 people on average (SD = 14.5, ranging from zero to 50 employees). Twenty-six participants (or 13 couples) had no children under 14 years of age. Fourteen participants (or 7 couples) had one or two children

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under 14 years of age. Twenty-eight participants had vocational training, and nine had a university degree. Twenty-three participants (19 males) were official business owners and worked an average of 52.8 hours per week ($SD = 2.2$, ranging from 30 to 65 hours). Eleven participants (one male) were employed in the businesses of their spouses and worked an average of 29.7 hours per week ($SD = 4.5$, ranging from 5 to 50 hours). Three participants (one male) were employed by another company but supported their spouses in their businesses. Five women were employed by another company and did not support their spouses in their businesses. We used t tests to compare the two intervention groups in terms of age, years of marriage, number of employees and working hours as sociodemographic variables. We found significant differences for working hours ($p = .03$) and years of marriage ($p = .01$). In IG1, participants worked 38.7 hours per week (men 50 hours; women 22 hours) on average ($SD = 17.4$) and they were married for 14.3 years on average ($SD = 7.4$). In IG2, participants worked 50.5 hours per week (men 59 hours; women 39 hours) on average ($SD = 13.4$) and were married for 21.9 years on average ($SD = 9.6$).

5.4 Measures

Intervention fidelity. To assess the heart of intervention fidelity, the intervention delivery, we asked the coaches to videotape all coaching sessions. We monitored the delivery of sessions two, four and five. Session two targets the “crossing of the Rubicon” from the motive to the intention by finding and setting self-congruent attitude goals with the method called “inner team” (Schulz von Thun, 2008). In session four, the participants’ attitude goals are transferred to behavioral implementation intentions combined with mental contrasting. In session five the participants’ implementation intentions are strengthened to cope with stressful transfer situations. We did not monitor the delivery of session one because initial coaching sessions should be avoided for

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studying coaches' behavior (Will et al., 2016). We skipped session three because it focuses on embodiment exercises which are difficult to videotape. Three psychology students¹ were trained and supervised by the first author to independently assess and rate the delivery in session two for each of the seven parts (1 introduction, 2 imagination exercise, 3 attitude goal explanation, 4 inner team, 5 spousal and family support, 6 goal formulation, 7 closing) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 2 = delivered with a goal or method other than what is written in the manual, 3 = delivered with the same goals and methods as what is written in the manual, but not in the correct manner 4 = delivered with goals and methods as intended in a correct manner, and 5 = exactly delivered word-for-word). To assess whether the raters provided consistency in their ratings across the different coach-client relations (i.e., interrater reliability), we calculated two-way random intraclass correlations (ICCs) with absolute agreement (average measures) between the raters (McGraw & Wong, 1996). The ICCs for the seven parts of session two yielded values of .985 ($p = .000$), .986 ($p = .000$), .944 ($p = .000$), .932 ($p = .000$), .900 ($p = .000$), .969 ($p = .000$) and .762 ($p = .000$), indicating excellent agreement among the three raters for the first six parts and good agreement for the seventh part (Koo & Li, 2016). ANOVA with repeated measures showed significant differences in delivery between the seven parts of session two: $F(3,97, 146,91) = 10.87$ $p = .000$. Part six (goal formulation) was delivered significantly worse than all the other parts. The coaches had problems to help the participants formulate an attitude goal after exploring their motives. Part 5 (spousal support) was also not delivered as intended (< 3) on average. The coaches did not carefully stimulate spousal support in this phase of the coaching.

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One of the three raters² rated the intervention delivery of sessions four and five. ANOVAs with repeated measures showed significant differences between the delivery of the different parts of session four: $F(2.97,62.33) = 2.93, p = .041$. Post hoc tests did not show any significant differences, but only initial part 1, part 4.1 and the closing part were delivered at least with goals and methods as intended, on average (≥ 3). The main parts were not delivered as intended.

ANOVAs with repeated measures showed no significant differences between the delivery of the different parts of session five: $F(2.37,49.86) = 1.30, p = .283$. ANOVA with repeated measures showed significant differences between the delivery of sessions two, four and five: $F(1.46, 30.64) = 6.49, p = .009$. Post-hoc test showed significant differences between session two and both sessions four and five ($p = .038$ and $p = .003$, respectively). Sessions four and five were delivered in a significantly worse manner than session two, on average. We decided that the participants who experienced coaching session two delivered with the same goals and methods as intended, even if not in a correct manner (≥ 3) belong to IG1 ($n = 18$), and the others to IG2 ($n = 24$) to guarantee a similar amount of coaching in each group. Furthermore, developing an attitude goal toward detachment and WLB is a core component of this coaching intervention and the prerequisite for all of the following sessions, and session two was delivered in a significantly better manner than sessions four and five.

Intervention receipt. Participants' intervention receipt was observed in session five (see Figure 1) by one psychology student³ and the first author. We rated the number and quality of activated resources, spousal support and implementations of the attitude goal. Three items were answered

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on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 5= high number and quality) with 100% agreement. Cronbach's alpha was .72.

Empathy by the coach was assessed in session two (see Figure 1) using the 6-item subscale of the adapted Rating Scale for the Assessment of Empathic Communication in Medical Interviews (REM; Meinecke & Kauffeld, 2019; Nicolai et al., 2007). Sample items include “Did the coach show understanding of the client’s point of view?”, “Did the coach try to put him/herself in the position of the client?”, and “Did the coach show interest in the client’s opinion?”. All items were answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The two endpoints of each item were described as behavioral terms such as indicating that the coach showed (1) no interest or (7) much interest. We used additional behavioral anchors to facilitate the rating process (e.g., “frequently cut the client off” vs. “frequently asked the client to express his or her opinions”) in accordance with former studies (Meinecke & Kauffeld, 2019).

Raters for each trial were two psychology students⁴ who independently rated the coaches’ empathy towards each of the clients by watching to the video recordings of session two and using a paper-pencil template. The students were trained and supervised by the first author. Session two is divided in seven parts, of which five could be rated because in these parts, the coach should show empathic behavior. To assess whether the raters provided consistency in their ratings of empathy across the different coach-client relations (i.e., interrater reliability), we calculated two-way random ICCs with absolute agreement (average measures) between the raters (McGraw & Wong, 1996). The ICCs for the observed five parts of session two yielded values of .800 ($p = .000$), .913 ($p = .000$), .866 ($p = .000$), .905 ($p = .000$), .947 ($p = .000$), indicating good

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to excellent agreement among the raters (Koo & Li, 2016). The average internal consistency yielded a value of .94 (Cronbach's α). In order to explore possible differences in the extent of coaches' empathic communication across the five parts, we calculated repeated ANOVAs. The results showed no significant differences between the five parts ($F(1,74, 29,64) = 2.598, p = .098$), indicating that the extent of expressed empathy was rather stable across the coaching session. We used the mean empathy score across the five parts of the session. Following recommendations from the behavioral observation literature (Yoder & Symons, 2010), we also used the mean empathy rating of all raters.

ATI was measured with the 9-item Franke et al. (2019) scale in the transfer session at T3 (see Figure 1). A sample item is, "I like testing the functions of new technical systems." Three items were reversed formulated. A sample item is, "It is enough for me to know the basic functions of a technical system." Items were answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = completely disagree; 6 = completely agree). Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Spousal social support during coaching was assessed using paper-pencil format at the end of the last coaching session (T1.5, see Figure 1) with the 5-items scale according to the contents of the five coaching sessions: "My spouse supported me during the coaching (1) "...to reflect my actual needs." (2) "...to develop my action-oriented goal." (3) "...to develop resources that support my goal attainment." (4) "...to improve my competencies to attain my goal in type B situations." and (5) "...to improve my competencies to attain my goal in type C situations." (anonymous, 2021). Items were answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 5 = completely). Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Result-oriented self-reflection was measured with the 3-item Greif and Berg (2011) scale at T2 (see Figure 1). A sample item is "During the coaching, I thought about my personal needs, goals,

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and norms, and I made a plan for how to reach them”. The response format was a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 4 = completely). Cronbach’s alpha was .89.

Positive affect was measured at the end of each of the first four coaching sessions (T1.1-1.4, see Figure 1) with 10 items, including “active”, “strong”, “interested”, “alert”, “attentive”, “joyful”, “enthusiastic”, “inspired”, “proud”, and “determined”, of the positive affect dimension of PANAS, which operationalizes approach-oriented positive emotional feelings (Krohne et al., 1996; Watson et al., 1988). The response format was a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 5 = most). Cronbach’s alphas were .94, .93, .95 and .93, for Times 1.1-1.4, respectively.

General coaching outcomes were assessed in the transfer session at T3 (see Figure 1) (Greif, 2007, 2017; Spence, 2007). Coaching satisfaction was assessed by each participant with the Runde (2003, 2016) item “How satisfied are you with the coaching?” using a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = very satisfied; 6 = very dissatisfied). Goal attainment was assessed with the Runde (2003, 2016) item “How high in percentage do you rate your personal goal attainment?”

Specific distal coaching outcomes were measured at T1, T2, and T3 (see Figure 1) (Greif, 2007, 2017; Semmer, 2011, p. 307). Detachment was assessed with the four items from the Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) scale. Items were answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A sample item is “During leisure time, I don’t think about work at all”. Cronbach’s alphas were .93 at T1, .84 at T2, and .95 at T3, respectively. WLB was measured with the five items from the Syrek et al. (2011) scale. Items were answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = totally disagree; 6 = completely agree). A sample item is “I manage to achieve a good balance between stressful and restful activities in my life”. Cronbach’s alphas were .92 at T1, .91 at T2, and .92 at T3, respectively. In Figure 1 you see all the above-mentioned variables and measurement points.

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5.5 Data Analysis

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare clients' intervention receipt in the "high intervention fidelity" and "low intervention fidelity" group (IG1 vs. IG2) (H1). To test the research question and our hypotheses that ATI (H2), spousal support during coaching (H3), result-oriented self-reflection (H4) and positive affect (H5) predict general coaching outcomes (coaching satisfaction and goal attainment) in the "high intervention fidelity" group (IG1) but not in the "low intervention fidelity" group (IG2), we used simple regression analyses due to the small sample size. We tested the hypotheses that coaching is effective on detachment and WLB over time in the "high intervention fidelity" group (IG1) but not in the "low intervention fidelity" group (IG2) (H6 and H7) using two-factor ANOVAs with repeated measures.

6 Results

Our first hypothesis (H1) stated that clients' intervention receipt is higher when coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity compared to clients' intervention receipt when coaches demonstrate low intervention fidelity. There were significant differences in the intervention receipt scores between the "high intervention fidelity" group (IG1) ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .81$) and the "low intervention fidelity" group (IG2) ($M = 2.03$, $SD = .48$), $t(24) = , p = .000$, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Concerning our research question (RQ) regarding the influence of coaches' empathy on coaching success, the results showed that empathy did not predict coaching satisfaction ($p = .080$) but empathy did predict goal attainment ($p = .004$) in the "high intervention fidelity" group IG1. It explained 38% of the variance in goal attainment, $R^2 = .38$, $F(1,16) = 11.37$, $p = .004$.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of coaches' empathy, clients' affinity for technology (ATI), mechanisms of change (spousal support, self-reflection, positive affect), coaching satisfaction and goal attainment.

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Coaches' empathy (Session 2)	40	5.37	.833	-						
2. ATI (T3)	31	3.59	.96	.135	-					
3. Spousal support (T1.5)	42	4.10	.68	.085	.318*	-				
4. Self-reflection (T2)	40	3.86	.75	.129	.524**	.646**	-			
5. Positive affect (T1.1-T1.4)	41	3.63	.57	.078	.355*	.619**	.523**	-		
6. Coaching satisfaction (T3)	34	1.76	1.33	-.248	-.052	-.536**	-.312*	-.367*	-	
7. Goal Attainment (T3)	34	64.32	23.31	.384*	.293	.337*	.335*	.547**	-.568**	-

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed).

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Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of coaches' empathy, ATI, spousal support, result-oriented self-reflection, positive affect and general outcome variables.

Tables 2 and 3 show the results of the simple linear regression analyses of coaches' empathy, ATI, spousal support, result-oriented self-reflection, positive affect on coaching satisfaction and goal attainment 4 months after the coaching ended in IG1 and IG2.

Table 2. Regression of coaches' empathy, ATI, mechanisms of change (spousal support, self-reflection, and positive affect) on coaching satisfaction (T3) and goal attainment (T3) with participants in the IG1 group.

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>	
Coaching Satisfaction (T3)						
Coaches' empathy (Session 2)	-0.68	0.36	-1.87	.080	[-1.45	0.09]
ATI (T3)	-0.79	0.24	-3.27	.005	[-1.31	-0.28]
Spousal support (T1.5)	-1.14	0.25	-4.59	.000	[-1.67	-0.62]
Self-reflection (T2)	-0.80	0.30	-2.65	.018	[-1.49	-0.16]
Positive affect (T1.1-T1.4)	-0.94	0.40	-2.33	.033	[-1.79	-0.08]
Goal Attainment (T3)						
Coaches' empathy (Session 2)	23.57	6.99	3.37	.004	[8.75	38.39]
ATI (T3)	17.83	5.58	3.19	.006	[5.99	29.67]
Spousal support (T1.5)	21.34	6.82	3.13	.006	[6.88	35.79]
Self-reflection (T2)	16.47	7.16	2.30	.036	[1.21	31.72]
Positive affect (T1.1-T1.4)	28.62	7.88	3.63	.002	[11.92	45.32]

Note. $n = 17$ for ATI and $n = 16$ for self-reflection.

Our second to fifth hypotheses (H2-H5) stated that client's ATI, spousal support during coaching, result-oriented self-reflection and positive affect predict coaching outcomes when coaches demonstrate high intervention fidelity. The results of the simple linear regression analyses with participants in IG1 suggested that ATI significantly predicted coaching satisfaction ($p = .005$) and goal attainment ($p = .006$). It explained 36% of the variance in coaching satisfaction, $R^2 = .36$, $F(1,16) = 10.68$, $p = .005$, and 35% of the variance in goal attainment, $R^2 =$

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.35, $F(1,16) = 10.2$, $p = .006$, supporting Hypothesis 2. Spousal support during coaching predicted coaching satisfaction ($p = .000$) and goal attainment ($p = .006$). It explained 54% of the variance in coaching satisfaction scores, $R^2 = .54$, $F(1,16) = 21.03$, $p = .000$, and 34% of the variance in goal attainment scores, $R^2 = .34$, $F(1,16) = 9.79$, $p = .006$, supporting Hypothesis 3. Self-reflection significantly predicted coaching satisfaction ($p = .02$) and goal attainment ($p = .04$). It explained 27% of the variance in coaching satisfaction, $R^2 = .27$, $F(1,15) = 7.01$, $p = .02$, and 21% of the variance in goal attainment, $R^2 = .21$, $F(1,15) = 5.29$, $p = .036$, supporting Hypothesis 4. Positive affect predicted coaching satisfaction ($p = .033$) and goal attainment ($p = .002$). It explained 21% of the variance in coaching satisfaction, $R^2 = .21$, $F(1,16) = 5.42$, $p = .033$, and 42% of the variance in goal attainment scores, $R^2 = .42$, $F(1,16) = 13.2$, $p = .002$, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Table 3. Regression of coaches' empathy, ATI, mechanisms of change (spousal support, self-reflection, and positive affect) on coaching satisfaction (T3) and goal attainment (T3) with participants in the IG2 group.

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>	
Coaching Satisfaction (T3)						
Coaches' empathy (Session 2)	-0.04	0.51	-0.07	.945	[-1.15	1.08]
ATI (T3)	0.62	0.45	1.37	.198	[-.376	1.62]
Spousal support (T1.5)	-1.01	0.72	-1.40	.183	[-2.57	0.54]
Self-reflection (T2)	-0.35	0.74	-0.48	.640	[-1.95	1.24]
Positive affect (T1.1-T1.4)	-0.67	0.71	-0.95	.359	[-2.19	.846]
Goal Attainment (T3)						
Coaches' empathy (Session 2)	1.60	6.76	0.24	.816	[-13.12	16.33]
ATI (T3)	-3.99	4.75	-0.84	.418	[-14.44	6.45]
Spousal support (T1.5)	-8.87	9.92	-0.89	.386	[-30.15	12.41]
Self-reflection (T2)	1.91	8.92	0.21	.834	[-17.37	21.19]
Positive affect (T1.1-T1.4)	12.38	9.05	1.37	.193	[-7.02	31.78]

Note. ATI $n = 12$, self-reflection $n = 14$, positive affect and spousal support $n = 15$, empathy $n =$

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Hypotheses 6 and 7 (H6 and H7) stated that clients will show an increase in detachment and WLB over time in IG1, i.e., when the coach delivers the intervention as intended, in contrast to clients in IG2, whose coach demonstrate low intervention fidelity. Table 4 shows the means, standard deviations, and ANOVA statistics for detachment and WLB. Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean detachment levels showed a statistically significant difference between the measurements, $F(1.60, 49.73) = 7.80, p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .20, d = 1.004$. There was no interaction effect group x time, $F(1.60, 49.73) = 1.36, p = .263$. The detachment level at T1 ($M = 3.12, SD = .89$) showed a significant difference from the mean detachment level at T2 ($M = 3.58, SD = .66$) ($p = .000$) and at T3 ($M = 3.56, SD = .93$) ($p = .001$). Hypothesis 6 was not supported. A repeated-measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean WLB levels showed a statistically significant difference between the measurements, $F(1.40, 43.52) = 3.86, p = .042$, partial $\eta^2 = .11, d = .706$. There was no interaction effect Group x time, $F(1.40, 43.52) = .10, p = .836$. WLB at T1 ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.11$) showed a significant difference from the mean WLB level at T2 ($M = 4.27, SD = .88$) ($p = .036$) and at T3 ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.02$) ($p = .051$). Hypothesis 7 was also not supported.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and repeated ANOVA statistics for the intervention-specific outcome variables of Detachment and Work-Life Balance (WLB).

Variable	IG1 (n = 17)		IG2 (n = 16)		ANOVA	p	η^2	d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Detachment T1	3.54	0.75	2.67	0.83	$F(1.6, 49.73)$			
Detachment T2	3.82	0.52	3.31	0.70	time	0.002	0.20	1.004
Detachment T3	3.79	0.85	3.31	0.98	Group x time	0.263	0.04	
WLB T1	4.02	1.02	3.69	1.21	$F(1.4, 43.52)$			
WLB T2	4.41	0.86	4.11	0.90	time	0.042	0.11	0.706
WLB T3	4.42	0.93	3.99	1.10	Group x time	0.836	0.00	

Note. $n = 17$ (IG1), $n = 16$ (IG2).

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7 Discussion

Detaching from work and creating a satisfying WLB are increasing challenges for many people due to the trends of digitalization, home office and the associated blurring of work-life boundaries. Effective interventions to promote detachment and WLB are needed and, most importantly, we need to understand ‘what works for whom in which circumstances’ (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017). We therefore studied the contexts, processes and mechanisms that impact the effectiveness of the blended coaching with an extreme target group when it comes to detachment and blurring work-life boundaries since ever: SBOs and their spouses, who often work together in their business as work-linked couples. We focused on the under investigated coaches’ behavior regarding intervention fidelity and empathy. We used the adapted design approach and examined two intervention groups that were formed according to the extent of coaches’ intervention fidelity. As general coaching outcomes, we studied coaching satisfaction and goal attainment. Further, we distinguished proximal and distal intervention-specific outcomes, i.e., intervention receipt as the immediate target of the intervention, detachment and WLB as more distal outcomes. We conceptually based the coaching on the spousal influence on goal-setting and behavior change toward detachment and WLB, the result-oriented coaching concept and the neuroscientific ZRM. We tested the hypothesized mechanisms of change, i.e., spousal support during coaching, result-oriented self-reflection and positive affect. The results showed that clients’ intervention receipt was significantly higher in the “high intervention fidelity” group than in the “low intervention fidelity” group ($p = .000$). Only in the “high intervention fidelity” group, ATI and the hypothesized mechanisms of change of the couple coaching predicted general coaching outcomes 4 months after the intervention ended ($p = .000$ to $p = .036$). The empathy of the coach predicted goal attainment ($p = .004$) only in the “high intervention fidelity”

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group. Two-factor ANOVAs with repeated measures showed significant large to middle-sized effects on detachment ($p = .002$) and WLB ($p = .042$) over 8 months without any interaction effect. In the following paragraphs, we first discuss coaches' intervention fidelity and empathy and then we discuss the context of SBOs and their spouses, ATI and the mechanisms of change of this coaching concept.

7.1 Coaches' intervention fidelity matters!

The hypothesized mechanisms of change of the coaching intervention predicted coaching satisfaction and goal attainment 4 months after the intervention ended only in the "high intervention fidelity" group. The immediate target of the intervention, the intervention receipt, was significantly higher in the "high intervention fidelity" group than in the "low intervention fidelity" group, indicating intervention fidelity matters and guides our understanding under which circumstances SBOs and their spouses comprehend and use the intervention skills during the coaching, being engaged and adherent with the content of the coaching and what makes clients more satisfied with the coaching and attain their coaching goals.

We followed in our study an inquiry in intervention research to carefully integrate coaches' behavior regarding intervention fidelity and to clearly describe intervention fidelity procedures. Interestingly, coaches' intervention fidelity was not stable within the coaching sessions and between the coaching sessions two and both sessions four and five. Sessions four and five were delivered significantly worse than session two. We decided to use the adapted design approach (Randall et al., 2005) and formed two intervention groups according to the extent of intervention fidelity in session two, in which the clients develop an attitude goal toward detachment and WLB as a core component of this coaching concept and the prerequisite for all the following sessions. Session two targets the "crossing of the Rubicon" from the motive to the

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intention by finding and setting self-congruent attitude goals with the method called the “inner team” (Schulz von Thun, 2008). In session two, part six (goal formulation) was delivered in a significantly worse manner than all the other parts. We noticed that the coaches had problems helping the clients to formulate their attitude goal after exploring their motives with the “inner team” method. Part 5 (spousal support) was also not delivered as intended, on average. The coaches did not carefully stimulate spousal support in this phase. This provides us with hints for future studies, i.e., for revising the manual and for improving the training of the coaches.

Intervention studies should integrate the measurement of coaches’ behavior regarding intervention fidelity on a regular basis to help better interpret the study findings, revise manuals and train-the-coach workshops for future studies. Enhancing intervention fidelity has the effect of not only increasing internal validity but also increasing external validity, as a high degree of intervention fidelity is needed both for study replication and for the generalization of the interventions to other contexts (Borrelli et al., 2005).

7.2 Coaches’ empathy matters!

We also observed coaches’ behavior in regard to empathy, because coaching research underpins coaches’ empathy as a coaching success factor and the need for observational data on coaches’ actual empathic behavior (Will et al., 2016; Will & Kauffeld, 2018). Coaches’ empathy supports a strong working alliance in individual coaching settings (Baron & Morin, 2009; de Haan et al., 2011), but working alliance did not seem to play a role in this couple format (anonymous, 2021). Therefore, we had no hypothesis, but a research question about the role of coaches’ empathy in this couple coaching concept. Our results showed that empathy predicted goal attainment 4 months after the coaching ended, but only in the “high intervention fidelity” group. We conclude that empathic behavior is vital for establishing a trusting coach-client relationship and essential

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for effective communication (Nicolai et al., 2007) not only for coaching in individual settings, but also in this couple coaching setting if the coaching intervention is delivered as intended by the authors.

7.3 SBOs and their spouses improved their detachment and WLB

The results of our study show large effects for detachment ($d = 1.0$) and middle effects for WLB ($d = 0.71$), independent of coaches' behavior regarding intervention fidelity. These are impressive results in comparison to the results of the recent meta-analysis with 30 detachment intervention studies which showed small effects in increasing detachment ($d = 0.36$), on average (Karabinski et al., 2021). Therefore, we should consider the context in which we investigated the couple coaching intervention: successful, middle-aged SBOs in craft industry and their spouses, who often work together in their business as work-linked couples. They have blurred work-life boundaries (Helmle et al., 2014), show enormous difficulties to detach from their business (Kollmann et al., 2019) and are less likely to implement mental health promotion programs (Hogg et al., 2021), in particular when it comes to their own well-being and health (anonymous, 2021). We successfully reached them with this coaching through people of trade guilds in their regional networks, to whom they have personal contact and trust (anonymous, 2021). There are several conceivable reasons why they may have profited so well from this coaching intervention. First and primary, the recent meta-analysis on detachment interventions (Karabinski et al., 2021) and previous intervention research (Clauss et al., 2018) stress that participants with higher levels of burnout or a stronger need for recovery show greater improvement than their less impaired counterparts. As SBOs have enormous problems to detach and to experience a satisfying WLB, and burnout is a significant concern for them (Shepherd et al., 2010), they may be more likely to benefit from the coaching in terms of their detachment and WLB regardless of coaches'

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intervention fidelity. In addition, participants in the “low intervention fidelity” group (IG2) worked significantly ($p = .03$) more hours per week (50.5 hours per week; male 59 hours; female 39 hours) on average than those in the “high intervention fidelity” group (IG1) (38.7 hours per week; male 50 hours; female 22 hours) on average. Experiencing high workload may increase the need for recovery, which may cause the effectiveness of the coaching in both intervention groups. Second, Karabinski et al. (2021) found that older employees benefit more from detachment interventions, as it might be the case as well for our participants, being 52 years on average. Third, the coaching experience itself, spending time with the spouse on reflecting and improving detachment experiences and WLB may be perceived as a pathway to distance oneself from work and ruminative thoughts. It may help the participants to detach and to be more satisfied with their WLB, independent how well the coach delivers the coaching.

7.4 Effective digital health interventions need clients with an affinity for technology interaction

The coaching was conceptualized as a blended intervention to benefit from digitalization, i.e., to give the participants more flexibility and decision latitude regarding when and where to take part in some parts of the coaching and to digitally support them between the sessions. We combined face-to-face sessions with tele-sessions, an online diary and online courses. The results showed that participants’ ATI predicted coaching satisfaction and goal attainment only if the intervention was delivered by the coach as intended. This emphasizes that digital formats may positively influence the success of coaching interventions, especially if participants have a certain propensity for technology use, as has also been shown in online teaching (Backhaus et al., 2019). However, technology is not an end in itself: The relevance of the online elements needs to be clearly established by the coaches to obtain a positive effect.

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7.5 Spousal support during coaching as the mechanism of change

Our results show that spousal support during coaching is the mechanism of change that highly significantly ($p < .01$) predicts coaching satisfaction and goal attainment when coaches deliver the intervention as intended. Couple coaching builds on insights into the influence of spousal support on behavior changes and goal pursuit (Nowack, 2017; Orehek & Forest, 2016), on enhancing recovery experiences (Park & Fritz, 2015; Park & Haun, 2017), and on WLB (Gudmunson et al., 2009; Helmle et al., 2014). The clients worked on their individual goals but were constantly encouraged by the coach to support each other. The couples experienced their interdependence during the coaching when setting and pursuing individual goals to enhance detachment and WLB (Hobfoll & Hobfoll, 1994). We drew on the goal systems theory in relationship research (Orehek & Forest, 2016) and the COR theory to argue that spousal support is the facilitating resource that helps partners set and pursue goals to enhance detachment and WLB. In the future, we may use the lens of WLB crafting (anonymous, 2021) to examine the processes by which spouses jointly develop strategies to enhance detachment and WLB.

7.6 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study has several limitations. First, our sample was limited to SBOs and their spouses in the German craft industry. Thus, we cannot expect SBOs from other industries and cultures to yield identical results. We need evaluation studies of coaching interventions with other, more diverse samples. Second, the small sample size and the dependencies of the data are strong limitations. The risk of statistical Type II errors is increased, and only small proportions of effects can be detected with small sample sizes (Semmer, 2011). We need to conduct more intervention research with larger samples. Third, we observed coaches' behavior regarding intervention fidelity and empathy. Intervention fidelity was rather unstable within the sessions

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and across the sessions, in contrast to empathy. In the future, we should involve interaction analyses to investigate coaches' behavior in the interaction with clients' behavior (Ianiro et al., 2015). We may also improve our manual and train-the-coach workshop to promote more stable behavior concerning intervention fidelity. Fourth, we used the adapted design (Randall et al., 2005) and the observed coaches' intervention fidelity to partition the participant sample into the two intervention groups, the "high intervention fidelity" group and the "low intervention fidelity" group. The differences in the results should therefore be due to the coaches' behavior in regard to intervention fidelity. However, it is the case that different coaches worked in the two intervention groups. Other behaviors beside intervention fidelity could have influenced the results. Fifth, the ZRM works with the somatic marker hypothesis to define and set self-congruent goals and actions. We assessed somatic markers through perceived positive affect after the first four coaching sessions. In the future, we could use bodily sensation maps. They reflect the most reliable and systematic consciously accessible bodily states during emotional processing (Nummenmaa et al., 2014). As online coaching is growing fast, future research should study effective online settings, tools and methods for online (couple) coaching and incorporate comparative studies between face-to-face, blended and purely online interventions to understand potential different processes and mechanisms 'what works for whom in which circumstances' (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017) and guide practitioners to offer high-quality coachings.

7.7 Practical Implications

Our findings suggest that the blended couple coaching intervention effectively fosters detachment and WLB, but coaches should be aware not only of their empathy but also of the theoretical foundation and the core components of their coaching approach. We need carefully

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prepared manuals and train-the-coach workshops to support them in delivering high-quality coaching.

8 Conclusions

In the present study, we investigated coaches' behavior and the coaching mechanisms that impact the effectiveness of blended couple coaching to enhance detachment and WLB using an adapted design and mixed methods. We chose an extreme context in regard to detachment and WLB: SBOs and their spouses. Clients' ATI and the coaching mechanisms of change, i.e., spousal support during the coaching, result-oriented self-reflection, positive affect predicted coaching satisfaction and goal attainment four months after the coaching had ceased when coaches delivered the coaching as intended. Coaches' empathy predicted clients' goal attainment. The results showed large intervention effects on detachment and middle intervention effects on WLB four months after the coaching had ceased independent of coaches' behavior with regard to intervention fidelity. Our results suggest that coaches' intervention fidelity matters for activating the coaching mechanisms of change and for coaching outcomes. Coaches' empathy matters for clients' goal attainment.

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- § 7 (4) der Promotionsordnung des Instituts für Bewegungswissenschaft der Universität Hamburg vom 18.08.2010**
- § 9 (1c und 1d) der Promotionsordnung des Instituts für Psychologie der Universität Hamburg vom 20.08.2003**

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not everything you do has
to be self-improving
you are not a machine
you are a person
without rest
your work can never be full
without play
your mind can never be nourished

balance – rupi kaur (2020, p. 121)