

WORK FAMILY BALANCE: MOVING BEYOND GENDER

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WORK FAMILY BALANCE: MOVING BEYOND GENDER

A Thesis

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Abstract
of
WORK FAMILY BALANCE: MOVING BEYOND GENDER
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The primary goal of this research is to identify predictors of work interference with family (WIF) and their subsequent relationship to WIF in 72 female, married participants. Several distal predictors (managerial support, role autonomy, and hours worked) have been well-documented as predictors of WIF. Proximal predictors (balance of power, division of labor and egalitarianism) were also studied. Results indicate that among workplace (distal) predictors managerial support and hours worked continued to act as predictors of WIF and relationship (proximal) predictors balance of power and percentage of home duties also contributed to understanding overall Work Family Conflict. Implications for these findings indicate that working mothers continue to seek a balance between their family and work responsibilities and entities who support this consideration should continue to search for ways to champion these efforts.

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To the patient ones: Mike, Mom, and Dr. A.

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Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING WORK- FAMILY CONFLICT

What happens when demands from work and demands from family collide? This question has been at the root of much research examining work-family conflict. Work-family conflict occurs when an individual encounters demands from one domain that are not compatible with demands from another domain (Greenhaus & Buetell, 1985).

My primary goal in this research is to identify predictors of work interference with family (WIF) and their subsequent relationship to WIF in heterosexual parents. Several distal predictors (workplace-based environment) have been well-documented as predictors of WIF. These predictors include number of hours worked, role autonomy and managerial support. Consistent with previous findings, the first issue of this investigation should replicate those prior results.

A second issue to be explored is the role of proximal predictors of WIF. Several proximal constructs (person-based environment) have been identified as predictors of WIF. These include such constructs as personality, disposition, gender, etc. I will specifically concentrate on the proximal constructs of division of labor, egalitarianism, and balance of power as potential predictors of WIF.

These three specific constructs, (division of labor, egalitarianism, and balance of power) parallel those used in Tuten and August (2006) who conducted a similar study using lesbian mothers as participants. In addition to collecting data using a heterosexual population, this study will secondarily provide data that will allow for later comparison

between lesbian and heterosexual partnerships on WIF and its predictors. Due to the need to collect data comparable to the lesbian sample, I used similar processes in obtaining participants, utilizing measures, and following procedures from Tuten and August (2006).

Overview of The Work-Family Construct

Research done in the past 30 years has provided many new insights into the work-family construct. This research has focused to some extent on how people can find a balance between the demanding roles of both work and family. Also known as work-family balance, the understanding of this construct may seem self-evident. According to Frone (2003), the use of the word balance may suggest that work and family are “somehow integrated or harmonious” (p. 145). However, Frone suggests the research focuses less on harmony and may be better understood as attempting a lack of conflict or interference between the competing roles of work and family. Research focusing on this idea of conflict or interference, has come to be known as research on the psychological construct of work-family conflict (WFC).

Early views of Work-Family Conflict

Early theoretical views of WFC were established as afterthoughts, once conflict was uncovered in one’s research. This post-hoc approach has left these initial theories open to much criticism, mostly due to their all or none approach. That is, initial theories did not leave room for the possibility of WFC emanating from several sources. Early theories stated that WFC could be explained solely by one cause (only due to spillover or only because of role conflict). The more accepted integrative approaches to WFC are largely based in these early theories and are therefore worth mentioning.

The authors of these early models focused mainly on the linking mechanisms (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) of work and family. Specifically, how does the joining of work and family lead to conflict? Analysis of the six primary mechanisms linking work to family led Morf (1989 as cited in Frone, 2003) to organize them as either causal or non-causal (Frone, 2003).

Three non-causal models explain WFC as due to three possible processes: segmentation, congruence and identity. The segmentation model poses a distinct separation of work and family and does not acknowledge cross-over. The congruence model does acknowledge cross-over, but regards the resulting conflict as moot, as both work and family “share a common cause” (p. 146). The identity (or integrative) model states that the roles of work and family are so closely related, they cannot be separated.

In addition, three causal models explain WFC in terms of the effect one area of life has on another area. These three models include spillover, compensation and resource drain. The spillover model states changes in one area lead to similar changes in another area. In terms of WFC, increases in family conflict, lead to increases in work conflict and vice versa. Also, decreases in conflict would follow the same rule. Unlike the positive relationship between work and family in the previous model, the compensation model states work and family have a negative relationship. Moreover, the compensation model highlights the notion that dissatisfaction in one area leads the individual to *compensate* by applying more time and energy in another area. For example, due to dissatisfaction with work, one spends less time and energy at work and compensates by spending more time and energy with family. Similar to the aforementioned model, the resource drain model

also states a negative relationship between work and family. Specifically, the resource drain model states there is a limited amount of resources one can expend. Therefore, as attention and energy to one area increases, attention and energy in the other area will consequently decrease. For example, the more time and energy one spends with family, the less time and energy one has to spend at work.

Current Views of Work-Family Conflict

The Role of Gender

Cinamon's (2006) findings highlight the issue of whether gender is associated with WFC. Early research on work-family conflict centered on the salience of conflict experienced by women (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Initially it was believed that women experienced this conflict due to the competing roles of wife/mother versus worker. Several theories of gender-role expectations abounded regarding the traditional mother and traditional father. It was assumed that men were not part of the work-family conflict experience.

To explain this gender-weighted phenomenon, researchers hypothesized about the different gender-role expectations for males versus females. Specifically, most researchers reached a consensus that women's primary roles were wife and mother and men's primary role was breadwinner. There was also a societal belief that too many roles were disastrous to women and that inevitably women would end up exhausted and without energy when compared to men who tackled the same responsibilities (Barnett & Gareis, 2005). Soon, women were at the center of WFC. It was assumed that the presence of WFC was largely gender-role related, although most early research was done with

mostly women participants, as their roles deviated more from traditional than did men's. Although there may be overlap, gender-roles are preconceived notions about what roles a specific gender should/should not encompass. Work and family roles are those roles an individual needs to employ as a family member or worker, and are not specific to any gender. Although gender-role theory is still prevalent in helping to understand the history of work-family conflict, it is no longer seen as just a women's conflict. It is important to note that gender-roles are not the same as previously mentioned work and family roles.

Recent research has discovered that there may be very little differences in the amount and type of work-family conflict between genders (Frone, 2003, Barnett & Gareis, 2006, Cinamon & Rich, 2002). Several studies, including those done outside the United States have supported the lack of WFC difference between men and women. Research done with over 3000 participants in the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce, discovered that men with families reported more work-family conflict than comparable women (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky & Prottas, in Barnett & Gareis, 2006). In a meta-analytic review of WFC, Byron (2005) combined 60 studies completed over a period of 17 years. Although gender differences were found, these differences were weakly related to various forms of WFC. Current WFC research has supported this notion, even when finding a significant difference in gender; the effect is so small, that this difference does not significantly contribute to understanding and explaining WFC. In keeping with the current consensus that gender plays little to no role in WFC, I did not make specific predictions about it.

Bidirectionality

Early research in WFC took a unidirectional approach to explaining the resulting conflict. This approach viewed the conflict in both the work and family domains, as indistinguishable (Cinamon, 2006). Recently, the possible direction of influence of work-family conflict has been studied. Several bodies of research consistently support the bidirectionality of work-family conflict (Carlson & Frone, 2003). Two separate influences, which are not highly correlated, have been teased out. Specifically, research has discovered a unique distinction between work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) (Frone, 2003; Barnett & Geuis, 2006; Cinamon, 2006).

Adding to the uniqueness of WIF and FIW, additional research has supported higher prevalence rates of WIF than FIW, suggesting that work has more harmful effects on family life than vice versa (Cinamon, 2006). In addition, there has been more research delineating the antecedents and consequents of WIF than FIW. Given that WIF is a better understood phenomenon, I will focus more on attempting to extend the current understanding of WIF.

Types of Conflict

In addition to its bidirectionality, work-family conflict also contains three separate types of conflict: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict occurs when “time demands of one role make it difficult or impossible to participate fully in another role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). For example, a parent in a scheduled 3pm meeting cannot also simultaneously attend his child’s 3pm

soccer game. Strain-based conflict “exists when strain in one role affects one’s performance in another role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 80). For example, a salesperson worried about meeting her sales quota may not be able to fully attend to her family’s needs. Behavior-based conflict occurs “when the behaviors that are expected or appropriate in the family role (e.g., expressiveness, emotional sensitivity) are viewed as inappropriate or dysfunctional when used in the work role” (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997, p. 4). For example, a manager who is expected to be forceful and curt at work may create an environment of hostility at home with these same behaviors.

Antecedents

A large body of research exists discussing both the antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict. In this study I will attempt to add to the growing knowledge of antecedents in WIF. These antecedents are the primary focus of this study and will be discussed throughout this paper in detail. Secondly, in this study I will explore possible antecedents of FIW.

Separate antecedents for each domain (work or family) have been researched (Carlson & Frone, 2003). Research by Carlson and Frone (2003) has suggested the causes of WIF lay largely in the work domain, and causes of FIW stem primarily from the family domain. However, the results of a meta-analysis on work-family conflict (Byron, 2005) were unable to directly connect the causes of WIF to the work domain, exclusively. Byron (2005), went on to suggest interdependence between the domains and their resulting WIF.

Consequents

WIF has great consequence, both for employees themselves and their employers. Within the work domain a number of negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, burnout, and absenteeism are noted (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000,; Kossek & Ozeki, in Byron, 2005). As WIF increases, these consequences also escalate.

Consequences within the family domain are also apparent. Some outcomes of WIF include decreased life satisfaction and decreased quality time with family members (Cinamon, 2006).

Chapter 2

AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK FOR PREDICTING WIF

Researchers have described a number of antecedents to WIF. These factors are wide-ranging and include features of the workplace, aspects of the job itself, as well as characteristics of the person, such as gender and personality. While the research into WIF demonstrates that many such factors are robust in predicting WIF, rarely have researchers offered an organizing framework for examining these many antecedents together. I will address this by first reviewing the known antecedents of WIF, and then by offering a theoretical framework for those and other potential, as yet unexplored antecedents.

Workplace Characteristics

Several features of the workplace have consistently shown to predict WIF; they include number of hours worked, role autonomy and managerial support. Number of hours spent working and WIF share a positive relation; the more hours one spends at work, the greater the amount of WIF (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone, 2003; Thompson, Beauvais, & Ellen, 2006). Conversely, role autonomy (flexible work schedule) at work has a negative relation with WIF (Frone, 2003). The more autonomy one experiences at work, the less WIF one is likely to experience. Finally, WIF is also predicted by the presence (or lack of) managerial support (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Research has shown a negative relation between WIF and managerial support; more

managerial support can lead to less WIF. Because of the reliability of these three predictors, I also expected similar findings:

Hypothesis 1. Number of hours worked relates positively to WIF.

Hypothesis 2. Role autonomy relates negatively to WIF.

Hypothesis 3. Managerial support relates negatively to WIF.

Person-Level Characteristics: Personality

A number of personality variables have been examined in relation to WIF.

Personality variables found to be positively correlated with WIF include negative affectivity, Type A behavior, and neuroticism (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1993; Thompson, Beauvais, & Allen, 2005); while research involving self-efficacy (Cinamon 2006) indicated a negative relation with WIF . Although personality characteristics are important to understanding the overall construct of WIF, it is not the focus of this study.

The Case for a Social-Ecological Model in Explaining WIF

It is apparent that there are a number of robust predictors of WIF. However, it would seem useful to organize those predictors into a unifying theoretical framework, which might then allow for additional speculations about as yet unexplored predictors of WIF. The Social-Ecological Model (SEM) is offered here as one such unifying framework. The SEM recognizes that individuals are complex systems that are exposed to several levels (or spheres) of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the context of WIF, this would suggest that interference does not just emanate from one source, such as the workplace, but rather it has its roots in many sources. The Social-Ecological Model

underlines the importance of all possible levels of influence and the relations between them. The Social-Ecological Model specifies four potential sources of influence that bear on individual behavior. These sources, known as spheres of influence, are identified as follows: macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem.

Macrosystems are the cultural contexts that exist in one's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, America is part of Western culture, which can be seen as a separate and distinct culture from the Communist culture in China or North Korea. Exosystems refer to the influence of community and its established norms and roles. This community includes geographic examples such as what it means to be a Southerner versus a Californian, but also includes influential group membership such as political affiliation. Mesosystems are the organizational factors that contribute an individual's behavior. Examples include workplaces, schools, and churches. Microsystems are comprised of interpersonal identities, such as mother, father, brother, child and other factors that contribute to one's social identity.

Essential to understanding SEM (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), is the relation between the spheres of influence. As the name suggests, these spheres are interrelated. Individual development and behavior cannot be fully understood without assessing the impact of all four systems (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988).

SEM applied to WIF Research

The research reviewed thus far suggests that sources driving WIF can be understood as emanating from either a work-based environment (mesosystem) or person-based environment (microsystem).

The role of the microsystem has actually received relatively little attention in the literature on WIF. Though it is clear that some microsystem variables such as some personality characteristics can impact WIF, other features of the microsystem have been left relatively unexplored. These might include other proximal conditions that is, conditions “close” to the person, such as “the dynamics of home, family, and personal life, encompassing everything from number of children and household task involvement to personal needs, values and aspirations. It involves people in the social system, including parents, friends, and members of the community.” (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004, p. 123).

The microsystem is the system closest to the individual, and consequently the system which the SEM predicts has the most direct effects. It would seem that focusing on various other features of the microsystem would be an important contribution to the literature on WIF. Thus I offer hypotheses on an additional set of microsystem variables which may help explain WIF.

From the description of proximal conditions offered by Clarke, Koch, and Hill (2004) above, it appears relationships central to individuals are an essential part of the microsystem, and therefore a likely culprit in WIF. It is important to note that those constructs studied here emanate from a relationship and are not necessarily applicable to those family units with one parent. For instance, Frone (2003) among many others (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Burley, 1995; Byron, 2003; Edwards, 2006, & Rosenbaum & Cohen, 1999) demonstrated the importance of spousal support in reducing WIF. Aycan and Eskin (2005) investigated the role of three types of social support (spousal, childcare

and organizational) and their relation to WIF in dual-earner families with children. Their findings indicated the importance of spousal support in reducing WIF and gave further support to the deleterious effects of WIF on psychological well-being, marital satisfaction, and parental role performance, regardless of gender. Further evidence for the role of spousal support on WIF is present in Byron's (2003) meta-analysis of antecedents in WIF where she cites 14 studies that have delineated the negative relation between spousal support and WIF.

Recently, researchers have accepted the negative relation between spousal support and WIF and have begun to include other relationship factors that may contribute to or mediate the effects on WIF. For example, Edwards (2006) studied the role of spousal support (in the form of supportive communication) between a working mother and her husband and its effect on stress and WIF. Although actual communication practices were not significant, her findings did indicate a significant negative relation between perceived spousal support and WIF. Working mothers who perceived their husbands as offering support were less likely to experience overall WFC (specific effects on FIW and WIF were not indicated).

In addition to these findings, Edwards' research also discussed the importance of division of household duties (washing dishes, child care tasks, preparing meals, etc.) as a potential predictor of WIF. Edwards identified division of labor in terms of perceived fairness (e.g. "Overall, how fair do you feel the division of household tasks is in your family... to you?") and in terms of actual performance (e.g. "Generally, who does more of the household tasks such as preparing meals, vacuuming, laundry, etc." p. 706). Her

analysis showed a positive correlation between inequity in household duties and WIF. Her findings also indicate that working women who perceive their husbands as offering adequate spousal support also perceive more equity (although not necessarily equality) in their respective household's division of labor.

Burley (1995) has also suggested the role of fairness in household task distribution and spousal support as mediating a negative relation between WIF and marital adjustment in both men and women. Although the mediating effects of fairness in household task distribution and spousal support were small, the direct relation of equity among household duties was negatively associated with WIF for both men and women. In accordance with these findings the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Participants who report an equitable division of labor should experience less WIF.

Another predictor that has begun to surface alongside spousal support is the impact an egalitarian relationship has on working parents. Egalitarianism as defined by King and King (1997) as a "bidirectional movement from traditional to nontraditional gender roles" (p.72), they further suggest that egalitarianism can best be understood in terms of sex roles. "A true egalitarian would neither disapprove of a woman assuming the stereotypically male role of business executive nor disapprove of a man assuming the stereotypically female role of child care provider" (p. 72). Though research establishing egalitarianism's direct relationship to WIF is sparse, some research has focused on countries that are generally considered low in egalitarianism.

For example, Aycan and Eskin's (2005) research in Turkey illustrates the relation of a culture that is considered to be low in egalitarianism and the subsequent high levels of WIF. Relative contributions of childcare, spousal support and organizational support in reducing WIF were analyzed. While the degree of egalitarianism was not directly measured in the 434 mothers and fathers, the overall cultural norm was understood and discussed. Findings confirmed the presence of high levels of WIF among working parents within a country that has particularly little egalitarianism. Furthermore, the authors indicated the importance of spousal and organizational support for both men and women.

In addition, Rosenbaum and Cohen (1999) studied working Israeli women's psychological distress levels as a result of degree of egalitarian marriage, presence of spousal support, and resourcefulness. The 94 female participants were queried on several factors which indicate the degree of egalitarianism within their marriage (higher score indicated lower degrees of egalitarianism within the marriage). Participants scoring below the median score were classified as being in highly egalitarian marriages, while those participants above the median were classified as being in low egalitarian marriages. The findings indicated that working women's distress levels were associated with the perception of less egalitarianism within their marriage.

One recent exception to the lack of research on egalitarianism and WIF is that of Cinamon (2006), although that study examined the importance of egalitarian parental models in predicting *anticipated* WIF among college students. Her findings indicated that the 358 undergraduate participants anticipated lower levels of WIF when exposed to an

egalitarian parental model. I expected to produce similar findings in measures of *actual* WFC. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5. Greater egalitarianism in a marriage will be negatively associated with WIF.

A final plausible predictor of WIF is parallel in nature to division of labor and egalitarianism. Although balance of power has yet to be directly linked to WIF, its relation to the previous predictors is apparent. Balance of power in romantic relationships is described by Sprecher and Felmlee (1997) as “the power to influence another person’s attitudes or behavior” (p.362). An example of an empirical measure of balance of power includes “Who do you think should have more say in your relationship- you or your partner?” (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984).

Peplau (1979) has also asserted that holding egalitarian ideals in romantic relationships do not always dictate an equal balance of power, and therefore holding egalitarian ideals should be appraised on its own merit, separate from actual egalitarianism. In other words, her research has indicated that power imbalances may still occur despite a norm of egalitarianism being that one’s egalitarian ideals may not be how they are presented within their relationship.

Sprecher and Felmlee (1997) also state that an imbalance of power is related to relationship decision-making, which includes decisions on division of household duties (inequitable division of labor). Relationships that have experience an imbalance of power are also likely to experience an imbalance in decision-making.

Although balance of power and WIF have not directly been studied, their apparent parallels to division of household duties (division of labor) and egalitarian relationship (egalitarianism) suggests it may also share a relationship to WIF. Therefore, the following is proposed:

Hypothesis 6. More equality in balance of power in a marriage, will be negatively associated with WIF.

Summary of the Goals for this Investigation

In sum, identifying predictors of work interference with family in heterosexual participants was my primary goal in this research. The first issue investigated was the role of distal predictors of WIF: number of hours worked, role autonomy, and managerial support. These antecedents of WIF are well-documented and the results should reflect similar findings.

The second issue explored was the role of proximal predictors of WIF. Although person-centered predictors have been documented in a number of other studies (personality, disposition, self-efficacy, gender, etc.), the three proximal predictors explored in this study will be those that are relationship-oriented. Specifically, it is postulated that participants who experience an equitable division of labor, an egalitarian relationship and an equal balance of power, should experience less WIF.

This study also presents a future opportunity to parallel findings found in Tuten and August (2006). However, these findings will be assessed in a separate investigation. Specifically, if the three proximal predictors (division of labor, egalitarianism and balance of power) are found to have a significant relation with WIF, a separate

investigation will be explored. If these relationship-oriented variables predict WIF, it is likely they will do so in other personal relationships that are high in these constructs, regardless of sexual orientation. Previous research by Tuten and August (2006) explored predictors of WIF in lesbian mothers. Measures of the named potential predictors (both distal and proximal) have been collected during Tuten and August's previous data collection. Identical measures and similar data collection processes from the Tuten and August study were used in the current study to investigate parallel findings in heterosexual relationships and lesbian relationships, along with further support for reliable findings.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Participants

To qualify for inclusion in the study, participants needed to conform to previous criteria for the sample used in Tuten and August (2006), with the exception of the nature of their marital relationship. Seventy-two married women in a long-term, heterosexual relationship considered to be marriage, participated in the study. The mean age of participants in this study was 34.61 ($SD = 4.54$). Participants worked an average of 36.84 ($SD = 11.68$) hours per week, had an average of 1.97 ($SD = .77$) children. Most participants made over \$36,000 per year (not combined income) and while education levels varied, all participants had graduated from high school. Of the participants who identified their ethnicity, one was Asian, two were African American, two were Hispanic American and 62 were Caucasian. Participants were treated in accordance with APA guidelines.

Procedures

Parents enrolled in an in-person parenting support groups offered in Northern California and parents participating in an on-line parenting support group in Virginia were asked to participate. In the Northern California support group, the researcher distributed pen and paper survey packets to the participants at the end of a parenting support group and asked participants to complete and sign the consent form and complete the survey found within and return it to a covered collection box once the survey was

complete. The researcher was present at the end of each seminar to collect the surveys. As participants completed the survey, the researcher handed out the debriefing page for participants to keep. Everyone was thanked for her participation. In the Virginia support group, the researcher emailed participants of the group asking for participation in the study. Pen and paper survey packets, and pre-stamped, addressed envelopes were mailed to participants after their agreement to take part in the study was indicated via email to the researcher. The participants mailed the completed survey and consent form to the researcher. Debriefing pages were mailed to all participants after the three-week deadline to submit finalized surveys.

Measures

Work Interference with Family (WIF)

The dimension of work interference with family is measured following Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000). This measure reflects the bi-directionality of work-family conflict as well as the various forms it can take. The two directions of conflict, work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) showed alphas of .83 and .85, respectively. The three forms of conflict were also assessed for each direction. The alphas for the three forms of conflict are as follows: time-based WIF ($\alpha = .86$) (e.g., The time I spend on family responsibilities often interfere with my work responsibilities), strain-based WIF ($\alpha = .72$) (e.g., I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family), and behavior-based WIF ($\alpha = .68$) (e.g., Behavior that is effective and necessary for me at home would be counterproductive at work).

Role Autonomy

Role autonomy ($\alpha = .91$) is measured using four items developed by Parasuraman and Alutto (1981) with a 5- point response format (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The scale consists of four items which indicate: the amount of say an individual has in setting work goals, determining task priorities, pace of work and freedom of choice in how to approach the job.

Managerial Support

An instrument measuring organizational work-family culture used a scale to measure managerial support, developed by Thompson, et al., (1999). The managerial support dimension contained 11 items and showed $\alpha = .93$. The scale consists of 11 items in which the respondent indicates the extent to which each item characterizes their current organization using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items include, “In general, managers in this organization are quite accommodating of family-related needs” and “Higher management in this organization encourages supervisors to be sensitive to employees’ family and personal concerns”.

Hours worked

The number of hours worked was measured with a single item, “In a typical week, how many hours do you work at your job?”

Balance of Power

The various aspects of power in relationships are measured following Caldwell and Peplau (1984). Beliefs regarding the ideal balance of power are measured with the

item “Who do you think should have more say in your relationship- you or your partner?” Beliefs about the actual balance of power are measured with the item “Who do you think has more of a say about what you and your partner do together- you or your partner?” Respondents indicate the extent to which they or their spouse have, and should have more say. Beliefs about relative psychological dependence in the relationship are measured by calculating the mean of the two items: “Who do you think is more involved in your relationship – you or your partner?” and “Who do you think is more committed to the relationship – you or your partner?”. Respondents indicate the extent to which they or their spouse are more involved and/or more committed on a five-point scale where one represented “My spouse is much more committed”, three indicated “We are equally committed” and five indicated “I am much more committed.” These responses were recoded so more balance of power (“We are equally committed”) received the highest point value (three) and responses of “My spouse is much more committed” or “I am much more committed” received the lowest point value (one). Both question types (ideal balance of power and actual balance of power) were coded similarly (i.e., more balance of power received the highest point value). For purposes of the analysis, all questions were combined into a mean variable where the values for all balance of power questions were combined and the average used to represent each participant’s mean level of balance of power.

Division of Labor

Other questions indicating the amount of labor burden the participant experienced were included. These include “Who pays bills from the checkbook?” and “Please indicate

the percentage of home care duties that you are responsible for?” and “Please indicate the percentage of child rearing duties that you are responsible for?” Similar to the previous variable (balance of power) questions that were qualitative in nature, “Who pays bills from the checkbook” were answered on a three-point scale, “I do, My spouse does, or We do it jointly”. Responses were coded so that equal division of labor (“We do it jointly”) received the highest point value. For purposes of the analysis, all questions were combined into a mean variable where the values for all division of labor questions were combined and the average used to represent each participant’s mean level of division of labor. Additionally, two questions, “Please indicate the percentage of home care duties that you are responsible for?” and “Please indicate the percentage of child rearing duties that you are responsible for?” were assessed for potential relationship to the criterion variables.

Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism, as defined by this study, is understood in terms of non-traditional gender roles. Meaning, if egalitarianism existed in a marriage, decision-making with regard to traditional male roles (finances, automobile decisions, etc.) would be done equally by men and women, while decision making with regard to traditional female roles (household chores, child-rearing, etc.) would also be done equally by men and women.

The measure of egalitarianism is behavior-based. Several questions ask the participant to identify the extent to which each decision was primarily handled by them, their spouse, or was truly equal. Such questions include housing decisions, financial services, automobiles, etc. Like the previous variables, responses were coded so that

responses indicating more egalitarianism (“The decision was totally equal”) received the highest point value.

Design

A mean score for each of the six predictor variables (role autonomy, managerial support, hours worked, balance of power, division of labor and egalitarianism) were created. These six mean scores were entered into a hierarchical multiple regression analysis as predictors of WIF. This hierarchical MRA included three steps: step one included demographic information (age, gender, etc.), step two included distal (workplace) characteristics, step three included the three proximal predictors (division of labor, egalitarianism, and balance of power). This third step allows for an assessment of the contribution of these three proximal predictors to our current understanding of WIF. Correlation coefficients were also be calculated.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

A series of independent t-tests were run between the Northern California parental support group and the Eastern United States support group on the basis of all study variables (demographics, predictors, WIF and FIW). No significant differences were found, therefore the two groups were combined to form one sample.

Descriptive statistics for the variables in this study were computed. The means and standard deviations for the sample are shown in Table 1. Further, the study variables were examined in order to see whether the assumptions of multivariate analyses were violated. No study variables violated the skewness assumptions of multiple regression.

Table 2 displays correlations among the study variables. As expected, managerial support was significantly negatively correlated with WIF ($r = -.49, p < .01$), and with the overall measure of work-family conflict ($r = -.40, p < .01$). Additionally, significant positive correlations were found between percentage of home duties performed by participant and FIW ($r = .40, p < .01$), as well as overall WFC ($r = .30, p < .05$).

In order to assess the relationship between distal (workplace characteristics) and proximal (relationship characteristics) predictors to Work Family Conflict, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed, first, for the overall construct of work-family conflict, then for the two different directions of work-family conflict (work interference with family, [WIF] and family interference with work, [FIW]). The overall construct of WFC and WIF specifically pertain to the six hypotheses in this study.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations among Study Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Balance of Power	2.68	.27	72
Egalitarianism	2.33	.38	72
Weekly work hours	36.84	11.68	70
Child Rearing Percentage	64.72	18.74	71
Home Duties Percentage	69.72	19.69	71
Division of Labor	1.89	.71	72
WIF	3.23	.26	67
FIW	3.13	.27	67
Work-Family Conflict	3.18	.22	67
Time Based WIF	3.36	.45	67
Time Based FIW	3.15	.55	67
Strain Based WIF	3.40	.55	67
Strain Based FIW	3.03	.34	67
Behavior Based WIF	2.94	.48	67
Behavior Based FIW	3.19	.48	67
Role Autonomy	3.51	.77	67
Managerial Support	2.97	.37	68
Number of Children	1.97	.77	72
Participant Age	34.61	4.53	72

Table 2

Correlation coefficient matrix within Relationship Predictors, Workplace Predictors, Demographic Predictors, and Work-Family Conflict

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. WFC	.82**	.83**	.16	-.40**	.05	-.08	.00	.22	.30*	.10
2. WIF	–	.36**	.19	-.49**	-.12	-.07	.03	.18	.10	-.00
3. FIW		–	.07	-.17	.20	-.07	-.03	.18	.16	.40**
4. Hours			–	-.03	.01	-.16	-.13	.25*	.08	-.23
5. Managerial Support				–	.48**	.20	.05	.05	-.15	-.24
6. Role Autonomy					–	.25*	.03	.37**	.20	.04
7. Egalitarian						–	.65**	-.08	.03	-.15
8. Balance Of Power							–	-.28*	-.14	-.08
9. Division of Labor								–	.12	-.10
10. Home duties									–	.47**
11. Child duties										–

The Work-Family Conflict construct was the dependent variable, and demographic information, workplace variables and relationship variables were predictors. The demographic variables of personal income, number of children and participant age were entered into the equation first to remove variance attributed to these factors.

Workplace variables included managerial support, role autonomy, and hours worked per week, and were entered in the second step. In the third and final step the relationship variables egalitarianism, balance of power and three variables representing division of labor (labor burden, percentage of home duties and percentage of child-rearing duties) were entered into the equation.

Table 3 displays the regression coefficients for the overall measure of work family conflict. The results approached a significant relationship between WFC and demographic variables ($F = 2.49, p = .07$). When workplace characteristics were entered into the regression equation ($F = 6.55, p < .01$), the variance explained by the model at this step was 33.8% ($\Delta R^2 = .23$) thus supporting hypotheses one, two and three of this study. Those variables that were significant at step two included managerial support and hours worked per week. The addition of relationship variables also contributed significantly ($F = 2.42, p < .05$) for a total of 47% of variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .13$) thus supporting hypotheses four, five and six of this study. Those variables that were significant at this third step included balance of power and percentage of home duties.

Table 4 displays the regression coefficients for the measure of Work Interference with Family (WIF); the criterion variable of primary interest in this study.

The results did support a significant relationship between WIF and demographic variables ($F = 3.88, p < .05$) and explained 16.2% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .16$). When workplace characteristics were entered into the regression equation ($F = 5.35, p < .01$), the variance explained by the model increased to 34.6% ($\Delta R^2 = .18$). The addition of relationship variables did not contribute significantly ($F = .85, p > .05$).

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Distal and Proximal Predictors and Work-Family Conflict

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Income	-.03	.03	-.14
Children	.06	.04	.20
Participant Age	.01	.006	.22
ΔR^2	.11		
Step 2			
Manag. Support	-.32	.08	-.51**
Role Autonomy	.12	.04	.42
Hours per Week	-.01	.01	-.15*
ΔR^2	.23**		
Step 3			
Egalitarianism	-.16	.10	-.28
Balance of Power	.07	.04	.24*
Division of Labor	.07	.04	.24
Home Duties	.004	-.002	.41**
Child Rearing	-.002	.002	-.14
ΔR^2	.13*		
Total R^2	.47		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Given that the data were available, an analysis of predictors of FIW was also conducted. Table 5 displays the regression coefficients for the measure of Family Interference with Work (FIW). The results did not show a significant relationship between FIW and demographic variables ($F = 1.21, p > .05$). When workplace characteristics were entered into the regression equation ($F = 4.13, p < .05$), the variance explained by the model at this step was 22.5% ($\Delta R^2 = .17$). The variable contributing significantly at this step in the model included hours worked per week. The addition of relationship variables also contributed significantly ($F = 2.62, p < .05$) for a total of 39.1% of variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .16$). The variable contributing significantly at this step included percentage of home duties.

The study variables were also assessed for their potential contribution to the three types of Work-Family Conflict (time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based). No additional understanding of these constructs were shown in this study. That is, there were no unique predictors of time-based, strain-based, or behavior-based conflict as compared to the predictors for overall WFC or for WIF.

Table 4

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Study Predictors and Work Interference with Family

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Income	-.02	.03	-.09
Children	-.01	.04	-.02
Participant Age	.02	.01	.29*
ΔR^2	.16*		
Step 2			
Manag. Support	-.34	.11	-.45**
Role Autonomy	.04	.05	.10
Hours per Week	-.02	.01	-.23
ΔR^2	.18**		
Step 3			
Egalitarianism	-.09	.13	-.12
Balance of Power	.26	.20	.27
Division of Labor	.07	.05	.20
Home Duties	.003	.002	.211
Child Rearing	-.002	.002	-.13
ΔR^2	.05		
Total R^2	.40		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Study Predictors and Family Interference with Work

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Income	.02	.03	.06
Children	.05	.05	.15
Participant Age	.01	.01	.15
ΔR^2	.06		
Step 2			
Manag. Support	-.15	.11	-.19
Role Autonomy	.10	.05	.29
Hours per Week	-.04	.01	-.37*
ΔR^2	.17*		
Step 3			
Egalitarianism	-.24	.14	-.33
Balance of Power	.38	.21	.38
Division of Labor	.07	.05	.19
Home Duties	.01	.002	.45**
Child Rearing	-.001	.002	-.10
ΔR^2	.16*		
Total R^2	.39		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The main point of interest in this study was to examine the relation between proximal relationship factors and work-family conflict in working mothers. One relationship factor, balance of power did show a negative relation with WFC, although when the study's primary dependent variable, WIF, was considered specifically, balance of power dropped out. However, WFC is understood as a bidirectional variable and further research involving of balance of power may be better understood as a predictor of FIW as balance of power approached significance as a predictor in that instance. Additionally, all though the other overall relationship factors (division of labor and egalitarianism) were not supported; one sub-factor of division of labor (percentage of home duties) did support a positive relationship with the overall construct of work-family conflict.

Previous research (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) has supported the negative relation between distal working factors (role autonomy and managerial support; although role autonomy was not supported in this study). The importance of such distal factors were further supported in this study. Additionally, work-family conflict research (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone, 2003; Thompson, Beauvais, & Ellen, 2006) has also shown a positive relation between hours spent at work and WFC; this study further supports these findings.

Generally, this study's findings continue to suggest that working mothers experience less conflict between their work and family responsibilities when their job allows for more role autonomy (as found in previous research), managerial support, and moderate hours spent at work. Additionally, this study also suggests that percentage of home duties that are performed by the working mother and the balance of power in a marital relationship share a positive relationship with work-family conflict, in general, and that percentage of home duties is important in predicting FIW in particular.

Several bodies of research consistently support the bidirectionality of work-family conflict (Carlson & Frone, 2003) (work interference with family and family interference with work), therefore study variables were assessed for their relation with both WIF and FIW. A larger body of research exists concerning factors explaining WIF and it is this construct that was my primary interest. In this study, primary relationship variables did not support a relation with WIF. However, one distal work relationship variable, managerial support, did mirror previous research in this subcategory of work-family conflict. Moreover, FIW continues to be a lesser known area of WFC. In this study, two family relevant variables (percentage of home duties and hours worked per week) did support a positive relationship with FIW.

The sample size and characteristics are major limitations of this study. The sample size was fairly small, making it difficult to obtain enough statistical power for the analysis procedures employed herein. Moreover, the participants in this study were largely of upper-middle socioeconomic status. Working mothers in this study were largely college graduated, married, working in professional careers with relatively high

incomes. This implies that the mothers in this study might be able to afford to solve their work-family issues in ways other than relying on relationship factors to mitigate this conflict. For example, wealthier mothers may be able to hire other people to complete some or most of their home duties, afford high quality child care, or take full advantage of flexible work schedules that may allow work from home. In these ways, the mothers in this study may not necessarily experience the same amount of work-family conflict as other working mothers who are not exposed to the same opportunities. Additionally, this sample was not ethnically diverse and thus generalization of the findings is limited.

Future research may benefit from a larger sample that is representative of a more diverse population of working mothers. Different socioeconomic statuses should be included, as well as a greater representation of varying ethnicities. Expanding these demographics may contribute to further understanding of additional proximal variables that may contribute to WFC. For example, members of some ethnic groups may experience greater help with homecare duties than others, for instance from other family members or friends, which may contribute to their overall experience of WFC.

It may also be of interest for further research to include working fathers and variables that contribute to their overall WFC. Previous research has indicated that men with families reported more work-family conflict than women (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky & Prottas, as cited in Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Considering these findings, a similar study may benefit from assessing the contribution of proximal predictors in explaining WFC experienced by fathers.

Additionally, research among single parents should also be considered. The relationship variables explored here, namely division of labor, egalitarianism and balance of power are non-existent without the presence of a parental partner. Therefore, future endeavors should also consider how the work-family conflict construct reacts differently for those individuals who are the primary and sole providers and caretakers within their family unit.

Working parents continue to seek a balance between their family and work responsibilities and future research should serve to support this consideration. As it relates to this study, organizations should continue to be aware of the effect managerial support and number of hours worked has on the overall amount of conflict experienced by their employees. Due to the large body of research supporting this, organizations might consider applying these findings and studying their local results in an effort to reduce WFC. Furthermore, organizations might also contemplate offering information to employees regarding the various levels one can affect WFC. For example, in efforts to reduce WFC, organizations might not only show how they are committed to understanding their part but also can help individuals understand what can be done outside of the organization, such as within their personal relationships a means to understanding and managing WFC.

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