ABSTRACT

Gender Differences in Work and Family Conflict

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Research on work and family conflict began several decades ago, but is more relevant today due to the increasing number of dual-earning families and single mothers. The purpose of this study is to supplement the current literature on gender differences in work and family conflict and to test Pleck's (1977) theory of the asymmetrically permeable boundaries in the work-family role system. Using the 2002 General Social Survey, results show that the model is more informative for women than men and that the two sexes differ in what predicts higher levels of work and family conflict. Specifically, ordinary least squares regression demonstrates that for women the most predictive power was in work characteristic variables. For men, the model did not show whether family or work variables were stronger predictors.

Gender Differences in Work and Family Conflict

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Sociology

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CHAPTER ONE

Review of the Literature and Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Research on work and family conflict began several decades ago, but is more relevant today due to the increasing number of dual-earning families and single mothers (Greenhaus and Singh, 2004). The topic spans across disciplines such as economics, psychology, and sociology. Previous research on work and family often examine the link of success or failure to the individuals' psychological well-being (Frone, Russell, and Barnes, 1996; Riemann, Berger, and Voderholzer, 2001), physical health (Adams and Jex 1999; Grzywacz, 2000), sleep quality (Williams et al., 2006), quality of life (Kofodimos, 1993), as well as family and work satisfaction levels (Frone, Yardley, and Markey, 1997; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999).

The work-family interface is defined as the interconnected relationship between work and family; specifically, these two areas affect one another. It assumes that family cannot be separated from work. While the work-family interface has been extensively studied, little research has focused on the effects of gender. The few studies attempting to explain gender differences have mixed findings (Voydanoff, 2002). This study serves to supplement the current literature by investigating gender differences in work and family interference using a national, representative sample. The focus of this study is to demonstrate that differences exist between men and women in what causes of family and work interference.

While women are choosing a career path more and more, they are still fulfilling traditional duties at home. Bianchi et al. (2000) found that men have doubled the number of hours that they devote to housework since 1965 (4.88 hours to 9.95 hours) but that women still do almost twice as much (17.47 hours). The gender difference in work at home is also found in other studies, where results show that women are likely to take on more familial responsibilities, such as cooking and cleaning, than men (Hochschild, 1989; Perkins and DeMeis, 1996). Additionally, Fredriksen-Goldsen and Schlarlach (2001) found that when familial responsibilities are somewhat balanced that women still tend to take a more active role as caregivers. Consequently, it has been argued that women are most at risk for work and family conflict (Covin and Brush, 1991; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000).

Research has also found that there are gender differences in the social-psychological experience of balancing work and family responsibilities (Gutek, Repetti, and Silever, 1988; Repetti, 1987). White (1999) found that the greatest satisfaction with work and family balance for women with small children is when they reduce time and commitments at work. He argued that, "The fact that most mothers still carry the lion's share of the work load for child care and domestic chores, suggest that females are balancing a qualitatively and quantitatively different set of demands than males" (1999; p. 8).

Review of the Literature

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as, "a form of interrole conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domain are mutually incompatible in some respect" (p. 77). There are three aspects of the work/family

interface that are related to conflict: (1) bidirectional nature (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000), (2) time, and (3) psychological carryover (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Piotrkowski, 1979; Voydanoff, 1988).

Conflict in the work/family interface has a bidirectional nature (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000; Eagle, Icenogle, and Maes, 1998; Eagle, Miles, and Icenogle, 1997; Frone, Yardley, and Markel, 1997; Greenhaus and Powell, 2003; Gutek, Searle, Klepa, 1991; Matsui, Ohsawa, and Onglotco, 1995; Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian, 1996; Williams and Alliger, 1994). That is, work affects family life and family life affects work. Greenhaus and Powell (2003) explain:

> "Work→family conflict occurs when participation in work activity interferes with participation in a competing family activity or when work stress has a negative effect on behavior within the family domain. An example of such a conflict is accepting a promotion that requires more hours which in turn decreases the number of hours at home with the family. Conversely, family→work conflict occurs when participation in a family activity interferes with participation in a competing work activity or when family stress has a negative effect on performance in the work role" (p. 292).

For example, this type of conflict would include caring for a sick child instead of going to work. Generally studies have found that work→family conflict occurs more often than family→work (Eagle et al., 1997; Gutek et al., 1991; Matsui et al., 1995; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Williams and Alliger, 1994).

The time aspect can be explained by using a spending (Freud, 1961) or drain metaphor (Bittner, 1963; Coser, 1974). In short, there is only so much time in a day. If one role consumes most of one's time, then the other roles are likely to suffer. For instance, in a traditional family men spend most of their time in paid work while women spend most of their time on childcare and household duties. However, as more women attempt to combine both homemaker and paid worker roles, the time that is usually

devoted to one role must be shared across two. Moreover, timing is an important factor in the work-family interface (Voydanoff, 1988). In other words, it's not only the amount of time spent but also when it is spent in each role that is important. Staines and Pleck (1983) found that working a non-day shift is associated with higher levels of work and family conflict.

The psychological aspect of the work/family interface is explained through the competition of the two roles. In short, competition brings psychological strain. Goode's (1960) role strain theory assumes this to be true and claims that it is normal to feel a sense of difficulty or strain when trying to meet the expectations of multiple roles. Similarly, Slater (1963) argues that energy is fixed and that people will naturally feel more inclined toward certain activities than others causing them to limit their participation in less important activities or give them up altogether. This creates an imbalance in application of time, energy, and attention between roles (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Slater warns that involvement in too many activities can leave people feeling unsatisfied. Both satisfaction and involvement are essential to the psychological aspect of the work/family interface (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Most of the past research on the work-family interface assumes the scarcity approach and role strain theory (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). These theoretical approaches will be included in this study to further examine the work/family interface.

The Gender Perspective

Pleck (1977) established gender as an important factor in work/family conflict with his theory of the work-family role system. It is a conception of the work/family interface that includes gender as an important factor. He explains, "The work-family role

system is composed of the male work role, the female work role, the female family role, and the male family role. Each of these roles may be fully actualized, or may be only partly actualized or latent, as is often the case with the female work role and the male family role" (p. 417). He describes what was then the current state of this work-family role system with the explanation of two buffers that serve to limit the links between the roles. First, he suggested that sex-segregated market mechanisms operate as a way for husbands and wives to work at the same time (p. 423). Specifically, in both paid work and family work roles men and women remain insulated from each other's employment and household participation decisions. For instance, Pleck claims that a woman can work in a paid job without affecting the man's job, and if that reduces the amount of housework she does then the man is not necessarily likely to pick up the slack.

The second kind of buffer that operates to stifle links in the work-family system is the concept of asymmetrically permeable boundaries between work and family roles (p. 423). As mentioned above, work/family conflict can originate in either the work or family domain. For women, it is acceptable for family demands to interfere with those at work. Pleck states, "This vulnerability of the female work role to family demands is an important part of negative stereotypes about women workers. It is also a major source of stress for women on the job, since the sex role norm that women take responsibility for the family conflicts with the norms of the job role" (1977; p. 423). Eventually, working mothers may try creating flexible work schedules. And, according to traditional gender norms, men suffer from exact opposite. In other words, it is tolerable for men to allow work demands to interfere with family so that they remain efficient at their jobs. Pleck argues that men, ". . . are expected to manage their families so that their family

responsibilities do not interfere with their work efficacy, and so that families will make any adjustments necessary to accommodate the demands of husbands' work roles" (1977; p. 424). Thus, according to Pleck's theory, men and women will differ in the causes of work and family conflict.

Studies have shown that employed women generally have more demands (from paid work, child care, and housework) than employed men (Robinson and Godbey, 1997). The bulk of this difference is made up by housework. Men and women differ on hours dedicated to housework, flexibility of the activity, and the challenging and/or creativity of the task. Hochschild (1989) claims that employed mothers work an extra month per year of 24 hour days when compared with employed fathers. Other research has shown that men do not adjust the time that they spend on home and family activities according to their wives' employment decisions (Shelton and John, 1996). Consequently, even if women increase the number of hours they work, men are not likely to spend more hours on housework.

It's not simply time that leaves women with the feeling of imbalance. Housework is gendered (Ferree, 1991). That is, there are tasks that women are expected to do, as well as tasks that are generally men's expected responsibility. While women cook, clean, and care for children, men usually take care of home repairs and lawn maintenance (Robinson and Godbey, 1997). Thus, "male" activities are more flexible while "female" duties are often necessary to do daily. Studies have shown that men in fact do see their tasks as leisure-like and discretionary more than women (Larson, Richards, and Perry-Jenkins 1994; Shaw 1988). Moreover, "female" tasks are often less creative and less challenging than "male" tasks (Berk, 1985). In other words, household duties that are

usually done by women are more likely to be things that require little imagination and are more tedious. Milkie and Peltola (1999) argue, "In sum, gender shapes time usage and quality. Not only is employed women's total time commitment to paid and unpaid work equal to or greater than that of employed men, but women's work in the home is different- more arduous, less flexible, and more likely to be interrupted." They believe that these factors make it more difficult for women to balance work and family.

Previous research includes many demographic, family, and work predictors in models of work and family interference. Voydanoff (1988) claimed that the number of hours worked, scheduling of hours worked, as well as the demand of the job on the individual are all important for predicting family and work interference among married individuals. Results from her study showed the same level of conflict for both men and women. Also, she found that the strongest effects on work and family conflict are the number of hours worked and workload pressure. In other words, having to work hard for many hours creates more work interference on family. However, the results for men and women did show small differences. Specifically, the number of hours devoted to chores at home was a more important predictor for women than men.

Duxbury and Higgins (1991) used a sample of 240 men and women who were married, had children, and worked in managerial or professional jobs. Their analysis, which utilized separate path models for men and women, showed many significant differences between genders. Specifically, there are differences in strength of effect on men and women concerning work involvement on work/family conflict, family involvement on work/family conflict, family expectations on family conflict, work expectations on work/family conflict, work conflict on family conflict, and family

conflict and work/family conflict. Overall, their results show that gender differences exist in both what leads to and the outcomes of conflict. Additionally, they argue that these differences imply that societal expectations and behavioral norms have not significantly changed over the years and are the source of conflict between men and women.

Gutek et al. (1991) studied gender differences on work and family conflict using psychologists in their sample. The results showed that there is a strong relationship between the hours spent in either work or family roles and conflict originating from that role. They found that this result was stronger in women than men. Specifically, results did not show that women were somewhat oblivious to family demands and men to work demands. Finally, women reported higher levels of work interference on family, even though they also reported spending the same amount of time in paid work as men.

McElwain et al.'s (2005) study showed no significant difference between men and women concerning work demands or family demands. They attribute this finding, which is contrary to other studies' findings, to the fact that they included only full-time professionals in their sample. Men and women did not differ on family satisfaction, job satisfaction, or life satisfaction either. Additionally, they found that women experienced higher levels of work interference on family but that both genders experienced the same level of family interference on work.

Despite the lack of consistent results regarding causal relationships in previous research, the overall theory of gender differences tend to be supported. This study will incorporate Plecks' theory to further examine gender's significance in predicting work and family conflict.

Hypotheses

Based on previous research, hypotheses were formulated to examine gender differences in the work/family interface. Specifically, the following analysis concentrates on predictors of conflict between work and family and to support.

Hypothesis 1: Job characteristics will be significant predictors of women's family and work interference more than men's.

Hypothesis 2: Family and home will be significant predictors of men's family and work interference more than women's.

CHAPTER TWO

Data and Methods

Data

The data used in this study is from the 2002 General Social Survey. In-person interviews were conducted with a national, full probability sample of 2,765 English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in non-institutional arrangements within the United States and were conducted during February, March, and April of 2002. The analytic plan is to first explore any significant differences in means between men and women followed by separate regression models for men and women.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is an index that is comprised of six items (α=.73) that incorporate the bidirectional nature of work and family interference. One of the questions is "How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months? It has been difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spent on my job." The response categories are several times a week (4), several times a month (3), once or twice (2), and never (1). Another question with the same response categories asks, "How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months? I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities." The index also includes, "How often do the demands of your family interfere with your work on the job." The response categories are often (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), and never (1). Similar to the other set of questions, there is

another item that is the opposite: “How often do the demands of your job interfere with your family life?” The final two questions include, “How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months? I have come home from work too tired to do the chores which need to be done,” and “How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months? I have arrived at work too tired to function well because of the household work I had done.” The response categories for both were several times a week (4), several times a month (3), once or twice (2), and never (1). A high score on this index corresponds with a higher self report of family and work interference.

Independent / Work Variables

Time demands from work are measured as a continuous variable. The question asked how many hours the respondent worked last week. The timing of work hours is also included in the analysis. I created a dummy variable in order to compared dayshift workers (1) to non day shift workers (0). Non day shift workers may include those who work at night, those who work on the weekends, etc. Another key variable is, “How hard is it to take time off during your work to take care of personal family matters?” The response categories range from not at all hard (4) to very hard (1). Job satisfaction is also taken into account. Respondents were asked, “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your (main) job?” Those who were satisfied were coded as “1” and those unsatisfied were coded as “0.” Involvement with work is measured by the question, “My main satisfaction in life comes from work.” The possible response categories for this item range from strongly disagree (4) to strongly agree (1). The stress level of work is also included. Respondents were asked to strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor

disagree (3), disagree (4), or strongly disagree (5) as to whether, "My job is rarely stressful."

Independent / Family Variables

Number of children is included as a continuous variable, and household work is measured by a continuous variable asking, "On average, how many hours a week do you personally spend on household work, not including childcare and leisure time activities?" Marital status was also collapsed into a dummy variable, with married respondents compared with their unmarried counterparts. Family satisfaction is also in the models and is measured the same way as job satisfaction, with those who were satisfied coded as "1" and those unsatisfied coded as "0." The stress level at home is included as well. Respondents were asked to strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), or strongly disagree (5) as to whether, "My life at home is rarely stressful." Finally, level of involvement with family and work is controlled for. Family involvement is measured by the question, "Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy–do you agree or disagree." Possible responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Control Variables

Other control variables are included: race (white=1, nonwhite=0); age (continuous); income (1=<$1000, 2=$1K–2999, 3= $3K-3999 . . . 8=$8–9999, 9=$10K–12.4K, 10=$12.5K–14.9K . . . 15=$25K–29.9K, 16= $30K-34.9K, 17= $35K–39.9K, 18=$40K–49.9K, 19=$50K–59.9K, 20=$60K–74.9K, 21=$75K–89.9K, 22= $90K–109.9K, 23=$110K +); region (south=1, nonsouth=0); and education (1=less than high school,

2=graduated from high school, 3=some college, 4=graduated from college, 5= postgraduate or professional degree).

Methods

All of the analysis was performed using SAS. Basic descriptive analysis and frequencies were run for the dependent variable. Simple t-tests were used to examine aggregate differences between men and women on work and family conflict levels. Because the dependent variables are indexes, I used ordinary least squares regression. Models will be run separately for both males and females so that comparisons can be made across models to compare predictors. In sum, the following methods were used to examine each hypothesis:

> Model 1: Used to test hypothesis 1 (Job characteristics will be significant predictors of women's family and work interference more than men's). Dependent variable, the work and family conflict index, was analyzed using ordinary least squares regression with independent variables job satisfaction, job stress, hours at work, dayshift, difficulty in taking time off, work top satisfaction in life, family satisfaction, watching kids growing up is life's greatest joy, stress at home, number of children, marital status, number of hours of housework, region of residence, race, age, education, and income.
>
> Model 2: Used to test hypothesis 2 (Family and home will be significant predictors of men's family and work interference more than women's). Dependent variable, the work and family conflict index, was analyzed using ordinary least squares regression with independent variables job satisfaction, job stress, hours at work, dayshift, difficulty in taking time off, work top satisfaction in life, family satisfaction, watching kids growing up is life's greatest joy, stress at home, number of children, marital status, number of hours of housework, region of residence, race, age, education, and income.

Both descriptive data and regression analysis reveal significant findings with concern to the study.

Table 1
Operationalization of Variables Used in Analysis

Variable Description	Operational
Dependent Variable	
INDEX (work and family conflict)	(continuous; 6 to 24)
Independent Variables	
HRS1	(continuous)
DAYSHIFT	(value=0) non-day shift (value=1) day shift
FAMWKOFF (how hard to take time off work for family matters)	(value=1) very hard (value=2) (value=3) (value=4) not at all hard
SATISJOB (work satisfaction)	(value=0) not satisfied (value=1) satisfied
WRKTOPSAT (work is top satisfaction in life)	(value=1) strongly agree (value=2) agree (value=3) disagree (value =4) strongly disagree
STRSSWRK (job is rarely stressful)	(value=1) strongly agree (value=2) agree (value=3) neutral (value=4) disagree (value=5) strongly disagree
CHILDS (number of children)	(continuous)
RHHWORK (number of hours of household work per week)	(continuous)
MARRIED (marital status)	(value=0) not married (value=1) married
SATISFAM (family satisfaction)	(value=0) not satisfied (value=1) satisfied
STRSSHME (life at home is rarely stressful)	(value=1) strongly agree (value=2) agree (value=3) neutral (value=4) disagree (value=5) strongly disagree

(table continues)

Variable Description	Operational
JOYKID (watching kids grow up is life's greatest joy)	(value=1) strongly disagree (value=2) disagree (value=3) neutral (value=4) agree (value=5) strongly agree)
WHITE	(value=0) non-white (value=1) white
AGE	(continuous)
INCOME	(23 categories given at data entry)

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Descriptive Analysis

In order to provide a thorough description of the data, basic descriptive statistics were run on all variables in the models. Table 2 presents a mean, standard deviation (if valid), minimum, maximum, and number of valid cases for each variable. The mean score on the work and family interference index is 12.01 with a standard deviation of 3.52. The average hours worked per week was 41.78 hours. The average number of hours of housework per week was 10.87. The average age of respondents was 46.28 years.

Table 2
Means of Variables Used in Analysis

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Dependent Variable					
Work and family interference index	12.01	3.52	6	23	703
Work Variables					
Number of hours of work/week	41.78	14.62	1	89	1729
Satisfaction with job	0.25				2765
Work top satisfaction in life	2.13	0.84	1	4	1769
Difficulty to take off work	1.89	1.02	1	4	1773
Stress at work	3.23	1.19	1	5	1000
Dayshift	0.45		0	1	2765
Family Variables					
Number of children	1.81	1.69	0	8	2760
Married	0.45				2765
Number of hours of housework/week	10.87	10.96	0	84	683
Kids are life's greatest joy	4.34	0.84	1	5	1152
Satisfaction with family	0.37				2765
Stress at home	2.83	1.25	1	5	1155

(table continues)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Control Variables					
Female	0.56				2765
White	0.79				2765
Age	46.28	17.37	18	89	2751
South	0.35				1773
Education (recoded by attainment)	2.77	1.22	1	5	2765
Total family income	15.90	5.46	1	23	2463

Basic frequencies were also run for independent and dependent variables. Table 3 presents these distributions for the dependent variable. The work and family conflict index is a combination of 6 items, which all have response categories that range from 1 to 4. They are all coded in the direction so that 4 is the value representing the most conflict. Approximately 43 percent of respondents ranged from 9 to 12.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution for Dependent Variable

Work and Family Conflict Index Score	Frequency	Percent
6	28	3.98
7	34	4.84
8	49	6.97
9	76	10.81
10	79	11.24
11	82	11.66
12*	72	10.24
13	56	7.97
14	47	6.69
15	53	7.54
16	46	6.54
17	31	4.41
18	21	2.99
19	12	1.71
20	8	1.14
21	4	0.57
22	1	0.14
23	4	0.57

* Mean = 12.01

Table 4 presents the frequency distributions for the independent variables. These results show that over 75 percent of respondents are not satisfied with the jobs and over 63 percent are not satisfied in their family or home life. Nearly 70 percent agree that work is their top satisfaction in life, and approximately 85 percent agree that watching kids grow up is life's greatest joy. Over 32 percent of respondents agreed that life at work is rarely stressful while 48 percent agreed that life at home is rarely stressful. Almost 47 percent say that it is very hard to take time off from work to take care of personal and/or family matters. Just over 45 percent say that they work a dayshift. Fifty-four percent are married, 55.6 percent are female, percent are white, 34.6 percent live in the South, and nearly 26 percent have a college degree or higher.

Table 4
Frequency Distribution for Independent and Control Variables

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Satisfaction with job		
Not satisfied	2085	75.41
Satisfied	690	24.59
Work is top satisfaction in life		
Strongly agree	389	21.99
Agree	883	49.92
Disagree	369	20.86
Strongly disagree	128	7.24
Difficulty to take off work		
Very hard	832	46.93
Somewhat hard	480	27.07
Not too hard	270	15.23
Not at all hard	191	10.77
Stress at work		
Strongly agree	73	7.30
Agree	249	24.90
Neutral	198	19.80
Disagree	329	32.90
Strongly disagree	151	15.10
Dayshift		
Dayshift	1255	45.39
Other	1510	54.61
Marital Status		
Not married	1496	54.10
Married	1269	45.90

(Table continues)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Kids are life's greatest joy		
Strongly disagree	11	0.95
Disagree	26	2.26
Neutral	130	11.28
Agree	374	32.47
Strongly agree	611	53.04
Satisfaction with family		
Not satisfied	1747	63.18
Satisfied	2765	36.82
Stress at home		
Strongly agree	175	15.15
Agree	383	33.16
Neutral	174	15.06
Disagree	309	26.75
Strongly disagree	114	9.87
Gender		
Male	1228	44.41
Female	1537	55.59
Race		
Nonwhite	590	21.34
White	2175	78.66
Region of the country		
Nonsouth	1808	65.39
South	957	34.61
Education		
Less than high school	428	15.55
Graduated from high school	818	29.71
Some college	796	28.91
Graduated from college	377	13.69
Postgraduate / Professional degree	334	12.13

Finally, t-tests were run to compare men and women on the dependent variable, the independent variables, and the control variables. Table 5 shows these results. Men and women did not differ on aggregate levels of work and family interference as shown by the index comparison. Similarly, there were no differences between men and women in job interference with family or in feelings of being tired at work because of home. However, women reported significantly higher levels of family interference with work than did men. Also, women reported significantly higher values when asked if they were tired at home from work. When examining work variables, men in this sample worked

significantly more hours than did the women. Women reported more difficulty when asking to take off time from work, and men agreed significantly more than work is their top satisfaction in life. Men and women differ on every family variable in the analysis. Women are more likely to be satisfied with their family lives, more like to agree that kids are life's greatest joy, more likely to feel stress at home, and are more likely to have more children and be married than men.

Table 5
T-tests Comparing Men and Women

Variable	Men	Women	Diff.	t
Interference Variables				
Work/Family Interference Index	11.82	12.19	-0.369	-1.39
Job interference with family[a]	2.01	1.93	0.078	1.11
Job interference with family*	2.27	2.21	0.067	1.41
Family interference with work[a]	1.53	1.64	-0.111	-2.05*
Family interference with work*	1.96	2.06	-0.100	-2.33*
Tired at work because of home	1.45	1.54	-0.085	-1.64
Tired at home because of work	2.55	2.82	-0.271	-3.97***
Work Characteristic Variables				
Number of hours worked last week	45.09	38.63	6.464	9.42***
I rarely feel stressed at work	3.19	3.27	-0.087	-1.15
Level of difficulty in taking off work	1.84	1.96	-0.118	-2.43*
Work is top satisfaction in life	2.19	2.08	0.117	2.95**
Satisfaction with job	0.25	0.24	0.004	0.27
Work the dayshift	0.48	0.43	0.045	2.36
Family Characteristic Variables				
Satisfaction with Family	0.33	0.40	-0.062	-3.35***
Kids are life's greatest joy	4.28	4.40	-0.147	-2.93**
I rarely feel stressed at home	2.65	2.96	-0.317	-4.27***
Number of children	1.65	1.94	-0.292	-4.53***
Married	0.50	0.43	0.072	3.80***
Other Variables				
Age	45.63	46.81	-1.176	-1.77
Educational Attainment	2.72	2.75	0.039	0.83
Total Family Income	16.43	15.46	0.966	4.38***

[a]Measured from never (1) to several times a week (4)
*Measured from never (1) to often (4)

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Using ordinary least squares regression, the dependent variable measuring work and family conflict was examined for men and women separately. Table 6 shows these two models side by side. The model was more informative for women than for men. Each model showed several significant relationships.

For women, there was a negative relationship between satisfaction with job and work and family conflict. Specifically, a one unit increase in satisfaction of job predicted a 2.164 decrease in conflict between work and family. Stress at work was also a significant predictor with more stress predicting more conflict. A one unit increase in stress at work predicted a 0.916 increase in work and family conflict. Additionally, the more difficult it is to take time off from the job the more likely it is that there will be conflict between work and family. That is, a one unit increase in level of difficulty in taking time off from work predicted a .889 increase in work and family conflict index. Another significant predictor of work and family conflict for women was the number or hours they work. The two variables had a positive relationship, with more hours worked predicting more conflict. Specifically, a one hour increase in number of hours worked last week predicted a .047 increase in conflict. Finally, stress at home was also an important factor, exhibiting a significant positive relationship with work and family conflict. A one unit increase in stress at home predicted a .513 increase in work and family conflict. The strongest effect in the model for women was satisfaction with job ($\beta = -.210$).

For men, there were only two significant predictors of work and family conflict. Stress at work was significant; specifically, a one unit increase predicted a .720 increase

in work and family conflict. The number of children at home was also significant and positive. That is, each additional child predicted a .448 increase on the conflict index. The strongest predictor in the model for males is stress at work ($\beta = .254$).

Table 6
OLS Models Predicting Work/Family Conflict

	Women		Men	
Variable	Estimate	β	Estimate	β
Intercept	7.520***		10.671***	
Demographics				
Living in the South	0.130	0.018	-0.426	-0.061
White	0.381	0.041	0.677	0.082
Age	-0.025	-0.082	-0.036	-0.122
Educational attainment	0.110	0.035	0.191	0.064
Total family income	0.091	0.104	-0.018	-0.025
Work Characteristics				
Satisfaction with job	-2.164***	-0.210	-0.280	-0.034
Work is top satisfaction in life	0.188	0.041	-0.251	-0.057
Job is rarely stressful	0.916***	0.317	0.720***	0.254
Level of difficulty in taking time off from job	0.889***	0.251	0.481	0.128
Number of hours worked last week	0.047*	0.154	0.029	0.118
Dayshift	-0.406	-0.050	-1.011	-0.139
Family Characteristics				
Satisfaction with family	-1.338	-0.106	-0.505	-0.035
Watching kids grow up is life's greatest joy	-0.264	-0.056	-0.136	-0.032
Life at home is rarely stressful	0.513**	0.178	-0.171	-0.054
Number of children	0.252	0.099	0.448*	0.182
Married	-1.004	-0.117	-0.420	-0.052
Number of hours of housework per week	0.010	0.023	0.019	0.047
R-square	0.4220		0.2033	
N	196		191	

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Discussion

This study was a test of Pleck's theory of the work-family role system with the analysis focusing on the idea of asymmetrically permeable boundaries as a structural buffer in that system. The crux of this part of his theory explains that family and work affect one another. In other words, while they are separated by the sheer fact of being different, their boundaries are not completely solid. From time to time family interferes with work and work interferes with family. In this way the boundaries between work and family are permeable. The theory also claims that the path between work and family are different, or asymmetrical, for men and women. In sum, work and family have an effect on one another but that effect is different between genders.

The model tested two hypotheses: (1) work characteristics are significant predictors of women's family and work conflict more than men's and (2) family and home characteristics are significant predictors of men's family and work conflict more than women's. Only the first hypothesis was supported. Ordinary least squares regression showed that job satisfaction, stress at work, level of difficulty in taking time off from work, and number of hours worked were significant predictors of female work and family conflict, but stress at work was the only significant work variable for men. Because women are expected to care for the family and the home, it is understandable that they would see work as the problem. In other words, women know what they have to do at home is necessary and they feel that their workplace does not help them achieve

this goal. While Pleck's theory was only partly supported, this study shows that men and women have different experiences when it comes to balancing work and family.

In addition to the results supporting the first hypothesis, a major difference between genders is that women reported significantly more family interference with work. This was shown in the results for two items. One question asked "How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months? -- I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities." The other asks, "How often do the demands of your family interfere with your work on the job: often, sometimes, rarely, or never?" T-test results showed that reported higher levels of family interference with work in both. An example of this type of conflict is leaving work in order to take care of a sick child who must stay home from school. This finding is incongruous to Pleck's theory and the findings from the first hypothesis. The theory would be supported if women reported higher levels of work interference with family, which is what Gutek et al. (1991) found in their study. So the question is: if women expect their families to interfere with work than why do they report higher levels than men? It is possible that they view their family responsibilities as obstacles that may be keeping them from getting ahead or performing well on the job. This inconsistency may be revealing the struggle that women have when balancing work and family. At one time they may blame their job for their role strain and at another their family. In fact, it may depend on the specific situation that has arisen. Consequently, because the experience of balancing work and family is complex so is the reporting of it.

Another gender difference shown in this study is that men felt that work was the major source of satisfaction in their lives whereas women believed that watching kids

grow up is life's greatest joy. Therefore, their priorities seem to be in different arenas. This finding is most likely related traditional gender roles. In this line of thinking, women are expected to be caregivers first and employees second. For men, it is the exact opposite. It seems as though the respondents have internalized these expectations.

Limitations

This study is limited due to the dataset. The General Social Survey did not include specific examples of work and family conflict to help respondents define and explain their experiences. Additionally, only a subset of the sample was asked questions concerning household duties as well as work and family conflict; therefore, the number of cases in the analysis was limited. Also, there is no longitudinal data as only certain questions are asked at each collection. Respondents were not asked how their families reacted to conflict, how their employers helped or hindered their success at balancing work and family roles, or how psychologically affected they were.

Future Research

Because daily life consists of work and family responsibilities, working adults will always have to find the right balance between them. Therefore, as long as people work and have families, conflict between the two realms will need to be studied. The issue of work and family conflict is often seen as an intrinsic part of adult working life, and some may feel that it will always be present. Future research should examine attitudes of and behaviors concerning conflict among different types of people. Specifically, how do people feel about the level of conflict they experience? Do they believe that it can be decreased? If so, what actions could or would they take to do so?

How harmful is work and family conflict to their personal psychological health? How often and in what ways does the conflict extend from merely psychological strain to behaviors seen by coworkers and family members?

This area would also benefit greatly from qualitative research. For instance, gathering information on specific incidents of conflict would aid in understanding the psychological experience of balancing work and family as well as the resulting behaviors. What situations are most common? How does choosing work over family affect the person's job and his or her family? How does choosing family over work affect them? Qualitative research can help with the "why" of family and work conflict. While theories aid in explanation, real life stories would be much better.

Similarly, longitudinal research would also be beneficial. Its applications could include specific times in a family's life cycle where work wins out over family, times when family wins out over work, how choosing one option over the other consistently affects the family and the individual, and so much more. Following the "success" of the family and the individual over the life course (marriage, divorce, promotion, career change, etc.) would provide great insight into work and family conflict.

Implications

Three questions should be considered knowing the results of this study. Is it likely that sex segregation at home and work will come to an end? Is it possible to change the fundamental nature of work so that it can be more easily balanced with family for both men and women? Assuming these things are achievable, would society benefit as a result? Other important questions follow. For instance, how would families be affected? What would the effects be on an individual level?

The findings in this study are relevant for all working men and women in the way that they target particular elements of work and family that can be altered or improved to make life less psychologically taxing. For instance, according to the model women should seek out jobs that offer them satisfaction, a lower stress environment, the flexibility to take time off if necessary, and minimal hourly input regardless of how many children they have or how many hours they spent on household chores. For men, these findings reveal that higher stress levels at work directly relate to work and family conflict, no matter how much they enjoy their jobs or how much money they make. In other words, they can look for jobs that cause minimal stress, learn behaviors to diminish unavoidable stress, or seek out coping strategies for work stress. And, success or failure in balancing work and family roles has been linked to physical health, sleep quality, quality of life, and family and work satisfaction levels.

Successfully balancing work and family will not only maintain mental health but also high work quality. It is likely that if working parents find a way to keep this balance in check that they will be more productive workers. Higher productivity would be created by being able to give more time and concentration on the job because they are not worried about their families. Additionally, higher productivity in the workplace would also be created by happier workers who know their families are taken care of.

Similarly, effectively managing work and family can lead to happier parents, happier children, and therefore happier families. Obviously children can benefit and or be harmed by an incorrect balance between work and family. Attentive and available parents can support their children with homework, social issues, and many other aspects of life that are difficult for many children. In turn, their children will be more successful.

And, the children will be socialized in the behavior of balancing work and children. In this way, success in managing work and family conflict can create a legacy of good balance for many generations.

Additionally, these findings stretch beyond the individual and his or her family. Men and women should not only rely on themselves to create a good balance between work and family. The results from this study can be applied in governmental and organizational policy in order to facilitate this process. It is quite possible that without employers embracing the importance of successful balance that their employees will not embrace it either. But because this may require less time at the office, especially for women with children, it opposes capitalist nature. In other words, unless employers can see the benefits of changing their policies they will not encourage their employees to do what is necessary to achieve a lower level of work and family conflict. Consequently, the government should explore opportunities to create regulations that protect employees.

Because work and family are basic tenets of life in modern society, society itself would benefit greatly from the successful balance between the two. Recently, men and women are forced to choose whether work is more important that family or vice versa. This is not beneficial for individuals, families, or society in general because often work and family are both equally important for life satisfaction. If society expected balance between work and family for each individual and assistance from organizations and governmental bodies, it is likely that traditional gender norms will cease to exist. Without acknowledging the differences between genders in how they handle work and family conflict, it is doubtful that traditional gender norms will disappear and working adults will continue to have to choose between work and family.

Final Summation

This study's purpose was to further explain findings from studies of gender differences in work and family conflict using Pleck's (1977) theory of asymmetrically permeable boundaries as a foundation. While the theory was only partially supported and findings were not clear cut, the results did show that the experience of balancing work and family is different for men and women. Further research is needed in order to understand the process incorporating time, psychological elements, a conception of its bidirectional nature, and its resulting behaviors.

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