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Managing Multiple Roles. Routes to Reconciliation

Cover: Martta Honkimäki, whose parents manage multiple roles everyday. © Hermanni Honkimäki, 2008

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Managing Multiple Roles. Routes to Reconciliation

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Managing Multiple Roles. Routes to Reconciliation

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Sociale Wetenschappen

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aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

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General Introduction

Families in which both parents are employed are becoming increasingly common in industrialized countries (Bianchi & Raley, 2005; Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). There are, however, large differences in the extent to which Western societies accept both the idea of mothers of young children being employed and the idea that the state should be involved in family issues (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Morgan, 2006). Accordingly, countries differ in the degree to which they offer work-family policies (e.g., child care arrangements, parental leaves, flexible and part-time work options). These policies are of social significance as they affect the lives of families. Whereas well-designed work-family policies may encourage and facilitate the combination of roles (e.g., access to child care largely determines the degree to which mothers are employed), the absence of such policies may hinder successful reconciliation and even force a choice between work and family, which may lead to, for example, dropping fertility rates (Morgan, 2006).

The largest share of research on working parents has been conducted in the United States (e.g., Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999), a country with sharply divided views on employed mothers and virtually no national policies to support working parents (Morgan, 2006). Given the role of cultural context, there is a need to study work-family issues in other contexts, too. The studies in this dissertation are conducted as part of the European Union supported project Family Life and Professional Work: Conflict and Synergy (FamWork)¹. Using a cross-national design, the project examined work-family experiences of dual-earner couples with

¹ The FamWork project (SERD-2002-00011) was carried out between 2003 and 2005 as a joint endeavor of research teams from seven European countries: Germany (University of Munich), Switzerland (University of Fribourg), Austria (University of Graz), Belgium (University of Mons), Portugal (University of Porto), Italy (University of Palermo), and the Netherlands (Radboud University Nijmegen). In a later stage Finland (University of Jyväskylä) and France (University of Toulouse) joined the project as associated research teams. The findings of the project have been summarized in a final report that is available from www.eu-project-famwork.org. Details with regard to research design and data collection are provided in chapters 2 to 5.

young children from a socio-psychological perspective. This dissertation focuses primarily on data concerning Dutch couples.

Traditionally the Netherlands has been characterized by a male-breadwinner model in which men provided income and women stayed at home to take care of the household and children (Pfau-Effinger, 2004b). Since the 1990s, however, the Dutch government has stimulated a so called combination scenario, in which men and women share the paid and unpaid work (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004). Nowadays, Dutch dual-earner families typically involve a full-time working father and a part-time employed mother, commonly working three days a week (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008). In contrast to countries like the United States, Dutch law requires that employers treat part-time workers the same as full-time workers in terms of pay and benefits (Morgan, 2006).

It has been suggested that the ability to balance work and family is one of the primary social challenges for contemporary society (Halpern, 2005). This is particularly the case among dual-earner couples with young children. Young children need care and attention, and, as there is a trend towards delayed child-bearing², these couples are likely to be in the midst of their careers and to face relatively high job demands. They do have to juggle the demands from multiple roles. A healthy balance between the work domain and the family domain is not only important for parents, as problems with the reconciliation may lead to various negative outcomes associated with health and well-being (T. D. Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000), but also for their children and the family as a system. Children are remarkably aware of parents' jobs in terms of moods and experiences (Galinsky, 1999; Wierda-Boer & Rönkä, 2004) and parents' work conditions have been linked to children's well-being (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). Problems with the reconciliation of work and family may also affect interaction with family members (e.g., Repetti, 1997), leading to interpersonal conflict that may eventually harm the family as a safe base for growing up.

² In 2006, Dutch women gave birth to their first child at an average age of 29.4. For highly educated women the average was even higher: 34 (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008).

Considering these societal changes and its presumed implications for individual and family well-being and functioning, it is not surprising that work-family issues have attracted considerable scientific interest during the past decades. Researchers from various disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, and family studies) have investigated a variety of work-family related topics. Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter (2000) identified four main themes that either emerged or continued to be important during the 1990s: the effects of mothers' employment on children's well-being, the socialization function of the work place, work stress and its consequences for non-work behavior and well-being, and the occupation of multiple roles. The latter theme examines "[...] how individuals manage the roles of parent, spouse, and worker and the consequences of this balance for health and family relationships." (p. 982). This theme continues to be an important area within work-family research in the 21st century and has guided the studies in this dissertation.

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to find out what can be done to ease the combination of multiple roles in families with young children. We approach this issue from an ecological perspective. That is, we use Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) to identify relevant current issues in the field of work-family research that need to be further explored. We first position the work-family interface in the ecological framework. The next section discusses prevailing theories on the linkage between work and family and corresponding concepts that have given shape to the work-family literature.

Ecological Framework

According to ecological systems theory, work and family are microsystems that are characterized by their own activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Voydanoff, 2005). The interface between work and family, including all the linkages and processes that occur between these domains, can be understood as a mesosystem (Voydanoff, 2002). The impact of a spouse's job on individual functioning as well as the impact of parents' jobs on children's functioning can be interpreted as exosystem-level phenomena. Bronfenbrenner defined the exosystem as environments in which the individual does not participate,

but is affected by. All these systems are embedded in the macrosystem. This is the cultural and social context of the individual, with its beliefs and attitudes, and its supporting facilities. In short, ecological systems theory acknowledges that work and family are important life domains that are interconnected. Experiences on the edge of work and family have an impact on individual functioning and may be shaped by factors in different 'layers' of environment.

Theories and Concepts Linking Work and Family

Whereas ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) offers a broad framework for understanding the position of the work-family interface, it does not explain how work and family are interconnected. There are two major theories providing a rationale for the effects of the work-family interface on work, family, and individual outcomes.

Role Stress Theory and the Scarcity Hypothesis

Role stress theory posits that if roles impose conflicting role expectations and pressures towards the individual, this may lead to psychological tension (Katz & Kahn, 1978)³. Katz and Kahn distinguished four types of role conflict, three of which focus on the conflict within a role (notably the work role). Intra-sender conflict and inter-sender conflict indicate that one or more role senders set incompatible role expectations for the individual, whereas person-role conflict indicates that the requirements of a role do not match the needs and values of the individual. The fourth type of role conflict, inter-role conflict, is relevant for the work-family interface. Inter-role conflict is the incompatibility of pressures arising from multiple roles. The idea of inter-role conflict is based on the scarcity hypothesis that assumes that human resources (e.g., time and energy) are finite and multiple roles, therefore, are by definition over demanding (Goode, 1960; see also Marks, 1977).

³ Note that in the literature the term 'role theory' is sometimes used instead. Role theory is a broad theory describing processes of role sending, role taking and how people behave in roles. The commonly used term role stress theory seems more appropriate when the focus is on conflicting roles.

Conflict between work and family roles can be regarded as a specific form of inter-role conflict, and has been defined as the conflict that arises when demands and responsibilities in the work (family) domain are incompatible with role performance in the family (work) domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Although bidirectional in nature (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992b), work-family interference has been studied far more often in terms of work-to-family conflict than in terms of family-to-work conflict (Frone, 2003). The model developed by Frone and colleagues (1997) has been one of the few attempts to explain the diversity and dynamics of the two directions of conflict. Their integrative model includes both direct and indirect predictors of interference and, moreover, portrays the domain-specificity of predictors and outcomes. That is, they argue that predictors of work-to-family conflict reside in the work domain, whereas its consequences are manifest in the family domain. Similarly, it is assumed that family-to-work conflict originates in the family domain, while its outcomes reside in the work domain. Consequently, their model focuses on domain-specific variables (e.g., family stress vs. job stress; family satisfaction vs. job satisfaction) in relation to work-family interference.

Role Accumulation Theory and the Expansion Hypothesis

Siebert (1974) argued that the accumulation of roles is more rewarding than stressful. Multiple roles not only give individuals access to more rights — as rights are inherent in each role — but also to benefits associated with the social relationships experienced in each role that may enhance individual's status and role performance. Through, for example, invitations to social gatherings individuals may establish new contacts. Furthermore, a greater number of roles offers overall status security, as individuals are not dependent on one role. In case of failure or conflict in a particular role they may seek support among a wide range of role partners. Multiple roles also offer enriching experiences that may foster personal development. Marks (1977) added that under favorable conditions (i.e., a supportive and sympathetic atmosphere) roles are likely to produce energy that may be used in the same or other roles. Multiple roles are also viewed as beneficial for men and women in expansionist theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). As in role accumulation theory, it identifies several processes that contribute to the beneficial effects of multiple roles (e.g., added income, social support, opportunities to experience

success, and expanded frame of reference). Barnett and Hyde argue, however, that the degree to which individuals actually benefit from these processes depends on the number and quality of roles. Beyond a certain upper limit (too many roles, too many demands) overload and stress may occur.

Although these theoretical insights date back to the seventies, it was not before the beginning of the 21st century that researchers started to focus on the positive effects of occupying multiple roles. This changing perspective brought about new concepts such as work-family facilitation (also referred to as enhancement, enrichment or positive spillover), which represents the extent to which participation at work (or home) is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home (or work) (Frone, 2003, p. 145).

In addition to work-family facilitation, theorists have started to explore the concept of work-family balance (e.g., Voydanoff, 2005). Work-family balance differs from work-family facilitation and related concepts in that it is not a causal concept, but a holistic construct assessing an overall level of contentment, of how successful an individual is in juggling the total demands arising from work and family (Valcour, 2007). Although some researchers have specified balance as low conflict or even absence of conflict (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), there is no empirical evidence that balance and interference are opposite ends of a single continuum. Although these concepts may be inversely related, individuals low in conflict do not necessarily feel successful in balancing work and family (Valcour, 2007). Although few studies have examined the correlates of work-family balance, they do indicate that both psychological and structural factors may play a role in determining perceived success in balancing work and family (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004; Fagan & Press, 2008; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; White, 1999).

We now have discussed the major concepts that appear in the work-family literature. We also showed that linkages between work and family are embedded in a larger context. What factors in these contexts may influence individual experiences in the work-family interface? Below we give a brief overview of correlates that have previously been associated with work-family experiences. Analogue to the

ecological perspective, we discuss significant correlates at the individual level⁴, within and between the work and family domains (microsystem/mesosystem), work(-family) experiences of the spouse (exosystem), and the social and cultural context (macrosystem). Bronfenbrenner argued that conflict between work and family roles may reduce the quantity and quality of parent-child interaction (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). As the parental role is central in both parents' and children's lives we also discuss the relation between work-family experiences and parenting.

Factors that Shape an Individual's Work-Family Experiences

The Individual

Gender is without doubt the most frequently studied individual characteristic related to work-family experiences. There are several reasons to expect gender differences in work-family experiences. Men and women are differently socialized and face different role expectations. These differences are usually found to be more important than sex differences, that is, differences on the biological level (see Lundberg, 1996). It is often hypothesized that family factors have more influence on women's work than men's. Few studies, however, support the notion that men and women differ in their levels of work-family interference or facilitation, particularly after controlling for demographic characteristics (Frone, 2003).

Far less studied, but attracting increasing scientific attention both in Western (e.g., Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004) and non-western contexts (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005), is the role of personality characteristics in relation to work-family experiences. Most studies have focused on the role of the Big Five traits⁵ (Aryee et al., 2005; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Rantanen et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 2004) and negative affectivity (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Carlson, 1999; Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002). In this emerging field there is a need to explore the role of other personal characteristics in work-family experiences, too (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Frone, 2003). Research indicates, for example, that

⁴ Personal characteristics are often viewed as part of the microsystem, but for the sake of clarity we here consider it as a separate, intra-individual level.

⁵ The Big Five traits are emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness (Goldberg, 1992; Vermulst & Gerris, 2005).

Type A behavior (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Carlson, 1999), attachment styles (Sumer & Knight, 2001) and gender based perceptions (Blanchard-Fields, Chen, & Hebert, 1997; King, 2006) may play a role in work-family experiences. The latter is particularly interesting as numerous studies have indicated that androgyny has positive adaptive value. Androgynous individuals can perform both instrumental and nurturing roles effectively, and are likely to be engaged in degendered role responsibilities (for an overview see King, 2006). Degendered role responsibilities have been identified as one of the key success factors in dual-earner couples' attempts to balance work and family (Haddock et al., 2001).

The literature distinguishes three mechanisms that may link personal characteristics to work-family experiences (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Friede & Ryan, 2005). First, personality may influence individuals' choices to participate in particular environments that may either challenge the reconciliation of work and family or function as a supportive context. Second, personality may influence whether individuals perceive their work and family lives as stressful and conflicting or manageable and enriching. Third, personality may influence which coping strategies individuals choose to use and how effectively individuals employ these coping strategies. It is therefore surprising that practically all studies cited above have studied direct linkages between Big Five traits and work-family experiences, and have largely neglected possible indirect mechanisms. Stoeva et al. (2002) is an exception; their study showed that domain-specific stress may mediate the relation between personal characteristics and work-family interference.

In chapter 2 we examine the relation between the Big Five traits and work-family interference, with domain-specific stress as a mediating mechanism. Thus far, Big Five traits have mostly been studied in isolation, so we know little about the relative importance of these traits. Rantanen et al. (2005) showed that only the effect of emotional stability remains when Big Five traits are simultaneously assessed in relation to work-family interference. To obtain a comprehensive picture of the role of the Big Five traits, we assess these traits simultaneously. In chapter 3 we explore the role of gender role orientation in the experience of perceived work-family balance. We also examine how gender role orientation may moderate the

relation between adaptive strategies (to be discussed in the next paragraph) and perceived work-family balance.

Micro- and Mesosystems

A great deal of research has investigated the role of demands in the work domain (work stressors, work hours, organizational culture, unsupportive supervisor) and family domain (age and number of children, eldercare responsibilities, unsupportive spouse) (Frone, 2003). It is generally assumed that factors in the family domain are primarily predictive for family-to-work experiences, whereas factors in the work domain are primarily related to work-to-family experiences (Frone, 2003). What is less studied is what parents do to deal with these demands, and how effective these strategies are.

Whereas personal characteristics may function as implicit strategies to juggle the demands of the work and family domain, individuals may also employ more explicit strategies, for example by prioritizing one role above the other, thereby limiting the standards. These actions are called adaptive strategies. In the literature they are also referred to as trade-offs or scaling back. According to Voydanoff (2005, p. 831) adaptive strategies are “[...] actions taken on the part of individuals and families to reduce or eliminate misfit between work and family demands and resources”. Following person environment fit theory, she states that to successfully reconcile work and family there must be an equilibrium in demands of the work domain and resources of the family domain on one hand, and family demands and work resources on the other hand. When demands exceed resources misfit is experienced. Misfit elicits the use of adaptive strategies, which in turn may promote work-family balance. Adaptive strategies may also moderate the negative effects of misfit on balance such that these negative effects occur only among individuals who do not employ adaptive strategies. Voydanoff distinguishes two types of strategies – strategies that decrease demands and strategies that increase resources. Others have proposed more complex taxonomies (for a review see Middleton, 2004).

People may not only employ strategies on an individual level, but also on the couple level. One important decision is couples’ division of paid and unpaid work. A vast

amount of research has focused on the division of unpaid work (i.e., household tasks, maintenance and child care). These studies reveal that although men's relative contributions have increased, women continue to do most of the unpaid work (Bianchi & Raley, 2005; Coltrane, 2000). The division appears to be largely dependent on women's and men's employment, earnings, gender ideology, and life course issues (Coltrane, 2000). Sharing unpaid work with the partner has been associated with less depression and, via perceived fairness, higher marital quality (Coltrane, 2000; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). Research on the division of paid work between partners is less widespread. Some have investigated young dual-earner couples' preferences concerning the division of tasks (Beets, Liefbroer, & De Jong Gierveld, 1997), showing that the traditional model is becoming less popular and that there is a greater preference for supplementary and egalitarian models. Others have investigated potential obstacles for such an egalitarian distribution of paid work, concluding that a lack of consistent government policy may hinder the redistribution of tasks (Plantenga, Schippers, & Siegers, 1999).

Very few studies have included both the division of paid work and unpaid work. The studies that pay attention to both types of work are mostly limited to the investigation of the prevalence of different constellations (Beaujot & Liu, 2005). Research indicates that striving for marital equality in its broadest sense (e.g., joint decision making, shared emotion work, mutual involvement in child care) is an important prerequisite for a successful balance (Zimmerman, Haddock, Current, & Ziemba, 2003). It is therefore surprising that virtually no studies have investigated the role of the division of both paid and unpaid work as a couple level strategy for dealing with work-family experiences.

In this dissertation we address both the need to study individual and couple's strategies to reconcile work and family. In chapter 3 we examine the relation between adaptive strategies at the individual level and perceived work-family balance, and in chapter 4 we examine the relation between couples' combination strategies (i.e., the way couples divide the paid and unpaid work) and work-family interference.

Exosystem

Work-family research has predominantly focused on processes within the individual. But apart from issues on the personal and contextual level individual work-family experiences may also influence and be influenced by spouse's experiences. In the literature this processes is referred to as crossover (Westman, 2002). Westman distinguishes three major processes through which crossover may occur. First, there may be uncontrolled shared family factors that explain crossover relations. In other words, the crossover relation is spurious. Second, spouses' experiences may be directly related through the empathetic reaction of one spouse in reaction to the other spouse's stress and strain. Third, spouse's experiences may affect experiences of the other partner via mediating mechanisms, including coping and social support. Bakker, Demerouti, and Dollard (2008), for example, found that spouse's feelings of work-family interference increased the other spouse's home demands via a process of negative social interactions. The three mechanisms may or may not jointly operate and are not mutually exclusive. In practice it may be difficult to distinguish the different type of mechanisms. Research shows that spouses' levels of work-family interference correlate positively (Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2005). This may be explained as an empathetic reaction, but there may be underlying mediating processes as well. Alternatively, there may be unmeasured common stressors that may affect the associations found between husbands and wives.

Although there is evidence suggesting bidirectional crossover — particularly in less traditional cultures (Westman, 2005) — studies do not necessarily investigate crossover in both directions, that is, from husbands to wives and from wives to husbands (e.g., Dikkers, 2008). It is, however, important to examine both directions of crossover, as research has shown the strength of crossover relations may depend on gender. Westman (2002) found that husbands' experiences more strongly affected their wives than the other way around. Women, due to their greater involvement in family affairs and higher levels of empathy, tend to be more sensitive to the stress of their significant others. On the other hand, it may be that men are less susceptible to their partners' experiences: Women seem to be better able to prevent their emotions from negatively affecting their families (Larson &

Almeida, 1999). These gender differences seem to exist already in adolescence. A study of Finnish teenagers, found that adolescent girls were more critical and sensitive in their evaluations of parents' work than boys (Wierda-Boer & Rönkä, 2004).

To shed more light on bidirectional crossover in dual-earner couples with young children, this dissertation uses couple data and examines relations of interest simultaneously for husbands and wives (chapter 2, 3, and 5).

Macrosystem

The first part of this chapter pointed to the relative paucity of studies on work and family issues that have been conducted outside the United States. Moreover, it is only since the past few years that cross-cultural differences in work-family issues have started to attract scientific interest. These cross-cultural studies are important as most of the theoretical models on work-family issues have been developed in the United States, and it has yet to be assessed whether these models are universal. Countries differ not only in the degree to which they employ family friendly policies, but also in work and family values, practices and habits (Poelmans, O'Driscoll, & Beham, 2005). As we explained in the first paragraph of this chapter, these issues may either enlarge or hinder parents' ability to reconcile work and family.

Cross-national studies indeed indicate that work-family experiences may vary by country. Van der Lippe, Jager and Kops (2006) found that among the eight European countries they included in their comparative study, difficulties with the reconciliation of work and family were most common among Swedish participants. They argue that in a country where combining work and family is a common issue, feeling stressed and hurried may have become part of the culture (p. 311). Their findings run counter those of Hill and colleagues (2003), who used data of the global IBM work-life survey (48 countries) to identify cultural differences in work-family experiences. In contrast to the previously mentioned study, they found that parents in Scandinavia encountered the fewest problems with the work-family reconciliation: these parents reported the lowest levels of work-family interference and felt most successful in balancing work and family. Asian working parents, in

contrast, experienced the highest levels of work-family interference and felt least successful in balancing work and family. The study by Hill used data collected among a specific organization. So, the organizational climate/context may be responsible for these differences. Still, they are in line with the findings reported by Spector and colleagues (2005). Using a sample of managers from eighteen countries they found that although the pattern was not fully consistent, in general managers from Asia and Eastern Europe experienced more work-family pressure than managers living in the Western countries. More cross-cultural studies are needed to further identify the patterns of work-family experiences in a global context and to identify more precisely which cultural factors make a difference.

Some studies not only investigated whether work-family experiences varied by country, but also whether these experiences are explained by similar variables. Spector and colleagues (2005) found that although in most samples work-family pressure was negatively related to mental and physical well-being, correlations with job satisfaction and number of children were less universal. Interestingly, work hours predicted work-family pressure only in the Anglo Saxon countries (Australia, UK and United States). Spector and colleagues argue that these differences may be at least partly explained by cultural differences in individualism versus collectivism. Results of the European FamWork study indicate that work hours may be a more or less universal predictor not only in Anglophone countries, but in a larger European setting, too. Together with work stress, work hours were the most powerful predictor for work-to-family conflict (but not family-to-work conflict) across the participating countries and gender. Other factors, such as the perceived burden of domestic work, were found to be related to work-to-family and family-to-work conflict only in some of the samples, but no specific patterns could be identified (FamWork Research Consortium, 2005). Thus, some relations found may hold in particular cultures, but may be weak or nonexistent in other cultures.

Information on these types of cultural differences is important when designing supportive policies for working parents on a larger (e.g., European) scale. In chapter 4 of this dissertation we investigate possible cultural difference in the relation between couples' combination strategies and work-family interference. In the Netherlands, a combination-scenario in which men and women contribute

equally to paid and unpaid work responsibilities is stimulated by the government (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004). Do Dutch couples that divide both paid work and unpaid work ‘fifty fifty’ benefit from this strategy in a similar way as couples from Germany and Finland? These countries form an interesting comparison, as they differ both in their past and current ideas about combining work and family (Pfau-Effinger, 1998).

Implications of Work-Family Experiences for Parenting

Thus far we have discussed factors that may shape individuals’ work-family experiences. But work-family experiences may also shape individuals’ behavior. The focus of this dissertation is on working parents with young children. Parental work is an exosystem for children. Whereas in the past research has concentrated on the consequences of — in particular mothers’ — employment status for family functioning, today the focus is more on parents’ employment conditions that may affect the family (Perry-Jenkins, et al., 2000). Parenting has often been analyzed as a mediating variable linking parental work conditions and child outcomes (Bowes, 2005). Crouter and colleagues (1999), for example, showed that parents’ high levels of work pressure were related to lower adolescent well-being via parental role overload and parent-child conflict. Wierda-Boer and Rönkä (2004) found that adolescents’ negative perceptions of their fathers’ work were related to increased levels of depression and negative school attitudes. This linkage was partially mediated by perceived parental warmth and acceptance.

Although work-family interference is a highly prevalent phenomenon among parents in contemporary society and perhaps the mostly studied concept in the work-family literature (Frone, 2003), it is surprising that few studies have been dedicated to unraveling the relation between this concept and parenting practices. Theoretical models indicate that work-to-family conflict may have an impact on family-related behavior (Frone, et al., 1997), so studies that examine the relation between work-to-family conflict and parenting practices are warranted. We address this issue in chapter 5 of this dissertation, where we study the relation between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles for both mothers and fathers.

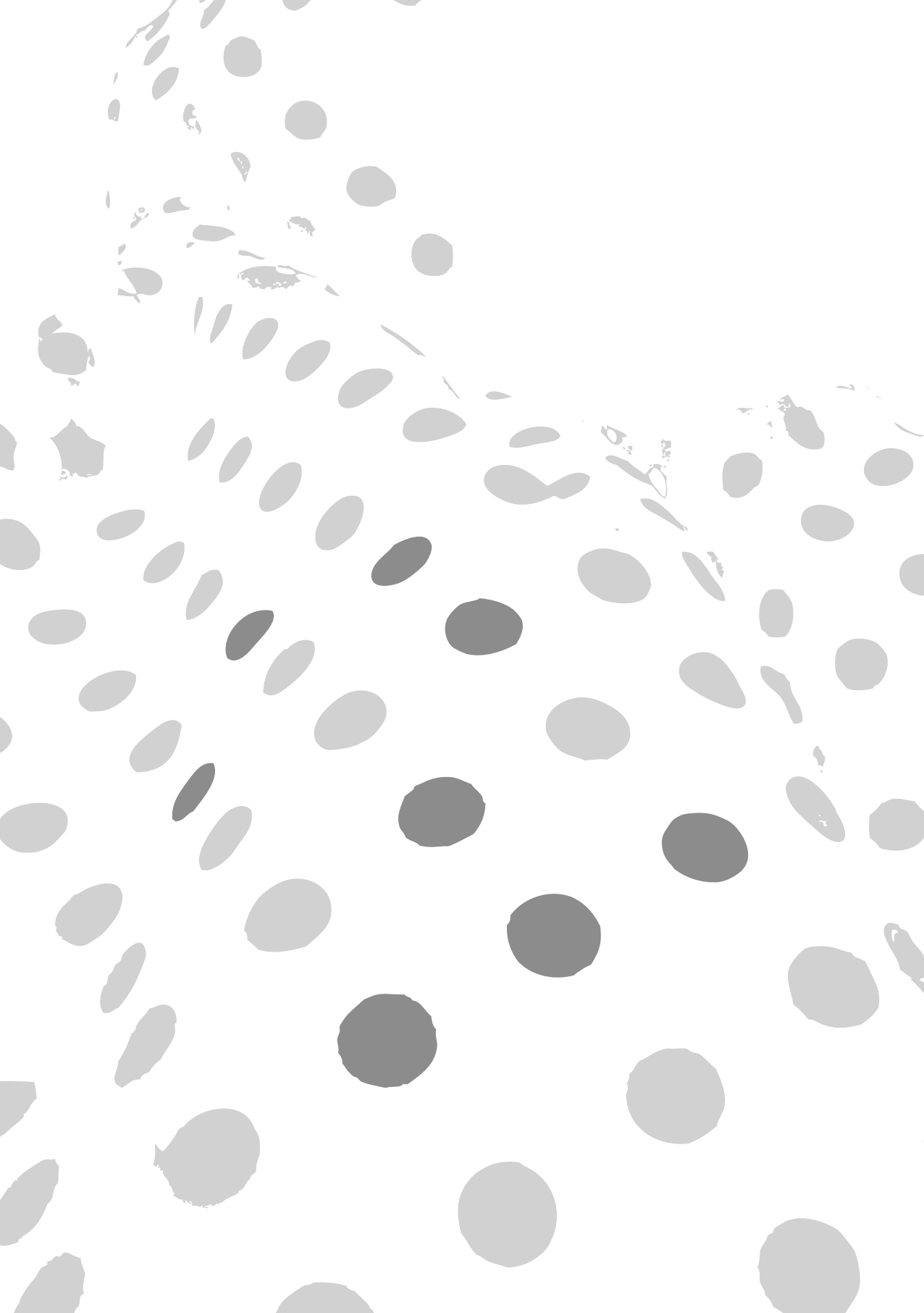
Summary

In this introductory chapter ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was applied as a guiding principle to delineate relevant current issues in the field of work and family. The present dissertation is a compilation of four studies that contribute to the literature on multiple roles by examining (1) individuals' implicit strategies and explicit strategies in combining multiple roles, (2) couples' combination strategies and crossover of work-family experiences between partners, and (3) work-family experiences and its relation to parenting. All themes are approached with attention to the role of cultural context. In chapter 2 to 5 specific research questions are developed capturing one or more of these themes. More specifically, the chapters address the following issues:

Chapter 2 assesses how the Big Five personality traits relate to work-family interference. Stress in the work domain and in the family domain are examined as mediating variables. In chapter 3 work-family balance is the concept of interest. More specifically it examines the role of gender role orientation (in terms of masculinity, femininity and androgyny) and adaptive strategies, as well as their combined effects, in the degree to which parents feel successful in balancing work and family. Chapter 4 examines whether parents with different ways of dividing paid work and unpaid work between partners vary in their levels of work-family interference. The chapter provides a cross-national comparison including data from Dutch, Finnish and German dual-earner couples. In chapter 5 we draw attention to the relation between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles for both mothers and fathers. Stress in the family domain is studied as a mediating variable.

In chapter 2, 3 and 5 partners are studied simultaneously, which not only allows for control for interdependencies between them, but also offers an opportunity to study gender differences and crossover effects between partners. All analyses are conducted according to the Actor-Partner-Interdependence Model (APIM). APIM is '...a model of dyadic relationships that integrates a conceptual view of interdependence in two-person relationships with the appropriate statistical techniques for measuring and testing it.' (Cook & Kenny, 2005, p. 101).

In answering these questions, finally, we intend to translate our findings into ideas about what routes may be followed to ease the combination of multiple roles in families with young children. This is the focus of the last chapter, where the key findings reported in chapter 2 to 5 are integrated and discussed. Specific attention is paid to the implications of the findings of this dissertation for policy makers at different levels of decision-making.



Personality, Stress, and Work-Family Interference¹

Today many parents have multiple roles. This study examined how personality, domain-specific stress, and work-family interference are interrelated. Questionnaire data of 276 Dutch dual-earner couples with young children were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Findings demonstrated that job stress and parenting stress were positively related to work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, respectively. For women, additionally, family-to-work conflict was strongly associated with increased levels of job stress. Finally, emotional stability functioned as an indirect predictor of work-family interference by decreasing the levels of job stress and parenting stress for both genders, but in distinctive ways. The use of couple data and inclusion of personality showed a valuable extension of existing models linking work and family.

Introduction

In most Western societies, men and women face the challenge of satisfactorily combining family life and work, and either partner may have difficulty reconciling these domains. When demands and responsibilities in one role conflict with the other, work-family interference is experienced (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family interference is bidirectional and can occur from work to family or from family to work (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992a).

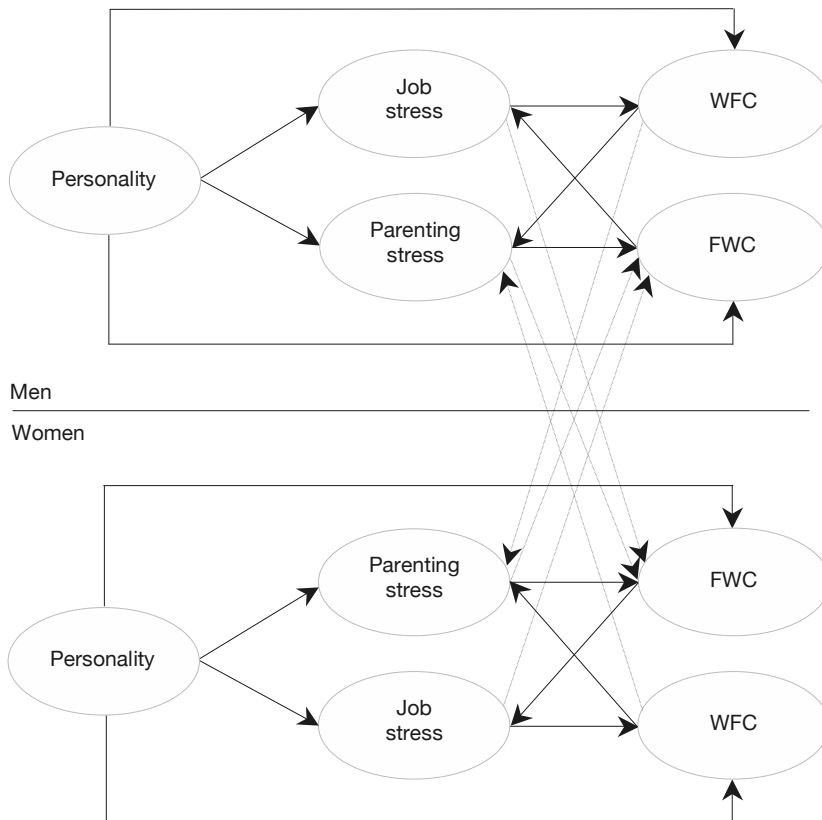
Frone, Yardley and Markel (1997) conceptualized work-family interference in an integrative framework that emphasizes the reciprocal relations between work and family life. They distinguish between distal (i.e., indirect) and proximal (i.e., direct) predictors of work-to-family (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). In this study we focus on a specific part of the model, that is, on the relation between stress and work-family interference. Central in the model is the idea that stress can be both a predictor and a result of work-family interference.

We build on the model in two ways. First, based on the theoretical framework developed by Bolger and Zuckerman (1995), we propose an extension of the model, arguing that personality may function as a direct or indirect predictor of work-family

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interference. The inclusion of personality may be particularly interesting given the role of stress in the model. We examine personality in terms of the Big Five traits (Goldberg, 1992), a five-factor model that offers a comprehensive basis for studying personality traits (Vollrath, 2001). Second, we study relations between personality, stress, and work-family interference for partners simultaneously in a single model, which gives us the change to examine cross relations between partners. Work-family interference has been extensively studied individually, but far less so when taking couple relationships into account, a lack that has recently been noticed by several researchers (Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Maguire, 1999; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Westman & Etzion, 2005). Our conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model. Interrelations between personality, domain-specific stress, and work-family interference. Broken lines represent relations between partners. WFC = work-to-family conflict, FWC = family-to-work conflict.



Stress and Work-Family Interference

Stress is a broad concept, and can refer to stress factors, stress reactions, or the interactions between these factors and reactions (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001). This causes confusion in the work-family literature because researchers have used the same term for different constructs, or, have used different terms for the same construct. We examine stress in the work and family domains (i.e., job and parenting stress, respectively) and we understand it as an affective reaction to stressors experienced in these particular domains.

In the past, this form of stress was predominantly studied as an outcome variable of work-family interference (T. D. Allen, et al., 2000; Frone, 2003). Unlike earlier work, the theoretical model developed by Frone et al. (1997) posits that stress may be conceptualized both as a predictor and as an outcome of work-family interference, and, moreover, may be a linking mechanism between the two directions of interference. More specifically, the model states that work stress functions as a predictor of WFC and family stress as a predictor of FWC. Role-related stress reactions, produced by role-related characteristics, may lead to cognitive preoccupation with the source of the stress, or, to reduced levels of psychological and physical energy. Both can undermine a person's ability or willingness to meet the obligations of other roles (Frone, 2003, p. 150; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Several longitudinal studies have supported this rationale (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999; Westman, Etzion, & Gortler, 2004; Williams & Alliger, 1994). In turn, WFC and FWC may elicit stress reactions in the family and work domain, respectively. The quality of life associated with one role may be undermined by frequent inability to participate, because of interference from another role (Frone, et al., 1997, p. 152). Also, this rationale has received longitudinal support (Kelloway, et al., 1999; Kinnunen, Geurts, & Mauno, 2004). We have no grounds for expecting fundamental gender differences in these relations.

The model developed by Frone et al. (1997) includes only domain-specific predictors of work-family interference. We argue that the inclusion of personality variables as direct and indirect predictors of the two types of work-family interference may be

a valuable extension of Frone et al.'s model. In the following sections the rationale for our prediction is developed.

Personality as a Direct Predictor of Work-Family Interference

Recently, the role of personality in experiencing work-family interference has attracted scientific interest both in Western (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Carlson, 1999; Noor, 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005; Wayne, et al., 2004) and non-Western contexts (Aryee, et al., 2005). Personality influences the way people interpret situations (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Extensive empirical support exists for the role of emotional stability (or its opposite neuroticism) in experiencing work-family interference. People with low levels of emotional stability experience higher levels of both directions of interference compared to people with high levels of emotional stability (Aryee, et al., 2005; Noor, 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005; Wayne, et al., 2004). People with low levels of emotional stability tend to see their environment negatively and, therefore, might more easily detect incompatibilities between work and family life (Rantanen, et al., 2005).

The role of the other Big Five traits in predicting work-family interference is not yet clear. Although some have found a negative relation between work-family interference and agreeableness (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Wayne, et al., 2004), others have not (Rantanen, et al., 2005). Similarly, it is not clear whether conscientiousness is (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Wayne, et al., 2004) or is not (Rantanen, et al., 2005) linked to work-family interference. Furthermore, the relation Noor (2003) found between extraversion and work-family interference has not been replicated (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005; Wayne, et al., 2004). Finally, inconsistent results apply to openness to experience: Rantanen et al. (2005) reported a positive relation with men's FWC, whereas others have failed to find any relation with work-family interference (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Wayne, et al., 2004). Although these traits contain elements that may buffer work-family interference experiences (e.g., because of their positive emotionality, extraverted people may have a higher threshold for problems of reconciliation), entering all traits simultaneously in the model, only the role of emotional stability was found significant for both genders (Rantanen, et al., 2005).

The study of Rantanen et al. (2005) not only underscores the importance of including all Big Five traits in one model, but also of studying both genders. Although emotional stability predicted WFC and FWC for both genders, openness to experience predicted only men's FWC. Furthermore, in a study by Aryee et al. (2005), gender moderated the influence of emotional stability on WFC such that the relation was stronger for women than for men. Both studies encourage us to further explore the role of gender in the relation between personality and work-family interference.

Personality as an Indirect Predictor of Work-Family Interference

Most studies investigating the relation between personality and work-family interference focus on direct relations. The work of Stoeva, Chiu, and Greenhaus (2002) being an exception, suggests personality is indirectly related to work-family interference via its relation to stress: People high in negative affectivity reported more job stress and, in turn, experienced more WFC than those low in negative affectivity. Furthermore, they experienced higher levels of family stress, which resulted in increased levels of FWC.

Personality not only directly influences the way people interpret situations (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995), but also indirectly, by affecting people's choice of coping strategies (Brebner, 2001; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Watson, David, & Suls, 1999). The type of coping strategy — problem-oriented or emotion-oriented (see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) — also determines whether people successfully deal with a situation. Research has shown that with regard to well-being outcomes, problem-oriented coping is the more favorable strategy (Hagger & Orbell, 2003).

As previously mentioned, our study examines stress in two life domains: job stress and parenting stress. Research suggests that people with high levels of emotional stability are less susceptible to job stress and exhaustion (Kinnunen, Vermulst, Gerris, & Mäkikangas, 2003; Stoeva, et al., 2002; Vermulst & Dubas, 2001) and experience less stress and problems in the family domain (Belsky, Crnic, & Woodworth, 1995; Mulsow, Caldera, Pursley, Reifman, & Huston, 2002; Stoeva, et al., 2002). It has also been suggested that people with high levels

of emotional stability use coping strategies successfully and, therefore, appraise situations as less stressful than people low in emotional stability, who tend to use more emotion-oriented coping styles (Brebner, 2001; Watson, et al., 1999). Additionally, agreeableness and extraversion have been associated with lower levels of parenting stress (Mulsow, et al., 2002) and fewer reports of daily problems within the family (Belsky, et al., 1995). Highly extraverted people may appraise situations as less stressful, due to their positive life attitude, whereas people with high scores on agreeableness may actively seek social support (Penley & Tomaka, 2002). Finally, we could not locate any papers specifically examining the relation of conscientiousness and openness to experience with stress in the work and family domains. Coping research, however, indicates that people with high levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience employ active, problem-oriented coping strategies (Penley & Tomaka, 2002), suggesting a negative relation between these traits and stress in both domains.

The question arises whether these presumed links between personality and stress are similar for men and women. Taking a small side-step to the parenting literature, Belsky and colleagues (1995) found that mothering was more strongly and consistently predicted by personality than fathering. Accordingly they speculated that "...personality traits may play a larger role in shaping psychological and social functioning in those arenas of life that are foremost in the lives of men and women. Thus while core traits might be more predictive of the parenting of mothers than of fathers, it is conceivable that these same traits might be more predictive of the occupational functioning of men than of women." (p. 923). Although society is changing, men are, in many cases, still primarily responsible for income and women for care-giving (Drew, Emerek, & Mahon, 1998). In this line of thinking, it is likely that the relation between personality traits and parenting stress is stronger for women than for men, while the relation between personality and job stress stronger for men than for women.

To summarize, previous work suggests both direct and indirect linkages between personality and work-family interference. Personality may directly relate to work-family interference, influencing people's interpretation of situations (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Indirectly, it may relate to work-family interference through its

relation with stress. Personality affects people's coping strategies (e.g., Brebner, 2001) and the type of coping strategy, in turn, determines how people react to stressors (see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress may then increase experiences of work-family interference. As a result of cognitive preoccupation with the source of stress or of reduced levels of psychological and physical energy, the ability or willingness to meet obligations of other roles may be undermined (Frone, 2003).

The Work Family Interface in a Couple Context

Simultaneously analyzing the outcomes specific to each member of a couple in a single model gives several benefits (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Gareis, Barnett, & Brennan, 2003; Kenny & Cook, 1999). It enables control for the nonindependent nature of couple data and allows testing for whether a given relation differs between genders. A third advantage is that crossover relations (i.e., partner effects) can be detected. That is, experiences related to different roles of one partner, such as work and family stress, may relate meaningfully to experiences of the other partner (Westman, 2002). According to Westman, crossover may occur through three mechanisms: Empathic reactions, common stressors, and indirect mediating processes such as coping strategies and social support.

Crossover, with regard to stress and work-family interference, may be understood as follows: a highly stressed partner who comes home, tired from work may withdraw from domestic and child care tasks (see Repetti, 1997). Consequently, the other partner might experience difficulties in combining family life and work, because of the lower level of support received from the other partner. In a similar way, one partner's parenting stress may be related to the other partner's FWC. Additionally, the latter crossover relation may be expected based on common family-related stressors. Experiences of WFC may, in turn, relate to one's partner's parenting stress. A lack of physical and psychological availability because of work demands may cause more parental tasks to be delegated to the partner, who may then feel restricted by the role of parent.

The work-family literature offers empirical evidence for both unidirectional and bidirectional crossover (Hammer, et al., 1997; Jones & Fletcher, 1993; Westman

& Etzion, 2005). This inconsistency in findings may relate to culture: In more traditional cultures crossover is found to be mostly unidirectional (from husbands to wives), whereas in less traditional cultures crossover tends to be predominantly bidirectional (Westman, 2005). Although crossover may be bidirectional, it has also been suggested that husbands' experiences more strongly affect their wives than the other way around (Westman, 2002): women, because of their greater involvement in family affairs and higher levels of empathy, tend to be more sensitive to the stress of their significant others. Contrarily, it may be that men are less susceptible to their partners' experiences: Women seem to be better able to prevent their emotions from negatively affecting their families (Larson & Almeida, 1999).

Present Study and Hypotheses

The main aim of the present study is to find out, by studying partners simultaneously and taking into account the interdependent nature of couple data, how partners' personality traits and experiences of stress in the work and family domains are associated with their WFC and FWC experiences. We are particularly interested in similarities and dissimilarities, and crossover between partners.

Within the context of the model presented in Figure 1, four sets of hypotheses are tested. First, we expect positive paths from job stress to WFC and from parenting stress to FWC. Additionally, we expect positive paths from WFC to parenting stress and from FWC to job stress. Both of these expectations are based on Frone et al.'s (1997) theoretical model. We do not expect gender differences in these relations. Second, we hypothesize that emotional stability will function as a direct predictor of work-family interference, negatively relating to both WFC and FWC. Our analyses regarding the other Big Five variables are explorative. Third, we expect that personality will function as an indirect predictor of work-family interference by reducing the levels of stress experienced in the work and family domains. Although we expect a negative relation for all the Big Five traits, we assume emotional stability to be the strongest predictor of stress. Furthermore, we assume that personality will be more powerful in predicting men's job stress, and for women, in predicting parenting stress. Fourth, we hypothesize that one

partner's job and parenting stress will be related to the other partner's FWC, and, one partner's experiences of WFC will be related to the other partner's parenting stress. We expect crossover to be bidirectional, but stronger from husband to wife than from wife to husband.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample of this study consisted of Dutch dual-earner couples that took part in 'FamWork - Family Life and Professional Work: Conflict and Synergy,' a European study conducted in 2003 - 2005. Couples were recruited by posters and brochures that were distributed among child care organizations, child welfare centers, and primary schools, as well as by an advertisement shown on regional television for a period of two weeks. Subscription for the project was possible either by telephone or by the entry form on the project's website. Participants were required to be employed for at least 15 hours per week; to have at least one child aged 1 to 6, and no children younger than 1 or older than 12 years. Research assistants visited eligible couples at home to deliver the questionnaires. The couples completed the questionnaires alone and were requested specifically to do this separately. If necessary, they were reminded by telephone or by a written reminder to return the questionnaires. The participants received a reward of € 20.

Out of 308 couples that initially subscribed for the project, 283 (92%) returned the questionnaires. Seven couples had missing data, therefore, the final analyses were based on 276 couples. Most of them (87%) lived in a town of 150,000 and its suburbs in the eastern part of the Netherlands; the remaining 13% came from two medium sized towns in the south and east of the Netherlands. They were either married (70.1%) or cohabiting and the number of children living at home varied from 1 to 4 with an average of 2. Men's mean age was 38.6 ($SD = 4.9$, range 29 - 58), and they spent an average 42.66 hours on professional work ($SD = 8.82$), which included the total amount of hours spent on contract hours, overtime, and commuting per week. Women's average age was 36.2 ($SD = 4.1$, range 26 - 47), and they spent an average 29.28 hours on professional work ($SD = 7.35$).

Measures

The response scales of the items for the measures (except the control variables) were 6-point Likert scales varying from 1 (*not at all applicable*) to 6 (*completely applicable*). All measures were used previously and were validated in a longitudinal study on functioning of Dutch families (Gerris, et al., 1998).

Control variables. This study controlled for four background variables that had been identified as related to our variables of interest in previous studies (e.g., Carlson, 1999; Kinnunen, et al., 2003; Stoeva, et al., 2002): Number of children living at home; educational level (1 = *primary school* to 8 = *university*); personal monthly net income (11 classes from 1 = < € 500 to 11 = > € 4000), and total amount of hours spent on professional work in a week (including commuting and overtime).

Personality. The Quick Big Five, a shortened Dutch version of Goldberg's (1992) Big Five questionnaire (Vermulst & Gerris, 2005), was used to assess personality. Each personality trait was measured with six adjectives. Emotional stability (e.g., "anxiety" [reversed], "fearful" [reversed]) indicated the degree to which a person is able to stay calm, quiet and undisturbed in stressful situations. Highly emotionally stable people are resilient to strong emotional feelings ($\alpha = .81$ for women and $.78$ for men). Agreeableness (e.g., "pleasant", "cooperative") indicated the degree to which a person is interested in another person's well being and needs. Highly agreeable people are kind and cooperative and place social harmony before their own needs ($\alpha = .85$ for women and $.84$ for men). A high score on extraversion (e.g., "quiet" [reversed], "talkative") indicated that a person is sociable, vivacious, energetic, verbally active, and gregarious ($\alpha = .88$ for women and $.83$ for men). A high score on conscientiousness (e.g., "organized", "neat") indicated that a person can set clear goals and pursue them to fulfillment. This person is regarded as hard working and reliable with high levels of self-control ($\alpha = .91$ for women and $.89$ for men). Openness to experience (e.g., "imaginative", "innovative") indicated the degree to which a person is eager for new things, variety, and changes. People with high scores on openness to experience are curious and creative, think liberally, and are introspective ($\alpha = .82$ for women and men).

Job stress. Job stress was assessed with two scales. Job burnout was measured by a 5 item-scale that was based on Warr (1990) and Gerris et al. (1998), and measured the degree to which parents indicate that they feel exhausted because of their jobs (e.g., “Because of my work I feel like I’m at the end of my rope”). Alphas were .86 for women and men. Job-related stress was measured by a 3 item-scale based on Warr (1990) and Gerris et al. (1998), and measured the degree to which parents indicate that they experience their work as stressful because they cannot unwind at the end of a workday (e.g., “When I am home I can hardly stop thinking about work”). Alphas were .77 for women and men.

Parenting stress. Parenting stress was assessed with two scales. Child rearing as a burden was measured by a 3 item-scale, that was a Dutch adaptation of Abidin (1983) (De Brock, Vermulst, Gerris, & Abidin, 1992), and indicated the degree to which parents report experiencing child-rearing as burdensome and problematic (e.g., “Raising my child(ren) brings about many more problems than I’d expected”). Alphas were .72 and .63 for women and men, respectively. Parental role restriction was measured by a 5 item-scale and measured the degree to which parents report feeling restricted by their role of parenting and child-rearing in arranging their personal lives and fulfilling their personal goals (e.g., “Since I have child(ren) I have too little opportunity to do different and new things”) (Abidin, 1983; De Brock, et al., 1992). Alphas were .73 and .70 for women and men, respectively.

Work-family interference. Work-family interference was assessed with two scales representing the two sides of work-family interference: work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). WFC was measured by a 2 item-scale developed by Frone et al. (1992a) that measured the degree to which work life interferes with home life (i.e., “My job interferes with my responsibilities at home” and “My job keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on my family”). Alphas were .83 and .76 for women and men respectively. FWC was measured by a 2 item-scale by Frone et al. (1992a), which measured the degree to which home life interferes with work life (i.e., “My home life interferes with the responsibilities at my job” and “My home life keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on job or career-related activities”). Alphas were .67 and .69 for women and men respectively.

Strategy of Analysis

Prior to the final analyses, we examined Pearson's correlations and tested differences between men and women (*t*-test for paired samples) for all the variables of interest. The second step was to test the model as depicted in Figure 1. Preceding the second step, we verified whether there was conceptual overlap between items of the two work-family interference variables and the items of parenting stress and job stress by means of exploratory factor analyses. We found that cross-loadings of the items of the two work-family interference variables were about zero on the parenting stress and job stress factors. Parenting stress items and job stress items showed also cross-loadings around zero. The results indicated that there was no conceptual overlap.

To test the model we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) using LISREL 8.52 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Each latent variable in the model was represented by two indicators. Job stress was measured by the scales job-related stress and job burnout, parenting stress by the scales child rearing as a burden and parental role restriction, WFC and FWC by two items each, and each personality variable by two parcels. Parcels are the mean or sum of subsets of items of a latent variable. Because the sample was relatively small we strove for parsimony in the number of parameters to be estimated. Two parcels of three items each replaced the six items of each personality variable. To demonstrate the distinctiveness of the personality, stress, and conflict measures we tested the measurement part of the SEM model before proceeding to the final SEM-analyses for men and women separately. Confirmatory factor analysis with nine factors (five personality, two stress, and two conflict measures) showed substantial loadings (varying from .62 to .98 for men and from .62 to .95 for women) on the indicators (measures, items, parcels) on the factors they belonged. The fit measures were $\chi^2(102) = 175.9382$, $p = .000$ with RMSEA = .05 and CFI = .96 for men and $\chi^2(102) = 166.52$, $p = .000$ with RMSEA = .05 and CFI = .97 for women. Because CFI is greater than .95 and RMSEA equals .05, the fit for both models is good.

To take into account the nonindependent nature of couple data, we were informed by the suggestions of Kenny and colleagues for testing the actor-partner

interdependence model (APIM) (Kenny & Cook, 1999; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). In this model, the type of crossover effects we tested corresponded to APIM partner effects. The SEM model included men and women simultaneously and was tested using the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method. Correlations between personality variables, between the disturbance terms of the stress variables and between the disturbance terms of the work-family interference variables were allowed within men and women and also between men and women. We used two fit measures: (a) The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Byrne, 1998), and (b) The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of Bentler (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1996). RMSEA is utilized for assessing approximate fit, preferably with values less than or equal .05, but values between .05 and .08 are indicative of fair fit (Kaplan, 2000, p. 113-114). CFI is a comparative fit index, and values above .95 are preferred (Kaplan, 2000, p. 107) but should not be lower than .90 (Kline, 1998, p. 131).

To test differences in structural relations between and within gender we used Chi-square differences tests (Byrne, 1998) that are allowed if the measurement models of men and women are invariant. To test invariance the Chi-square and *df* of the unconstrained model must be determined for the first step. The second step is constraining the lambdas of men and women to equality. The difference in Chi-square between the unconstrained and the lambda-constrained model combined with the difference in *df*, is, again, a Chi-square distribution and a nonsignificant value will indicate that the measurement models of men and women are equivalent. If the measurement models can be assumed equal, Chi-square difference tests of structural parameters (paths) between men and women are allowed.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

As can be seen from Table 1, significant differences existed between men and women on almost all variables, except on openness to experience, job-related stress, and job burnout.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables in the Study

Variable	Men		Women		Paired sample <i>t</i> -test	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Background variables						
Education	6.58	1.75	6.83	1.37	271	-2.67 **
Income	6.47	1.69	4.75	1.61	271	12.85 ***
Working hours/week	42.66	8.82	29.28	7.35	271	17.64 ***
No. of children at home	1.94	.74	1.94	.74	-	-
Personality						
Emotional stability	4.39	.82	4.06	.91	275	4.47 ***
Agreeableness	4.86	.55	5.07	.57	275	-4.65 ***
Extraversion	4.13	.94	4.46	1.04	275	-3.88 ***
Conscientiousness	4.18	.97	4.39	1.05	275	-2.29 *
Openness to experience	4.05	.84	3.95	.90	275	1.37
Job stress						
Job-related stress	2.39	1.00	2.45	1.10	275	-.73
Job burnout	2.51	.95	2.53	1.00	275	-.26
Parenting stress						
Child rearing as a burden	2.53	1.01	2.74	1.21	275	-2.57 *
Parental role restriction	3.42	.90	3.56	.96	275	-2.13 *
Work-family interference						
Family-to-work conflict	2.74	1.26	3.00	1.32	275	-2.67 **
Work-to-family conflict	2.83	1.32	2.50	1.36	275	3.13 **

Note. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Women had a higher educational level than men, whereas men spent significantly more hours per week on professional work and had a higher personal net income compared to women. Additionally, men were more emotionally stable than women, whereas women were more agreeable, extraverted, and conscientious than men. Furthermore, women experienced child rearing as more burdensome and felt more restricted by their role as a parent than men. Finally, women experienced significantly higher levels of FWC compared to men, whereas men reported higher levels of WFC, compared to women. Men experienced similar levels of WFC and FWC ($t(275) = -.10, ns$), whereas women's FWC exceeded their levels of WFC ($t(275) = 5.95, p < .001$).

Table 2 presents the correlations of the variables in the study. The control variables showed weak relations with the main variables in the study, with two exceptions. The more hours partners spent on professional work and the higher their personal net income, the more they felt that their jobs interfered with their family life. Correlations between WFC and FWC were moderate among men and relatively high among women.

The correlations between partners on the same variables are shown in bold on the diagonal. Of the control variables, educational level was highly positively correlated. Additionally, the more hours one partner spent on professional work, the fewer hours the other worked. There were no significant correlations between partners' personality traits. With regard to stress variables, there were moderate positive associations between partners' job burnout and the two concepts of parenting stress. Finally, increased FWC in one partner was associated with increased FWC in the other partner. No such significant associations were found for WFC. Not shown in Table 2, but of interest for our expectations about crossover between men and women, are correlations between the stress measures of one partner with the conflict measures of the other partner. Women's stress variables correlated positively with men's FWC ($r = .13$ to $.22$, at least $p < .05$), whereas men's FWC was only positively correlated with women's parental role restriction ($r = .16, p < .01$). Women's WFC correlated significantly with men's parental role restriction ($r = .15, p < .05$), whereas men's WFC was positively correlated with women's child rearing stress ($r = .12, p < .05$).

Table 2. Intercorrelations Among Variables in the Study for Men and Women

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
Background variables															
1. Education	.56 ***	.32 ***	-.04	.08	.05	-.09	.01	.03	.11	.18 **	.15 *	-.07	.15 *	.20 ***	.08
2. Income	.46 ***	.10	.47 ***	.11	.16 **	.02	.04	.04	-.01	.08	.05	-.14 *	.02	.02	.26 ***
3. Working hours/week	.33 ***	.70 ***	-.19 ***	.06	.05	.08	.08	.00	.02	.12 *	.18 **	-.13 *	-.04	-.10	.44 ***
4. No. of children at home	.12 *	-.01	-.08	1 ***	.07	.04	.02	.10	-.03	-.01	.07	.05	.13 *	.11	.14 *
Personality															
5. Emotional stability	.06	.13 *	.04	.13 *	-.01	.07	.13 *	-.04	.04	-.29 ***	-.26 ***	-.24 ***	-.09	-.16 **	-.08
6. Agreeableness	-.04	-.17 **	-.07	.04	.20 ***	.09	.15 *	.23 ***	.14 *	-.04	-.03	-.15 *	-.06	-.05	-.02
7. Extraversion	.08	.11	.08	.02	.42 ***	.24 ***	.01	.01	.20 ***	.03	.02	-.12 *	-.11	-.03	.04
8. Conscientiousness	-.15 *	-.04	-.00	-.04	-.01	.16 **	-.07	-.12	.03	-.07	-.06	.03	.13 *	-.03	-.03
9. Openness to experience	-.04	.02	.08	-.03	-.07	.17 **	.15 *	.14 *	-.01	.02	.06	.06	.15 *	.22 ***	.02
Job stress															
10. Job-related stress	.16 **	.16 **	.21 ***	-.00	-.26 ***	-.10	-.08	-.05	-.03	.05	.59 ***	.16 **	.17 **	.21 ***	.29 ***
11. Job burnout	.18 **	.05	.06	.03	-.26 ***	-.19 ***	-.12 *	-.08	.03	.62 ***	.23 ***	.25 ***	.20 ***	.26 ***	.39 ***

Table 2 (continued).

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
Parenting stress															
12. Child rearing as a burden	.03	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.45***	-.08	-.21***	.08	.06	.13*	.17**	.29***	.44***	.18**	.06
13. Parental role restriction	.07	.06	.08	-.02	-.19**	-.05	-.09	.04	.14*	.23***	.23***	.53***	.31***	.41***	.20***
Work-family interference															
14. Family-to-work conflict	.22***	.14*	.06	.18**	-.15*	-.11	-.06	-.06	-.07	.33***	.38***	.21***	.36***	.20***	.25***
15. Work-to-family conflict	.14*	.28***	.42***	.09	-.16**	-.10	-.07	-.07	.00	.43***	.40***	.17**	.20***	.44***	.10

Note. Values above the diagonal are for men, and values below the diagonal are for women. Bold values on the diagonal depict correlations between men's and women's concepts. Full correlations between men's and women's concepts can be obtained from the author.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Both women and men tended to experience less work-family interference when they described themselves as more emotionally stable and experiencing less job and parenting stress. Additionally, men's openness to experience was positively related to FWC. The strongest correlations were observed between the parenting stress variables and FWC, and between the job stress variables and WFC. Furthermore, higher levels of emotional stability were associated with lower stress in the work and family domains for both genders.

Structural Equation Model

Structural equation modeling, including all Big Five traits, showed that emotional stability was the only trait with significant paths to the endogenous variables. Therefore, in subsequent stages, only emotional stability was kept in the model. Of the control variables, the amount of children living at home did not contribute to the model and was therefore left out in subsequent analyses.

From Table 3 it can be concluded that the standardized factor loadings (lambdas) of the measurement model have sufficiently high loadings to represent the latent concepts adequately.

Figure 2 shows the final model with standardized path coefficients and indices of model fit. Only paths that were significant for at least one partner were included in the model. The fit of the model was good: $\chi^2 (257) = 375.82, p = .000$ with RMSEA = .04 and CFI = .96. The difference in Chi-square between the unconstrained model of Figure 2 and the lambda-constrained model was not significant ($\Delta \chi^2 (9) = 12.73, ns$) indicating that the measurement models of men and women could be assumed equal, and testing for gender differences in structural relations was allowed.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the control variables showed some small- to moderate-sized paths to the endogenous variables. The more hours men and women spent on professional work, the more they reported that job interfered with home life. No gender difference was found ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 1.98, ns$). For men, work hours were also positively related to job stress. Although for women this relation was not

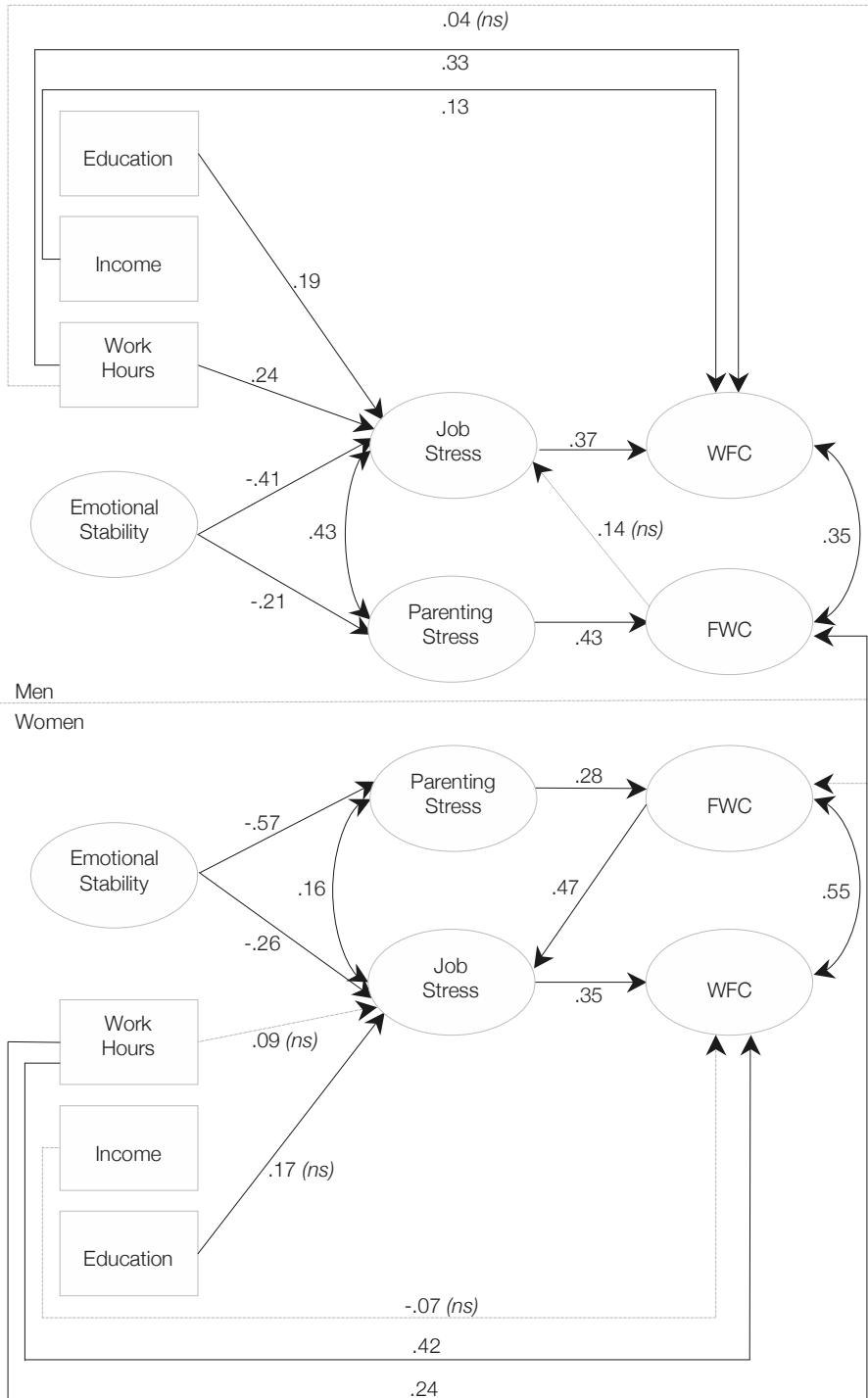
Table 3: Factor Loadings (Lambdas) for the Model

Latent variables	Manifest variables	Factor loadings (Lambdas)	
		Men	Women
Emotional stability	Parcel 1	.69	.78
	Parcel 2	.82	.79
Job stress	Job-related stress	.72	.73
	Job burnout	.82	.83
Parenting stress	Child rearing as a burden	.71	.79
	Parental role restriction	.68	.60
Family-to-work conflict	strain-based conflict	.81	.81
	time-based conflict	.63	.64
Work-to-family conflict	strain-based conflict	.90	.87
	time-based conflict	.68	.83

significant, men and women's paths did not significantly differ ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 1.38, ns$). Furthermore, educational level was positively related to job stress for men. Again, for women this relation was not significant, however no gender difference was found ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 0.49, ns$). Finally, men showed a small significant positive path between income and WFC. That is, the higher the income of men, the more WFC they reported. For women this path was not significant, moreover, the difference between men and women was significant ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 4.12, p < .05$).

Higher job stress was associated with increased WFC and higher parenting stress with increased FWC for both men and women, as illustrated in Figure 2. With regard to the relation between job stress and WFC, no gender differences appeared ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = .03, ns$). The relation between parenting stress and FWC, however, tended to be stronger for men than for women, almost reaching significance ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 3.58, p = .06$). FWC, in turn, was a powerful predictor of women's but not men's

Figure 2. Final model with its standardized path coefficients and indices of model fit. WFC = work-to-family conflict, FWC = family-to-work conflict. $\chi^2 (257) = 375.82, p = .000$ with RMSEA = .04 and CFI = .96. *ns* = nonsignificant.



job stress (.47 vs. .14; $\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 7.66, p < .01$). WFC was not significantly related to job stress for both genders.

No significant direct paths existed between emotional stability and either direction of work-family interference for men or women. However, emotional stability was indirectly related to work-family interference via its relations with stress in both life domains (see Figure 2). Higher levels of emotional stability were associated with lower levels of stress in the family domain. This relation was stronger for women than for men ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 12.26, p < .001$). Additionally, emotional stability had a negative relation with stress in the work domain. The higher the level of emotional stability, the less job stress the person experienced. There was no gender difference in this relation ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 1.35, ns$). For women, the relation between emotional stability and parenting stress was stronger than between emotional stability and job stress ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 6.42, p < .01$). The reverse was found for men: the relation between emotional stability and job stress was stronger than between emotional stability and parenting stress ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 5.00, p < .05$).

Our initial model included three crossover paths between partners: From both forms of stress to partner's FWC, and from WFC to partner's parenting stress. None of these proved significant and were, therefore, excluded from the final model. However, a significant positive path was found between women's control variable work hours and their partner's FWC. Thus, the more time women spent on their jobs, the more FWC their partners experienced. The corresponding path from men to women was not significant and a chi-square difference test showed that the difference between these paths was significant ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 6.12, p < .01$), indicating that the crossover relation is unidirectional.

Discussion

This study provided insight into the linkages between personality, domain-specific stress, and work-family interference. Our findings suggest that the use of couple data and inclusion of personality in the model offer a valuable extension of Frone et al.'s (1997) framework. First, our study revealed several substantial gender differences in the relations under study. Second, although our final model only

supports a cross relation with regard to one of the control variables, correlations indicate crossover that may be detected in structural models if larger samples are included. Third, our study suggests that in addition to domain-specific predictors of WFC and FWC, personality should be included as a general predictor in the model.

The results obtained with regard to the interrelations of stress and work-family interference support, to a considerable extent, Frone et al.'s (1997) theoretical model. As expected, job stress was related to WFC and parenting stress to FWC. The relations we found were somewhat stronger than those reported by Frone et al. This may be a result of our operationalization of job stress and family stress: whereas Frone et al. studied domain-specific stress in terms of overall feelings regarding the work (family) role (e.g., 'frustrated', 'bothered'), our stress measures tapped feelings that were specific to the particular role (e.g., 'Raising my child(ren) brings about many more problems than I'd expected'). Specific measures may show stronger correlates with the construct of interest than global measures. It may also be that these relations are more powerful in families with young children, such as those we studied. These families in particular face challenges in reconciling work and family life. Interestingly, although women exceeded men in the levels of parenting stress they experience, the relation between parenting stress and FWC tended to be stronger for men. Perhaps women are used to a certain level of parenting stress, whereas for men, in their relatively new caring-role with accompanying responsibilities, parenting stress — although lower in absolute terms — may be less predictable and more difficult to handle.

Also in line with Frone et al.'s (1997) framework, FWC was positively related to job stress. Contrary to what was expected, however, this relation was only significant for women. Women in our sample experienced significantly higher levels of FWC as compared to men. It may be that to establish a relation between FWC and job stress, higher levels of FWC are required. The strong association found for women may relate to their working pattern. In accordance with the general working pattern of Dutch mothers with young children (see Van Wel & Knijn, 2006), virtually all women in our sample had part-time jobs, mostly substantial (i.e., ≥ 21 hours). Research has shown that substantial part-time employees report similar levels of

overtime, job demands and fatigue as fulltime employees (Beckers, et al., 2007). Likewise, women in our sample experienced similar levels of job stress as men, who mostly occupied fulltime jobs. If family issues are contemplated during work time or demand physical time away from the job, those who have fewer hours to fulfil work duties may more readily experience difficulties meeting job expectations, resulting in job stress.

The absence of a linkage between WFC and parenting stress was unexpected, but in accordance with previous empirical testing of the same model (Frone, et al., 1997). It should be noted that this relation was close to significance for women ($z = 1.89$). It may be that parents who experience WFC experience increased levels of parenting stress only in the long term, after stress has accumulated. This may be, in particular, the case for men, who may have less involvement in child care than their partners (Drew, et al., 1998). Future research should more carefully examine this relation in a longitudinal design.

Contrary to our expectations, our study showed that personality did not function as a direct predictor of work-family interference. This contrasts with previous work that reported direct links between personality and work-family interference (e.g., Wayne, et al., 2004). The present results suggest that personality may relate to work-family interference primarily by affecting the levels of job stress and parenting stress. This is in accordance with the work of Stoeva et al. (2002) that included both types of stress and directions of interference. Thus, our findings suggest personality functions as an indirect predictor of work-family interference. More specifically, we found that dealing with multiple roles is easier for those who are able to stay calm and undisturbed in stressful situations. Emotional stability was the only personality trait that remained significant when simultaneously including all Big Five traits in the model. Although previous work has reported relations between the other traits and work-family interference (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Noor, 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005; Wayne, et al., 2004), our findings are consistent with those of Rantanen et al. (2005) who found that only emotional stability remained significant for both genders when all other personality dimensions were included in a model aimed at explaining work-family interference.

Our findings suggest the process through which this personality trait relates to work-family interference is different for men and women. In line with our hypothesis, among women, emotional stability was more strongly related to parenting stress than to job stress, whereas among men it was more strongly related to job stress than to parenting stress. Thus, Belsky et al.'s (1995) speculation that personality particularly affects functioning in the domain most highly valued or to which one is most strongly committed seems to broaden to affective reactions in the domains traditionally linked with gender.

The design of our study enabled us to examine crossover between partners. Contrary to our expectations, no significant crossover relations between the main variables of interest were found. However, correlations indicated crossover that may be detected in structural models if larger samples are included. The absence of crossover may also be a result of the relatively low levels of job and parenting stress experienced by our participants (Westman, 2001). Additionally, crossover may occur only under certain conditions: according to Westman (2002) personal attributes such as Big Five personality traits may not only impact one's own and one's partner's stress and work-family interference — as we investigated in this study — but may also moderate the crossover process. Future research should investigate the conditions under which crossover takes place, preferably using larger samples.

We found a unidirectional crossover relation of the control variable work hours to FWC, suggesting that the more hours women are involved in professional work, the more FWC their partners report. We believe this finding reflects a societal change. During recent decades women's participation in the labor force has increased dramatically in the Netherlands. When women spend more hours on professional work, it is likely that their partners are confronted with new tasks at home. However, the caring man is a relatively new phenomenon and men may experience that these tasks hinder their careers simply because they have not yet fully adapted to the new role. As previously mentioned, crossover may depend on culture (Westman, 2005). Although the Netherlands is a rather gender-egalitarian country, there are nations being even more egalitarian, in particular the Scandinavian countries (e.g., offering extensive paternal leave following the birth of the child). It remains an issue

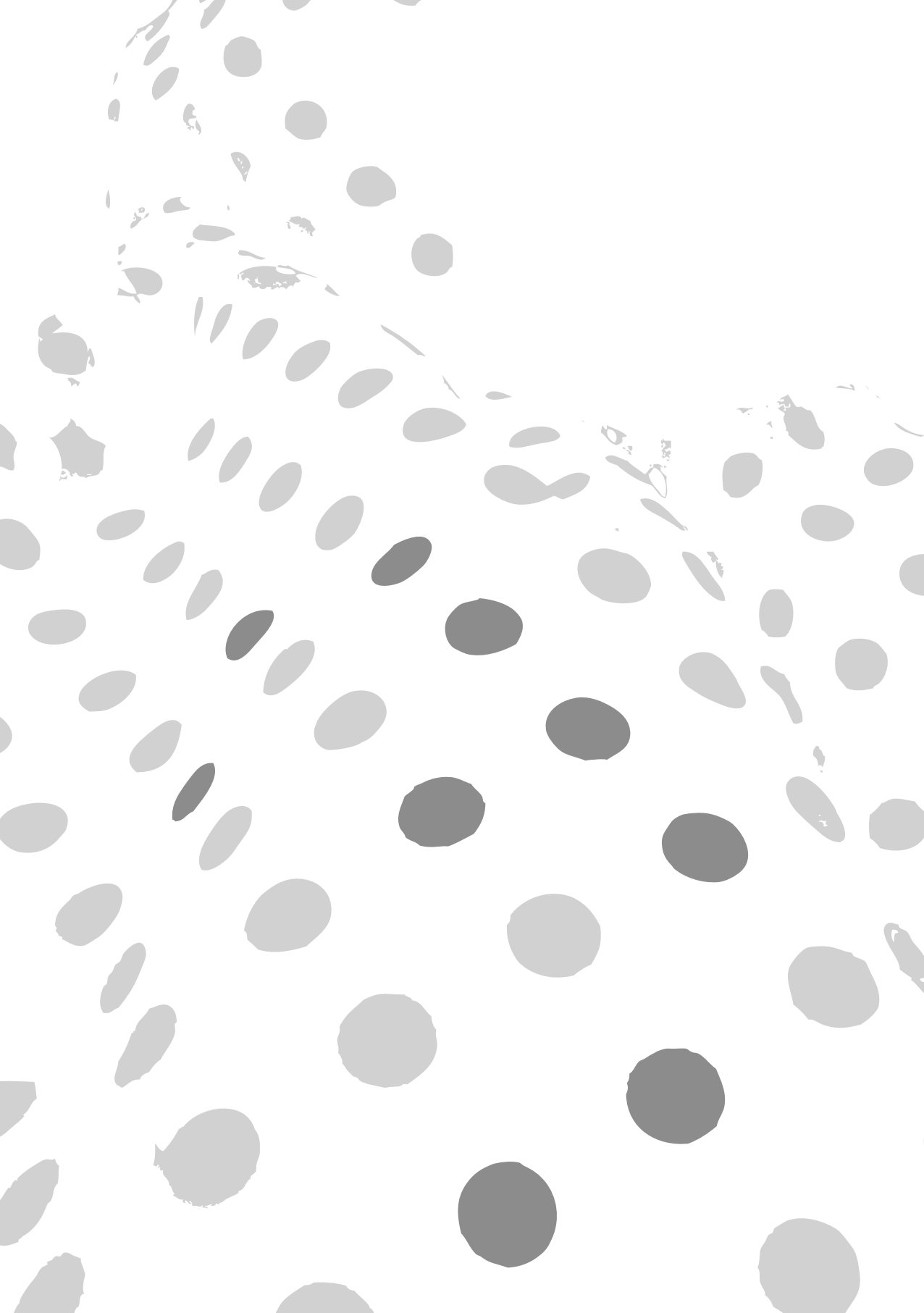
for future research whether this finding replicates in countries that are said to be ahead in adopting new gender roles.

The results of this study have to be interpreted in light of several limitations. To begin with, our results are subject to the methodological limitations that accompany a cross-sectional design, which implies that no conclusions on causal ordering can be made. Research on this topic should benefit from more longitudinal studies to unravel these relations. Furthermore, we focused only on a specific part of Frone et al.'s model (1997), due to the limited number of parameters that could be estimated within the available sample size. Future studies should explore whether our findings related to gender differences, crossover, and the role of personality in managing multiple roles replicate in more complex models. Another limitation of this study relates to our sample. Participation in our extensive questionnaire study was time-consuming and required the effort of both partners. We cannot, therefore assume that our self-selected sample of dual-earner couples is representative. Although recruitment material was made available to a wide range of people, distressed couples might have been less likely to subscribe. Finally, our sample was fairly highly educated. This is not surprising because in the Netherlands families in which both partners have substantial jobs (>12 hours/week, as indicated by Statistics Netherlands) are predominantly highly educated (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). However, in other countries the situation may be different and it remains an issue for future research whether our findings replicate in lower educated samples of dual-earner couples.

In spite of these limitations and issues for future research, the present study could have valuable implications for practice. Referring to the predictive role of emotional stability in experiencing stress, it might be useful to teach dual-earner couples skills that are associated with this trait (e.g., coping strategies, such as staying cool-headed and thinking rationally in tense situations) to reduce their levels of stress experienced in the work and family domains, and, in turn, to reduce their work-family interference experiences. Increasing resources at the personal and social level may compensate the negative effect of low levels of emotional stability on individual functioning (Schneewind & Kupsch, 2007). Because dual-earners' work-family interference and parental distress have been associated with increased

internalizing and externalizing behavior among their pre-school aged children (Hart & Kelley, 2006) and, additionally, work-family interference experiences have been associated with lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Aryee, et al., 2005), decreasing parents' stress and work-family interference may have positive potential consequences not only for parents themselves but also for their families and employers.

Although the above implication for practice is rather speculative, the current study extends and enhances our understanding of the work-family interface. Although domain-specific antecedents were identified as predictors of work-family interference, our findings suggest that it is important to include more general predictors as well, such as emotional stability, which appeared to be a significant predictor of work-family interference via decreased levels of job and parenting stress. Furthermore, our results underscore the importance of using couple data when examining linkages between work and family life. Managing work and family life does not occur in a vacuum, it clearly is the effort of multiple family members.



Adaptive Strategies, Gender Role Orientation, and Work-Family Balance¹

Using questionnaire data on 149 Dutch dual-earner couples with young children participating in the European Famwork study, we examine how adaptive strategies and gender role orientation relate to parents' perceived success in balancing work and family. Path analysis indicates that some adaptive strategies may harm individuals' work-family balance, particularly when they are made in the domain where the time budget is limited. In the need to succeed in multiple roles, however, endorsement of traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender, that is masculine traits for women and feminine traits for men, seems beneficial. We speculate that two underlying mechanisms — social pressure and time constraints — jointly operate in determining perceived success in balancing work and family.

Introduction

As a result of changes in society, the number of dual-earner families with young children has increased rapidly during the last decades (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). These families face the challenge of reconciling work and family demands. Much research has been devoted to the conflict that may arise from combining multiple roles or the synergy it may create (Perry-Jenkins, et al., 2000). Yet we know little about what contributes to parents' perceived success in balancing work and family. Although work-family balance is a frequently invoked concept, it has been used inconsistently (Voydanoff, 2005) and very few studies have actually investigated work-family balance as a global assessment of satisfaction with the work-family exchange (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In this paper, we explore two sets of possible predictors of work-family balance — adaptive strategies and gender role orientation — in a sample of 149 dual-earner couples having at least one preschool child.

Perceived success in balancing work and family is the result of a complex psychological process in which people evaluate the fit between work demands and family resources, and between family demands and work resources (Voydanoff,

¹ Appeared as: Wierda-Boer, H. H., Gerris, J. R. M., & Vermulst, A. A. (2008). Adaptive strategies, gender ideology, and work-family balance among Dutch dual-earners. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70, 1004-1014.

2005, p. 824). As a reaction to misfit, family members may actively construct and modify their roles, resources, and relationships (Becker & Moen, 1999; Voydanoff). These adaptive strategies often seem to be a result of conscientious reflexive action (Becker & Moen) and are guided by both internal and external motives, such as whether particular activities are important to the individual or whether support is available (Powell & Greenhaus, 2006). From a stress theory perspective, adaptive strategies may be comparable to coping strategies, responses, or behaviors at both the individual and family level (Voydanoff, 1990, 2002).

Couples may use a wide range of strategies to manage their daily lives (Becker & Moen, 1999; Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Current, 2001). According to Voydanoff (2005) there are two types of adaptive strategies: increasing resources (e.g., hire household services) and decreasing demands (e.g., cut paid work hours). Both may increase work-family balance. Two studies have empirically tested linkages between adaptive strategies and work-family balance (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999), using items similar to those reflecting decreasing demands as suggested by Voydanoff (p. 826). These studies generally report *negative* associations between adaptive strategies and work-family balance, mainly for strategies made at home. The latter more severely affected women's balance, whereas adaptive strategies at work appeared to be more strongly associated with men's balance. These contradicting outcomes encourage us to further explore the relation between adaptive strategies that decrease demands and work-family balance.

We go beyond previous work investigating linkages between adaptive strategies and work-family balance among dual-earner couples, by studying partners simultaneously in a single model. This analytical approach not only takes into account the dependent nature of dyadic data (Kenny, et al., 2006), but also allows us to study crossover effects between partners. There is evidence that work-family experiences may crossover from one partner to the other (Westman, 2001), but in the context of work-family balance the issue remains unexplored. 'Doing' work and family involves both partners and it is hence likely that adaptive strategies are connected with partners' work-family balance. Social support may be the underlying mechanism (Westman, 2002): When one partner makes an adaptation in the work

domain, such as reducing paid work hours, he or she may have more time available at home, providing greater support to the other partner. Conversely, adaptations at home, such as cutting back on household duties, may relate negatively to a partner's work-family balance.

Voydanoff (2005) speculated that linkages between adaptive strategies and work-family balance may vary by personal characteristics. Personal characteristics may also directly contribute to a successful reconciliation of work and family by counterbalancing the demands of multiple roles (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004). Saginak and Saginak (2005) mentioned the potential influence of gender-based perceptions on work-family balance and called for additional research. In this study we therefore also explore the role of gender role orientation, that is, masculine and feminine traits, in explaining work-family balance.

Masculinity refers to an individual's identification with stereotypical masculine roles. Traits associated with masculine roles are agentic and instrumental. Femininity, on the other hand, refers to an individual's identification with stereotypical feminine roles. Feminine traits are communal and expressive (Bem, 1974). Masculinity and femininity are embedded within the social context and are socially reinforced (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). They are not opposite ends of a single continuum, instead, individuals can possess both masculine and feminine traits. Integration and relatively high identification with both masculine and feminine traits is referred to as androgyny (Bem).

Numerous studies have indicated that androgyny has positive adaptive value. Androgynous individuals can perform both instrumental and nurturing roles effectively, and are likely to be engaged in degendered role responsibilities (for an overview see King, 2006). Degendered role responsibilities have been identified as one of the key success factors in dual-earner couples' attempts to balance work and family (Haddock, et al., 2001). This suggests that androgynous individuals, highly identifying with masculine as well as feminine traits may feel more successful in balancing work and family compared to individuals with mainly masculine or feminine traits.

Helms-Erikson (2001) has shown the importance of congruence between behaviors and beliefs for well-being. For that reason, we explore whether adaptive strategies and gender role orientation should “match” to enhance work-family balance. Adaptive strategies at work, for example, may be more effective for people with mainly feminine traits, because these strategies prioritize the family domain, with its feminine roles. Differences in identification with masculine and feminine traits may not necessarily correspond to observed differences in other aspects of gender identity, however, such as activity preferences and social behavior (see Strough, Leszczynski, Neely, Flinn, & Margrett, 2007). Still, gender role orientation is an important moderator to consider, as effects commonly attributed to gender may in fact be related to gender role orientation (Evans & Steptoe, 2002).

In sum, the aim of this study is to answer the following research questions: (1) How do adaptive strategies (self / partner) relate to work-family balance?, (2) How does gender role orientation (self / partner) relate to work-family balance? and (3) Does gender role orientation moderate the relation between adaptive strategies and work-family balance? Both factors in the work domain and factors in the family domain may affect an individual's experiences in the work-family interface. Our analyses control for the same variables as used previously (e.g., Milkie & Peltola, 1999) including paid work hours, educational level, number of children, and duration of cohabitation. Whereas the first three factors are likely to decrease work-family balance, duration of cohabitation may enhance work-family balance.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample of this study consisted of Dutch dual-earner couples that took part in ‘FamWork - Family Life and Professional Work: Conflict and Synergy’, a European study conducted in 2003 - 2005. Couples were recruited through posters and brochures that were distributed among childcare organizations, child welfare centers, and primary schools, as well as through an advertisement shown on regional television. Enrollment occurred by telephone or via the project's website. Participants were required to be employed for ≥ 15 hours / week, have at least

one child aged 1 to 6 (target child), and no children under 1 or over 12 years. Research assistants visited eligible couples at home to deliver the questionnaires. Participants were specifically asked to complete the questionnaires individually and return them via post. When necessary, they were reminded by telephone or through a written reminder to return the questionnaires. Each couple received a reward of \$ 27.

Out of 308 couples that initially enrolled in the project, 283 (92%) returned the questionnaires (Winter 2003). Seven couples had missing data, resulting in a sample size of 276 couples. In the summer of 2004 an additional survey was sent to 220 couples who had indicated willingness to take part in future research, 149 (68%) of them returned the questionnaires. The present study is based on this subsample. Any differences between this subsample and couples that did not participate in the additional survey are indicated below.

Couples were married (69%) or cohabiting and the number of children living at home varied from 1 to 4 with an average of 2. The target child's mean age was 46.3 months ($SD = 16.9$, range 12 - 72). Most couples lived in a town of 150,000 in the eastern part of the Netherlands; the remainder in two medium sized towns in the south and east of the Netherlands. Men's mean age was 38.3 ($SD = 4.7$, range 29 - 52), and they spent an average 41.80 hours on paid work per week ($SD = 8.74$), including contract hours, overtime, and commuting. Women's average age was 35.9 ($SD = 4.1$, range 26 - 46), and they spent an average 30.25 hours on paid work ($SD = 7.35$) (2.08 hours more than women in the nonparticipating sample [$p < .05$]). Personal monthly net income averaged \$ 2753 ($SD = 1152$) for men and \$ 1604 ($SD = 847$) for women (\$ 268 more than women in the nonparticipating sample [$p < .01$]). The average family monthly net income was \$ 4743 ($SD = 1537$). Most men (74.4%) and women (86.7%) had completed either higher vocational training or university (i.e., ≥ 17 years of education). This was slightly more than those who not participated in the additional survey (men: 69.3%, $p < .01$; women: 76.4%, $p < .001$).

Measures

Work-family balance measured the degree to which parents feel successful in balancing work and family and was assessed by the question: “How successful do you feel in balancing your work and family lives?” The answer format was a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*). This single-item measure has been previously applied as a major outcome variable (Clarke, et al., 2004; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

Gender role orientation was measured with a Dutch adaptation of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Gerris, et al., 1998; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Masculinity (7 items, e.g., “I am not at all self-confident – I am very self-confident”) and femininity (7 items, e.g., “I am very warm in my relations with others – I am very cold in relations with others,” reversed) measure the degree to which people report being characterized by a number of stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics. The answer format was a 5-point Likert scale, 1 indicating a low score and 5 indicating a high score on masculinity or femininity. For masculinity, alphas were .72 for women and .77 for men. For femininity alphas were .75 for women and .69 for men. Factor analysis indicated that there was no content overlap. Androgyny scores were computed according to the formula $\{(masculinity + femininity) - |masculinity - femininity|\}$. This formula is proposed by Heilbrun and Pitman (1979) and used in several articles (e.g., Strough, et al., 2007). As they noted:

This formula capitalizes on two attributes of androgyny: (a) Scores reflecting masculinity and femininity both should be elevated, and (b) scores reflecting masculinity and femininity should tend to approximate each other. If both of these requisites are met, the first term of the formula (the sum of the scores) will be high and the second term (the absolute difference between scores) will be low, resulting in a high androgyny score. (p. 179)

To measure adaptive strategies at work the following question was asked: “In your present job, have you ever done any of the following because of your responsibilities to members of your family? (a) refuse a job promotion, (b) refuse to work overtime or extra hours, (c) cut back on your work.” A similar question was used to measure adaptive strategies at home: “In your present job, have you ever done any of the

following because of your responsibilities to the job? (a) missed a family occasion, (b) been unable to care for a sick child, (c) been unable to do the work you usually do around the house.” These scales were developed for the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). One item (‘take on additional paid work’) was dropped from the original ‘adaptive strategies at work’-scale because it was qualitatively different from the other items. A similar adaptation has been made by Keene and Quadagno (2004). Each item had two answer categories, 1 (yes) and 0 (no). We created two scales: one for the total number of strategies made at home because of work (range 0 - 3) and one for the total number of strategies at work because of family (range 0 - 3). Mennino and Brayfield (2002) have discussed in detail the limitations of these scales. They do, for instance, not tap the magnitude or the timing of the strategy. Moreover, there seems to be some conceptual difference between the strategies made at home and those made at work. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, these scales are useful in light of this study as they provide insight in the choices and decisions people make about allocating time to work and family life. As individuals continue to balance roles related to both work and family, allocating time becomes increasingly important.

To assess the validity of these measures we ran a factor analysis with oblique rotation. We included items tapping work-to-family and family-to-work conflict (a Dutch adaptation of Frone, et al., 1992a), and both measures of adaptive strategies. The factor pattern showed a clear factor structure with low loadings of the adaptive strategies on both conflict concepts for both women (-.00 to .07) and men (-.06 to .24). This indicated that our measures of adaptive strategies are not confounded with work-family interference.

Control variables. Paid work hours were measured with a single item indicating the total amount of hours the participant spent on paid work per week, including contract hours, commuting and overtime. The paid work hours of the partner were taken from the corresponding item in the partner’s questionnaire. Additionally, we controlled for participants’ educational level using a single item that indicated the highest grade completed. Every educational level was translated into the number of years of education varying from 8 years (*primary school*) to 18 (*university*). Finally, we included the duration of cohabitation in months as control variable in

the model. In preliminary analyses we included number of children living at home as a control variable, but because there were no significant correlations with the variables of interest this variable was excluded from further analyses.

Strategy of Analysis

There were no missing data except for work-family balance (men: 2.7%; women: 4.0%). These missing values were imputed using the Expectation-Maximization (EM) algorithm in SPSS. Next, we examined Pearson's correlations and tested gender differences (*t*-test for paired samples) for all the variables of interest.

The dependent variables were men's and women's work-family balance. The independent variables were control variables (hours of employment, educational level, and duration of cohabitation), gender role orientation, and adaptive strategies of men and women. Cross paths were specified from husbands' (wives') independent variables to wives' (husbands') work-family balance.

The model was tested with path analysis in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2004). Because the metric of the dependent variable (a single item ranging from 1 - 6) is an ordinal rather than interval variable, we used the Weighted Least Square with Mean-adjusted (WLSM) estimator. With this estimator thresholds located in normal distributions replace the original ordinal scale values. The resulting estimates are interpreted in terms of probit regression estimates. We tested the model simultaneously for men and women. As explained by Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006, pp. 100-118) these kinds of models are particularly useful in the analysis of dyadic data: "Parallel SEM models are created for each member, and correlations across members are added to model nonindependence" (p. 117). Control variables as well as the disturbance terms (unexplained variances) of gender role orientation and adaptive strategies were allowed to correlate between and within partners. The disturbance terms of work-family balance were allowed to correlate between partners. Correlations between disturbance terms can be interpreted as partial correlations between latent variables controlled for the preceding variables in the model.

The model was tested in three steps in order to examine the relative contribution of control variables (step 1), gender role orientation (step 2), and adaptive strategies (step 3) in the prediction of work-family balance of the self and partner. To analyze whether gender role orientation of the self (partner) moderates the relation between adaptive strategies and work-family balance, we ran an additional model. To prevent multicollinearity, we centered the independent variables around their mean (see e.g., Aiken & West, 1991). We then multiplied these centered variables to compute interaction terms. Finally, these terms were added as new independent variables in the model.

The fit of the regression models is expressed in terms of robust chi-square variates in combination with two other fit measures: (a) The root mean square error of approximation (RSMEA), and (b) The Comparative Fit Index (CFI). RMSEA is utilized for assessing approximate fit, preferably with values less than or equal to .05 (Kaplan, 2000, pp. 113 - 114). CFI is a comparative fit index, values above .95 are preferred (p. 107). Gender differences in path strengths were examined using chi-square difference tests. Because differences between robust chi-square variates do not have a standard chi-square distribution, these values were first rescaled to standard chi-square values according to the procedure described in Satorra and Bentler (2001).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 shows the correlations between all variables, along with the means and standard deviations. Men and women experienced similar levels of work-family balance. On average, they felt quite successful in combining these life domains. Men and women differed on several variables. On average, men spent more hours on paid work than women ($t = 10.76, p < .001$). Women reported more feminine ($t = -4.67, p < .001$) and less masculine characteristics ($t = 4.60, p < .001$) than men. Compared to men, women reported on average more adaptive strategies at work ($t = -2.71, p < .01$) and had completed more years of education ($t = -2.21, p < .05$).

Table 1. Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations Among Variables in the Study ($n = 149$ Couples)

Variable	Men		Women		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>									
1. Paid work hours	41.69	8.74	30.18	7.96	-.22**	.28***	-.03	.30***	-.11	.13	-.18*	.15	-.14
2. Educational level (years)	16.70	1.86	17.05	1.33	.11	.43***	-.01	.09	-.13	.04	.02	.03	-.04
3. Duration of cohabitation (months)	107.30	44.83	107.30	44.83	-.03	.02	1.00***	.06	-.01	.08	.00	.12	.03
4. Masculinity	3.62	.63	3.29	.58	.03	-.08	.01	-.05	-.10	.80***	-.05	.03	.25**
5. Femininity	3.50	.55	3.79	.58	.03	.11	.02	-.04	.05	.21*	.07	-.02	.16
6. Androgyny	6.43	1.05	6.29	1.00	.06	-.02	.05	.60***	.63***	.08	.01	.06	.27**
7. Strategies at work	1.11	.72	1.34	.80	-.03	-.01	-.08	-.05	-.07	-.06	.08	.17*	-.13
8. Strategies at home	1.15	.95	1.28	1.03	.17*	.12	.11	-.07	.03	-.02	.21**	.08	-.29***
9. Work-family balance	4.28	.87	4.42	.95	-.22*	-.04	.06	.21**	.15	.18*	-.16*	-.52***	.13

Note. Values below the diagonal are for men, and values above the diagonal are for women. Bold values on the diagonal depict correlations between men's and women's concepts. Full correlations between men's and women's concepts can be obtained from the author.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

All aspects of gender role orientation were positively associated with work-family balance, although only the correlations between work-family balance and masculinity and androgyny were significant. The correlation between adaptive strategies and work-family balance was negative, indicating that higher numbers of adaptive strategies made at work and at home were associated with decreased work-family balance. The control variables yielded one significant correlation with the outcome variable: Men's paid work hours were negatively related to their work-family balance, indicating that the more hours men spend on paid work, overtime and commuting, the worse they evaluate their success in balancing work and family. Partners' work-family balance was positively, but not significantly correlated. Not shown in Table 1 but of interest for our expectations about crossover between men and women, are correlations between partners' control variables, gender role orientation, and adaptive strategies, and work-family balance of the self. A positive correlation was found between women's paid work hours and men's work-family balance ($r = .17, p < .05$), whereas men's paid work hours correlated negatively with women's work-family balance ($r = -.17, p < .05$).

Path Analyses

The models as specified under Strategy of Analysis (Method section) were tested. Cross paths between partners of control variables, gender role orientation, and adaptive strategies appeared to be not significant, with one exception: husbands' paid work hours were related to women's balance. Nonsignificant cross paths were excluded from the final model.

Table 2 shows the results of the final model. Of the control variables, paid work hours were predictive of work-family balance. Increased paid work hours were similarly ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = .22, ns$) associated with lower work-family balance for men and women. Additionally, husbands' paid work hours predicted women's work-family balance in a similar way as their own paid work hours ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = .20, ns$). For men, wives' paid work hours were not predictive of their perceived sense of success in balancing work and family. The difference between men and women was significant ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 6.77, p < .01$). Control variables explained 6% of the variance in women's balance and 10% in men's.

Table 2. Effects of Gender Role Orientation and Adaptive Strategies on Work-Family Balance of Men and Women ($n = 149$ couples)

Variables	Women		Men	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Control variables				
Paid work hours	-.30 **		-.21 **	
Partner's paid work hours	-.26 **		.10	
Educational level	.09		.04	
Duration of cohabitation	.01		.15	
		.06		.10
Gender ideology				
Masculinity	.48 ***		.34 **	
Femininity	.20		.36 **	
Androgyny	-.08		-.24	
		.15		.11
Adaptive strategies				
Number of strategies at work	-.24 **		-.06	
Number of strategies at home	-.20 *		-.47 ***	
		.15		.24

Note. $\chi^2(12) = 11.06, p = .524, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00$. Total $R^2 = .36$ (women), $.45$ (men).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Femininity was positively related to work-family balance for men. The more men were characterized by feminine qualities, the more positively they evaluated their work-family balance. Although femininity was not a significant predictor for women, the gender difference was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.06, ns$). Masculinity played a significant role for both, but was a particularly powerful predictor for women's work-family balance. The more women and men were characterized by masculine

qualities, the higher their perceived work-family balance. The difference between men and women with regard to masculinity was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = .20$, *ns*), nor was the difference with regard to androgyny ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = .31$, *ns*). Together, gender role orientation explained an additional 15% of the variance in women's balance and 11% in men's.

For men, the strongest relation observed was between the number of adaptive strategies made at home and work-family balance. For women, this relation was also significant, although not as strong. This difference between men and women was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 4.52$, $p < .05$). Additional analyses showed a threshold: only if more than one strategy was made at home, the effect on balance was stronger for men than for women. For both genders results indicated that more adaptive strategies at home predicted worse work-family balance. Adaptive strategies at work were significantly related to perceived work-family balance only for women, but the relation was not significantly different with men ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 1.27$, *ns*). Men's adaptive strategies at home tended to be a significantly stronger predictor of work-family balance than adaptive strategies made at work ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 5.61$, $p < .05$). For women, such a trend was not visible ($\Delta\chi^2 (1) = .56$, *ns*). Adaptive strategies explained an additional 15% of the variance in women's balance and 24% in men's.

The final model showed a good fit with a nonsignificant chi-square, CFI 1.00 and RMSEA .00, see Table 2. The total set of variables explained 36% of the variance in women's work-family balance and 45% in men's. Subsequent analyses testing whether gender role orientation moderates the relation between adaptive strategies and work-family balance yielded no significant results.

Conclusions and Discussion

Much research has been devoted to the conflict that may arise from combining multiple roles, or the synergy it may create (Perry-Jenkins, et al., 2000), but correlates of work-family balance have remained largely unstudied (Voydanoff, 2005). This study was designed to enhance our understanding of parents' perceived success in balancing work and family. To this purpose we examined two sets

of possible predictors: adaptive strategies and gender role orientation, as well as interactions between adaptive strategies and gender role orientation, using a sample of Dutch dual-earner couples with young children. Below we discuss the most essential findings.

The negative associations between adaptive strategies and work-family balance found in this and other studies (e.g., Milkie & Peltola, 1999) do not support the proposition that adaptive strategies in general enhance work-family balance (Voydanoff, 2005). Adaptive strategies require a modification of personal goals. When people consider decisions as undesirable, these may undermine their work-family balance (Voydanoff, 2002). Although parents' underlying motives were not analyzed in this study, we speculate that some of the strategies may have been forced cutbacks. The strategies we studied reflected the prioritization of roles. The concept of adaptive strategies is, however, far more complex (Middleton, 2004) and other types of strategies may relate differently to work-family balance.

Previous work (Milkie & Peltola, 1999) indicated that strategies at home were more disturbing for women's balance than for men's. In our study, using a Dutch sample, we found the opposite. These contrasting findings bring us to discuss the social context of our study more in detail. Traditionally, a male breadwinner model has characterized the Netherlands with clearly divided roles for men and women. Nowadays a considerable number of women participate in the labor force, but the hours they spend on domestic work continue to exceed men's (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). Since the mid-1990s, the Dutch government has stimulated the so-called combination scenario, in which both partners work part-time and share the duties at home (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004). Making adaptations at home by prioritizing the work role, men may feel that they do not meet the standards of a modern father as promoted in the media. Having to admit — to oneself and one's partner — not being able to meet the requirements of their new role, they may feel less successful in balancing work and family. Previous work has shown that fathers who are more involved in child care have a better work-family balance (Hill, et al., 2003).

The underlying mechanism of social pressure and changing roles also seemed reflected in our findings regarding gender role orientation. Not androgyny, as was anticipated, but the endorsement of traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender showed beneficial effects on work-family balance. Men who possess feminine qualities may — because of their well developed interpersonal skills — achieve the standard of new fatherhood more easily (see Hill, et al., 2003). As a result, they may feel more successful in balancing work and family. Masculine qualities, on the other hand, may be valuable to women's work-family balance, because in contemporary society women are challenged to perform well, not only in the family domain, but also in the former male dominated domain of labor. Male qualities may help women to achieve their goals in the work domain. Thus, in claiming their new roles, men may benefit from feminine qualities, as do women from masculine qualities.

There may also be a more structural mechanism involved in determining work-family balance. Today, the most common situation in Dutch two-parent families with young children is men working full-time and women working part-time (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Van Wel & Knijn, 2006), as was the case in this study. Full-time working husbands may have less time available to spend with their families than their part-time working wives. Cutting back on family-related activities may be particularly stressful if time with the family is sparse. Similar, cutting back in the work domain may be most detrimental under conditions of part-time employment, as our findings suggest. Thus, making adaptations in the domain in which the time budget is limited seems to be most detrimental with regard to work-family balance. Because of the characteristics of our sample, we were, unfortunately, not able to test these assumptions with full-time working couples as a control group.

The fact that their wives work part-time and therefore may compensate for men's absence in the family, seemed not to buffer the negative effect of adaptive strategies at home on men's work-family balance. Husbands' paid work hours, however, were negatively associated with women's work-family balance. Research suggests that when men spend more hours on paid work, more of the domestic work is put on their partners' shoulders. This increased domestic workload may have a negative effect on women's balance. In contrast, when women start to work more, the time they spend on domestic tasks does not reduce at the same pace, nor do

men compensate by taking over some of these tasks (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000).

Some issues in this study remain unresolved. Apart from the link between husbands' paid work hours and wives' work-family balance, we found no indications for crossover. Although we investigated adaptive strategies at the individual level, it is likely that such decisions affect the family environment. The picture may be different in a sample of full-time working couples, for whom a successful balance of work and family may be even more challenging. A larger number of strategies may be needed to trigger crossover, or perhaps other strategies are relevant to partners' work-family balance. Our measure tapped only some possible strategies. Moreover, a more refined measure assessing the intensity, impact, and relevance of the strategies may generate different outcomes. Such a measure may also be needed to tap moderating effects of gender role orientation on the association between adaptive strategies and work-family balance that were not detected in this study.

This study, like all studies, has its limitations. One is the cross-sectional design, which does not permit conclusions on the causal ordering of gender role orientation, adaptive strategies and work-family balance. Gender role orientation may change over time in reaction to new roles (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) or to social-cultural changes (Strough, et al., 2007). Longitudinal studies with cross lagged designs are needed to test the causal ordering of the variables, as well as the time dependence of associations found in this study.

We measured work-family balance with a single item, as was done previously (e.g., Clarke, et al., 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Research on this issue is immature (Voydanoff, 2005) and there is not yet consensus on a set of multiple items that represents a reliable measurement of balance (see Clarke, et al.). Although single-item measures may still adequately represent the larger construct of interest (Jansen, Kant, Kristensen, & Nijhuis, 2003) and provide a useful global assessment of work-family balance (Voydanoff), multi-item measures would allow more reliable analyses such as structural models with latent variables.

As indicated, the proposed positive association between androgyny and work-family balance was not supported. Although we used a formula to calculate androgyny that is widely used and accepted (Heilbrun & Pitman, 1979), it is based on the specific masculinity and femininity measures. Consequently, strong correlations of androgyny with both aspects can be observed. For that reason, the predictive power of androgyny may have been attenuated.

In our study we controlled for paid work hours to measure the true contribution of adaptive strategies to work-family balance. Including this variable, an analytical and conceptual problem arises, because paid work hours are potentially confounded with work-family adaptive strategies. The division of paid work hours between partners, for instance, may reflect a couple level strategy to deal with the challenges of multiple roles, but was not incorporated as such in this study. We do, however, include partner's paid work hours in all the analyses to address this issue. Another issue related to paid work hours, is the part-time work status of nearly all mothers in our sample. This may have made them more likely to report adaptive strategies at work, as cutting back on paid work hours is an adaptive strategy. Indeed, women reported more adaptive strategies at work than men, but the actual difference was small. Alternatively, it may be that these women occupied their part-time positions from when they were hired and therefore were less likely to report cutting back on paid work hours in their current jobs. Working part-time could be an a priori decision to minimize work-family conflict. Consequently, the actual number of adaptive strategies at work that women use may be underreported.

Several issues may limit the generalizability of our findings. First, participation in our extensive questionnaire study was time-consuming and required the effort of both partners. We cannot, therefore assume that our self-selected sample of dual-earner couples is representative. Although recruitment material was made available to a wide range of people, distressed couples might have been less likely to subscribe and participate in additional research. On the other hand, it may be exactly these overburdened individuals who want their voices to be heard. Second, the couples in our sample were relatively highly educated. This is not surprising because in the Netherlands, families in which both partners have substantial jobs (> 12 hours / week, as indicated by Statistics Netherlands) are predominantly

highly educated (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). Lower educated couples, however, may have fewer resources available to cope with the juggle of multiple roles than the couples in this sample. For them scaling back may have even more severe consequences, because of a lack of resources. Third, we only included families with young children in our analyses. It has been suggested that the ability to balance work and family life is strongly related to life cycle stage (Higgins, Duxburry, & Lee, 1994). The function of gender role orientation may also depend on birth cohort (Carr, 2002). Whether our findings are representative of lower educated parents, or parents in other life cycle stages or birth cohorts, remains an issue to be explored.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of parents' perceived success in balancing work and family. In postmodern society the family domain has become increasingly important for men, as has the work domain for women. Our findings indicate that in the need to succeed in multiple roles endorsement of traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender is beneficial. The social pressure for both genders to perform well in each role may ultimately be translated in discussions at the "kitchen table". Scaling back, however, proved to be an ineffective strategy to balance work and family, particularly in the domain where the time budget is limited. We speculate that two underlying mechanisms – social pressure and time constraints – jointly operate in determining perceived success in balancing work and family. These mechanisms should be validated in future studies; in other cultural settings, and among a diversity of samples.



Combination Strategies and Work-Family Interference in Cross-National Perspective¹

In many contemporary families both parents are involved in paid work and family responsibilities. This creates challenges for the successful reconciliation of work and family. In this study we examined whether and how the division of paid work and unpaid work between partners is related to work-family interference. Analyses were based on survey data of 147 Finnish, 186 German, and 265 Dutch dual-earner couples with young children and show that there is no recipe for a division of paid work and unpaid work that guarantees a conflict-free reconciliation of work and family. Although some cultural variation was identified, in general, individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies. Therefore, to help working parents it seems important to create opportunities to adjust their time spent on paid work and unpaid work.

Introduction

In many contemporary families both parents are involved in paid work and family responsibilities (Bianchi & Raley, 2005). The combination of multiple roles may create conflict when work (family) demands are incompatible with family (work) demands (Frone, et al., 1992a; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). To juggle competing demands, many parents adjust the time they allocate to work and family (Becker & Moen, 1999). Couples' division of tasks may have important consequences for their ability to balance multiple roles (Hochschild, 1989). This study examines whether parents with different ways of dividing paid work and unpaid work (hereafter referred to as combination strategies) vary in their levels of work-family interference. The analysis is based on data from Finnish, German, and Dutch dual-earner couples with young children.

How couples divide their tasks is an issue that has received considerable scientific interest during the past years. Often the focus has been on either unpaid work (i.e., domestic work, household maintenance, and child care) or paid work (e.g., Coltrane, 2000; Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). This may, in some cases,

¹ Appeared as: Wierda-Boer, H. H., Gerris, J. R. M., Vermust, A. A., Malinen, K. E., & Anderson, K. (2009). Combination strategies and work-family interference among dual-earner couples in Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands. *Community, Work & Family*, 12, 233-249.

lead to false conclusions about the total workload. It is, for example, commonly claimed that mothers work longer hours than men — the so called ‘second shift’ (Hochschild, 1989), but these conclusions are often based solely on unpaid work. When the total workload (i.e., paid work and unpaid work) is considered, mothers’ and fathers’ workloads are often relatively equal (Bianchi & Raley, 2005). When investigating linkages between combination strategies and work-family interference, it is thus important to consider the division of tasks in both domains.

Three combination strategies may characterize dual-earner couples’ division of paid work and family responsibilities (Beaujot & Liu, 2005). In the shared roles model partners divide work equally. Although Beaujot and Liu stress the importance of including both paid work and unpaid work when studying the division of tasks within working couples, their shared roles model is based on unpaid work only. If unpaid work is shared, but one partner does more of the paid work, this partner carries a higher workload. We therefore suggest being stricter in using this term, only applying it to couples equally dividing both paid work and unpaid work. In the complementary model one partner does more of the paid work, and the other partner more of the unpaid work. The division can be either complementary-traditional, when men are main providers, or complementary-reversed when women do more of the paid work. Contrary to the two other models, in the double burden model there is an imbalance between partners. One partner spends an equal or larger amount of hours on paid (unpaid) work and simultaneously performs a larger amount of unpaid (paid) work. Either women or men can carry the double burden. Partners of double burdened individuals are not primarily responsible in either domain.

Theoretical Framework

Is there a particular combination strategy that offers a couple-level solution to difficulties in reconciling work and family? We approach this question from a multiple roles perspective. Theories of multiple roles focus on the two most central life domains of adulthood: the work domain (employee, employer, entrepreneur) and the family domain (parent, spouse), and assume a bidirectional influence between these life domains. Within this perspective there are two major assumptions: The

conflict hypothesis posits that combining multiple roles creates strain and conflict, because of limited time, energy, and involvement (Marks, 1977). The enhancement hypothesis, on the other hand, states that participation in multiple roles is beneficial for the individual, increasing sources of identity, self-esteem, rewards, and resources available for coping with multiple demands (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks, 1977).

All parents in our study are involved in multiple roles. The degree of responsibility partners have in each domain, however, varies by combination strategy (Härenstam & Bejerot, 2001). From the conflict perspective we would expect the lowest levels of conflict among individuals who are primarily responsible in one domain only (individuals with a complementary strategy) or who have no primary responsibility in either of the domains (individuals with a double burdened partner). From the enhancement perspective, we would expect the lowest levels of conflict among those individuals who have (shared) major responsibilities in both domains, that is, individuals with a shared roles strategy and double burdened individuals. Whereas a shared roles strategy can be interpreted as an intentional effort to achieve a more equal division of tasks, a double burden strategy can be more easily understood as a constraint (Beaujot & Ravanera, 2003). Some have indeed argued that the benefits of multiple roles are best guaranteed when responsibilities are equally shared between partners, referred to as the balance hypothesis (Härenstam & Bejerot, 2001). This would imply that individuals in couples that share roles would have the least difficulty combining work and family, because partners participate actively in both domains and share responsibilities.

The relation between combination strategy and work-family interference has, to our knowledge, not yet been empirically studied. Härenstam and Bejerot (2001), however, examined its association with a closely related concept: perceived success in balancing work and family responsibilities. Although they did not find clear support for any of the above-mentioned hypotheses, their findings suggest that when the well-being of both partners is considered, the shared roles model offers the best opportunities for a successful balance between work and family. Others have argued that 'striving for partnership' (i.e., in the division of labor,

decision making; showing mutual respect and support) is one of the key factors to a successful balance between work and family (Haddock, et al., 2001).

Cross-National Approach

The study by Härenstam and Bejerot (2001) was conducted using a sample of working parents from Sweden, a country well known for its generous work-family policies and high gender equality (Näsman, 1999). We do not know whether a shared roles strategy is the best option in countries with other work-family climates. In every society norms exist about work-family issues. These norms are institutionalized and influence the behavior of institutions as well as the everyday life of people (Näsman, 1999; Pfau-Effinger, 1998). Dual-earner couples are thought to struggle with feelings of guilt because of societal messages (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). Research has, for example, shown that if working hours deviate from the cultural norm this may produce feelings of guilt (Anttila, Nätti, & Väisänen, 2005). These findings lead us to explore the possibility that the relation between combination strategies and work-family interference varies across countries along with prevailing ideas about combining work and family.

To investigate this issue, we included data concerning dual-earner couples from Finland, former West Germany², and the Netherlands. These countries differ both in their past and current ideas about combining work and family (Pfau-Effinger, 1998). Whereas Germany and the Netherlands share a history in which men were providers and women took care of the household (i.e., male breadwinner model), Finland's history is characterized by the family economic model in which all family members contributed to the family income and roles were fairly egalitarian. This country is still one of the most equal countries in the world (Forsberg, 2005) and provides acceptance — particularly when the child has entered school (ISSP, 2002) — and opportunities for high maternal employment, although parental leave take-up rates are still very unequal. New, nurturing fatherhood is extending slowly (e.g.,

² Differences between the Eastern and Western states are dramatic. In the East German states attitudes resemble those of the Nordic countries while West German attitudes are among the most conservative in the EU (ISSP, 2002). The term Germany should throughout the text be read as former West-Germany.

Huttunen, 2001) and mothers are still frequently thought of as the primary parent (Perälä-Littunen, 2007).

Although working mothers are nowadays a common phenomenon in Germany as well as in the Netherlands, attitudes towards working mothers are in many ways still very traditional in Germany (Blome, Keck, & Alber, 2008). One out of four Germans surveyed for the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, 2002) believes that it is men's job to work, and women's responsibility to take care of the household (cf. the Netherlands and Finland: 12%). Well over fifty percent of those surveyed think that mothers should stay home when children have not yet entered school. This is considerably higher than in the Netherlands (29%) and Finland (40%). In the Netherlands attitudes towards working mothers have become more positive during recent years (Portegijs, Cloin, Ooms, & Eggink, 2006) and there is a trend towards a greater preference for egalitarian and supplementary models and a declined preference for the traditional model (Beets, et al., 1997). An equal division of unpaid work has been stimulated by the Dutch government using multimedia campaigns (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004).

Taking these cultural differences into account, we expect that German couples, still living in a rather traditional context, experience the least work-family interference when they combine work and family using the complementary-traditional strategy. In the Netherlands, where the government heavily promotes role sharing, a sharing roles strategy may be associated with the lowest levels of conflict. Given Finland's high level of equality, we also speculate that this is the most favorable strategy for Finnish couples. It is expected, however, that the sharing roles strategy is differently specified in these two countries. As Pfau-Effinger (2004a) observed, Finnish society remains heavily oriented towards full-time work, also for mothers. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, part-time employment — a legal right — is in great demand (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). We therefore expect that Finnish couples that share roles are mostly employed full-time, whereas Dutch parents are more likely to be employed part-time. This may have divergent consequences for their levels of work-family interference.

The Present Study

To summarize, the present study aims to answer the following questions: Is there a relation between combination strategy and the experience of conflict between work and family? Are these relations similar across countries? We test three competing hypotheses in the literature concerning the combination of multiple roles (the conflict, enhancement and balance arguments). We speculate that parents' cultural context may determine the effectiveness of combination strategies. We expect to find support for the balance argument (i.e., the lowest levels of work-family interference among couples equally sharing work and family roles) in samples from countries that are characterized by relatively high levels of gender equality (Finland, the Netherlands). In more a traditional context (Germany) where combining multiple roles is less common, we expect to find support for the conflict hypothesis, predicting less conflict when the main focus is on one role. More specifically, we expect the complementary-traditional strategy to be associated with the lowest levels of work-family interference for these couples, because it more closely matches prevailing ideologies about work and family. Because previous research indicated that hours spent on tasks in the work and family domains are likely to increase people's levels of work-family interference (Frone, 2003), we also explore whether associations exist over and above the impact of hours spent on paid work and unpaid work.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample of this study consisted of Finnish ($n = 147$), German ($n = 186$), and Dutch ($n = 265$) dual-earner couples that took part in 'FamWork - Family Life and Professional Work: Conflict and Synergy'³, a European study conducted between 2003 and 2005. Participants had to be employed for at least 15 hours per week; to have at least one child aged 1 to 6 (target child), and no children younger than 1 or older than 12 years. Couples were recruited using diverse strategies such

³ Detailed information may be obtained from the first author.

as distributing posters and brochures among child care organizations. Research assistants visited eligible couples at home to deliver the questionnaires. Finnish couples received the questionnaires at child care centers. Parents completed the questionnaires individually, without the presence of the instructor, and returned the questionnaires by mail. The participants received a reward of € 20. As an alternative, Finnish parents participated in a lottery for a € 250 travel certificate and children's books.

The average parent in our study was in his or her thirties (men: $M = 37.82$; women: $M = 35.61$), had one or two children ($M = 1.83$), and was well educated⁴ (men: $M = 3.53$; women: $M = 3.60$). Typically, men spent 44.93 hours on paid work (i.e., contract hours, overtime, and commuting) and 29.73 hours on unpaid work (i.e., domestic work, maintenance work, and child care). The average woman spent 32.14 hours on paid work and 49.60 hours on unpaid work. GLM multivariate analyses in SPSS, with the background variables as dependent variables and culture as fixed factor, identified cross-national differences (overall: $F(18,1174) = 22.31, p < .001$). As shown in Table 1, Finnish mothers worked far more hours than their counterparts in Germany and the Netherlands, whereas German fathers spent considerably more hours on paid work than either Finnish or Dutch fathers. German mothers spent more hours on unpaid work than Dutch mothers, who in turn spent more hours on these tasks than Finnish mothers. German couples had fewer children living at home than Finnish or Dutch couples.

Measures

Combination strategies. We used the estimates of both partners' self-reports of weekly time spent on unpaid work and paid work. Reports were summed and ratios were calculated. We used a range of 45% to 55% of the couple's total workload to indicate an equal distribution between partners (cf. Beaujot & Liu, 2005). On the basis of these ratios we defined the three combination strategies described in the introduction. The percentages of couples belonging to each strategy are shown in Table 2.

⁴ Educational level: 1 = primary education, 2 = lower secondary or vocational education, 3 = upper secondary or vocational education, 4 = university or higher vocational education

Work-family interference. Work-to-family conflict (WFC) was measured by a 2 item-scale developed by Frone et al. (1992a), measuring the degree to which work life interferes with home life ('My job interferes with my responsibilities at home' and 'My job keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on my family'). The reliability of the scale was good in all samples (α s between .74 and .84). Family-to-work conflict (FWC) was measured using Frone et al.'s (1992a) 2 item scale, measuring the degree to which home life interferes with work life ('My home life interferes with the responsibilities at my job' and 'My home life keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on job or career-related activities'). The reliability of the scale was acceptable in all samples (α s between .67 and .80). The answer format of both scales was a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*don't agree at all*) to 6 (*totally agree*).

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Background Variables

	FIN		D		NL		<i>F</i> (2,595)	Eta ²	Posthoc
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Children	1.83	.76	1.46	.52	1.93	.74	26.12***	.08	D < FIN, NL
Age _m	36.19	5.97	37.90	5.24	38.66	4.85	10.46***	.03	FIN < D, NL
Age _w	34.44	5.15	35.70	4.05	36.21	4.13	7.83***	.03	FIN < D, NL
Education _m	3.32	.82	3.62	.64	3.59	.59	9.08***	.03	FIN < D, NL
Education _w	3.44	.70	3.57	.71	3.72	.70	9.48***	.03	NL > FIN, D
Paid work _m	43.27	6.51	49.31	11.36	42.69	8.88	28.88***	.09	D > FIN, NL
Paid work _w	40.03	7.03	30.06	11.15	29.30	7.39	88.67***	.23	FIN > D, NL
Unpaid work _m	27.15	14.24	28.26	14.04	32.83	18.68	6.65***	.02	NL > FIN, D
Unpaid work _w	41.56	18.92	56.44	19.08	49.07	17.68	25.32***	.08	D > NL > FIN

Note. The subscript _m indicates men and _w women. Paid work and unpaid work in hours.

FIN = Finland (*n* = 147). D = Germany (*n* = 186). NL = the Netherlands (*n* = 265).

Wilks' lambda = .56, *F* (18,1174) = 22.31, *p* < .001.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Strategy of Analysis

Prior to the core analysis, we examined Pearson's correlations and tested gender differences (*t*-test for paired samples) for the work-family variables. A Monte Carlo Chi-square test was used to examine whether combination strategies varied by country. To answer our research questions a two-way MANCOVA (using GLM in SPSS) was conducted with combination strategy and culture as fixed factors, the work-family variables (i.e., WFC and FWC) of both spouses as dependent variables and background variables as control variables.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Combination strategies. Couples were not equally distributed across combination strategies in the three countries ($\chi^2(8) = 120.92, p < .001$; see Table 2). Both in the German (67%) and the Dutch sample (54%) the complementary-traditional model was most common. In the German sample this strategy reflected most strongly a neo-traditional division: additional analyses (not shown in Table 2) showed that in 87% of the cases, the husband was employed full-time, and his wife part-time. In the Finnish (61%) and Dutch (66%) samples this pattern was also common, but in 33% of the Dutch cases both partners were employed part-time, whereas in 36% of Finnish couples both partners worked full-time. This variation can be understood as combination strategies being based on the total time spent on paid work include overtime and commuting, whereas the part-time / full-time distinction reflects contract hours only. A complementary-reversed strategy, in which the husband does more of the unpaid work and the wife more of the paid work, was uncommon in all three countries (2%) and was therefore omitted from further analyses (see Table 2).

In the Finnish sample the majority of couples (49%) employed a strategy that put a double burden on the wife's shoulders (see Table 2). Additional analyses showed that the double burden was mostly (86%) characterized by partners' equal share in paid work and women's larger share in unpaid work. This pattern was also

Table 2. Prevalence of Dual-Earner Couples' Combination Strategies across Countries (in %)

	Unpaid work	Paid work	FIN (n = 147) ^a	D (n = 186) ^a	NL (n = 265) ^a	Total (n = 598) ^a
1a Complementary – traditional	women > men	women < men	19.0	67.2	53.6	49.3
1b Complementary – reversed ^b	women < men	women > men	2.0	1.6	2.3	2.0
2a Women's double burden	women > men	women ≥ men or	49.0	11.8	13.2	21.6
	women ≥ men	women > men				
2b Men's double burden	women < men	women ≤ men or	15.6	11.8	22.6	17.6
	women ≤ men	women < men				
3 Role-sharing	women = men ^c	women = men ^c	14.3	7.5	8.3	9.5

Note. ^a n indicates the number of couples. ^b Because of small sample this category was omitted from further analyses. ^c Partners perform 45-55% of the couple's total hours spent on the tasks.

visible among German (82%) and Dutch (83%) couples, although far fewer women carried a double burden in these countries. Dutch men faced a double burden relatively often (23%). Subsequent analyses revealed that in most of these cases (62%) partners spent an equal amount of time on unpaid work, but men did more paid work. In the German sample, where only one out of eight men had a double burden, the pattern was similar (68%). In the Finnish sample, however, men and women typically spent an equal amount of time on paid work, and men more on unpaid work (65%). Finally, 14% of the couples in the Finnish sample shared roles, whereas only 8% of the German and Dutch couples did so (see Table 2). Typically, as additional analyses showed, Finnish role sharing partners were engaged full-time in paid work (81%), whereas in half of the Dutch and German couples with a sharing roles strategy both partners reported a part-time job.

Table 3. Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations of the Work-Family Variables

		Men		Women		WFC	FWC
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Finland	WFC	3.00	1.40	3.10	1.40	-.04	.19*
	FWC	2.65	1.31	2.61	1.40	.29***	.23**
Germany	WFC	3.60	1.39	2.62	1.31	.06	.30***
	FWC	2.62	1.26	2.92	1.31	.43***	.29***
The Netherlands	WFC	2.88	1.31	2.46	1.34	.13*	.23***
	FWC	2.76	1.25	3.01	1.33	.45***	.18**

Note. WFC = work-to-family conflict. FWC = family-to-work conflict. Men's correlations are displayed above the diagonals, women's below. Bold correlations on the diagonals depict the correlations between men's and women's concepts.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Work-family interference. Scores on WFC and FWC were moderately interrelated for both sexes across countries (.29 to .45 for women; .19 to .30 for men; see Table 3). Levels of WFC were also interrelated between spouses (.18 to .29). FWC was weakly, but significantly correlated for couples in the Dutch sample only (.13). On average, parents experienced moderate levels of interference (see Table 3). In the German sample ($t = 2.88, p < .01$) and the Dutch sample ($t = 6.44, p < .001$), women experienced more FWC than WFC, whereas among women in the Finnish sample the latter was more prevalent ($t = -3.56, p < .001$). This pattern could also be observed among Finnish men ($t = -2.45, p < .05$) and German men ($t = -8.39, p < .001$), but the levels of WFC and FWC were not significantly different for Dutch men. Finnish men and women experienced similar levels of work-family interference. Among the German and Dutch couples WFC was more prevalent among men ($t = -7.15, p < .001$; $t = -3.85, p < .001$), and FWC among women ($t = 2.64, p < .01$; $t = 2.53, p < .05$).

A GLM multivariate analysis with two fixed factors (combination strategy and culture), four dependent variables (WFC and FWC of both sexes), and five covariates (age and educational level of both sexes and number of children living at home) showed an effect for culture (Wilks' lambda = .95, $F(8, 566) = 3.63; p < .001$): The levels of WFC varied by country for men ($F(2, 569) = 5.12, p < .01$) as well as women ($F(2, 569) = 3.15, p < .05$). Dutch fathers experienced less WFC than their Finnish ($p < .05$) and German ($p < .01$) counterparts. Similarly, Dutch mothers experienced less WFC compared to Finnish mothers ($p < .05$). There were no significant cross-national differences concerning FWC.

Combination Strategies and Work-Family Interference

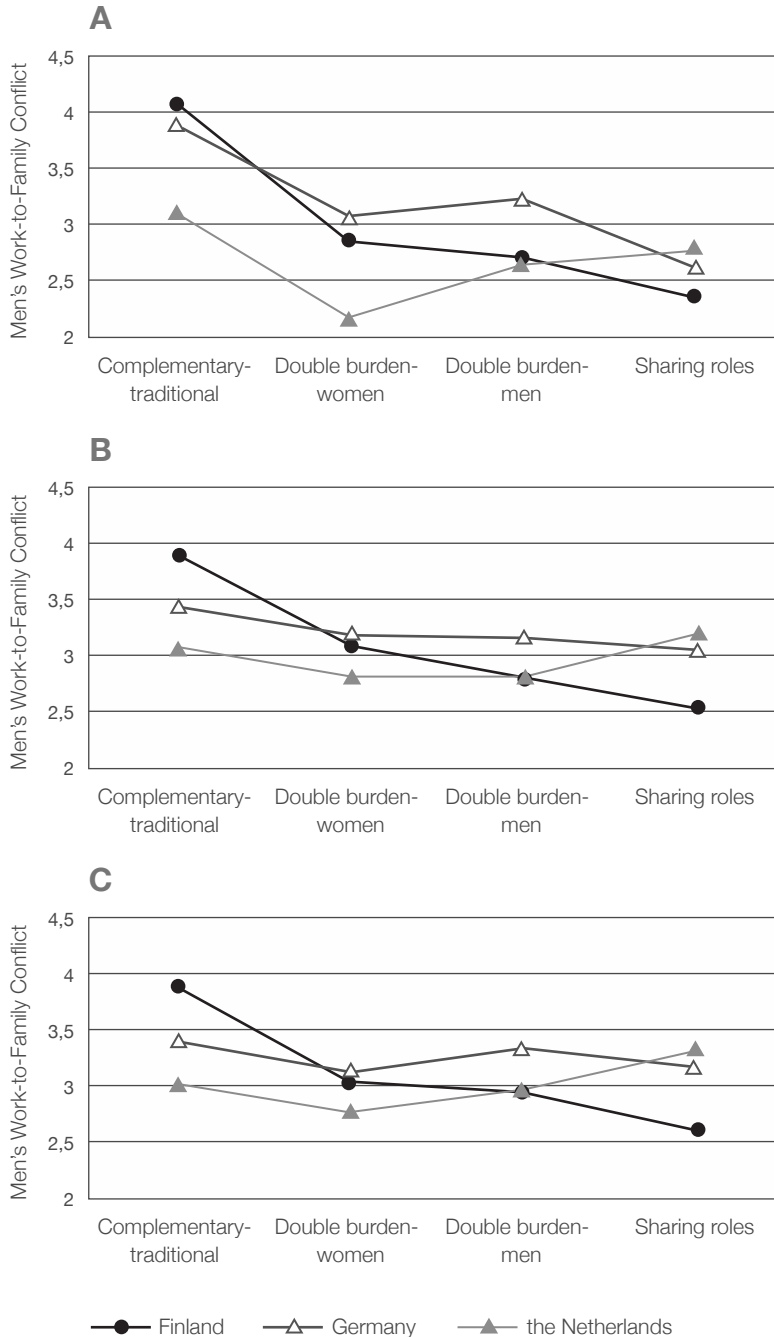
The effects of combination strategy (Wilks' lambda = .82, $F(12, 566) = 9.78; p < .001$) and the interaction of combination strategy and culture (Wilks' lambda = .94, $F(24, 566) = 1.56; p < .05$) on the work-family variables were also significant. The univariate tests indicated that women who have a double burden or who share roles experienced more conflict than women with a complementary-traditional strategy and women whose partner has a double burden ($F(3, 569) = 10.76, p < .001$). Women with a double burden as well as women with a complementary-

traditional strategy experienced more FWC compared with women whose partner has a double burden ($F(3, 569) = 2.96, p < .05$). Men's WFC also varied by combination strategy ($F(3, 569) = 18.67, p < .001$): Men with a complementary-traditional strategy experienced more WFC than men with other strategies. This relation tended to be culture-specific ($F(6, 569) = 1.93, p < .10$). Profile plots indicated that the relation held in the Finnish and German sample, but not among Dutch men (see Figure 1, panel A).

The Role of Hours Spent on Tasks in the Work and Family Domains

To rule out the possibility that variation in work-family interference between the different combination strategies is caused by the hours spent on paid work and unpaid work rather than by the division of tasks, we reran our analyses, first adding hours spent on paid work of both partners as a covariate, and in a subsequent analysis hours spent on unpaid work. Our results showed that women's (Wilks' lambda = .89, $F(4, 564) = 16.92; p < .001$) and men's (Wilks' lambda = .86, $F(4, 564) = 22.12; p < .001$) hours spent on paid work had an effect on the outcome variables. The effect of combination strategy (Wilks' lambda = .95, $F(12, 564) = 2.48; p < .01$) and the interaction term combination strategy * culture (Wilks' lambda = .94, $F(24, 564) = 1.59; p < .05$) remained significant. The effect of culture was no longer significant, indicating that the cultural differences in the experience of WFC found in our first analysis are largely explained by the cultural differences in hours spent on paid work. The univariate tests showed that the effect of combination strategy on women's FWC ($F(3, 567) = 2.64, p < .05$) and men's WFC ($F(3, 567) = 4.05, p < .01$) remained. The effect on women's WFC was no longer significant. The interaction effect combination strategy * culture (see Figure 1, panel B) on men's WFC remained; moreover, the effect was now significant ($F(6, 567) = 2.12, p < .05$). Univariate follow-up analyses conducted separately per country indicated that regarding WFC only for Finnish men, the complementary-traditional strategy is more intrusive than the other strategies ($F(3, 133) = 5.16, p < .01$). Next, hours spent on unpaid work by both partners were added in the analyses. Only the interaction effect combination strategy * culture on men's WFC remained ($F(6, 565) = 2.10, p < .05$), with a similar pattern as described above (see Figure 1, panel C).

Figure 1. Interaction effect combination strategies * culture on men's work-to-family conflict. Panel A. Estimated marginal means evaluated for mean of number of children, age of both spouses, and educational level of both spouses. Panel B. As A, but with paid work hours of both spouses. Panel C. As B, but with unpaid work hours of both spouses.



Discussion

The aim of this study was to clarify whether and how the division of paid work and unpaid work between partners is related to problems in reconciling work and family, and whether associations are culture-specific. To this end we examined relations between combination strategies and work-family interference (i.e., WFC and FWC), using a cross-national sample of dual-earner couples with young children. The theoretical foundation of this study is based on three competing hypotheses in the area of work-family research: the conflict hypothesis which states that multiple roles are potentially harmful (Marks, 1977), the enhancement hypothesis which assumes that participation in multiple roles is beneficial to the individual (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks, 1977), and the balance hypothesis which argues multiple roles are beneficial only under conditions of equally shared roles between partners (Härenstam & Bejerot, 2001). We found no clear support for any of these hypotheses: our results indicated that the level of work-family interference does not vary along with couples' combination strategies. There was, however, some cultural variation.

Our first analyses showed that women who are actively involved in multiple roles (e.g., women sharing roles and those carrying a double burden), experienced more conflict from work to family than women who were primarily responsible in one or none of the domains (e.g., women with a complementary-traditional strategy and those whose partner faced a double burden). Doubly burdened women also experienced more FWC than women in couples where men carried a double burden. These findings provided some support for the conflict hypothesis. Subsequent analyses, however, revealed that these differences were explained by hours spent on tasks, correlating positively with work-family interference. This suggests that active involvement in multiple roles may be harmful, but only under conditions of a higher workload.

For men, it was those actively participating in one domain (i.e., men with a complementary-traditional strategy) that experienced most conflict from work to family. For women, we found a similar relation with regard to FWC. A strong focus on one domain seemed to be related to increased conflict from that particular

domain to the other domain. This contradicts the conflict hypothesis. But as with the other findings, these effects largely disappeared when holding hours spent on tasks constant. Again, these hours seem to be more decisive than the division of tasks between partners.

Researchers have frequently pointed to the impact of cultural factors on the division of tasks (e.g., Davis & Greenstein, 2004; Fuwa, 2004). Our study made a first attempt to examine the role of cultural context in shaping the relation between combination strategies and work-family interference. Men in our Finnish sample with a complementary-traditional strategy experienced more WFC than Finnish men following any other strategy. Since Finland is one of the most equal countries in the world (Forsberg, 2005), this finding seems to be in line with our hypothesis that uncommon strategies are related to higher conflict. Closer inspection, however, revealed that in more than one third of these couples both partners were employed full-time. Thus, although men perform a larger share of paid work and women a larger share of unpaid work, couples' division of labor is less traditional than among the Dutch and particularly the German couples with a complementary-traditional strategy, among whom men have a full-time job and women work part-time. As such, Finnish couples with a complementary-traditional strategy may employ a strategy that does not differ from both historical and contemporary Finnish ideas about work and family, and our hypothesis may, therefore, not fully explain our finding.

In both Germany and the Netherlands the complementary-traditional strategy is a common way to divide paid work and unpaid work, whereas in Finland it is not. In Finland such a strategy may emerge under specific conditions, and may be a consequence of work-family interference, rather than a cause. Finnish couples with a complementary-traditional strategy are often both employed full-time (or the wife has a large part-time job), but the husband still spends more time on paid work than his wife. This indicates that these men spent considerably more time on overtime and commuting than their partners, suggesting that these men have particularly demanding jobs. High psychological job involvement was previously found to increase WFC (Frone, et al., 1992a). Finnish men with demanding jobs may face greater dilemma's concerning the work-family interface, since their

partners often occupy full-time or large part-time positions. In Germany and the Netherlands, wives often spend a great deal of the time at home taking care of the children and domestic chorus, thereby providing support to their husbands.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

To summarize, our findings do not offer clear support for any of the three hypotheses, nor did we find some sort of ‘super strategy’ that is the ultimate solution to difficulties arising from the reconciling of work and family for both partners. Perhaps the positive aspects of multiple roles are cancelled out by the incompatibility of roles that may arise in response to multiple responsibilities. It may, furthermore, be that cognitions about combination strategies are more important than the strategy itself. For example, research focusing on the division of unpaid work between partners has shown that satisfaction with and evaluations of the division are more decisive than the actual division (Mikula, 1998). It may also be that combination strategies at the couple level primarily have consequences for experiences at the couple level, as opposed to the individual experiences of work-family interference that were measured in this study.

To examine whether congruence in measurement level would reveal stronger relations between combination strategies and work-family interference, we conducted a series of additional GLM multivariate analyses, replacing couples’ combination strategies with women’s and men’s individual combination strategies. Individual combination strategies indicate the division of paid and unpaid tasks within persons, as opposed to strategies at the couple level that indicate the division of these tasks between partners. Previous work has shown that people who spend more time in the family domain than at work report the lowest levels of WFC. Those who spend more time on work than on family, on the other hand, seem to experience most WFC. People who equally distribute time across roles, are somewhat in between (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

The findings of our additional analyses resembled those of Greenhaus et al. (2003): More time investment in paid tasks than in unpaid tasks was associated with increased WFC for both genders, irrespective of cultural context. This association,

however, disappeared when we added hours spent on paid work and unpaid work. These findings are theoretically relevant as they indicate that the concept of combination strategies – both on the couple level and the individual level – may have limited utility in understanding parents' difficulties in reconciling work and family. Task specific time investment, in contrast, seems to be a crucial factor for parents' ability to reconcile work and family.

These findings also have practical implications. From an equality point of view it may be right to encourage couples towards an equal division of both paid tasks and unpaid tasks, but our study shows that this does not necessarily help couples to balance work and family responsibilities. In general, individual hours spent on tasks seem to be more decisive than the division of tasks. This suggests that it is important to create a supportive context, by offering parents opportunities to adjust their time spent on paid work (e.g., part-time employment, part-time parental leave) and unpaid work (e.g., good quality child care, affordable domestic services). This can be accomplished at the national level by legislation, at the organizational level by collective agreements, and, not least, by creating a family-friendly atmosphere that encourages parents to use facilities provided at both the national and organizational level. The issue of reconciliation thus requires the attention of policy makers at different levels. Our findings regarding Finnish men also show that it is important to take cultural context into consideration when developing such policies in a wider context (e.g., multicultural settings).

Limitations

Our study has some methodological constraints. First, we used a range of 45-55% to indicate an equal distribution of tasks between partners. Among couples with a large total workload such a range may conceal considerable differences in hours between partners. The range we used is, however, stricter than those commonly used (see Beaujot & Liu, 2005). Second, we interpreted a greater share in tasks as a higher responsibility in the particular domain. Subjective responsibility may be different and perhaps more important for the experience of work-family interference. We have, unfortunately, no data in this area, and conclusions are limited to objective responsibility. Third, drawing on previous work (Beaujot &

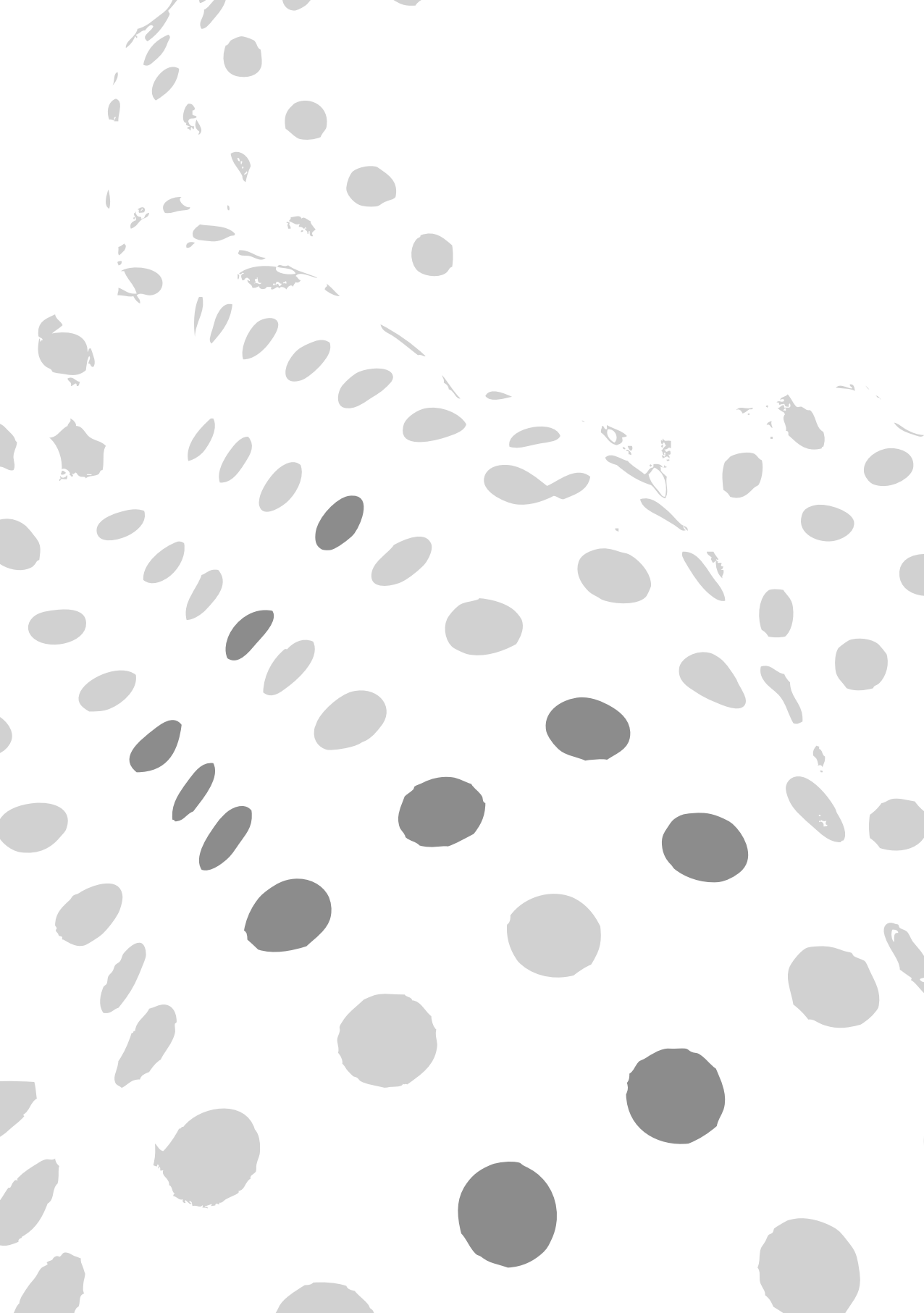
Liu, 2005; Beaujot & Ravanera, 2003) we aggregated hours spent on domestic tasks, household maintenance, and childcare. This aggregated measure does not reveal whether couples with a sharing roles strategy divide all the specific tasks at home equally. Domestic tasks and particularly childcare can usually not be postponed, whereas people have more control over the performance of household maintenance (Blair & Johnson, 1992). An equal overall distribution that is unequal on the task level may have different consequences for an individual's ability to reconcile work and family. Differentiation, however, challenges the specification of different combination strategies, and requires larger samples.

Some issues may limit the generalizability of our findings. First, our samples were self-selected. Participation in the study was time-consuming and required the effort of both partners. Couples with extensive demands in both life domains may not have participated. Second, all couples came from urban areas. Rural areas may confront parents with other challenges related to the reconciliation of work and family. Moreover, we do not know whether our findings apply to other urban areas within the countries under study. Particularly the situation in Germany is different per 'Bundesland' (state) and the parents in our sample were from Bavaria, a rather traditional area in Germany. Finally, we studied only families with young children. It has been suggested that the ability to balance work and family life is strongly related to life cycle stage (Higgins, et al., 1994). In addition, combination strategies may change over time, in response to life events (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). Whether our findings are representative of parents in other life cycle stages, remains to be explored.

Conclusion

Our results suggest that there is no recipe for a division of paid work and unpaid work between partners that guarantees a conflict-free reconciliation of work and family. Moreover, this study challenges the common idea that sharing paid work and unpaid work is the ultimate solution to a successful reconciliation of work and family. Although some cultural variation was identified, in general, individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies. Therefore,

to help working parents, policy makers should focus on creating opportunities for parents to adjust their time spent on paid work and unpaid work.



Work-to-Family Conflict, Parenting Stress, and Parenting Styles¹

Guided by the theoretical framework of Frone et al. (1997), we examined both direct linkages between work-to-family conflict (WFC) and parenting styles and indirect linkages via parenting stress. Furthermore, we investigated crossover relations between partners. Questionnaire-based data of 149 Dutch dual-earner couples with young children were analyzed using path analysis, studying partners simultaneously in a single model. We found no direct paths between WFC and parenting styles, but our findings pointed to an indirect relation between these concepts, mediated by parenting stress. No crossover relations were found. In general, the relations found were similar among men and women. Our findings underline the importance of recognizing dual-earner couples' difficulties in managing multiple roles.

Introduction

Today many parents combine multiple roles. This can be satisfying, but can be particularly challenging as well, especially with young children. Whereas in the past research has concentrated on the consequences of — in particular mothers' — employment status for family functioning, today the focus is more on parents' employment conditions that may affect the family (Perry-Jenkins, et al., 2000). Numerous studies have examined linkages between job conditions and parenting, both from the parents' and child's point of view (e.g., Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001; Greenberger, O'Neil, & Nagel, 1994; Wierda-Boer & Rönkä, 2004). High time demands and overload at work, for example, are often associated with less child centrality and supervision (Kinnunen & Pulkkinen, 2001), more harsh control (Greenberger, et al., 1994), and more aversive parent-child interactions (Repetti, 1999); whereas job features such as complexity and challenge can be associated with more favorable parenting (Greenberger, et al., 1994).

Surprisingly few studies, however, have linked parenting to a very central construct in the work-family interface, namely work-family interference. Work-family interference occurs when roles are incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and, being bidirectional, it can occur from family to work or from work to family (Frone, et al., 1992a). Family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict are hypothesized

¹ submitted.

to have consequences in the work and family domain, respectively (Frone, et al., 1997). Because the focus of this study is on parenting, work-to-family conflict (WFC) and its outcomes are investigated. In this study we examine linkages between mothers' and fathers' experiences of WFC, parenting stress, and parenting styles using a sample of dual-earner couples.

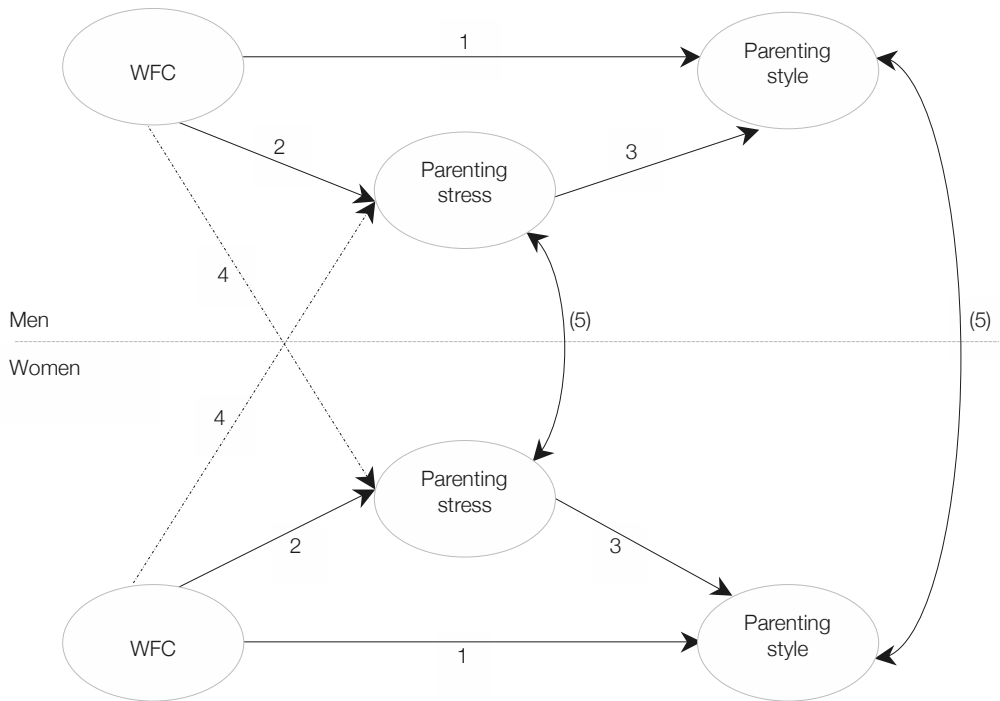
Many studies linking work and parenthood have either focused on mothers or fathers (e.g., Crouter, et al., 2001; Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Kinnunen, Gerris, & Vermulst, 1996; MacEwen & Barling, 1991; Repetti, 1997, 1999; Stewart & Barling, 1996) or, if both genders were included, men and women were not likely to be couples (e.g., Kinnunen & Pulkkinen, 2001). However, including couples allows for studying crossover relations between partners (Westman, 2001). Thus far, few researchers have investigated linkages between one partner's WFC and the other partner's family-related experiences (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2006). Moreover, the studies that did include dual-earner couples often failed to take the nonindependent nature of couple data into account (e.g., Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999; Bumpus, et al., 2006). As seen from our conceptual model in Figure 1, we acknowledge these lacks in the literature by studying partners simultaneously and by examining crossover relations between them.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Parenting Styles

The theoretical framework of our study is based on the integrative model of the work-family interface by Frone et al. (1997). Unlike previous theoretical models, Frone et al.'s model includes behavioral outcomes. According to the model, FWC is linked to work-related behavioral outcomes; similarly WFC is connected to family-related behavior. In the present study, we focus on the latter part of the model and examine linkages between WFC and a specific form of family-related behavior, that is, parenting behavior. Most studies that have investigated linkages between work and parenting have studied specific parenting behaviors, such as monitoring and supervision (Bumpus, et al., 1999, 2006; Kinnunen & Pulkkinen, 2001), warmth and responsiveness (Greenberger, et al., 1994; Repetti, 1997; Sallinen, Kinnunen, & Rönkä, 2004) and aversive behavior (Repetti, 1997, 1999). However, this study focuses on parenting styles since parenting styles are part of a larger context

that moderates the influence of specific parenting practices on a child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Figure 1. Conceptual model. Relations between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles in dual-earner couples. WFC = work-to-family conflict. Broken lines represent relations between partners. Arrows indicated with (5) represent the correlations between men's and women's error terms.



Baumrind (1967) distinguishes three different parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. An authoritative parenting style is characterized by high levels of responsiveness to the child and high levels of firm and adequate control. Authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, is characterized by a high level of — often harsh — control and low levels of responsiveness. Finally, permissive parenting is typified by high levels of responsiveness and low levels of control. Authoritative parenting has been associated with favorable child outcomes (e.g., enhanced social and emotional well-being and more competent behavior) whereas authoritarian and permissive parenting have been associated with more negative outcomes (Baumrind, 1989). Although the effects of parenting style may vary as a

function of the child's cultural background (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), some have argued that even if other parenting styles may create more optimal outcomes in particular contexts, authoritative parenting has not shown to be harmful or have worse outcomes than other parenting styles when it comes to child competence (Baumrind & Thompson, 2002).

Frone et al. (1997) hypothesize a direct relation between WFC and family behavior (see Figure 1, arrow 1). As they state, by definition WFC reflects the extent to which work undermines one's ability to meet one's familial responsibilities (p. 154). With regard to parenting styles, this suggests that high levels of WFC are related to the use of less functional parenting styles. Because of feeling rushed, parents who experience higher levels of WFC may have difficulties attending to the needs of their children; they may have less time for physical warmth, such as hugging and kissing, and may be less emotionally available to their child. Stewart and Barling (1996) found no evidence for direct linkages between inter-role conflict (which is similar to our concept of WFC) and authoritative behavior. However, other studies have shown that parents show withdrawal in interaction with their children (Repetti, 1997, 1999; Schulz, 1997) and less acceptance (Crouter, et al., 2001) in response to negative work experiences, such as overload. In addition, parents' work pressure has been associated with a decreased use of firm, but flexible control (Greenberger, et al., 1994).

Parents experiencing high levels of WFC may have difficulties placing appropriate demands on their children. In addition, they may be more likely to react with harsh control to the child's misbehaviors, which may be an effective short-term solution to avoid additional demands on their time (Patterson & Fisher, 2002). Indeed, Stewart and Barling's study (1996) showed direct positive linkages between inter-role conflict and punitive and rejecting behavior in a study of fathers and their school-aged children. MacEwen and Barling (1991) suggested these linkages occur through processes such as cognitive difficulties and negative mood. Additionally, there is evidence that parents who experience work pressure show more harsh control in interactions with their children (Greenberger, et al., 1994) and engage in more parent-child conflicts (Crouter, et al., 1999; Sallinen, et al., 2004).

In sum, we expect higher levels of WFC to relate to lower levels of responsiveness and firm control and higher levels of harsh control, and thus to lower levels of authoritative parenting and higher levels of authoritarian parenting. With regard to permissive parenting, the picture is less clear. Whereas the degree of permissive parenting is expected to decrease due to lower levels of responsiveness, it may also increase: It is likely that parents use less control if their work interferes with time and attention they want to devote to their families. Although no evidence was found for linkages between parents' work pressure and the use of lax control (Greenberger, et al., 1994), parents, in particular fathers, may be less knowledgeable of their children's whereabouts under conditions of work overload and WFC (Bumpus, et al., 1999, 2006).

The Mediating Role of Parenting Stress

Beside a direct relation, Frone et al. (1997) suggest that WFC affects family behavior via family stress (see Figure 1, arrow 2 and 3). Because of the interference from the work role with the family role, the quality of the family role is thought to be undermined by the frequent inability to participate in this role. This positive linkage between WFC and family stress is well supported (T. D. Allen, et al., 2000). This study focuses on a particular form of family stress: parenting stress. Parenting stress is the aversive psychological reaction to the demands of being a parent (Deater-Deckard, 1998, p. 315) and is determined by parent, child, family, and contextual factors (Crnic & Low, 2002).

According to the theoretical model of Abidin (1992), these contexts produce parenting relevant stressors. Parents' workplace has been identified as one of the most salient contexts outside the family system affecting parents' perceptions of their parental role (Crnic & Low, 2002). As stated by Abidin, parents facing such stressors assess harmfulness based on their internal working model of the 'self-as-parent'. The result of this appraisal process is reflected in the level of parenting stress parents experiences. Parenting stress is in the model identified as a linking mechanism that mediates the impact of these stressors to parenting behavior.

Research on the linkages between parenting stress and parenting behavior indeed indicates that parenting stress may lead to dysfunctional parenting. However, most of these studies rely on clinically referred samples (Crnic & Low, 2002). There is, nevertheless, accumulating evidence that parenting stress is experienced by parents in normal populations as well, and, moreover, is also related to poor parenting practices (Crnic & Low, 2002; Deater-Deckard, 1998). Anthony et al. (2005), for example, showed that general parenting stress, independent of the economic background of the parents, was associated with the use of more strict discipline, less nurturance, and lower developmental expectations. Similarly, Crnic, Gaze, and Hoffman (2005) found that cumulative parenting stress related to less positive parent-child interaction, less dyadic pleasure, and more dyadic conflict. Additionally, using a sample of dual-earner families with young children, Deater-Deckard and Scarr (1996) found that parenting stress correlated significantly with authoritarian discipline.

In sum, we anticipate that experiences of WFC are related to higher levels of parenting stress and that parenting stress, in turn, is associated with higher levels of authoritarian and permissive parenting, and with lower levels of authoritative parenting. Research has brought forth inconsistent findings in regard to gender differences in the experience of parenting stress and its subsequent effects (Crnic & Low, 2002). A study by Deater-Deckard and Scarr (1996), however, suggests that among dual-earner couples with young children — our population of interest — parenting stress may be similar among mothers and fathers. We therefore do not anticipate any gender differences in parenting stress and its relation with parenting styles.

Work and Parenthood in a Couple Context

Analyzing the outcomes specific to each member of a couple simultaneously in a single model includes several benefits (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Gareis, et al., 2003). First, it allows control for the nonindependent nature of couple data and also for testing whether a given relation differs between genders. A third advantage is that crossover relations between partners can be detected. That is, experiences related to different roles of one partner may relate meaningfully to the experiences

of the other partner (Westman, 2002). Westman distinguishes three mechanisms through which crossover may occur: indirectly by mediating processes such as social support, directly by empathic reactions or common stressors.

In our study, we expect that spouse's experiences of WFC are indirectly related to the other spouse's parenting style by crossover relations. First, we believe one spouse's WFC increases the levels of parenting stress in the other spouse (see Figure 1, arrow 4). When people experience WFC they may be both emotionally and physically less available in the home, and, within households with children, be less available to participate in, or assist, with child care tasks. This may create tension with spouses, who may feel more restricted by their parental role due to the extra responsibilities placed upon their shoulders. Similarly, they may experience child rearing tasks as more burdensome because of a lack of support. This crossover relation may be particularly strong for women because women, due to their greater involvement in family affairs and higher levels of empathy, tend to be more sensitive to the stress of their significant others (Westman, 2002). Second, we expect the levels of parenting stress and parenting styles to be interrelated between partners (see Figure 1, arrow 5), both because of empathic reactions and common stressors. According to the crossover literature (e.g., Westman, 2002), partners are empathic to the other partners' emotions and are therefore more likely to reflect each others emotions. Moreover, by sharing the same household, they experience the same home conditions, that is the same child with the same care demands and the same challenges related to child rearing.

The Present Study

In sum, the aim of this study is to examine the relation between WFC and parenting styles in a sample of dual-earner couples with young children. Guided by the theoretical framework of Frone et al. (1997), we examine both direct linkages between WFC and parenting styles and indirect linkages via parenting stress, as depicted in Figure 1. Inspired by the crossover literature (Westman, 2001), we extend the model of Frone et al. by studying partners simultaneously in a single model. We investigate the degree to which experiences of WFC of one partner

crossover to the parenting stress of the other partner, and the degree to which experiences of parenting stress and parenting styles are interrelated between partners.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample of this study consisted of Dutch dual-earner couples that took part in 'FamWork - Family Life and Professional Work: Conflict and Synergy,' a European study conducted in 2003 - 2005. Couples were recruited through posters and brochures that were distributed among childcare organizations, child welfare centers, and primary schools, as well as through an advertisement shown on regional television for a period of two weeks. Subscription for the project was possible by telephone or through the entry form on the project's website. Participants were required to be employed for at least 15 hours per week, to have at least one child aged 1 to 6, and no children younger than 1 or older than 12 years. Research assistants visited eligible couples at home to deliver the questionnaires. The couples completed the questionnaires alone and were specifically requested to do this separately. When necessary, they were reminded by telephone or through a written reminder to return the questionnaires. The participants received a reward of € 20.

Out of 308 couples that initially subscribed for the project, 283 (92%) returned the questionnaires (Winter 2003). Seven couples had missing data, resulting in a sample size of 276 couples. In the summer of 2004 an additional survey was sent to 220 couples who had indicated willingness to participate in future research, 149 (68%) of them returned the questionnaires. The present study is based on this subsample. Couples were either married (69%) or cohabiting and the number of children living at home varied from 1 to 4 with an average of 2. Most of them lived in a major town in the eastern part of the Netherlands; the remaining came from two medium sized towns in the south and east of the Netherlands. Compared to those couples who did not participate in the additional survey, the first group was somewhat over represented (91% versus 82%, $p < .05$). Men's mean age was 38.3

($SD = 4.7$, range 29 - 52), and they spent an average 41.80 hours on professional work per week ($SD = 8.74$), which included the total amount of hours spent on contract, overtime, and commuting. Women's average age was 35.9 ($SD = 4.1$, range 26 - 46). In accordance with the general working pattern of Dutch mothers with young children (see Van Wel & Knijn, 2006), virtually all women in our sample occupied part-time jobs. They spent an average 30.25 hours on professional work per week ($SD = 7.35$), which was 2.08 hours more than those women not participating in the additional survey ($p < .05$). Men (74.4% versus 69.3%, $p < .01$) and women (86.7 versus 76.4%, $p < .001$) had a slightly greater completion rate of higher education than those who had not participated in the additional survey. With regard to the variables under study, men who participated in the additional survey experienced somewhat more parenting stress ($M = 3.55$ versus $M = 3.27$, $p < .01$), than those who did not.

Measures

Control variables. Because previous work identified strong linkages between work hours and WFC (Kinnunen, et al., 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005) and because it has also been associated with the parent-child relationship (Crouter, et al., 2001), we controlled this variable. Our measure included the total amount of hours spent on professional work in a week (including commuting, and overtime).

Work-to-family conflict was measured by a 2 item-scale of Frone et al. (1992a) which measured the degree to which work life interferes with home life (e.g., "My job interferes with my responsibilities at home") on a 6-point Likert scale varying from 1 (*not at all applicable*) to 6 (*completely applicable*). The measure was used previously and was validated in a longitudinal study on functioning of Dutch families (Gerris, et al., 1998). Alphas were .83 and .76 for women and men respectively.

Parenting stress was assessed using a combination of two subscales previously used and validated in a longitudinal study on functioning of Dutch families (Gerris, et al., 1998). Both scales had 6-point Likert responses scales varying from 1 (*not at all applicable*) to 6 (*completely applicable*). Child rearing as a burden was measured by a 3 item-scale, a Dutch adaptation of Abidin (1983) (De Brock, et

al., 1992). It measured the degree to which parents report experiencing child-rearing as burdensome and problematic (e.g., “Rearing my child(ren) brings about many more problems than I’d expected”) Alphas were .72 and .63 for women and men respectively. Parental role restriction was measured using a 5 item-scale and measured the degree to which parents report feeling restricted by their parental role and child rearing duties in arranging their personal lives and fulfilling their personal goals (e.g., “Since I have child(ren) I have too little opportunity to do different and new things”) (Abidin, 1983; De Brock, et al., 1992). Alphas were .73 and .70 for women and men respectively. The subscales could be combined into one factor. Factor analyses showed substantial factor loadings (men: .66 and .66, women: .72 and .72) and explained variances (men: 44.2%, women: 52.4%). The variable parenting stress is the mean value of both scales.

Parenting styles. Parenting styles were measured by an age-appropriate selection of items from the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001). Participants provided self-reports of parenting behavior exhibited when interacting with the target child (age 1 – 6) using a 5-point Likert response scale varying from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Authoritative parenting was assessed with 15 items and measured the degree to which parents show warm and involved parenting, reasoning and easygoingness in the interaction with their child (e.g., “I am responsive to our child’s feelings or needs”). Alphas were .76 and .84 for women and men respectively. Authoritarian parenting was assessed with 20 items and measured the degree to which parents show verbal hostility, corporal punishment, non-reasoning, punitive strategies and directiveness in the interaction with their child (e.g., “I use threats as punishment with little or no justification”). The reliability was .69 for women and .78 for men. Permissive parenting was assessed with 15 items and measured the degree to which parents ignore misbehavior, show self-confidence and a lack of follow-through in the interaction with their child (e.g., “I allow our child to interrupt others”). Alphas were .70 and .63 for women and men respectively.

Strategy of Analysis

Preliminary to the final analyses, we examined Pearson's correlations and tested gender differences (*t*-test for paired samples) for all the variables of interest. Second, we tested the model, as depicted in Figure 1, extended with the control variable. To take into account the dependent nature of couple data, we followed the suggestions by Kenny and colleagues (Kenny, et al., 2006). The model was tested using path analysis with the software package Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2004). The regression weights of the paths were estimated using the ML-estimator.

The fit of the regression models is expressed in terms of chi-square variates in combination with two other fit measures: (a) The root mean square error of approximation (RSMEA, Byrne, 1998), and (b) The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of Bentler (Marsh, et al., 1996). RMSEA is utilized for assessing approximate fit (preferably with values less than or equal .05, but values between .05 and .08 are indicative of fair fit (Kaplan, 2000, pp. 113 - 114). CFI is a comparative fit index, values above .95 are preferred (Kaplan, 2000, p. 107), but should not be lower than .90 (Kline, 1998, p. 131).

The mediating role of parenting stress was examined by testing the significance of the indirect effects. The indirect effect is the product of the two unstandardized regression weights of the incoming and outgoing paths divided by the standard error of this product. This standard error is in Mplus calculated according to the multivariate delta method as described in MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets (2002).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 shows the correlations between all variables, along with means and standard deviations. Men and women differed on several variables. On average, men spent more hours on professional work (including commuting and overtime) than women

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Variables in the Study for Men and Women

Variables	Men		Women		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
	M	SD	M	SD						
1. Working hours / week	41.80	8.74	30.25	7.94	-.22 **	.50 ***	.04	-.12	.12	.00
2. Work-to-family conflict	2.84	1.32	2.45	1.37	.44 ***	.03	.18 *	-.17 *	.22 **	.02
3. Parenting stress	3.05	.75	3.17	.95	-.01	.24 **	.30 ***	-.19 *	.20 *	.27 ***
4. Authoritative parenting	3.78	.47	3.97	.39	.05	-.16	-.17 *	.06	-.13	-.24 **
5. Authoritarian parenting	2.15	.34	2.13	.31	-.07	.01	.24 **	-.05	.32 ***	.15
6. Permissive parenting	2.17	.31	1.98	.35	.01	.20 *	.30 ***	-.12	.22 **	.18 *

Note. Values above the diagonal are for men, and values below the diagonal are for women. Bold values on the diagonal depict correlations between men's and women's concepts. Full correlations between men's and women's concepts can be obtained from the author.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

($t = 10.68, p < .001$). Furthermore, men experienced slightly more WFC than women ($t = 2.53, p < .05$). Finally, women regarded their parenting style more authoritative ($t = -4.01, p < .001$) and less permissive ($t = 5.38, p < .001$) than men. The other variables were not significantly different between men and women.

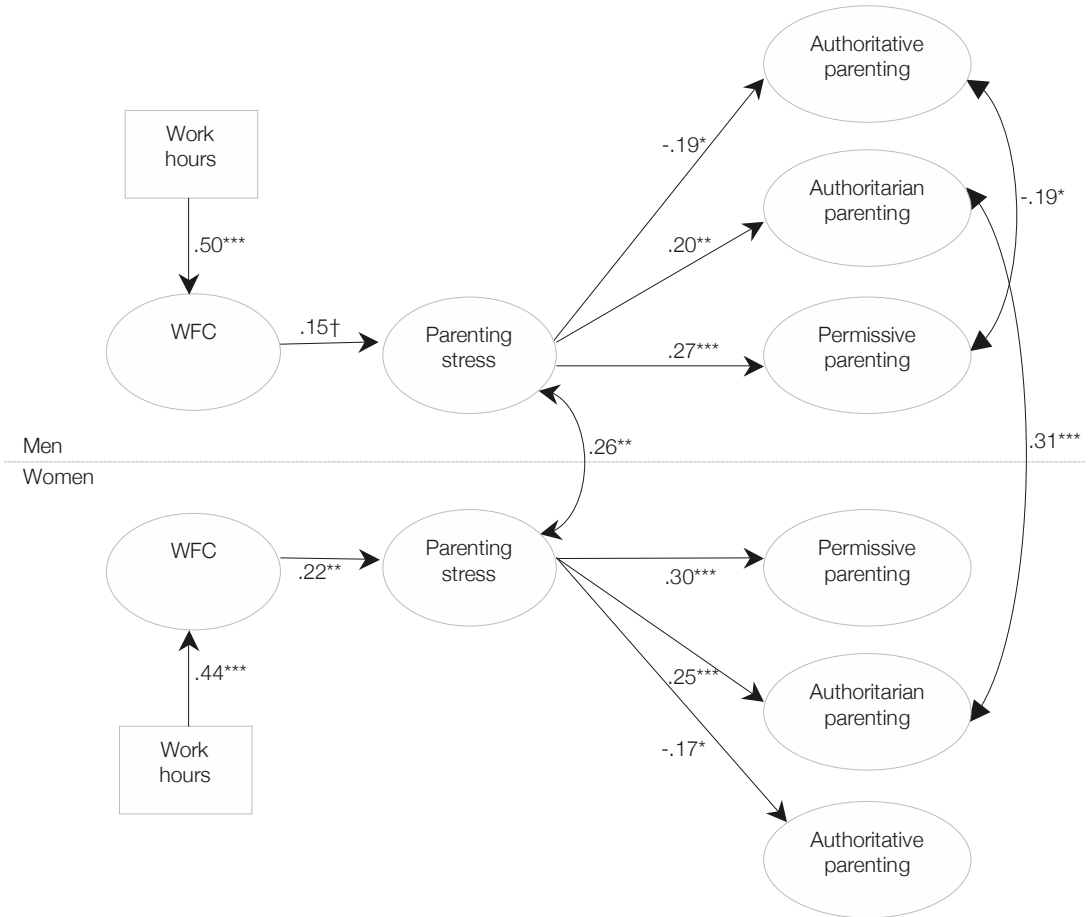
The control variable correlated only, but strongly, with WFC: Increased work hours were associated with more conflict from work to family in both genders. The negative correlation between WFC and authoritative parenting and the positive correlation between WFC and authoritarian parenting were unique to men, whereas WFC correlated positively with permissive parenting only in women. WFC correlated positively with parenting stress of men and women. Parenting stress, in turn, was related to lower levels of authoritative parenting and higher levels of authoritarian and particularly permissive parenting in both men and women.

The correlations between partners on the same variables are shown in bold on the diagonal. Work hours, parenting stress, and two of the parenting styles significantly correlated between partners. Not shown in Table 1, but of interest for our expectations about crossover relations between men and women, are correlations of WFC of one partner with parenting stress of the other partner. Correlations between these variables were not significant.

Path Analysis

Figure 2 shows the final model with path estimates and indices of model fit. Only paths that were significant for at least one partner were included in the model, nonsignificant paths were set to zero. The fit of the model was good: $\chi^2 (52) = 68.92, p = .06$ with RMSEA = .05 and CFI = .90. The total set of variables explained 4 to 7% of the variance in men's parenting style and 3 to 9% in women's parenting style. The error terms of parenting stress and those of authoritarian parenting significantly correlated between men and women.

Figure 2. Final model with path estimates and indices of model fit. WFC = work-to-family conflict. $\chi^2(52) = 68.92, p = .06$ with RMSEA = .05 and CFI = .90. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.



As can be seen from Figure 2, the control variable was positively related to WFC: The more hours parents spent on professional work, the more they experienced work interfered with their family life. No gender differences appeared ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 0.00, ns$). The model showed no direct relations between WFC and parenting style. However, WFC was related to increased levels of parenting stress for both women and men. The path for men was marginally significant ($t = 1.89$), but the strength of the relation was not significantly different between genders ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 1.02, ns$). Parenting stress, in turn, was related to parenting style. For men and women it similarly related to decreased levels of authoritative parenting ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 0.74, ns$) and increased levels of authoritarian parenting ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = .07, ns$), and

in particular permissive parenting ($\Delta \chi^2 (1) = 0.00, ns$). The indirect paths between WFC and parenting style via parenting stress were significant for women ($\beta = .05$ for authoritarian parenting and $\beta = .07$ for permissive parenting, both with $p < .05$) with the exception of authoritative parenting. For men, no significant indirect paths were found.

Discussion

Although interference between work and family is a central issue in the work-family literature (T. D. Allen, et al., 2000; Frone, 2003), it has only been sparsely studied in connection with parenting. We examined these relations using a sample of people for whom combining multiple roles may be particularly challenging: dual-earner couples with young children. Our theoretical starting point was the integrative model of Frone et al. (1997) that suggests both direct and indirect linkages between WFC and family behavior. Our study only partially supported the applicability of this model when studying family behavior in terms of parenting styles. We found no direct paths between WFC and parenting styles, but our findings do point in the direction of an indirect relation between WFC and parenting style, mediated by parenting stress. In general, the relations found were similar among men and women.

Research indicates that the way in which job experiences are interpreted and experienced by the worker is a key mediator linking work conditions to mental health (Perry-Jenkins & Turner, 2004, p. 158). It seems that such evaluation processes also play a role in the relationship between WFC and parenting styles. The absence of a direct linkage between WFC and parenting styles suggests that it is not the experience of WFC that relates to parenting style, but rather the feelings of parenting stress, provoked by WFC, that are associated with the ways parents rear their children. Parents may assess the severity and consequences of work interfering with family life in light of their commitment to the parental role and their own expectations of fulfilling that role (Abidin, 1992). It should be mentioned that for men this relation was marginally significant, though in the expected direction and similar to that of women. It is to be expected that when using larger samples this relation will be significant, too. Thus, even when parents experience relatively

low levels of WFC, these perceptions seem to be reflected in their experiences of stress in the parental role. Feelings of parenting stress, in turn, may then be reflected in their parenting behavior.

The relations we found between parenting stress and parenting style were in the expected direction. Moreover, the magnitude of the relations was in accordance with previous work using nonclinical samples (Crnic, et al., 2005). Our findings support the notion that parenting stress is not just an issue in clinically referred samples, but a part of everyday life (Crnic & Low, 2002). In accordance with previous work among dual-earner couples (Deater-Deckard & Scarr, 1996), we found no gender differences.

We extended the model of Frone et al. (1997) by examining crossover between partners. Although experiences of parenting stress were interrelated between partners, as was authoritarian parenting, we found no support for crossover of one partner's WFC to the other partner's parenting stress. The absence of such a linkage was surprising given the findings of previous work (e.g., Gareis, et al., 2003). Perhaps the physical and emotional absence of a partner is compensated by seeking support from a social network or institutions. Westman (2001) suggested social support may function as a moderator in the crossover process. Future research should investigate this as well as other particular conditions under which crossover may take place.

The results of this study must be interpreted in the light of several limitations. To begin with, our results are subject to the methodological limitations that accompany a cross-sectional design, which implies that no conclusions on causal ordering can be made. Research on this topic should benefit from more longitudinal studies to unravel these relations. Such designs could also produce valuable information about the impact of cumulative WFC on parenting. Although we did not find support for a direct linkage between WFC and parenting styles, it may be that enduring conflict between work and family life eventually spills over directly to parents' parenting styles. Another limitation of this study relates to our sample. Participation in our extensive questionnaire study was time-consuming and required the effort of both partners. We cannot, therefore, assume that our self-selected sample of dual-earner

couples is representative. Although recruitment material was made available to a wide range of people, distressed couples may have been less likely to subscribe. Furthermore, our sample was fairly highly educated. This is not surprising because in the Netherlands families in which both partners have substantial jobs (>12 hours/week, as indicated by Statistics Netherlands) are predominantly highly educated (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000). However, in other countries the situation may be different and it remains an issue for future research whether our findings replicate in samples including lower educated dual-earner couples.

Finally, we want to raise two issues concerning the operationalization of concepts in this study. First, the family distress/dissatisfaction component of Frone et al.'s model (1997) was defined as stress experienced in the role as a parent. There may, however, operate other mediators between WFC and parenting. A substantive body of research suggests that WFC affects the marital relationship (see e.g., Leiter & Durup, 1996; Schulz, Cowan, Pape Cowan, & Brennan, 2004). Marital functioning has, in turn, been linked to the quality of parenting behavior: People experiencing positive interaction in their relationships tend to show positive interaction also with their children, and having a supportive partner may promote positive parenting (Belsky, 1984). Second, our measure of WFC was a global one. Therefore, people's evaluation of WFC was not restricted to the parental role. In addition to parenthood, they could have experienced conflict with regard to their partner relationship, or the ability to perform domestic tasks. It has been suggested that more specific scales allow for more precise and stronger estimates of effect than would do a global measure of WFC (see Small & Riley, 1990). Both issues should be explored in future research.

The way parents parent their children is determined by factors within the parent, child, and family, as well as by contextual factors (Crnic & Low, 2002). Previous work has shown that parental work is one of those contexts playing a role in parenting (e.g., Perry-Jenkins, et al., 2000). Working parents are confronted with multiple roles, which can be a source of joy, but also a challenge. Our study adds to prior work by showing that when the work role interferes with the family role, parents may experience increased levels of parenting stress, which, in turn, may be reflected in their parenting styles.



General Discussion

In this dissertation we studied an important issue in the lives of contemporary young families: the combination of work and family. We used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) to identify relevant current issues in the field of work-family research that needed to be further explored. In this chapter the key findings of the studies described in chapter 2 to 5 are integrated and discussed around three overarching themes: (1) the role of work hours and stress, (2) changing gender roles, and (3) the juggling of multiple roles as a couple's issue. Next, we discuss the strengths and limitations of this dissertation. We conclude with several recommendations for practice.

Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

Work Hours and Stress

In line with previous research (Frone, 2003), we found that individual time spent on paid tasks was an important predictor of work-to-family conflict (chapter 2, 4, 5). We also found that it was negatively related to work-family balance (chapter 3) for both men and women. These findings support the scarcity hypothesis, which states that individuals have limited resources that when used in one life domain, cannot – or restrictedly – be used in other life domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This may cause conflicting role expectations, which, according to role stress theory, may create psychological conflict and role overload (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Marks, 1977). Time is finite, and time spent at work cannot be shared with the family. This may create role strain, particularly in families with young children, manifesting itself in conflict and imbalance.

These theoretical insights suggest that parents should scale back their time investment and energy in the work domain to reduce the conflict they experience between work and family and to increase their perceived work-family balance. Additional analyses of our sample showed, however, that trade-offs at work (that in our study largely implied a reduction of physical time and energy in work issues) were not related to work-to-family conflict for either sex. Moreover, the findings of the study in chapter 3 showed that when women make trade-offs at work, this may even hinder a successful reconciliation. Trading-off at home appeared to be even

more intrusive for the work-family interface: it was negatively related to both men's and women's work-family balance.

The negative relation between trade-offs and balance seemed particularly evident when the time budget in a domain was limited (i.e., cutting back in the work domain in case of part-time work, and in the family domain in case of full-time work). Possible negative consequences of a limited time budget were also found in chapter 2, where findings suggested that if family issues are contemplated during work time or demand physical time away from the job, those who have fewer hours to fulfill work duties (i.e., occupy small part-time positions) may more readily experience difficulties meeting job expectations¹.

An explanation for these findings may be found in role accumulation theory and expansionist theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). Recall that according to these theories, multiple roles are potentially enhancing for individuals, because the benefits they generate (e.g., additional income, social support, opportunities to experience success, and expanded frame of reference). Scaling back in either the work domain or family domain or limited participation in these domains would imply less access to such benefits.

According to expansionist theory, the benefits of multiple roles depend on the number of roles and the amount of time spent on these roles, and, beyond certain upper limits — too many roles, too many demands — overload and stress may occur (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). We indeed found that stress plays a significant role within the work-family interface. Stress was an important predictor of work-family interference. Its relation with conflict was domain-specific: parenting stress was related to increased family-to-work conflict, whereas job stress was associated with higher levels of work-to-family conflict. Work-to-family conflict, in turn, was weakly related to mothers' parenting practices (see chapter 5). These findings are in line with one of the key principles of the conceptual model developed by Frone and

¹ Note that we did not find a relation between men's work-to-family conflict and parenting stress. Perhaps the evaluation of one's work-family balance is externally validated (in light of what is socially expected), whereas parenting stress is much more an internal family issue. Job stress, in contrast, is again a more public issue.

colleagues (1997), stating that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are two separate constructs having their own antecedents and consequences.

For another key principle of Frone's model (1997) — the interconnectedness of the two dimensions of conflict via domain-specific stress — we found no support. Perhaps such a vicious circle as hypothesized by Frone and colleagues is prevented by protective factors within the individual. Previous research has shown that personality may moderate the impact of work-to-family conflict on job and general well-being (Kinnunen, et al., 2003).

There is also increasing evidence showing that personality may buffer negative work-family experiences (e.g., Bruck & Allen, 2003; Rantanen, et al., 2005; Wayne, et al., 2004). Stoeva and colleagues (2002) found that the effects of negative affectivity on work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were mediated by job stress and family stress. Our findings extend this evidence, showing that emotional stability was related to lower levels of interference via reduced levels of stress in the work domain (work-to-family conflict) and family domain (family-to-work conflict, see chapter 2). Although our study had a cross-sectional character and we cannot claim causality, other research suggests that personality precedes work-family experiences (Rantanen, 2008).

In sum, we found that time investment is a complicated factor in the work-family interface. Too much time investment may lead to negative work-family experiences as a result of finite resources, but a certain time budget seems necessary for benefiting from of multiple roles. There are upper limits to the benefits of multiple roles: when the demands in one role are too great, stress may occur, which in turn makes people more vulnerable to work-family interference. Future research should investigate the conditions that trigger these 'upper limits'. Is it the congruence between time investment and individuals' beliefs (cf., Helms-Erikson, 2001)? Or is it perhaps the degree to which parents are able to flexibly allocate time spent on work and family (cf., Karasek, 1979)? We found no support for a vicious circle in which job stress, work-to-family conflict, parenting stress and family-to-work conflict reinforce each other. We argue that models with such feedback loops underestimate individuals' resilience to stress and conflict. We found that

emotionally stable people are better able to combine multiple roles, as they are less prone to experience stress in the work domain and family domain and, therefore, less likely to experience work-family interference. Our findings suggest that integrative models like that of Frone and colleagues (1997) should not be limited to domain-specific variables (e.g., role stress and role commitment; see chapter 2), but be extended with personality traits as general variables to fully understand linkages between work and family. The study discussed in chapter 3 even suggests the inclusion of broader personal characteristics (i.e., gender role orientation). We will elaborate on that in the next section.

Changing Gender Roles

In the Netherlands individuals generally agree with the statement that it is fair to divide unpaid tasks more or less equally between partners (Portegijs, Hermans, & Lalta, 2006). Still, chapter 4 showed that equal role sharing was relatively uncommon in the Dutch sample. Couples mostly had a complementary-traditional strategy, in which both partners participate in work and family roles, but in which the focus lies on the domains traditionally linked with gender. That is, men did most of the paid work, whereas their female partners did most of the unpaid work.

These persistent gendered patterns seemed to play a role in determining the success of resource factors that may help parents to reconcile work and family: In chapter 2 we found that for men, emotional stability particularly buffered stress in the work domain, whereas for women it was a stronger buffer for stress in the family domain. Thus, emotional stability operated differently for men and women. We concluded that Belsky and colleagues' (1995) speculation that personality particularly affects functioning in the domain most highly valued or the one to which one is most strongly committed, seems to broaden to emotional reactions (e.g., stress) in the domains traditionally linked with gender.

In line with these findings, chapter 5 showed that only women experienced conflict from work to family that was reflected in less functional parenting (i.e., the use of more authoritarian and more permissive parenting styles), via increased levels of parenting stress. Once parenting stress was experienced, there were no

gender differences in its relation to parenting styles. These findings suggest that the sources of parenting stress are gender specific. It may also be that women appraise work-to-family conflict differently from men. Abidin (1992) stated that parents may assess the severity and consequences of work interfering with family life in light of their commitment to the parental role and their own expectations of fulfilling that role. Chapter 4 indicated that in almost two-thirds of the Dutch couples in our study, mothers bore primary responsibility in family tasks in terms of hours. Although Thoits (1992) found that men and women rank the role of parent similarly and more prominently than the role of employee, it may be that mothers set themselves higher standards and expectations concerning the parental role than men. We speculate that this may moderate the relation between work-to-family conflict and parenting stress in two ways. First, being less able to participate in the parental role (either physically or emotionally) means that the quality of the parental role may be particularly undermined under the condition of high standards and expectations. Second, mothers' high standards and expectations concerning the parental role may result in reluctance to hand over responsibilities in parenting matters to their partners and inhibit fathers' involvement in parenting tasks (i.e., gatekeeping behavior; see S. M. Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Perhaps men do not experience parenting stress in reaction to work-to-family conflict, as their wives will compensate for men's reduced physical and emotional involvement in family tasks. Future studies should examine whether our speculations hold.

Although the above findings seem to reflect persistent gendered patterns in work and family, we also found evidence for changing gender roles. Chapter 4 revealed that almost a quarter of the Dutch men in our sample experienced a double burden. That is, they did more of the paid work and at least half of the unpaid work (i.e., domestic tasks, maintenance work and child care), reflecting active participation in the family domain. Further evidence for the increasingly important role of the family for men was found in chapter 3, showing that trade-offs in the family particularly harmed men's work-family balance. Although there may be structural explanations for this finding related to limited time budgets (as discussed in the previous section), having to admit — to oneself and one's partner — that one is not able to meet the requirements of their new role as promoted in the media, these men may feel less successful in balancing work and family. If the family role was not important

to men, they may not have been affected by the trade-offs they made in the family domain.

In the same study we found that men who identified more with feminine traits felt more successful in balancing work and family. For women, endorsement of masculine traits seemed beneficial in light of work-family balance. We were among the first to explore the relation between gender role orientation and work-family experiences. There is, however, much research linking gender role orientation with psychological health. The literature distinguishes three theoretical models of how gender role orientation is related to psychological health (Marsh & Byrne, 1991; Marusic & Bratko, 1998). Below we evaluate our findings in light of each of these models.

The traditional gender typed model assumes that masculinity and femininity are opposite ends of a single continuum, and that for an optimal health, gender role orientation should be congruent with one's gender. That is, men should endorse masculine traits, whereas women should endorse feminine traits. As we found positive associations between masculinity and femininity and work-family balance for both genders, our findings do not support this model. The androgyny model, in contrast, assumes that masculinity and femininity are two separate dimensions. Three submodels can be distinguished: (a) the additive model, stating that the sum of separate effects of masculinity and femininity predicts psychological health, (b) the interactive model, which assumes androgyny is a separate entity beyond the sum of the effects of masculinity and femininity; and (c) the emergent properties model, which assumes both main and interaction effects for masculinity and femininity. We found only main effects of masculinity and femininity and, therefore, our findings support the additive model. The third model, the masculine model, suggests that, for both genders, the observed positive relation between androgyny and psychological health can primarily be attributed to the masculinity component, while the contribution of the femininity component is negligible. Although most empirical findings with regard to psychological health point to this argument, we found no support in our study, as femininity played a significant role in men's balance when simultaneously tested with masculinity as a predictor of work-family balance (chapter 3).

Based on our evaluation, the additive model seems most appropriate to describe the linkages between gender role orientation and work-family balance. Marsh has suggested a specification of the additive model, the so-called differentiated additive model (see Marsh & Byrne, 1991). This model assumes that the relative contribution of masculinity and femininity depends on the specific criterion variables. That is, it expects masculinity and femininity to be more positively related to those criterion variables to which they are more logically and theoretically related. Although this model has been formulated in relation to self-concept, we believe that its rationale can be fruitful in understanding the findings of our study. Extending the principles 'logically and theoretically related' with 'meaningfully related', we ask ourselves the following questions: 'What does work-family balance mean for men, what does it mean for women?' and 'What does this signification imply for the role of gender role orientation?'

Individuals' perceptions of what constitutes a successful balance may be heavily shaped by how society views successful balance, or what roles are regarded as desirable for men and women. In contemporary discussions about work and family, the focus for men is on increased participation in family tasks, whereas women are expected to engage at least in some form of paid work. If individuals are asked to evaluate their work-family balance, men may increasingly evaluate their success in terms of family tasks and women in terms of paid work. This may explain why in our study men benefited from feminine traits and women from masculine traits.

In sum, we found that traditional patterns persist in work-family issues. On the other hand, we found that gender roles are changing. Men are becoming increasingly involved in the family domain, and trading-off at home because of work had serious negative effects on men's work-family balance. Future studies should investigate the conditions under which trade-offs are made (e.g., voluntary vs. forced) and what this implies for its relation with work-family balance. Another gender-related issue we explored was the role of gender role orientation. We found that men and women may benefit from traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender. More research is needed before we can fully understand its significance and temporal connection with work-family experiences. According to Barnett and Hyde (2001), personality characteristics required by certain roles are related to historical context

and to cultural definitions, and therefore, are subject to change with changed experiences, expectations, and context (p. 784-785). It is, therefore, important to continue studying this topic. Longitudinal surveys combined with qualitative, in-depth studies may contribute to our understanding of this. A particularly interesting question to examine would be what constitutes a successful balance according to men and women in different cultural settings and life stages.

Juggling Multiple Roles as a Couple's Issue

The issue of reconciliation does not occur in a vacuum (Galinsky, 1999; Wierda-Boer & Rönkä, 2004). As Westman and Etzion (2005, p. 1939) noticed, work-family experiences '...are inherently dependent upon interactions with key people in one's work life (e.g., supervisors and co-workers) and family life (spouses and dependents).' Still, much of the current research has focused on either mothers or fathers, or, if studies include both male and female participants, these individuals usually do not represent couples. One of the strengths in this dissertation, therefore, is the use of couple data. Our research design allowed for studying crossover from husband to wife and from wife to husband. In other words, we examined whether experiences related to different roles of one partner related meaningfully to the experiences of the other partner (Westman, 2002). Crossover may occur through three mechanisms: empathic reactions, common stressors, and indirectly through mediating and moderating variables (Westman, 2001).

In this dissertation, partners' experiences of family-to-work conflict were interrelated, not only in the Dutch sample but also in the Finnish and German samples (chapter 2, 4). Furthermore, experiences of parenting stress seemed to covary between partners (chapter 2, 5). Covariation of similar concepts between partners may be an indication for empathy-based crossover (Dikkers, Geurts, Kinnunen, Kompier, & Taris, 2007). Empathy based crossover is the direct transmission of stress and strain between two closely related partners who identify and care for each other, as a result of an empathic reaction, or tuning in to the emotions of the partner (Dikkers, et al., 2007; Westman, 2001). It is, however, possible that the correlations found reflect a spurious relation. Both of the above-mentioned variables originate in the family domain. In a shared environment, common stressors may increase the stress

and strain in both partners (Westman, 2002). This idea is strengthened by the fact that we found no covariation between partners for work-to-family conflict (chapter 2, 5) or work-family balance (chapter 3). Moreover, in our studies we found only actor effects. We found no support for crossover of stress to the other partner's work-family experiences and way of parenting, nor did we find partner effects of personality and adaptive strategies.

Given the findings in this dissertation and inconsistencies in previous studies, how important is the crossover concept for the issue of reconciliation? Parents in our study did not seem very vulnerable to their partners' experiences. Crossover may be something that operates for the most part on the day-to-day level. Negative experiences at work such as daily experiences of stress may be carried home (Larson & Almeida, 1999). Emotions are expressed, shared and transmitted between family members, and the qualities of these expressions are reflected in family members' daily well-being. Moreover, they set the scene for family relations (Larson & Richards, 1994) and may influence daily family interaction (see e.g., Galinsky, 1999; Schulz, et al., 2004). If daily experiences of stress are not structural – not all days at work are the same – we might be unable to detect such relations in more global reports².

It may also be that we have to focus our research efforts on a different type of crossover. Applying the scarcity hypothesis to the dyadic level, Dikkers and colleagues (2007) argued that time demands at work take time away from the family. Without external help, this absence has to be compensated by the partner, increasing partner's family demands. We found support for this argument of time-based crossover: Wives' work hours were positively related to their husbands' family-to-work conflict (chapter 2). Apparently, their wives' more intense participation in the labor force confronted men with more challenges at home, creating conflict with demands in the work domain. Similarly, we found that women with husbands spending more time at work felt less successful in balancing work and family (chapter 3).

² In the FamWork project, diary data were collected among a subset of the participating families. The final report contains a discussion on global questionnaire reports versus dairy data (FamWork Research Consortium, 2005).

We wondered whether an equal division of paid and unpaid work between partners would be the recipe for a successful reconciliation of work and family. Chapter 4 showed that couples that equally divide the paid and unpaid work did not differ from couples with other combination strategies in their levels of work-family interference. Individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies. We also investigated whether an equal division of paid and unpaid tasks within persons was related to lower levels of conflict, but we found no support for this. Note that these findings challenge the theory of role balance (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). This theory posits that individuals who are fully engaged in their roles ('having a balanced role system') will report less role strain, more role ease, greater well-being, and more positive role specific experience than individuals with less balanced role systems. We concluded that equally dividing roles, either within-individual or between partners, is no guarantee for successful reconciliation.

In sum, we found very little support for crossover of stress and conflict. These findings, however, do not mean that partners are vulnerable to each other's work-family experiences. Westman's crossover model (2002) proposes a moderating role for personal characteristics in the crossover process. In chapter 2 we showed that within-individual emotional stability buffered stress experiences. Others have shown that personality may moderate the relation between work-family interference and one's own well-being (Rantanen, 2008). Future studies should investigate whether emotional stability also functions as a buffering or protective factor in the crossover process. Our findings suggest that the time investment of one partner may form a serious challenge for the other partner. However, this study challenges the common idea that sharing paid work and unpaid work is the ultimate solution to a successful reconciliation of work and family. Although some cultural variation was identified, in general, individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies.

Strengths and Limitations

This dissertation contributed to previous research in the field of work and family by examining (1) individuals' implicit strategies and explicit strategies in combining multiple roles, (2) couples' combination strategies and crossover of work-family experiences between partners, and (3) work-family experiences and its relation to parenting. In addressing these important, but thus far scarcely studied themes, we used data of the FamWork-project, a European study on the reconciliation of work and family among dual-earner couples with young children. This has two major advantages.

First, research on work and family has been dominated by studies from the United States (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999) and, accordingly, most theoretical models explaining linkages between work and family are based on an American context. The ecological perspective argues that the larger social and cultural context influences individual functioning and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The United States is characterized by sharply divided views on employed mothers and virtually no national policies to support working parents (Morgan, 2006). As we mentioned in chapter 1, the absence of such policies may affect parents' ability to manage multiple roles. Using non-US data we were able to extend the insights on work and family issues to other cultural settings. More specifically, in chapter 4 we examined whether couples' combination strategies showed similar relations with work-family interference in the Dutch, Finnish and German samples. The other chapters focused on the experiences of Dutch couples³. The Dutch context is different from the US context in many respects, most notably in the degree to which women are employed in well-paid, good quality part-time jobs, but also considering the government's concern with and involvement in family issues. For a genuine comparison with the United States, however, it would have been necessary

³ Personality, job stress, and parenting stress were addressed in the project's common questionnaire, but in the Dutch questionnaire extended versions of the scales were included, yielding much better reliability coefficients. We therefore preferred to focus on the Dutch data in chapter 2. The items on work-family balance, trade-offs, gender role orientation and parenting styles were not included in the project's common questionnaire as they were part of an additional questionnaire addressed among Dutch participants. Consequently, chapter 3 and chapter 5 include only Dutch data.

to include both countries in a single study. We recommend this as a topic for future research.

Second, research on work and family generally focuses on either mothers or fathers, or, if the study includes both male and female participants, they often do not include couples as a unit of analysis. From the ecological perspective partner's job experiences are important, as their work environment is an exosystem that may assert influence on the other partner's individual functioning and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus, by studying couples we were better able to tap into the dynamics of the work-family interface. Using couple data presents a methodological challenge that we carefully addressed in this dissertation. Partners within a couple are not two independent individuals. Moreover, they share something in common that is referred to as nonindependence (for a discussion on sources of nonindependence, see Kenny, et al., 2006). If couple data are analyzed it is therefore important to acknowledge the interdependent character of dyadic data. We did so by applying the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) in structural equation modeling in chapters 2, 3, and 5. Parallel SEM models created for each partner are appropriate to address the issue of nonindependence as correlations across partners are added to model this nonindependence (Kenny, et al., 2006). We encourage researchers to use this technique in their future studies when faced with couple data.

Despite these strengths, the findings of this dissertation have to be viewed in light of some limitations. The limitations on the level of the separate studies as well as some general limitations related to the sample (e.g., cross-sectional character of the data, self-selected and highly educated sample, limited choice for scales) have been extensively discussed in each of the chapters. There are two limitations at the general level of this dissertation, however, that we want to discuss here.

First, according to expansion theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) the number of roles and role quality determine the degree to which individuals may benefit from multiple roles. Multiple roles involve more roles than just the roles of employee and parent that we focused on in this dissertation. Although we studied couples' combination strategies and crossover between husbands and wives, we did not

examine experiences related to the spousal role, like marital quality. It has been argued that intimate partnership is the key to a successful work-family balance (Zimmerman, et al., 2003). There is also empirical evidence that experiences in the spousal role may interact with experiences in the role of employee in explaining parental role functioning. Bumpus, Crouter and McHale (1999), for example, found that the negative effects of fathers' work stress on paternal knowledge about their youngsters' whereabouts were intensified by poor marital quality. Similarly, Schultz's study (1997) showed that high workload and negative emotions at work were less likely to harm men's parent-child interaction if men were happily married.

Although experiences in the role of employee, parent, and spouse have frequently been studied in relation to work-family experiences, there is little research linking other roles to the work family interface, for example 'student', 'volunteer' or 'child of elderly parents'. The latter merits particular attention as the 'sandwich generation' is expanding (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008). Parents in the sandwich generation have to provide care both to their dependent children and their aging parents. These family demands may have consequences for the balance between work and family. Cullen, Hammer, Neal and Sinclair (2009) found that dual-earner couples in the sandwich generation either focused on child care or on parent care and concluded that such roles cannot be fulfilled simultaneously without trading-off. Interestingly, couples with high child care demands did not differ from couples with high parent care demands in terms of work-to-family conflict. To fully understand the impact of parent care in relation to the issue of reconciliation further studies including 'sandwich roles' are needed.

A second limitation at the general level is that we were not able to test our hypotheses in an integrative model, because of the limited size of our sample. Validating our findings in a comprehensive model would be a better test of the ecological perspective and may yield more insight in the interrelations of each of the variables studied in this dissertation. Questions that remain are, for example: Could it be that we found no support for a feedback loop between the two directions of conflict and domain-specific stress (see Frone, et al., 1997) because at some point in time people evaluate themselves as relatively successful in balancing work and family, as managing multiple roles and the accompanying rush has become

a common part of everyday life for dual-earner families (Van der Lippe, et al., 2006)? If adaptive strategies were made under conditions of severe stress in either the work domain or family domain, would its negative relation with work-family balance be inflated? Given that women with more masculine traits seem to feel more successful in balancing work and family, how would these women respond to parenting stress in terms of work-to-family conflict? These are only a few questions that may be answered using a model that includes both positive and negative work-family experiences, general as well as domain-specific variables, and individuals' adaptive strategies.

Practical Recommendations

The establishment of the Ministry for Youth and Families in 2007 has put family issues more firmly on the Dutch political agenda. Indeed, family policy is mentioned as one of the focal points of interest of the Balkenende IV government (Rouvoet, 2009). The current government aims to make the Dutch society more family-friendly. The Dutch government acknowledges that because of the increased participation of women in the labor force, it can no longer be taken for granted that one of the parents (read: the mother) stays home with the children. The combination of work and family is, therefore, one of the family issues receiving explicit attention in the recent family policy green paper (Ministry of Youth and Families, 2008). Freedom of choice concerning the combination of work and family is regarded as important (Rouvoet, 2009). This requires flexibility from both employers and parents, and a government that creates facilitating conditions.

We believe the findings of this dissertation can help to give direction to policy actions concerning the issue of reconciliation. On the basis of our research findings we formulate five recommendations for policy makers at the national and organizational level⁴: (1) empower working parents, (2) open dialogue on task sharing, (3) stimulate parents in trying new arrangements, (4) don't narrow the

⁴ The final report of the European FamWork study includes an extensive section with policy recommendations (FamWork Research Consortium, 2005). In this chapter, however, we choose to focus on policy recommendations that follow directly from the key findings of the studies discussed in this dissertation.

focus to working mothers, but include fathers, and (5) remember social-cultural context when designing policies. Each recommendation is discussed below.

Empower working parents. We found that a large share of parents in our study managed the combination of multiple roles relatively well: they experienced moderate levels of conflict between the two domains and rated themselves as rather successful in balancing work and family. Although one has to remember that the sample was self-selected and predominantly highly educated, this finding corresponds to the currently prevailing idea in the field of work-family research that multiple roles are potentially conflicting, but may also include enriching experiences. Moreover, we found that emotional stability buffered conflict experiences by reducing stress levels (chapter 2) and that endorsement of traits traditionally linked to the opposite gender (masculine traits for women, feminine traits for men) was related to a greater self-perception of balance (chapter 3). Our findings regarding the role of gender role orientation are tentative, as we were among the first to study its relation with work-family balance. Our findings concerning the protective role of emotional stability, however, built on the findings of previous studies showing that emotional stability is a resource in parents' efforts to reconcile work and family (e.g., Kinnunen, et al., 2003; Rantanen, 2008). Personality characteristics are relatively stable during adulthood (McCrae & Costa, 1994). If individuals are not likely to change in terms of their personality, what do these findings mean for practice? To answer this question it is useful to look at the specific features that characterize emotionally stable people. Emotionally stable people may not only experience less stress in both domains but may also see the challenge of combining work and family as less negative compared to more neurotic individuals. Training programs or workshops that aim to reduce work-family interference should, therefore, (1) make parents familiar with stress-reducing techniques, and (2) create awareness of their own strengths among parents by showing them the positive side of combining multiple roles. A recent study showed the promising effects of a training that pictured work-family enhancement to parents: When working parents were presented positive views of work and family, they reported fewer problems with work-family interface, whereas when they were presented negative views, their work-family balance was more problematic (Van Steenbergen, Ellemers, Haslam, & Urlings, 2008).

Open dialogue on task sharing. We found that an equal distribution of tasks between partners is no guarantee for a smooth reconciliation of work and family (chapter 4). Still, an equal division per se may be a positive thing to pursue as a couple: Additional analyses of our sample showed that a sense of equality is beneficial for marital satisfaction. Intimate partnership, in turn, has been identified as one of the keys to successful reconciliation (Zimmerman, et al., 2003). A recent study showed that decision making about the distribution of tasks is often largely implicit (Wiesmann, Boeije, Van Doorne-Huiskes, & Den Dulk, 2008). Interestingly, couples that openly debated work-family issues were happier with their situation than other couples. The studies in this dissertation showed that individual time spent on tasks plays a prominent role in the issue of reconciliation. Discussions about work-family issues leave room to talk about individual needs. Couples should develop a family culture and philosophy (FamWork Research Consortium, 2005). A family culture and philosophy can be defined as ‘...the unique way that a family forms itself in terms of communication and interaction rules, planning and maintaining daily routines, installing family rituals and roles, habits, beliefs and other areas’ (p. 107-108). Topics may include setting priorities, defining how these priorities are implemented, but also clarifying expectations about the parent-child relationship. Discussions at the kitchen table aimed to create a family culture and philosophy of work and family should therefore be encouraged. The direction of the current government towards flexibility (Rouvoet, 2009) may assist families in fulfilling their unique philosophies.

Stimulate parents to try new arrangements. Although the labor force participation of Dutch mothers is now socially accepted (Portegijs, Cloin, et al., 2006), parents are still hesitant to bring babies to day care. For toddlers and preschoolers two or three days of day care is more often seen as acceptable, but parents’ attitudes are closely related to the quality of the child care and the faith they have in these centers (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008; Ministry of Youth and Families, 2008). Well-designed policies may help parents to get used to the combination of multiple roles and keep both parents involved in caring and paid work by gradually increasing external support, fitting the needs of both the child and the parent. Crompton has referred to this as a ‘dual-earner dual-carer model’ (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). When, for example, parental leave is at least partly paid and allows for flexibility,

it becomes accessible to a much larger group than it is now. Facilities and a supportive atmosphere at the work place are also necessary to stimulate the use of such leaves. Research has shown that in the Netherlands there are relatively many facilities that may help working parents to manage the combination of multiple roles, but workplace culture often hinders the use of these facilities (Den Dulk & Spenkelink, 2009).

Don't narrow the focus to working mothers, but include fathers. As the issue of reconciliation is often merely approached from an economic point of view, that is, from a wish to increase the participation of mothers on the labor market (to solve capacity problems of the aging society or to increase the financial independence of women) men are easily forgotten. For example, at a recent conference on working families organized by the Ministry of Youth and Families (Rouvoet, 2009), the focus was actually on working mothers. Although this point of view is important, policy makers have to acknowledge that combining work and family is not just something that affects working mothers. In chapter 3 we showed that trading-off in the family domain had serious negative effects for men's experience of work-family balance. Furthermore, in our cross-national study (chapter 4), 3 out of 10 Dutch and Finnish fathers did at least half of the unpaid work, which points to active participation of these fathers in the family domain. Although in the more traditional context fathers were somewhat less involved in family affairs (20% of the German fathers did at least half of the unpaid work), the studies discussed in this dissertation indicate that combining multiple roles is a men's issue too. Therefore, political awareness should go beyond the economic point of view, and both partners should be involved in seeking solutions when facing problems concerning reconciliation. As men seem to be less actively and consciously involved in decision making processes concerning the division of paid and unpaid work than women (Wiesmann, et al., 2008), policies may have to be targeted more explicitly towards working fathers, acknowledging the increasingly important role of the family for men.

Consider social-cultural context when designing policies. Not only individual variability, but also contextual variability is important to address when designing policies aimed at supporting working families. The literature often mentions the double burden women carry, or, the second shift they have to face as they have

to perform the larger share of domestic work and child care after returning home from work (Hochschild, 1989). Chapter 4 showed that there were large differences between Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands in the degree to which women carried a double burden. Only 13% of the Dutch women did more of the unpaid work and at least as much paid work as their husbands. In contrast, in our Finnish sample - with mostly full-time working mothers - as many as 49% of the women carried a genuine double burden. Thus, particularly in societies as the Netherlands where part-time work is more common, it seems vital to broaden the focus of task sharing to both paid and unpaid work. Differences in part-time working rates may confront parents with other challenges. From chapter 4 can be seen that Dutch parents experienced higher levels of family-to-work conflict than parents in Finland or Germany. Countries may learn from each other, but because circumstances in which multiple roles are managed may be rather different, identical policies are not necessarily successful in every country. It is important to hear the voices of young families and leave them choice in their decisions of how to manage their work and family demands.

Concluding Remarks

We approached the issue of reconciliation from different angles (individual, couple, society), using data of dual-earner couples with young children collected in a European study. Most families in our study did relatively well. Although they were facing demands from the work and family domains they felt quite successful in balancing work and family and experienced only moderate levels of conflict between work and family. Emotionally stable parents had an asset in facing multiple demands and men and women benefited from feminine and masculine traits, respectively, in juggling work and family. Hours spent on paid work, scaling back in life domains with a limited time budget, and the experience of stress, however, formed a serious challenge in parents' attempts to reconcile work and family. On the basis of our findings we discussed a number of practical recommendations that may improve routes to reconciliation.



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Summary

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to find out what can be done to ease the combination of multiple roles in families with young children. It has been suggested that the ability to balance work and family is one of the primary social challenges for contemporary society. Families in which both parents are employed are becoming increasingly common, making the issue of reconciliation a highly relevant research theme. Linkages between work and family have predominantly been studied from a conflict perspective, assuming that multiple roles are potentially conflicting and, consequently, a threat for individual functioning and well-being. It is, however, nowadays commonly agreed upon that individuals may also benefit from multiple roles, because each role provides a variety of resources.

Work-family experiences are not only shaped by factors in the work domain and family domain, but also by the larger social-cultural context (e.g., through policies and beliefs). Also environments in which individuals do not themselves participate may affect their work-family experiences, such as partner's work. We used this ecological perspective as a guiding principle to delineate relevant current issues in the field of work and family. The present dissertation is a compilation of four studies that contribute to the literature on multiple roles by examining (1) individuals' implicit strategies and explicit strategies in combining multiple roles, (2) couples' combination strategies and crossover of work-family experiences between partners, and (3) work-family experiences and its relation to parenting. All themes were approached with attention to the role of social-cultural context. All chapters are based on questionnaire data from the FamWork project, a European study on the reconciliation of work and family life among dual-earner couples with young children. The results of each study are briefly summarized below.

In chapter 2 we examined how personality traits (the 'Big Five' dimensions emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and experiences of stress in the work and family domains are associated with work-family interference (the degree to which demands and

responsibilities in one domain make it difficult to participate in the other domain). To this purpose, we analyzed data of 276 Dutch dual-earner couples using structural equation modeling, an advanced multivariate statistical approach.

Of all Big Five dimensions only emotional stability showed of importance, though its relation with work-family interference was indirect. The more emotionally stable, the less job stress and parenting stress were experienced by both men and women. The relation was gender specific. For women the buffering effect of emotional stability towards parenting stress was stronger than it was for men. Moreover, for women, the relation between emotional stability and parenting stress was stronger than between emotional stability and job stress. The reverse was found for men. Job stress and parenting stress, in turn, were positively related to work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, respectively. For women, additionally, family-to-work conflict was strongly associated with increased levels of job stress. We found no support for crossover of stress and conflict from one partner to the other, though women's work hours were associated with increased conflict between family and work among their husbands.

In short, the inclusion of personality variables showed a valuable extension of existing models linking work and family that have focused mainly on domain-specific variables. Our findings suggest that emotionally stable individuals do face less work-family interference, because they experience less stress in the work domain and family domain compared to their more neurotic counterparts. Moreover, using couple data we were able to detect gender differences: emotional stability buffered stress particularly in the domains traditionally linked with the own gender. We can see emotional stability as a successful implicit strategy in combining work and family.

The study described in chapter 3 was based on a subsample of 149 Dutch dual-earner couples. Using structural equation modeling, we examined how adaptive strategies ('trade-offs', either scaling back in the work domain because of family or in the family domain because of work) and gender role orientation (masculine, feminine or androgynous traits) relate to work-family balance, which we defined as the subjective experience of success in balancing work and family.

Path analysis indicated that a higher number of adaptive strategies was related to decreased perceived success in balancing work and family, particularly when these decisions were made at home by virtue of work matters. The negative relation between adaptive strategies at home and work-family balance was stronger for fathers than for mothers. Masculine and feminine traits contributed to a successful work-family balance. Men seemed to benefit from feminine traits, whereas women seemed to benefit from masculine traits. Gender role orientation did not moderate the relation between adaptive strategies and work-family balance.

In sum, our analyses showed that adaptive strategies may harm individuals' work-family balance, particularly when they are made in the domain where the time budget is limited. In the need to succeed in multiple roles, endorsement of traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender seems beneficial. We speculated that two underlying mechanisms – social pressure to perform in 'new domains' and time constraints – jointly operate in determining perceived success in balancing work and family.

In chapter 4 we examined whether and how the division of paid work (contract hours, overtime and commute) and unpaid work (domestic tasks, maintenance work and child care) between partners is related to work-family interference. We distinguished three strategies: (1) complementary-traditional, in which men do most of the paid work and women do most of the unpaid work; (2) double burden, in which one of the partners does more of the paid (unpaid) work and at least half of the unpaid (paid) work; and (3) role sharing, in which partners contribute similarly in paid tasks and unpaid tasks. With MANCOVA we analyzed data of 147 Finnish, 186 German, and 265 Dutch dual-earner couples.

Our first analysis showed that women being actively involved in multiple roles (i.e., women sharing roles and those carrying a double burden), experienced more conflict from work to family than women that were primarily responsible in none or only one of the domains (i.e., women with a complementary-traditional strategy and those whose partner faced a double burden). Double burdened women also experienced more family-to-work conflict than women in couples where the double burden was at men's site. For men, it were those actively participating in one

domain (i.e., men with a complementary-traditional strategy) that experienced most conflict from work to family. For women, we found a similar relation with regard to family-to-work conflict. These relations, however, largely disappeared when we controlled for hours spent on paid work and unpaid work. One relation remained: Men in our Finnish sample with a complementary-traditional strategy experienced more work-to-family conflict than Finnish men with any other strategy.

The overall picture indicated that the level of work-family interference does not vary along with couples' combination strategies. Although some cultural variation was identified, in general, individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies. Therefore, to help working parents it seems important to create opportunities to adjust their time spent on paid work and unpaid work.

The study described in chapter 5 was based on a subsample of 149 Dutch dual-earner couples. In this chapter we examined linkages between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles using structural equation modeling. We examined both direct relations and indirect relations via parenting stress.

We found no support for a direct relation between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles, but our findings show an indirect relation via parenting stress for mothers. Women that experience increased work-to-family conflict, report higher levels of parenting stress. Parenting stress, in turn, was for both genders associated with decreased levels of authoritative parenting and increased levels of authoritarian and particularly permissive parenting. No crossover relations were found.

Although interference between work and family is a central issue in the work-family literature, it has only been sparsely studied in connection with parenting. Our findings suggested that the linkage between work-to-family conflict and parenting styles is relatively weak. It has to be noted that the parents in our study experienced low to moderate levels of work-to-family conflict. As the relations found were in the expected direction, the linkage may be stronger for parents experiencing more

difficulties in managing multiple roles. The impact of work-to-family conflict on parental functioning should therefore not be ignored.

In chapter 6 we integrated and discussed the key findings of the studies described in chapters 2 to 5 around three overarching themes: (1) the role of work hours and stress, (2) changing gender roles, and (3) the juggling of multiple roles as a couple's issue.

With regard to the first theme, we found that time investment is a complicated factor in the work-family interface. On the one hand too much time investment may lead to negative work-family experiences as a result of finite resources, on the other hand a certain time budget seems necessary to make profit of the benefits of multiple roles. There are upper limits to the benefits of multiple roles: when the demands in one role are too great, stress may occur, which in turn makes people more vulnerable to work-family interference. Mechanisms behind such upper limits remain a topic for future research. We found no support for a vicious circle in which job stress, work-to-family conflict, parenting stress and family-to-work conflict reinforce each other. We argued that models with such feedback loops underestimate individuals' resilience to stress and conflict. We found that emotionally stable people are better able to combine multiple roles, as they are less prone to experience stress in the work domain and family domain and, therefore, less likely to experience work-family interference. Our findings suggest that integrative models should not be limited to domain-specific variables, but be extended with personality traits as general variables to fully understand linkages between work and family.

We found that traditional patterns still persist in work-family issues. On the other hand, we found that gender roles are changing. First, the family domain is important to men: trading-off at home because of work had serious negative effects on their work-family balance. Future studies should investigate the conditions under which trade-offs are made (e.g., voluntary vs. forced) and what this implies for its relation with work-family balance. Second, we found that men and women benefited from traits traditionally linked with the opposite gender. More research is needed before we can fully understand the significance and temporal connection of gender role

orientation with work-family experiences. We recommend longitudinal surveys combined with qualitative, in-depth studies. A particular interesting question to examine would be what constitutes a successful balance according to men and women in different cultural settings and life stages.

This dissertation offers little support for crossover of experiences between partners. These findings, however, do not rule out that partners are vulnerable to each other's work-family experiences. There may be factors moderating this relation. Given our finding with regard to emotional stability, future research may investigate whether emotional stability functions as a buffering or protective factor in the crossover process. Our findings suggest that time investment of one partner may form a serious challenge for the other partner. But, this study challenges the common idea that sharing paid work and unpaid work is the ultimate solution to a successful reconciliation of work and family. Individual time spent on paid work and unpaid work appeared to be more decisive for parents' level of work-family interference than couples' combination strategies.

Strengths of this dissertation are on the one hand the use of non-US data, which enabled us to extend the insights in work and family issues to other cultural settings, and on the other hand the use of couple data, by which we were better able to tap into the dynamics of the work-family interface. We also discussed two limitations. First, our studies focused on the parental role and role as a worker, but more roles exist that may be important with regard to the work-family interface, such as being a child of elderly parents ('sandwich generation'). Second, because of the limited sample size we were not able to test all of our hypotheses in a single model, leaving some interesting questions unanswered.

Based on our findings we formulated five recommendations for practice: (1) empower working parents by making them familiar with stress-reducing techniques and making them aware of their own strengths as well as the positive side of combining multiple roles; (2) open dialogue on task sharing and encourage parents to develop a family culture and philosophy explicating, for example, planning and daily routines; (3) stimulate parents to try new time arrangements by increasing the flexibility of parental leave and creating a supportive context; (4) don't narrow the

focus to working mothers, but include fathers as the family domain is becoming increasingly important for men and they are confronted with similar challenges as their wives; and, finally, (5) consider social-cultural context when designing policies, as circumstances in which multiple roles are managed may vary noticeably across cultures and similar policies are, therefore, not necessarily successful in every country.



Samenvatting

(Summary in Dutch)

Het doel van dit proefschrift was te achterhalen wat er gedaan kan worden om gezinnen met jonge kinderen te ondersteunen bij het combineren van werk en gezin. Algemeen wordt verondersteld dat het combineren van werk en gezin één van de grootste sociale uitdagingen is van deze tijd. Het is steeds gebruikelijker dat in gezinnen met kinderen beide ouders werken. Dat maakt het thema van dit proefschrift zeer relevant. In de literatuur is vooral vanuit een zogenaamd conflict perspectief gekeken naar de relatie tussen werk en gezin, vanuit de veronderstelling dat de eisen en verantwoordelijkheden van meerdere rollen onverenigbaar zijn en daardoor een belemmering vormen voor het persoonlijk functioneren en welbevinden. Tegenwoordig zijn onderzoekers en theoretici het er echter over eens dat mensen ook kunnen profiteren van het vervullen van meerdere rollen, omdat elke rol het individu een reeks van voordelen biedt.

Ervaringen op het gebied van werk en gezin worden niet alleen gevormd door factoren in de werksfeer en in de gezinssfeer, maar ook door factoren in de bredere sociaal-culturele omgeving (bijv. politieke stroming, beleid en overtuigingen). Bovendien kunnen werk-gezin ervaringen beïnvloed worden door omgevingen waarvan het individu zelf geen deel uit maakt, bijvoorbeeld het werk van de partner. Vanuit deze ecologische benadering hebben wij een aantal relevante thema's afgeleid die tot dus ver onderbelicht zijn gebleven in de werk-gezin literatuur. Dit proefschrift is een compilatie van vier studies. Het verrijkt de huidige literatuur op het gebied van werk en gezin door aandacht te besteden aan (1) impliciete en expliciete strategieën om werk en gezin te combineren op het persoonniveau, (2) combinatiestrategieën van koppels en 'crossover' van ervaringen tussen partners en (3) de relatie tussen opvoeding en werk-gezin ervaringen. Alle drie de thema's zijn benaderd met specifieke aandacht voor de rol van de sociaal-culturele omgeving. Alle hoofdstukken baseren zich op vragenlijstdata uit het FamWork onderzoek, een Europees onderzoek naar de verenigbaarheid van werk en gezin onder tweeverdieners met jonge kinderen. De resultaten worden hieronder samengevat.

In hoofdstuk 2 onderzochten we hoe persoonlijkheid (de 'Big Five' dimensies emotionele stabiliteit, vriendelijkheid, extraversie, zorgvuldigheid en openheid voor ervaringen) en stresservaringen in de werk- en opvoedings sfeer, gerelateerd zijn aan werk-gezin interferentie (de mate waarin eisen en verantwoordelijkheden in de ene rol, participatie in de andere rol bemoeilijken). Hiervoor analyseerden we gegevens van 276 Nederlandse tweeverdienerparen met behulp van 'structural equation modeling', een geavanceerde multivariate statistische techniek.

Van alle Big Five dimensies bleek alleen emotionele stabiliteit er toe te doen, zij het dat de relatie met werk-gezin interferentie indirect was. Des te hoger de mate van emotionele stabiliteit, des te minder werkstress en opvoedingsstress er werd ervaren door zowel mannen als vrouwen. Deze relatie was genderspecifiek. Voor vrouwen werkte emotionele stabiliteit namelijk sterker bufferend naar opvoedingsstress toe dan voor mannen. Ook was voor vrouwen de relatie tussen emotionele stabiliteit en opvoedingsstress sterker dan de relatie tussen emotionele stabiliteit en werkstress. Het omgekeerde vonden we voor mannen. Werkstress en opvoedingsstress waren positief gerelateerd aan respectievelijk werk-gezin conflict ('work-to-family conflict') en gezin-werk conflict ('family-to-work conflict'). Bij vrouwen vonden we bovendien een sterke positieve relatie tussen gezin-werk conflict en werkstress. We vonden geen bewijs voor 'crossover' van stress en conflict van de ene naar de andere partner, al vonden we wel dat hoe meer uren vrouwen besteedden aan betaald werk, hoe meer gezin-werk conflict hun partners ervoeren.

Kortom, het toevoegen van persoonlijkheidsdimensies bleek een waardevolle uitbereiding van bestaande conceptuele modellen die uitsluitend variabelen in de werk- en gezinssfeer opnemen. Onze bevindingen suggereren dat emotioneel stabiele personen minder last hebben van werk-gezin interferentie, omdat zij minder stress ervaren in de werk- en gezinssfeer, vergeleken met meer neurotische individuen. Door gebruik te maken van koppeldata waren we bovendien in staat genderverschillen bloot te leggen: emotionele stabiliteit werkte vooral als buffer in het domein dat traditioneel gezien bij de eigen sekse behoort. Emotionele stabiliteit kunnen we opvatten als een succesvolle impliciete strategie bij het combineren van werk en gezin.

De studie beschreven in hoofdstuk 3 baseert zich op een deelsteekproef van 149 Nederlandse tweeverdienerparen. Door middel van 'structural equation modeling' onderzochten wij hoe adaptieve strategieën ('trade-offs', ofwel stappen terug doen in de werksfeer vanwege het gezin of in de gezinssfeer vanwege het werk) en genderroloriëntatie (masculiene, feminiene of androgynе eigenschappen) gerelateerd zijn aan werk-gezin balans, wat wij definieerden als de subjectieve succeservaring met betrekking tot het balanceren van werk en gezin.

Padanalyses lieten zien, dat hoe meer adaptieve strategieën ouders toepasten, hoe minder succesvol zij zich voelden in het balanceren van werk en gezin. Vooral wanneer ouders in de gezinssfeer een stap terugdeden vanwege hun werk, oordeelden zij negatiever over de werk-gezin balans. Deze negatieve relatie was sterker voor vaders dan voor moeders. Masculiene en feminiene eigenschappen droegen bij aan een succesvolle balans tussen werk en gezin. Mannen leken te profiteren van feminiene eigenschappen, terwijl vrouwen baat hadden bij masculiene eigenschappen. Genderroloriëntatie had geen invloed op de relatie tussen adaptieve strategieën en werk-gezin balans.

Kortom, onze analyses laten zien dat adaptieve strategieën succes in de werk-gezin balans kunnen aantasten, vooral als de tijd die men in dat domein tot zijn of haar beschikking heeft toch al beperkt is. In het succesvol balanceren van werk en gezin lijkt het nuttig over eigenschappen te beschikken die traditioneel gezien bij de andere sekse horen. Wij speculeren dat twee onderliggende mechanismen, namelijk sociale druk om te presteren in 'nieuwe domeinen' en tijdgebrek, gezamenlijk opereren in het bepalen van het subjectieve succes in het balanceren van werk en gezin.

In hoofdstuk 4 onderzochten we òf en hoe de verdeling van uren besteed aan betaald werk (contracttijd, overwerk en reistijd) en onbetaald werk (huishoudelijk werk, onderhoudswerkzaamheden en verzorging van de kinderen) tussen partners zich verhoudt tot werk-gezin interferentie. We onderscheidde drie strategieën: (1) aanvullend, waarbij de man meer van het betaalde werk voor zijn rekening neemt, en de vrouw meer van het onbetaalde werk; (2) dubbele belasting, waarbij één van de partners meer van het betaalde (onbetaalde) werk doet en minstens de



helft van het onbetaalde (betaalde werk); en (3) roldeling, waarbij partners vrijwel evenveel tijd stoppen in betaald en onbetaald werk. Met behulp van MANCOVA analyseerden we de gegevens van 147 Finse, 186 Duitse en 265 Nederlandse tweeverdienerparen.

Uit onze eerste analyse bleek dat vrouwen die actief betrokken zijn in meerdere rollen (vrouwen die betaald en onbetaald werk delen met hun partner en vrouwen die dubbel belast zijn), meer werk-gezin conflict ervoeren dan vrouwen die in één of geen domein hoofdverantwoordelijk waren (vrouwen met een aanvullende strategie of vrouwen wiens man dubbel belast is). Daarnaast ervoeren dubbel belaste vrouwen meer gezin-werk conflict dan vrouwen in koppels waar de dubbele belasting aan de kant van de man lag. Voor mannen was het juist zo dat wanneer men actief betrokken was in één rol (mannen met een aanvullende strategie), er meer werk-gezin conflict werd ervaren. Voor vrouwen vonden we een dergelijke relatie voor gezin-werk conflict. De associaties verdwenen echter grotendeels wanneer gecontroleerd werd voor het aantal uur betaald en onbetaald werk. Eén relatie bleef overeind: Finse mannen met een aanvullende strategie ervoeren meer werk-naar-gezin conflict dan Finse mannen met welke andere strategie dan ook.

Het algemeen beeld liet zien dat koppels met verschillende combinatiestrategieën zich niet onderscheiden op werk-gezin interferentie. Hoewel er aanwijzing is voor enige culturele variatie, geldt in het algemeen dat de individuele tijd die gestopt wordt in betaald en onbetaald werk doorslaggevend is voor het ervaren van werk-gezin interferentie, dan combinatiestrategieën. Daarom is het belangrijk dat er voor ouders mogelijkheden gecreëerd worden om de tijdsbesteding aan te passen.

De studie beschreven in hoofdstuk 5 baseert zich op een deelsteekproef van 149 Nederlandse tweeverdienerparen. In dit hoofdstuk onderzochten we met behulp van 'structural equation modeling' de relatie tussen werk-gezin conflict en opvoedingsstijlen. We onderzochten zowel directe verbanden, als mogelijke indirecte verbanden via opvoedingsstress.

We vonden geen bewijs voor een directe relatie tussen werk-gezin conflict en opvoedingsstijl, maar onze resultaten laten wel een indirecte relatie via

opvoedingsstress zien voor moeders. Vrouwen die meer werk-gezin conflict ervaren, rapporteren een hogere mate van opvoedingsstress. Opvoedingsstress werd voor zowel moeders als vaders in verband gebracht met minder autoritatieve opvoeding en meer autoritair en permissief opvoedingsgedrag. Er was geen indicatie voor 'crossover' van ervaringen van de ene partner naar de andere partner.

Hoewel conflict tussen werk en gezin een centraal concept is in de werk-gezin literatuur, is het nog maar weinig in verband gebracht met opvoedingsstijl. Onze resultaten suggereren dat de relatie tussen werk-gezin conflict en opvoedingsstijl relatief zwak is. Daarbij merken we op dat ouders in ons onderzoek gemiddeld genomen laag tot gematigd scoorden op de werk-gezin conflictschaal. De gevonden relaties waren wel in de verwachte richting en het is mogelijk dat de relatie sterker is voor ouders die meer problemen ervaren bij het combineren van meerdere rollen. De mogelijke invloed van werk-gezin conflict op ouderlijk functioneren moet daardoor niet genegeerd worden.

In hoofdstuk 6 integreerden en bediscussieerden we de belangrijkste bevindingen uit hoofdstuk 2 tot en met 5 rond drie overkoepelende thema's: (1) de rol van stress en tijd besteed aan werk, (2) veranderende genderrollen en (3) het combineren van meerdere rollen als een kwestie op koppelniveau.

Met betrekking tot het eerste punt concludeerden we dat tijdsinvestering een gecompliceerde factor is bij het combineren van werk en gezin. Enerzijds kan te veel tijdsinvestering leiden tot negatieve werk-gezin ervaringen, door het eindige karakter van tijd en energie; anderzijds lijkt het noodzakelijk een bepaalde tijdsinvestering te hebben om gebruik te kunnen maken van de voordelen die het vervullen van meerdere rollen met zich mee brengt. Er lijken wel grenzen aan die voordelen: wanneer de eisen in een rol te groot zijn ontstaat er stress, wat kan uitmonden in werk-gezin interferentie. Welke mechanismen bepalen wat die grenzen zijn, blijft een onderwerp van toekomstig onderzoek. We vonden geen bewijs voor het bestaan van een vicieuze cirkel waarin werkstress, werk-gezin conflict, opvoedingsstress en gezin-werk conflict elkaar aanjagen. We stellen dat modellen met dergelijke 'feedback loops' de veerkracht van individuen met betrekking tot stress en conflict onderschatten. We vonden dat emotioneel stabiele personen een



voordeel hebben in het combineren van meerdere rollen, omdat ze minder geneigd zijn stress in de werk- en gezinssfeer te ervaren en daardoor minder werk-gezin interferentie ervaren. Onze resultaten suggereren dat integratieve modellen zich niet moeten beperken tot variabelen in de werk- en gezinssfeer, maar zich ook moeten richten op meer algemene persoonlijkheidsdimensies.

Wij vonden dat traditionele patronen nog steeds bestaan waar het gaat om werk en gezin. Tegelijkertijd zien we dat genderrollen aan het veranderen zijn. Ten eerste zien we dat de gezinssfeer voor mannen belangrijk is: een stap terugdoen in de gezinssfeer had een sterk negatief effect op hun werk-gezin balans. Toekomstig onderzoek moet nagaan onder welke condities (bijv. vrijwillig versus gedwongen) 'trade-offs' gemaakt worden en wat dit impliceert voor de werk-gezin balans. Ten tweede zien we dat mannen en vrouwen baat hebben bij eigenschappen die traditioneel gezien met de andere sekse in verband worden gebracht. Verder onderzoek is nodig om de (temporele) functie van genderroloriëntatie volledig te begrijpen. Hiervoor zijn longitudinale vragenlijstonderzoeken in combinatie met kwalitatieve diepte studies aanbevelenswaardig. Een belangrijke vraag die in toekomstig onderzoek beantwoord zal moeten worden is wat een succesvolle werk-gezin balans inhoudt voor mannen en vrouwen in verschillende sociaal-culturele contexten en levensfasen.

Dit proefschrift biedt slechts weinig bewijs voor het bestaan van 'crossover' van ervaringen tussen partners. Deze resultaten sluiten echter niet uit dat partners gevoelig zijn voor elkaars werk-gezin ervaringen. Het is mogelijk dat er factoren zijn die de relatie tussen partners beïnvloeden. Gezien onze bevinding met betrekking tot emotionele stabiliteit, zou toekomstig onderzoek kunnen bekijken in welke mate emotionele stabiliteit een rol heeft in het 'crossover' proces. Onze resultaten tonen aan dat de tijdsinvestering van de ene partner een serieuze uitdaging kan zijn voor de andere partner. We betwisten echter het gangbare idee dat het gelijkwaardig verdelen van taken een oplossing is voor werk-gezin interferentie. Van doorslaggevend belang lijkt de individuele tijdsinvestering.

Sterke punten van dit proefschrift zijn enerzijds het gebruik van niet-Amerikaanse data, wat ons in staat stelde inzichten op het gebied van werk en gezin naar

andere sociaal-culturele contexten uit te bereiden; en anderzijds het gebruik van koppeldata, waardoor we beter in staat waren de dynamiek van werk en gezin te vatten. We bespraken ook twee beperkingen. Ten eerste richtte dit proefschrift zich op ervaringen in de ouderlijke rol en de rol van werknemer. Er zijn meer rollen die belangrijk zijn in de context van werk en gezin, zoals kind van zorgbehoevende ouders (de 'sandwich generatie'). Ten tweede konden wij gezien de beperkte steekproefomvang niet al onze hypotheses in één integratief model toetsen, en bleven enkele interessante kwesties daardoor onbeantwoord.

Op basis van de resultaten formuleerden wij vijf aanbevelingen voor de praktijk: (1) 'empower' werkende ouders door ze bekend te maken met stressverlagende technieken en door hen bewust te maken van hun sterke kanten en de positieve kant van het vervullen van meerdere rollen; (2) open de dialoog over taakverdeling en moedig ouders aan een gezinsscultuur en -filosofie te ontwikkelen (met daarin gezamenlijk gedragen ideeën over bijvoorbeeld planning en dagelijkse routines); (3) stimuleer ouders om nieuwe tijdarrangementen uit te proberen door de flexibiliteit in (verlof)regelingen te vergroten en een stimulerende context te bieden; (4) beperk de focus niet tot werkende moeders, maar richt de aandacht ook op vaders, de gezinssfeer wordt steeds belangrijker voor mannen en zij staan voor dezelfde uitdagingen als vrouwen; en, tot slot, (5) neem de sociaal-culturele context in ogenschouw bij het uitwerken van beleid, want de situatie waarin ouders meerdere rollen combineren varieert sterk per land en beleid dat werkt in het ene land, hoeft daarom niet per definitie elders een oplossing te zijn.





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Curriculum Vitae

Hilde Wierda-Boer was born on 22 March, 1981, in Nijkerk. In 1999 she finished high school (atheneum) at Christelijk College Groevenbeek in Ermelo and continued to study Pedagogical Sciences at Utrecht University. She studied Finnish language as a minor at the University of Amsterdam, which she continued at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) in 2002-2003. During this year abroad she completed her studies in Pedagogical Sciences by writing her Master thesis and participating in a research traineeship, both at the university's Family Research Centre. After graduating in 2003, she started as a junior researcher at the Radboud University Nijmegen, at the Institute of Family and Child Care Studies. Her PhD-project focused on the reconciliation of work and family among dual-earner couples with young children and was part of the European study 'FamWork'. In 2006 she obtained a grant from the Finnish government and returned to the University of Jyväskylä for a six months research period. In addition to her research, she has been involved in the supervision of several master theses and in teaching a course on family policy. Since 2007 she has been working as a researcher for IOWO, a higher education consultancy affiliated with the Radboud University Nijmegen.

