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Journal of Family Issues

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Journal of Family Issues published online 1 April 2011

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What the Person Brings to the Table: Personality, Coping, and Work–Family Conflict

Jeanine K. Andreassi[1]

Abstract

Employees ($N = 291$) of various industries and companies were surveyed to study how individual factors (coping and personality) affect work–family conflict: strain-based work-to-family conflict (S-WFC), time-based work-to-family conflict (T-WFC), strain-based family-to-work conflict (S-FWC), and time-based family-to-work conflict (T-FWC). As expected, passive coping was related to significantly higher levels of S-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC. Unexpectedly, active coping was related to higher levels of S-WFC. As hypothesized, social support coping was negatively related to work–family conflict, but only for T-WFC. Venting was positively related to S-WFC. As predicted, neuroticism was positively related to S-WFC, T-WFC, and S-FWC. Passive coping mediated the positive relationship between neuroticism and S-FWC. Neither internal locus of control nor extraversion was related to work–family conflict. Implications and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Keywords

work–family conflict, coping, personality, Big Five, locus of control

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Historically, family and background characteristics have been the most commonly studied antecedents to work–family outcomes (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005) despite the fact that individuals exhibit differences in their ability to adapt to life demands. Recent research has begun to explore the role of individual traits, such as personality and coping, in the experience of work–family conflict (e.g., Andreassi & Thompson, 2007; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

One objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between coping and work–family conflict (WFC), an area that represents less than 1% of work–family studies (Eby et al., 2005). There is support for a negative relationship between problem-focused coping and work–family conflict (Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003) and a positive relationship between passive coping (i.e., avoidance and reactive role behavior) and work–family conflict (Raskin, 2006; Rotondo et al., 2003). Help-seeking coping has been related to lower levels of time-based family interference with work conflict (Rotondo et al., 2003). In the current study, relationships between five forms of coping (active, passive, social support, venting, and positive thinking) and work–family conflict were examined.

A second aim of this research is to examine the direct relationship between personality (in particular, neuroticism, extraversion, and internal locus of control) and work–family conflict. Researchers have found a positive relationship between neuroticism and work–family conflict (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000) and a negative relationship between extraversion and work–family conflict (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Only two studies have examined the relationship between locus of control (LOC) and work–family outcomes (Andreassi & Thompson, 2007; Noor, 2002). Given the important role that LOC plays in the stress and coping process (Folkman, 1984), it most likely has an important influence on the ability to balance work and family.

Finally, the study investigates whether coping may explain why some people are more effective in handling work and family stressors. Researchers have suggested that we should investigate the process through which personality influences work–family conflict (Bruck & Allen, 2003). For a comprehensive review, see Thompson, Poelmans, Allen, and Andreassi (2007). Theoretically, personality influences coping choice (e.g., Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Penley & Tomaka, 2002), which, in turn, is related to the adaptiveness of outcomes (e.g., Brown, Mulhern, & Joseph, 2002; Coyne & Racioppo, 2000). This article will examine whether active and passive coping partially mediate the relationships among neuroticism, extraversion, internal LOC, and work–family conflict. Active and passive coping were chosen because they are most consistently related to strain outcomes. Neuroticism and extraversion
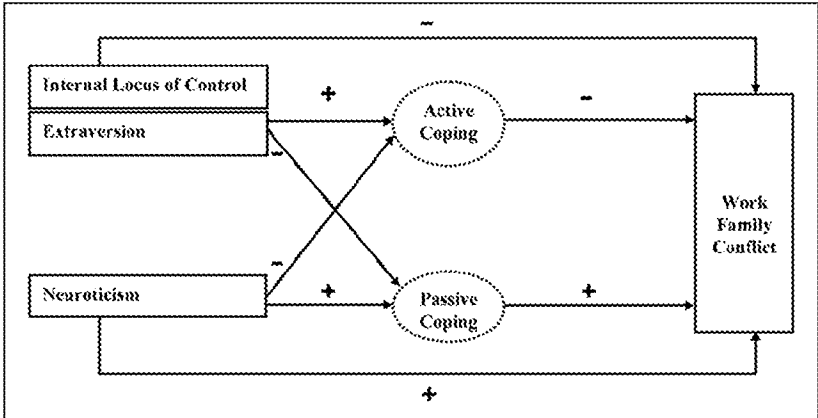
Figure 1. Proposed model to link personality, coping, and work–family conflict

were chosen because out of the Big Five personality factors they have consistently shown the strongest relationships with choice of coping style (McCrae & Costa, 1986). LOC was included because of its important role in the stress process (e.g., Spector, 1986; Szilagyi, Sims, & Keller, 1976), its strong relationship with coping styles (e.g., Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999), and interest in examining LOC as a direct antecedent to work–family conflict. Theoretical reasons why these three personality variables were chosen are discussed in a later section.

The relationships proposed for the mediated model positing that personality influences active and passive coping choice, which, in turn, is related to work–family conflict, are demonstrated in Figure 1. In the next section, I will review the literature on coping, personality, and the relationships among coping, personality, and work–family conflict.

Theory and Hypotheses

Work–family conflict refers to simultaneous pressures from both work and family that are incompatible in some way (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time-based work–family conflict occurs when there is less time available in one sphere because of experiences in the other, strain-based work–family conflict indicates more strain in one field because of experiences in the other, and behavior-based work–family conflict is a difference in behavior displayed in one domain because of activities in the other. Research has demonstrated that work–family conflict is bidirectional, with work interfering with family (WFC) and family interfering with work (FWC; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). In

the present investigation, four dependent variables are measured: strain- and time-based work-to-family conflicts (S-WFC and T-WFC, respectively) and strain- and time-based family-to-work conflicts (S-FWC and T-FWC, respectively). Behavior-based conflict will not be examined because it has yet to be adequately operationalized and, therefore, has weak empirical evidence (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999).

Coping and Work–Family Conflict

Coping refers to a response after cognitive appraisal that a situation is taxing one's resources (e.g., a challenge, threat, or loss) and is not necessarily a "successful" act. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argued that when confronted with a potential stressor people engage in a primary appraisal process, where they ask themselves whether a situation is threatening to their well-being, and a secondary appraisal process, where they assess their ability to effectively cope with stressors. Problem-focused coping, where strategies are used to directly address the source of stress, tends to be dominant when individuals believe that they can do something about a stressor. Emotion-focused coping, where one attempts to manage the emotions that result from the stressor, is used when people perceive that they have no control over the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the current research, the stressors we are interested in are the family and work demands (e.g., number of children, working spouse, number of hours worked per week) that compete for one's time and energy.

Typically, problem-focused forms of coping are related positively and emotion-focused coping behaviors are related negatively to psychological outcomes (Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996). In situations that can be changed, actively managing the stressor reduces the perceived threat in the environment, diverts attention from the problem, and helps reduce the threat (Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996). The present study will examine the impact of five coping styles on work–family conflict: active coping, passive coping, social support (instrumental and emotional), venting, and positive thinking.

Active coping. Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) maintain that active coping is the essence of what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) named problem-focused coping. Active coping consists of initiating *direct action* to reduce a stressor(s), *planning* the steps to ameliorate the stressor(s), and *suppressing competing activities* to focus on the stressor(s) (Carver et al., 1989). Active coping behaviors have been related to higher levels of well-being (Brown et al., 2002; Ingledew, Hardy, & Cooper, 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1986), lower FWC (Kirchmeyer, 1993; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Rotondo et al., 2003), and lower WFC (Baltes & Heydens-Gahir, 2003). Other

research has shown a positive relationship with work–family conflict (e.g., Brink & De La Rey, 2001).

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress theory explains how active coping can alleviate strain. It would seem reasonable that taking steps to efficiently manage one's work (e.g., making daily to-do lists) and family (e.g., planning meals ahead of time) responsibilities would leave more time and energy for both family and work activities. Active coping should also provide one with a sense of control over the stressor, which is an important predictor of health and well-being and lower levels of strain (Bond & Bunce, 2003; Loscocco & Spitze, 1990; Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996).

> *Hypothesis 1a:* Active coping will be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Passive coping. Passive coping is a type of emotion-focused coping, consisting of *behavioral disengagement* (discontinue trying to manage a stressor), *mental disengagement* (not thinking about the goal with which the stressor is associated), and *denial* (pretending that the stressor does not exist; Carver et al., 1989). Passive coping styles often are related negatively to well-being (Brown et al., 2002; Ingledew et al., 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1986) and positively to work–family conflict (both WFC and FWC; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Rotondo et al., 2003), because an individual is not actively trying to reduce the stressors that he or she faces (e.g., work and family responsibilities that conflict in terms of resource availability). For example, when a family's nanny quits a person may exhibit mental disengagement (e.g., daydreaming about better times) instead of actively looking for a replacement, leading to higher levels of strain. Furthermore, passive coping used at home and at work likely reduces the amount of time for work and family-related tasks, leading to higher levels of time-based work–family conflict. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), emotion-focused forms of coping, particularly denial and avoidance, can impair health by preventing the person from realistically addressing a problem that can be mitigated with problem-focused coping. Furthermore, emotion-focused coping can lead to strain by failing to prevent damaging conditions in the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, one might expect that when faced with competing work and family demands, emotion-focused coping behaviors interfere with more effective types of coping, leading to higher levels of strain and time-based work–family conflict.

> *Hypothesis 2a:* Passive coping will be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Social support coping. This consists of problem-focused strategies such as *instrumental support* (seeking advice, help, or information) and emotion-focused strategies such as *emotional support* (seeking sympathy and understanding) and *venting of emotions* (venting experienced emotions to others; Carver et al., 1989). Factor analyses have indicated that emotional and instrumental support mechanisms generally load together, presumably because people solicit both at the same time. Also, when tangible support is offered voluntarily, it may send the message that the recipient is valued, providing emotional support simultaneously (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Seeking and obtaining instrumental support is an adaptive coping mechanism in that one gains resources, increasing the likelihood that one is able to manage the stressors in their environment (Carver et al., 1989). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), social support can be viewed as an active form of coping in that individuals must seek out social support. Emotional support is also an adaptive coping mechanism because the individual is seeking to help manage emotions that result from the experience of strain (Carver et al., 1989). Venting, on the other hand, typically loads as a separate factor (Carver et al., 1989) and is maladaptive over long periods of time because it hinders adjustment, may worsen the distress, inhibits more active coping mechanisms (Carver et al., 1989), and lowers self-esteem (Felton, Revenson, & Hinrichsen, 1984).

Although past research examined coping and social support separately as different constructs, research currently is associating coping and social support to create an "interpersonal theory of coping with stress" (Folkman, 2009). Following this line of reasoning, the general social support literature is drawn on when developing hypotheses on social support coping. Research has demonstrated that social support is related to decreased strain (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999), work–family conflict (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Bernas & Major, 2000; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999), and family-to-work conflict (Adams, King, & King, 1996). Moreover, Lapierre and Allen (2006) showed that instrumental assistance, and not emotional support, was related to lower levels of family-to-work conflict (both time based and strain based).

When one receives instrumental support, the increase in resources (e.g., car pooling help, work coverage, etc.) likely frees up one's time for home and work activities, decreasing the experience of time-based conflict in both domains. In addition, the emotional support that one receives at work (e.g., through colleagues) and at home (e.g., friends) likely makes someone feel that they are not alone experiencing stressors, reducing the degree to which one experiences stress that spills over to the other domain. Additionally, since venting is related to maladaptive outcomes (Billings & Moos, 1984)

because of its interference with more active, adaptive coping, it is predicted that venting will be positively related to time-based and strain-based work–family conflicts.

> *Hypothesis 3:* Social support (instrumental and emotional) coping will be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 4:* Venting coping will be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Positive thinking coping. This coping style consists of functional coping strategies that include *acceptance* (accepting the reality of a situation, even if there is nothing one can do about it) and *positive reinterpretation* (trying to see the stressor in a positive light to make it appear less threatening; Carver et al., 1989). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) regarded positive reinterpretation as an emotion-focused type of coping because they maintained that it was coping directed at managing distress, as opposed to addressing the stressor (Carver et al., 1989). It is an adaptive response, because positive appraisal is related to the belief that one can improve conditions, increasing one's use of active problem-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989). As opposed to denial, acceptance requires affirming that a situation exists, and therefore, the individual becomes engaged in dealing with it (Carver et al., 1989). Positive thinking and acceptance have been related to lower levels of strain (Folkman, 1997) and, therefore, should be related to lower work–family conflict. Positive thinking should also be related to lower time-based conflict, because thinking positively increases perceived control over stressors and encourages problem-focused coping.

> *Hypothesis 5:* Positive thinking coping will be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Personality and Work–Family Conflict

Neuroticism. Basic characteristics of the neurotic person include low self-esteem, irrational perfectionist beliefs, and pessimistic attitudes (McCrae & Costa, 1999), characteristics that lead to appraising events as threatening in the primary appraisal process and perceiving that one cannot effectively handle the situation in the secondary appraisal process. In fact, investigators have found a positive relationship between neuroticism and work–family conflict (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Therefore, it is

expected that this trait will be related to higher levels of strain-based work–family conflict. In addition, because people high on neuroticism are not as effective at dealing with stress and have a tendency to be perfectionists, this may lead to difficulty in managing the amount of time available to handle demands at home and work, leading to less time and higher levels of time-based work–family conflict (both directions).

> *Hypothesis 6:* Neuroticism will be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Extraversion. An extraverted individual has a preference for companionship and perceives events positively (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Extraversion has mixed support for being related to work–family conflict, with some research finding no relationship (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002) and others supporting a relationship with lower levels of negative spillover and higher levels of positive spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; both directions). In the primary appraisal process, because of its relationship with positive affect, people high on extraversion are likely to perceive events as less threatening than those low on the trait. However, in the secondary appraisal process, they are more likely to be positive in their appraisal of being able to handle the situation. Therefore, it is expected that this trait will be related to lower levels of strain-based work–family conflict (both directions). Furthermore, because people high on extraversion are more sociable, they may be more likely to form a support network of others who can assist them at home and at work, leading to lower levels of time-based and strain-based work–family conflicts (both directions).

> *Hypothesis 7:* Extraversion will be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Locus of control. Although there is an abundance of empirical and theoretical research looking at LOC and strain, its examination with respect to work–family conflict is limited. Noor (2002) found that individuals with an internal LOC were less likely to experience work-to-family conflict. However, her study operationalized LOC in terms of interpersonal control rather than measuring dispositional LOC. In fact, one of the items in the interpersonal control scale, "I have no trouble making and keeping friends," appears to measure extraversion rather than LOC as conceptualized by Rotter (1966). Recently, Andreassi and Thompson (2007) found that an internal LOC was negatively related to WFC and FWC.

LOC has an important role in the stress process. Individuals with an internal LOC experience less distress because they perceive fewer stressors in the environment (Brookings, Bolton, Brown, & McEvoy, 1985; Szilagyi et al., 1976) and less strain (Siu, Lu, & Cooper, 1999; Spector, 1986). An internal LOC also has been found to buffer the effects of stressors on strain (Averill, 1973; Cohen, 1980). In the secondary appraisal process, those high on an internal LOC (internals) are more likely to perceive that they have control over work and family events, leading to more active adaptive coping mechanisms. Therefore, it is expected that this trait will be related to lower levels of strain-based work–family conflict (both directions). In addition, because internals are more likely to cope in active ways, they may be better at time-saving mechanisms such as planning ahead, thus leading to lower levels of time-based work–family conflict (both directions).

> *Hypothesis 8:* Internal LOC will be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Coping as a Mediator Between Personality and Work–Family Conflict

Neuroticism and extraversion are the two Big Five factors most consistently related to coping choices (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1986). According to Watson and Hubbard (1996), people high in Neuroticism are more likely to experience stressors because they (a) actively create problems for themselves (e.g., being unpleasant may precipitate divorce), (b) interpret stressors as threatening, and (c) react strongly to minor daily hassles. Watson and Hubbard (1996) conclude that those high in Neuroticism must "be doing something wrong when responding to stress; in other words, in light of their high levels of distress and disorder, they cannot be particularly effective copers" (p. 749). Empirical research supports the theoretical link between neuroticism and coping, with neuroticism related positively to passive, ineffective, coping styles, and negatively to active, more adaptive coping styles (e.g., Parkes, 1986; Watson & Hubbard, 1996).

Extraversion is also an important trait to consider in the stress-coping process because of the relationship between extraversion and positive affect (Watson & Hubbard, 1996). Because extraverts report higher levels of positive affectivity and energy, you would expect that in the secondary appraisal process, where one assesses their ability to handle the situation, these individuals would evaluate stressors as more controllable and, therefore, activate more active and effective coping mechanisms than their introverted peers. In fact, research has demonstrated that extraverts do cope in more adaptive

ways, such as using positive thinking, rational action, restraint, problem-focused coping, support seeking, and less emotion-focused types of coping (e.g., Amirkhan, Risinger, & Swickert, 1995; McCrae & Costa, 1986).

In addition to the Big Five, research has demonstrated that LOC has an important role in the stress process (see Brookings et al., 1985; Szilagyi et al., 1976). Internals believe that events in their lives are the consequences of their actions and characteristics, whereas externals believe that luck, chance, powerful others, or fate determines life events (Rotter, 1966). It is likely that in the secondary appraisal process of coping, where individuals assesses their ability to handle the stressor, internals are more likely to perceive that they have control over events in their lives and hence can handle the stressor, whereas externals are more likely to believe that luck, chance, or powerful others decide the course of events, likely leading to an assessment that they cannot solve the issues at hand. This line of reasoning is bolstered by research evidence indicating that internals are likely to experience less distress because they cope using active, problem-focused methods (Ingledew et al., 1997; Judge et al., 1999) and externals cope using more passive avoidance behaviors (Brown et al., 2002; Ingledew et al., 1997).

In conclusion, there is both theoretical and empirical support for a relationship between personality and coping, which, in turn, would likely affect one's experience of work–family conflict.

> *Hypothesis 9a:* Passive coping mediates the positive relationship between Neuroticism and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 9b:* Active coping mediates the positive relationship between Neuroticism and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 10a:* Active coping mediates the negative relationship between Extraversion and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 10b:* Passive coping mediates the negative relationship between Extraversion and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 11a:* Active coping mediates the negative relationship between an internal LOC and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).
>
> *Hypothesis 11b:* Passive coping mediates the negative relationship between an internal LOC and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Method

Participants

The survey was administered online to 291 participants. The majority of the respondents were female (68%) and the average participant worked 44 hours per week. The mean age of females was 38 years ($SD = 8.09$), and for males it was 42 years ($SD = 10.72$). A variety of companies, work groups within companies, and Internet posting boards were used to obtain responses for the current study. Seventy percent of the sample had at least one child, with the average number of children for those who had a child being 1.83 ($SD = 0.73$), equivalent to the average number of children in the United States, among households with children (average = 1.87; see www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabST-F1-2000.pdf). The majority of the sample was married or living with a partner (76%), and of those, 71% had a spouse who worked full-time. The industry composition was 70% in service, 8% in manufacturing, and 22% in other industries. The sample was largely composed of professional employees (70%).

One organization was a consulting firm with 50 employees. Online surveys were distributed to all employees, yielding a response rate of 62%. The second group of responses was from a 25-person trading group within a large financial services company. The response rate was 72%. The third participant pool was a 35-person rehabilitation group within a regional hospital. The response rate was 54%. Two additional samples were obtained from online organizations. Approximations for response rates are required for these samples because it is not possible to identify how many people viewed the solicitation letter. One group, "HR Net" (http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/hrnet), has 1,382 members. It is estimated that 5% of the members saw the e-mail, or 69 people. Thirteen responses were obtained from this site, or an approximate response rate of 19%. The second online organization was the "Berkeley Family Network" (see http://parents.berkeley.edu; $n = 72$), which reaches 13,000 parents each week. Assuming that 5% of those who received the e-mail opened it, approximately 650 people received the e-mail. The approximate response rate was 11%. The last group of responses was obtained by creating a snowball effect. An initial e-mail with the survey link was sent out by the researcher to 65 colleagues, requesting them to forward the e-mail. Assuming that the average person forwarded the survey to 10 individuals, it is estimated that the survey reached approximately 650 individuals. Through this method, 135 responses were obtained, an estimated response rate of 21%.

Procedure

All data were collected through a web-based survey, hosted by Baruch College, using a system called "Asset," which was developed by Bert Wachsmuth at Seton Hall University. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participation in the study was voluntary, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were provided to the respondents. To be inclusive of individuals without children, who also balance work–nonwork activities, data were only excluded if the individual did not work (one case excluded).

Measures

Work–family conflict. An 18-item scale by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) was used to measure S-WFC, S-FWC, T-WFC, and T-FWC. Three items measured each of these dependent measures, for a total of 12 items. The Carlson et al. (2000) scale also includes three items that measure behavior-based work interfering with family and three items that measure behavior-based family interfering with work. These six items were not included in the current study because there is weak empirical support for behavior-based conflict (Kelloway et al., 1999). Carlson et al. (2000) demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency with Cronbach's α for the four scales ranging from .79 to .87. They demonstrated separate factors, with factor loading consistent with dimensions. Evidence of construct validity was determined when the measures were related to antecedents of work–family conflict and outcomes (for details, see Carlson et al., 2000).

Coping. The Carver et al. (1989) COPE Scale was used. The scale consisted of 13 distinct 4-item dimensions that measured aspects of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and other types of coping that were indicated as "less useful" coping styles. All reliability coefficients (α) were above .60. Convergent and discriminant validities were established (see Carver et al., 1989, for details). Second-order factor analysis of the COPE full scale has consistently revealed four dimensions of coping: active (planning, active, and suppression of competing activities), social support (emotional support, instrumental support, focus on, and venting of emotions), passive (denial, behavior disengagement, and mental disengagement), and positive thinking (positive reinterpretation and acceptance). The current study used confirmatory factor analysis to replicate the factor structure. Respondents were asked to report the degree to which they usually do the things listed. The 5-point response scale ranged from "I usually don't do this at all" to "I usually do this a lot."

Internal LOC. Levenson's (1974) eight-item internal LOC scale was used. Both construct and discriminant validities have been determined for this measure (see Levenson, 1974). Test–retest reliabilities for the internal LOC scale range from .64 (Levenson, 1974) to .89 (Lam & Schaubroeck, 2000), sufficient to demonstrate internal consistency. In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient was .69.

Big Five (neuroticism and extraversion). The Big Five factors of neuroticism and extraversion were measured with the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1992). There are 10 items for each trait. Cronbach's α for each of the factors were all above .83. Convergent validity was determined by significant associations between each of the International Personality Item Pool personality markers and the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae, 1985). This scale has demonstrated reliability as well as validity (see Goldberg, 1992). In the present study, the internal consistency estimate for neuroticism was .90, and the estimate for extraversion was .75.

Control variables. Control variables were included that have been significantly related to work–family conflict in past research (Carlson, 1999). These variables are gender ($0 = males$, $1 = females$), age, marital status ($0 = married$ or *living with partner*, $1 = single, widowed, separated$ or *divorced*), average number of hours worked per week and work status of the spouse ($0 = existence of stay at home spouse/partner$, $1 = spouse works part-time$, $2 = spouse works full-time$, and $3 = no spouse$). Total family demands was also controlled for (total family demands was measured following a Responsibility for Dependents Scale—RFD—procedure developed by Rothausen, 1999). For each child, weights were assigned, so that as the child increased in age, the demand level decreased. A score of 1 was added if, in addition, the individual cared for an elderly parent at least 10 hours per week. Finally, because data were collected from a number of settings, the work group was controlled for.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, *SD*s, and correlations for each of the variables in the study. The reliability coefficients appear in the diagonal of the correlation matrix. The reliability coefficients range from .66 to .90.

Analytic Method (Hypotheses 1-8)

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the study hypotheses (Hypotheses 1a, 2a, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). Regressions were run separately with each of the dependent variables: S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC. For

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations (SDs), and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1 Gender	0.59	0.49	—																		
2 Age	39.23	9.49	-.24**	—																	
3 Marital status	0.28	0.45	.17*	-.19**	—																
4 Spouse work status	1.84	0.96	.48**	-.22**	.64**	—															
5 Hours worked	46.43	10.79	-.24**	-.06	-.04	-.17*	—														
6 Total family demands	5.61	5.61	-.31**	.21**	-.41**	-.45**	.03	—													
7 Work group	2.03	1.52	-.27**	.10	-.01	-.17*	.09	.03	—												
8 Active coping	3.75	0.48	-.08	.21**	-.15*	-.08	.06	.07	.03	.87											
9 Passive coping	1.92	0.52	.17*	-.12	.23**	.17*	-.18**	-.13*	-.03	-.35**	(.84)										
10 Venting coping	3.11	0.77	.23**	-.10	.12	.12	-.11	-.11	.05	.02	.10	(.66)									
11 Social support	3.46	0.73	.32**	-.11	.07	.12	-.10	-.13*	-.08	.30**	.00	.43**	(.88)								
12 Positive thinking	3.62	0.63	.05	-.02	.10	.13	.16*	-.16*	-.08	.52**	-.21**	-.01	.29**	(.72)							
13 Neuroticism	2.73	0.83	.16**	-.14*	.11	.10	-.15*	-.13	.07	-.17*	.35**	.35**	.04	-.31**	(.90)						
14 Internal locus of control	3.60	0.51	-.283**	.14*	-.12	-.19**	.15*	.09	.02	.29**	-.22**	-.12	.03	.28**	-.24**	(.69)					
15 Extraversion	3.18	0.76	.04	-.03	.03	.01	.12	-.09	.06	.10	-.12	.19**	.27**	.16*	.03	.18**	(.75)				
16 S-WFC	2.65	0.87	.10	-.06	-.01	-.05	-.15*	-.05	.08	-.02	.16*	.10	-.06	-.13	.44**	-.10	.04	(.88)			
17 S-FWC	1.93	0.62	-.06	.02	-.03	-.01	-.14*	.07	.04	-.16*	.34**	.12	-.08	-.23**	.30**	-.17*	-.16*	.31**	(.86)		
18 T-WFC	2.89	0.76	-.08	.02	-.17*	-.18**	.33**	.08	.06	.05	-.03	-.02	-.14*	-.01	.10	.08	.08	.50**	.08	(.87)	
19 T-FWC	2.10	0.68	-.10	.09	-.15*	-.11	-.04	.33**	-.04	.04	.10	-.02	-.03	-.07	-.02	-.02	-.14*	.14*	.47**	.25**	(.78)

Note. S-WFC = strain-based work-to-family conflict; T-WFC = time-based work-to-family conflict; S-FWC = strain-based family-to-work conflict; T-FWC = time-based family-to-work conflict. Categorical variables: gender (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*); marital status (0 = *married or living with partner*, 1 = *single, widowed, separated, or divorced*); spouse work status (1 = *spouse works part-time*, 2 = *spouse works full-time*, 3 = *no spouse*). N = 291. Reliability estimates are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.
*p < .05. **p < .01, two-tailed.

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each hypothesis, a series of four regressions (one for each of the four dependent measures) was computed. For Hypotheses 1a, 2a, 3, 4, and 5, the control variables were entered in Step 1 and then the coping variables (i.e., active coping, passive coping, social support coping, venting, and positive thinking) were entered in Step 2. For Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8, the control variables were entered in Step 1 and the personality variables (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, and internal LOC) were entered in Step 2.

Coping and Work–Family Conflict

Hypothesis 1a. It predicted that active coping would be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown in Table 2, Hypothesis 1a was not supported. Contrary to predictions, active coping was related to higher levels of S-WFC ($\beta = .192$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 2a. It predicted that passive coping would be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown in Table 2, Hypothesis 2a was supported for three of the four dependent measures. Passive coping was positively related to S-WFC ($\beta = .264$, $p < .01$), S-FWC ($\beta = .349$, $p < .01$), and T-FWC ($\beta = .199$, $p < .05$). Passive coping was not significantly related to T-WFC.

Hypothesis 3. It predicted that social support coping (instrumental and emotional) would be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown in Table 2, social support coping was significantly and negatively related to lower levels of T-WFC ($\beta = -.165$, $p < .05$). Social support coping was not significantly related to S-WFC, S-FWC, or T-FWC.

Hypothesis 4. It predicted that venting coping would be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). Venting coping was significantly related to higher levels of S-WFC ($\beta = .155, p < .05$) and was unrelated to the other three dependent measures (T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC).

Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5, which predicted that positive thinking coping would be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC), was not supported. Positive thinking was not related to work–family conflict.

Personality and Work–Family Conflict

Hypothesis 6. It predicted that neuroticism would be positively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown in

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Active, Passive, Social Support, Venting, and Positive Thinking Coping Measures as Predictors of Work–Family Conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC)

	Work–Family Conflict			
	Work-to-Family		Family-to-Work	
Independent Variables	S-WFC	T-WFC	S-FWC	T-FWC
Step 1				
Gender	.244**	.124	−.106	−.033
Age	−.044	.015	−.032	.027
Marital status	.026	−.120	−.021	−.076
Spouse work status	−.155	−.093	.072	.094
Hours worked	.148*	.340**	−.169*	−.028
Family demands	−.059	−.007	.036	.306**
Work group	.137	.062	.064	−.016
ΔR^2	.077*	.144**	.038	.102**
Step 2				
Active coping	.192*	.108	−.042	.049
Passive coping	.264**	.121	.349**	.199*
Social support	−.135	−.165*	−.032	.011
Venting	.155*	.113	.128	.021
Positive thinking	−.131	.011	−.075	.018
ΔR^2	.095**	.031	.162**	.032
Total R^2	.172**	.176	.200**	.134
F	3.348**	3.429**	4.020**	2.489**

Note. N = 291. S-WFC = strain-based work-to-family conflict; T-WFC = time-based work-to-family conflict; S-FWC = strain-based family-to-work conflict; T-FWC = time-based family-to-work conflict. Categorical variables: gender (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*); marital status (0 = *married or living with partner*, 1 = *single, widowed, separated, or divorced*); spouse work status (1 = *spouse works part-time*, 2 = *spouse works full-time*, 3 = *no spouse*).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 3, Hypothesis 6 was supported for three of the four dependent variables. Neuroticism was positively related to S-WFC ($\beta = .466$, $p < .001$), T-WFC ($\beta = .151$, $p < .05$), and S-FWC ($\beta = .288$, $p < .01$), and Neuroticism was not significantly related to T-FWC.

Hypothesis 7. It predicted that extraversion would be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 7 was not supported; extraversion was not related to work–family outcomes.

Hypothesis 8. It predicted that an internal LOC would be negatively related to work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC). As shown

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Internal LOC) Predicting Work–Family Conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC)

| | Work–Family Conflict | | | |
| | Work-to-Family | | Family-to-Work | |
Independent Variables	S-WFC	T-WFC	S-FWC	T-FWC
Step 1				
Gender	.244**	.123	−.165	−.033
Age	−.045	.015	.009	.027
Marital status	.025	−.120	−.052	−.075
Spouse work status	−.156	−.093	.083	.094
Hours worked	.148*	.329**	−.096	−.028
Family demands	−.059	−.013	.042	.306**
Work group	.134	.076	.017	−.017
ΔR^2	.076*	.144**	.037	.102**
Step 2				
Neuroticism	.466**	.151*	.288**	.014
Extraversion	−.049	.003	−.117	−.102
Internal LOC	−.006	.040	−.092	−.041
ΔR^2	.196**	.020	.107**	.013
Total R^2	.272	.164	.144	.116
F	7.297**	3.814**	3.275**	2.549**

Note. $N = 291$. LOC = locus of control; S-WFC = strain-based work-to-family conflict; T-WFC = time-based work-to-family conflict; S-FWC = strain-based family-to-work conflict; T-FWC = time-based family-to-work conflict. Categorical variables: gender (0 = male, 1 = female); marital status (0 = married or living with partner, 1 = single, widowed, separated, or divorced); spouse work status (1 = spouse works part-time, 2 = spouse works full-time, 3 = no spouse).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

in Table 3, Hypothesis 8 was not supported. An internal LOC was not significantly related to work–family conflict.

Summary of Analysis Method (Hypotheses 9-11)

The Preacher and Hayes (2004) mediation macro for SPSS was used to test for mediation. Their technique expands on the Baron and Kenny (1986) method by directly testing the significance of indirect mediation effects using a bootstrap approach to obtain confidence intervals (CIs). A bootstrapping of 1,000, with a 95% CI was specified, meaning that the macro provides a 95%

CI for the population value of the mediation by taking 1,000 samples from the data, sampling with replacement, and computing the indirect effect in each sample. The effect size point sample and standard errors computed were the mean effect size and mean sample standard error over the 1,000 samples. If the CI does not include 0, one can conclude that the effect size is significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$. Although the basic concepts of Baron and Kenny (1986) are used in the calculation, the analysis is enhanced by (a) testing the mediation for significance and (b) providing effect sizes (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). For each mediation test that was computed, I controlled for the variables gender, age, marital status, spouse work status, hours worked, total family demands, and work group.

Coping Mediates Personality and Work–Family Conflict

Hypotheses 9a, 9b, 10a, 10b, 11a, and 11b predicted that the relationships between personality (neuroticism, extraversion, and internal LOC) and work–family conflict (S-WFC, T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC) would be mediated by active and passive coping. Hypothesis 9a was supported for one of the four outcome variables. The relationship between neuroticism and higher levels of S-FWC was partially mediated by higher levels of passive coping (CI = [.03, .13], $p < .05$). Hypotheses 9b, 10a, 10b, 11a, and 11b were not supported.

Discussion

One of the contributions of the current study was the examination of coping as a possible mediator in the relationship between personality and work–family conflict. Previous research reporting a positive relationship between neuroticism and work–family conflict (e.g., Bruck & Allen, 2003) was of theoretical importance, but was limited practically because personality is considered to be relatively stable in nature and unlikely to change. Passive coping was one of the mechanisms through which neuroticism was related to higher levels of S-FWC. Passive coping did not mediate the relationship between neuroticism and WFC (strain based or time based), suggesting that it may have less of an effect on spillover from work to family because one has less control over the work domain. Passive coping appears to be less detrimental when a domain is not controllable (Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; Forsythe & Compas, 1987; Vitaliano, DeWolfe, Maiuro, Russo, & Katon, 1990). Passive coping also did not mediate the relationship between neuroticism and either direction of time-based conflict (T-WFC and T-FWC).

It is possible that neuroticism is related to inefficient use of time, which in turn leads to higher levels of time-based conflict.

Another important contribution of the current study was examining the relationship between coping and work–family conflict, one of the least studied areas in the work–family field. The finding that passive coping was related to higher levels of work–family conflict suggests that organizations should train employees on how to identify their typical coping styles and how to avoid coping passively.

The fact that active coping was not related to work–family conflict (T-WFC, S-FWC, and T-FWC) and was related to higher levels of S-WFC was unexpected. Active coping is typically effective only when one has control over the stressor. Supporting this notion, Cunningham and De La Rosa (2008) found that when stressors originate in controllable areas (e.g., high time demands), proactive measures protect the individual from experiencing strain. Researchers have contended that the work sphere is less controllable than the family domain. Therefore, active coping used in the work domain may be counterproductive, resulting in strain that spills over into family life. Further research is needed to investigate how perceived controllability over work and family stressors affects the impact of active and passive coping mechanisms on each domain, influencing work–family outcomes.

Social support was related to lower levels of T-WFC and not related to T-FWC, S-WFC, or S-FWC. In the current research, social support was measured in general terms, that is, "I get help and advice from other people," instead of being specific to the domain in which the support originated. It is possible that this particular sample received a large proportion of their support from coworkers and managers, which is likely to be more instrumental in nature, which in turn was related to lower levels of time-based work interfering with family. Future research should continue to investigate coping within domain to assess effectiveness of different coping styles when used at home and at work.

Venting was positively related to S-WFC. Because venting refers to "expressing negative feelings," it may cause an increase in cardiovascular activity, leading to negative health outcomes. Venting may affect relationships negatively, reducing one's available support for more useful means of social support such as instrumental support. It is interesting that venting affected work interfering with the home domain and not the reverse. It is likely that individuals feel that it is only acceptable to vent at home and not at work. It makes sense that strain-based conflict is affected because, as discussed earlier, coping is an attempt to manage stressors in order to reduce experienced strain. However, because the data were collected at one point in time, we cannot be sure about causality.

Positive thinking did not mitigate the experience of work–family conflict. Perhaps, similar to the limited effectiveness of active coping, it could be that when employees perceive work–family stressors to be uncontrollable, it is difficult to reappraise the situation. Regardless of how someone appraises one's work and family demands—positively or negatively—there are still the same number of demands with the same number of resources. Future research should investigate whether positive thinking is more helpful when individuals perceive their stressors to be more controllable.

Neuroticism was related to higher levels of work interfering with family (S-WFC and T-WFC) and strain-based family interfering with work (S-FWC), consistent with past research (e.g., Bruck & Allen, 2003; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). This information would suggest that people high on neuroticism might be trained to perceive events in their environment more positively and to actively manage their stressors in order to reduce the amount of strain experienced.

Employees with an internal LOC were not less likely to experience work–family conflict, contrary to findings by Andreassi and Thompson (2007), who found that an internal LOC was negatively related to work interfering with family and family interfering with work. It is possible that, in the current study, the significant overlap in the relationship of LOC and neuroticism to outcome measures, such as stress, resulted in a suppressed relationship between an internal LOC and work–family conflict (see Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002, for a discussion of the overlap in constructs). Future research should continue to examine internal LOC, controlling for neuroticism, to ensure that the results are because of an internal LOC and not because of its relationship with neuroticism. Similar to the findings for active coping, the results suggest that people high in LOC may not be successful managing work and family demands because of the uncontrollable nature of the work–family stressor.

Extraversion was also not related to work–family conflict. Similar to the active coping and internal LOC explanations, there might be only so much one can do, and just so many resources available to help with multiple work and life demands.

There was no support for coping (neither active nor passive) mediating the relationships between extraversion, internal LOC, and work–family conflict. Moreover, there was no support for neuroticism leading to higher levels of work–family conflict through lower levels of active coping, suggesting that the detrimental aspect of neuroticism is coping in more passive ways, not necessarily coping less actively. The findings also suggest that neuroticism is

directly related to work–family outcome measures, and not only because people high on this trait are coping more passively.

Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional nature of the data prevents any conclusions about causality. Therefore, it is important for future research to longitudinally examine the relationships among personality, coping, and work–family outcomes measures. There is also the possibility of common-method bias because of the self-report nature of the study. However, because the results of this study were consistent with past research, this bias does not seem to be a flaw in the current research.

Passive coping mediated the relationship between neuroticism and strain-based family interfering with work conflict. Follow-up studies might investigate the mechanism through which neuroticism affects time-based work–family conflict. Perhaps those high in neuroticism have perfectionist tendencies, which cause procrastination, leading to time-based conflict. An examination of the Big Five traits at the subfactor level might elucidate this relationship. Understanding the pathways better would advance theory and facilitate organizational intervention.

Acknowledgments

Author's Note

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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