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Sources of Conflict Between Work and Family Roles[1]

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An examination of the literature on conflict between work and family roles suggests that work-family conflict exists when: (a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another. A model of work-family conflict is proposed, and a series of research propositions is presented.

The relationship between employees' work lives and their nonwork pursuits has undergone recent scrutiny (Kanter, 1977; Voydanoff, 1980). One element of the work-nonwork interface is the conflict a person may experience between the work role and other life roles. Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) identified such interrole conflict as a significant source of strain for nearly one third of the men in their national sample. Yet the bulk of their pioneering research focused on conflict within the work role, and later writings (Katz & Kahn, 1978) continued to devote little attention to the dynamics underlying interrole conflict.

Recent literature reviews have examined work and nonwork roles from a number of different perspectives (Burke & Bradshaw, 1981; Kabanoff, 1980; Kanter, 1977; Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1980; Staines, 1980; Voydanoff, 1980). However, none of these reviews has systematically evaluated the empirical research on conflict between work and nonwork roles. Consistent with Kanter's (1977) observations, it is proposed here that rising numbers of two-income households (Gordon & Kammeyer, 1980; Johnson, 1980), a heightened concern for employees' quality of work life (Walton, 1973), possible changes in the meaning of success (Tarnowieski, 1973), and changing expectations regarding self-fulfillment (Yankelovich, 1981) suggest the need to review and integrate this steadily growing body of literature.

Boundaries and Organization of the Review

The present paper examines sources of conflict between the work role and the family role. Therefore, interrole conflict that does not directly involve the work role is omitted from the review. (The one exception to this rule is the inclusion of conflict between nonhome and home roles — conceptually similar to work and family roles — that was identified in Hall's, 1972, research on married women.) In addition, conflict between the work role and the "leisure" role is excluded from the review. Although several studies have addressed the possibility of conflict between work and leisure (Staines & O'Connor, 1980) or between work and "self" (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a, 1979b), the majority of the literature has examined interference between work and family responsibilities.

The review is generally limited to studies in which work-family conflict is directly assessed

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and empirical data are presented. Nonempirical research and studies that measure related phenomena (e.g., marital satisfaction, social alienation) are occasionally included to highlight convergences with the more directly relevant research on work-family conflict.

The review is concerned with sources or antecedents of work-family conflict. Although the impact of work-family conflict on coping strategies (Gilbert & Holahan, 1982; Hall, 1972) and psychological well-being (Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980) is unquestionably important, an extensive treatment of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper.

The focus here on sources of conflict between work and family domains does not imply that work and family cannot be mutually supportive. Nevertheless, the opportunities for interference between these domains need to be examined and understood more thoroughly. Moreover, despite the blurring of work and family activities in some situations, work and family roles still have distinct norms and requirements that may be incompatible with one another. Thus, the analytical separation of work and family is maintained in this review.

The Meaning of Work-Family Conflict

Role Conflict

Kahn et al. have defined role conflict as the "simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (1964, p. 19). They identified different types of conflict within the work role: intrasender; intersender; and person-role conflict. In each form of conflict, one set of role pressures is in some sense *incompatible* with the other set of pressures.

Interrole Conflict

Interrole conflict is a form of role conflict in which the sets of opposing pressures arise from participation in different roles.

> In such cases of interrole conflict, the role pressures associated with membership in one organization are in conflict with pressures stemming from membership in other groups. Demands from role senders on the job for overtime or take-home work may conflict with pressures from one's wife to give attention to family affairs during evening hours. The conflict arises between the role of the focal person as worker and his role as husband and father (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 20).

Kahn et al. (1964) described a specific instance of interrole conflict in this passage. In a more general sense, interrole conflict is experienced when pressures arising in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role. Note again that role pressure incompatibility exists when participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in another role.

Work-Family Conflict

Based on the work of Kahn et al. (1964), the following definition of work-family conflict is offered: a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role. An examination of the literature suggests three major forms of work-family conflict: (a) time-based conflict, (b) strain-based conflict, and (c) behavior-based conflict.

Figure 1 presents a model of the sources of work-family conflict. The model proposes that any role characteristic that affects a person's time involvement, strain, or behavior within a role can produce conflict between that role and another role. The model also proposes that role pressures (and hence work-family conflict) are intensified when the work and family roles are salient or central to the person's self-concept and when there are strong negative sanctions for noncompliance with role demands.

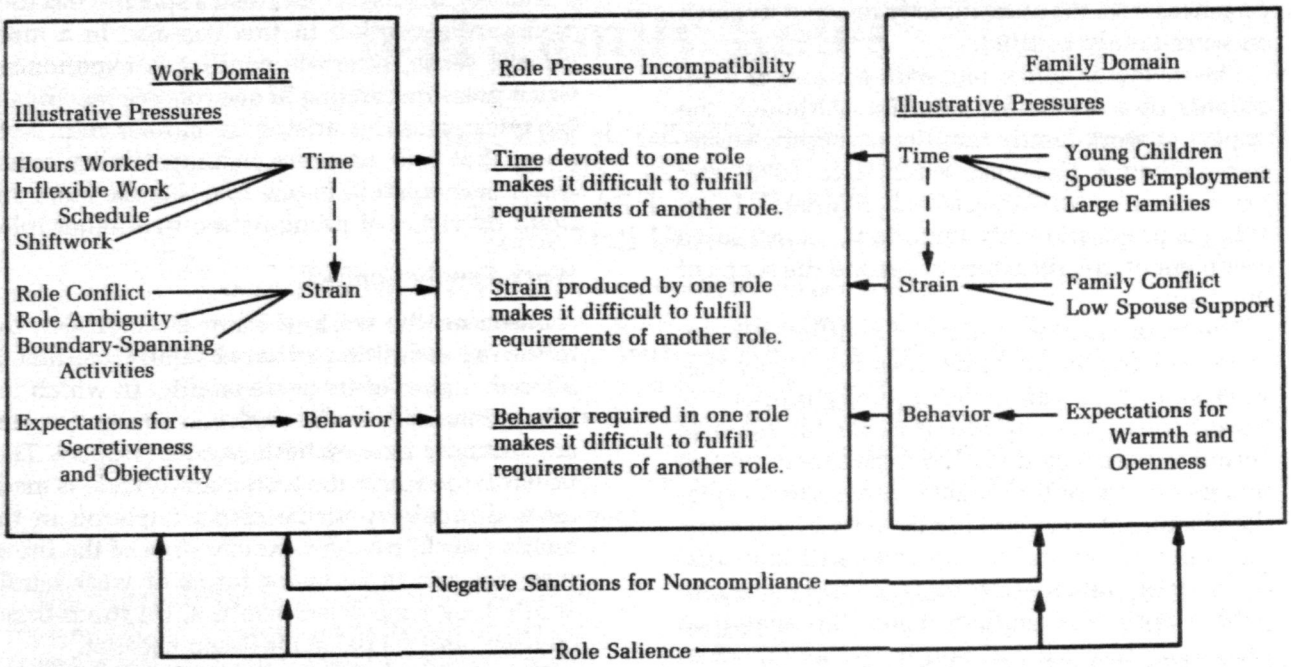
An Integration of the Research on Work-Family Conflict

Studies that have investigated work-family conflict are presented in Table 1.

Time-Based Conflict

Multiple roles may compete for a person's time. Time spent on activities within one role generally cannot be devoted to activities within another role. Time-based conflict is consistent with the excessive work time and schedule conflict dimensions identified by Pleck et al. (1980) and role overload identified by Kahn et al. (1964). Time-

Figure 1
Work-Family Role Pressure Incompatibility



based conflict can take two forms: (1) time pressures associated with membership in one role may make it physically impossible to comply with expectations arising from another role; (2) pressures also may produce a preoccupation with one role even when one is physically attempting to meet the demands of another role (Bartolome & Evans, 1979).

Work Related Sources of Conflict. Work-family conflict is positively relate to the number of hours worked per week (Burke et al. 1980b; Keith & Schafer, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980) as well as the number of hours worked/commuted per week (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). Work-family conflict also has been associated with the amount and frequency of overtime and the presence and irregularity of shiftwork (Pleck et al., 1980).

In addition to the sheer number of hours worked per week, the inflexibility of the work schedule can produce work-family conflict (Pleck et al., 1980). Indeed, work schedule control was used by Herman and Gyllstrom (1977) to explain why more severe work-family tension was experienced by university professional staff members than by faculty members. The faculty members worked more hours than the staff members but presumably had more control over their schedules.

However, it cannot be assumed that flexible working hours will inevitably reduce the work-family conflict of all employees. In their thorough investigation of a flexitime program in a government agency, Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) concluded that the "modest" schedule flexibility in the agency they examined may have been insufficient to reduce the conflict of those with primary childcare responsibility, such as employed mothers. Thus, the degree of flexibility permitted and the needs of the employees may jointly affect the prevalence of work-family conflict.

Several studies have revealed positive relationships between an employee's Type A behavior and work-family conflict (Burke et al., 1979, 1980a; Werbel, 1978). These relationships may reflect the tendency of extreme Type A employees to work the longest hours and travel the most extensively (Howard, Cunningham, & Rechnitzer, 1977). Thus an employee's personal orientation may affect work-family conflict by virtue of its influence on time commitment to the work role.

Table 1
Characteristics of Studies Investigating Work-Family Conflict

Author	*Sample*	*Type of Conflict*[a]	*No./Type of Items*[c]
Beutell & Greenhaus (1980, 1982, 1983)	Married female college students	Home-nonhome[b]	3 OE/CE
Bohen & Viveros-Long (1981)	Employees of two federal agencies	Job-family role strain	19 CE
Burke, Weir, & Duwors (1979, 1980a, 1980b)	Male Canadian administrators and/or wives	Impact of husband's job on home/family (assessed by wife)	50 CE
Cartwright (1978)	Female physicians	Work-family role harmony	1 CE
Greenhaus & Kopelman (1981)	Male alumni of technological college	Work-family[b]	1 OE/CE
Gross, Mason, & McEachern (1958)	Male school superintendents	Time allocation of after-office hours	1 CE/OE
Gordon & Hall (1974); Hall (1972, 1975); Hall & Gordon (1973)	Female college graduates	Home-nonhome[b]	1 OE
Herman & Gyllstrom (1977)	University employees	Work-home maintenance[b]	1 CE
		Work-family conflict	1 CE
		Work-family tension	1 CE
Holahan & Gilbert (1979a)	Dual-career couples	Professional-spouse[b]	3 CE
		Professional-parent	4 CE
Holahan & Gilbert (1979b)	Employed married women	See Holahan and Gilbert (1979a)	See Holahan and Gilbert (1979a)
Jones & Butler (1980)	Married male U.S. sailors	Family/work role incompatibility	2 CE
Keith & Schafer (1980)	Dual-career couples	Work-family role strain	4 CE
Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly (1983)			
Study 1	Male alumni of technological college	Interrole conflict	4 CE
Study 2	Employed college students	Interrole conflict	8 CE
Locksley (1980)	Males and females from national survey data base	Work-marriage interference	1 CE
Pleck et al, (1980)	Employees from 1977 Quality of employment survey	Work-family: excessive worktime schedule conflicts fatigue/irritability	1 CE/OE
Werbel (1978)	Employees (96% male) of 9 companies	Interrole conflict between work and family	4 CE
Willmott (1971)	Male employees of two companies in Great Britain	Work-family/home[b]	1 CE
		Preoccupation with work at home	1 CE

[a]Although not all of the researchers used the term "work-family conflict" to describe their variables, the conflict types presented in this table are, in our view, consistent with our definition of work-family conflict.

[b]Other forms of interrole conflict not relevant to this review were also assessed in the study.

[c]OE = open-ended items; CE = closed-ended items.

Family-Related Sources of Conflict. As Figure 1 illustrates, family role characteristics that require a person to spend large amounts of time in family activities can produce work-family conflict. Consistent with this proposition, Herman and Gyllstrom (1977) found that married persons experienced more work-family conflict than unmarried persons. In a similar vein, it might be expected that parents would experience more work-family conflict than nonparents. Although support for this expectation has been mixed (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a; Pleck et al., 1980), having the major responsibility for child rearing may be the significant contributor to work-family conflict (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981).

Several studies have found that parents of younger children (who are likely to be particularly demanding of their parents' time) experience more conflict than do parents of older children (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1980; Greenhaus & Kopelman, 1981; Pleck et al., 1980). Large families, which are likely to be more time demanding than small families, also have been associated with high levels of work-family conflict (Cartwright, 1978; Keith & Schafer, 1980).

Furthermore, Beutell and Greenhaus (1982) reported that large families produce conflict primarily for women whose husbands are highly involved in their own work careers. It is plausible that a highly career-involved man devotes little time to his family, thereby increasing the already heavy time demands placed on his wife by a large family. Consistent with this notion, Keith and Schafer (1980) reported that a woman's level of work-family conflict is directly related to the number of hours her husband works per week.

Family role pressures that impinge on women also may be a function of the number of hours that they work outside the home. For example, Hall and Gordon (1973) found that married women who are employed part time were more likely to experience home-related conflicts than women who are employed full time. Hall and Gordon observed that women with part-time jobs may be spread very thin and experience role overload; not only do they work outside the home, but they may be full-time housewives as well. It may be that part-time employment (for women at least) does not necessarily lighten family time demands and might even increase the total array of pressures to which the person is exposed.

The effects of a woman's work pattern on her husband's conflict is less clear-cut. A husband's level of work-family conflict does not seem to be affected by whether his wife is employed outside the home (Greenhaus & Kopelman, 1981; Locksley, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980). However, husbands of managerial/professional women have been found to experience more intense work-family conflict than husbands of nonmanagerial/nonprofessional women (Greenhaus & Kopelman, 1981). It is possible that women who are employed in managerial or professional positions work sufficiently longer hours to produce intense pressures on the husband to participate more heavily in family activities which, in turn, may conflict with his work responsibilities.

Summary. The findings of the empirical research are generally consistent with the notion of time-based conflict. Work schedules, work orientation, marriage, children, and spouse employment patterns may all produce pressures to participate extensively in the work role or the family role. Conflict is experienced when these time pressures are incompatible with the demands of the other role domain.

Strain-Based Conflict

A second form of work-family conflict involves role-produced strain. There is considerable evidence that work stressors can produce strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability (Brief, Schuler, & Van Sell, 1981; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980). Strain-based conflict, consistent with the fatigue/irritability dimension identified by Pleck et al. (1980), exists when strain in one role affects one's performance in another role. The roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another. Therefore, the model illustrated in Figure 1 proposes that any work or family role characteristic that produces strain can contribute to work-family conflict.

Work-Related Sources of Conflict. Ambiguity and/or conflict within the work role have been found to be positively related to work-family conflict (Jones & Butler, 1980; Kopelman et al. 1983). (See Burke et al., 1980b, for exception.) In addition, low levels of leader support and interaction facilitation appear to produce work-family conflict (Jones & Butler, 1980).

Pleck et al. (1980) reported that physical and psychological work demands were positively related to several types of work-family conflict. In addition, Burke et al. (1980b) found that the following work stressors were related to work-family conflict: rate of work environment changes; participation in boundary-spanning activities; stress in communications; and mental concentration required at work.

In addition, Jones and Butler (1980) found that work-family conflict was negatively related to task challenge, variety, and importance and was positively related to task autonomy. Burke et al. (1980b), however, found no relationship between several job scope variables and conflict. Additional studies finding a negative job scope-conflict relationship would provide further support for the idea of strain-based conflict, because some employees who work on nonchallenging, routine, unimportant tasks experience high levels of strain (Brief et al., 1981) that in turn may produce work-family conflict. The positive relationship between autonomy and conflict reported by Jones and Butler is more difficult to explain, especially because autonomy in their study was related to such positive outcomes as satisfaction with the job and the organization. Although it could be that excessively high levels of autonomy can produce qualitative overload and strain (and therefore conflict), a determination of the impact of autonomy and discretion on strain and conflict awaits additional research.

It might be noted that Bartolome and Evans' (1980) observations also are consistent with the concept of strain-based conflict. Referring to the "negative emotional spillover" from work to nonwork, Bartolome and Evans suggest that certain stressful events at work (specifically, coping with a new job, poor job-person fit, and disappointment due to unfulfilled expectations) produce fatigue, tension, worry, or frustration that make it difficult to pursue a satisfying nonwork life.

Additional indirect evidence is provided by the finding that job burnout can have a debilitating effect on the quality of an employee's family life (Jackson & Maslach, 1982). In a similar vein, Kanter (1977) has observed that employees who experience "interaction fatigue" at work may withdraw from personal contact at home.

In short, a variety of work stressors have been associated with work-family conflict. However, it is important to note that extensive time involvement in a particular role also can produce strain symptoms. Therefore, as the dotted arrow in Figure 1 implies, long and inflexible work hours, extensive travel, and overtime may indirectly produce strain-based conflict as well as time-based conflict. Although conceptually distinct, then, it is likely that time-based and strain-based conflict share several common sources within the work domain.

Family-Related Sources of Conflict. Conflict within the family has been associated with high levels of work-family conflict (Kopelman et al., 1983; Study 1), whereas supportive spouses may protect each other from experiencing high levels of work-family conflict (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a). Furthermore, Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) found that a husband with profeminist attitudes (and presumably supportive behaviors) may buffer his wife from the conflict associated with extensive involvement outside the home.

Furthermore, Beutell and Greenhaus (1982) found that women whose career orientations are dissimilar from those of their husbands experience relatively intense conflict between home and nonhome roles. Husband-wife disagreement about family roles (Chadwick, Albrecht, & Kunz, 1976) and husband-wife dissimilarity in attitudes toward a wife's employment status (Eiswirth-Neems & Handal, 1978) also can contribute to family tension. Presumably, spouse dissimilarity in fundamental beliefs can weaken the mutual support system and produce stress.

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that strain, conflict, or the absence of support in the family unit may contribute to work-family conflict. As with the work domain, family role characteristics that produce extensive time commitment also may directly or indirectly produce strain (e.g., the presence of young children, Gove & Geerken, 1977).

Behavior-Based Conflict

Specific patterns of in-role behavior may be incompatible with expectations regarding behavior in another role. It has been suggested, for example, that the male, managerial stereotype emphasizes self-reliance, emotional stability,

aggressiveness, and objectivity (Schein, 1973). Family members, on the other hand, may expect a person to be warm, nurturant, emotional, and vulnerable in his or her interactions with them. If a person is unable to adjust behavior to comply with the expectations of different roles, he or she is likely to experience conflict between the roles.

To the authors' knowledge, there is no empirical research that directly assesses the prevalence of behavior-based conflict. However, Burke and Weir (cited in Burke and Bradshaw, 1981) have proposed that the behavioral styles that males exhibit at work (impersonality, logic, power, authority) may be incompatible with behaviors desired by their children within the family domain. In a similar vein, Bartolome (1972) has suggested that many young male managers feel caught between two incompatible behavior/value systems: the emotional restrictedness presumably reinforced at work and the openness expected by family members. Similar conclusions have been reached by Greiff and Munter (1980), Steiner (1972), and Walker (1976).

Directions for Future Research

In the interest of stimulating future research activities, a number of research propositions are presented. Although the propositions vary somewhat in specificity, they are all intended to pose broad research questions that currently appear to be unaddressed in the empirical literature.

Proposition 1: Simultaneous pressures from both work and family roles are necessary to arouse work-family conflict.

There seems to be a fundamental discrepancy between the conceptual definition of interrole conflict proposed by Kahn et al. (1964) and the empirical investigations regarding the antecedents of work-family conflict. It is the presence of two strong opposing role pressures (in this case, from the work and the family domains) that produces interrole conflict. However, the existing research typically has investigated the impact of *either* work pressures or family pressures on work-family conflict. Rarely, if at all, have the *joint* effects of specific work and family pressures been studied.

Imagine an employee who puts in long and stressful hours in his or her job. In an objective sense, the person's work activities may interfere with his or her participation in family activities. However, if there is no strong pressure to participate in family activities, the person is not likely to experience conflict between work and family roles. As pressures to engage in family activities from other role senders and/or from self-sender expectations grow stronger, the opposing pressures may become equally strong and conflict may be experienced.

A recognition of the interactive effects of work and family role pressures may help explain some of the inconsistencies in research results. For example, although Jones and Butler (1980) found relationships between work-family conflict and several job-related variables (challenge, variety, importance, role ambiguity/role conflict), Burke et al. (1980b) reported nonsignificant relationships among similar variables. It is possible, however, that Jones and Butler's respondents (U.S. sailors on deployment) experienced greater family stress than did Burke et al.'s subjects (administrators of Canadian correctional facilities) and that these additional family strains exacerbated the impact of the specific job characteristics on work-family conflict.

In a similar vein, although several studies have reported declining levels of conflict at later family stages, Hall (1975) found that the presence of conflict increased at more advanced family stages. It is noteworthy that for Hall's sample (female college graduates), home pressures *and* work pressures (variables that other studies did not jointly assess) tended to increase at later stages. It is likely that the combined effect of rising work and home pressures produced the increased prevalence of conflict. In other words, differences among samples in unmeasured role pressures can strengthen or attenuate relationships between measured role pressures and conflict. Additional research is needed to determine the specific role pressure variables in each of two or more domains that combine to produce high levels of conflict. Multivariate analyses are necessary to identify the relative importance of different sources of conflict within a particular domain and to determine the joint impact of work and family pressures on work-family conflict.

Proposition 2: Self-perceptions of role requirements are significant sources of pressures within a given domain.

Self-sender or reflexive expectations are important in two respects. First, a person's expecta-

tions and values can shape his or her role behavior (Graen, 1976; Hall, 1972). In addition, discrepancies between self-expectations and others' expectations within a given domain can produce strain (Kahn et al., 1964) that may result in work-family conflict.

Presumably, one source of self-expectations is a person's beliefs, values, and personality traits. Although relationships between personality/attitudinal variables and conflict have been somewhat inconclusive (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982, 1983; Cartwright, 1978; Gordon & Hall, 1974), one interesting variable, Type A characteristics, has been consistently associated with high levels of work-family conflict (Burke et al., 1979, 1980a; Werbel, 1978).

It is possible that persons who exhibit Type A behavior are more susceptible to work-related strain (Ivancevich, Matteson, & Preston, 1982; Schuler, 1982) than are Type B persons. Alternatively, Type A persons may work longer hours, demand more of themselves, or place greater importance on work than Type B persons. In any event, it seems clear that role pressures are not produced exclusively by other role senders but rather are due, at least in part, to individual differences in a focal person's beliefs and values. More research is needed to determine the impact of specific personal characteristics on role attitudes/behaviors that affect the arousal of work-family conflict.

Proposition 3A: Role salience is positively related to the level of work-family conflict.

It is likely that the salience of a role has a direct impact on pressures within the particular domain. Hall's (1976) model of psychological success suggests that as a person's career subidentity grows, he or she becomes more ego-involved in the role and may exhibit higher levels of motivation. It seems reasonable to expect that an expanded family subidentity would produce similar consequences within the family domain. The resultant ego-involvement and motivation, in turn, may increase time commitment and/or produce strain that may interfere with another role. In effect, role salience influences self-sender expectations that can affect role behavior and ultimately role pressures and conflict.

There is some evidence of a positive relationship between the salience of the work role and work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Kopelman, 1981). However, other related concepts such as career aspirations and career commitment (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a), level of interest in work (Locksley, 1980), and the perception of work as a career versus a job (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979b) have not shown consistently positive relationships with work-family conflict. Research that tests the linkages among role salience, self-sender expectations, role pressures, and work-family conflict would be most helpful.

Proposition 3B: Role salience moderates the relationship between externally-produced role pressures and work-family conflict.

This proposition is based on the assumption that persons for whom a role is highly salient are particularly responsive to environmental pressures because success and rewards in the domain are so important. Therefore, there should be stronger relationships between role demands (e.g., pressure from a boss to complete a project, pressure from a spouse to clean the house) and time commitment and/or strain when the role is highly salient than when the role is not central to the person's self-concept.

One implication of Propositions 3A and 3B is that all other things equal, persons for whom work and family are *both* highly salient would be particularly susceptible to work-family conflict. This line of reasoning suggests that employees who use work as an escape from family (Bartolome, 1983) do not experience much work-family conflict: they may not be responsive to pressures in the family domain.

Proposition 4: Work-family conflict is strongest when there are negative sanctions for noncompliance with role demands.

The absence of strong sanctions for noncompliance may reduce pressures to comply with role demands (Gross et al., 1958). Therefore, environmental characteristics (e.g., union contract, academic tenure) that reduce the sanctions for noncompliance are likely to attenuate the impact of role pressures on time, strain, and behavior.

Men traditionally have experienced stronger sanctions for noncompliance with work role demands than for noncompliance with family demands. As one male employee observed, "Work makes clear, objective calls on you, and the penalties if you don't meet them are explicit and obvious. The demands, requests, pleas that your family gives you are not so clear and obvious.

And the penalties aren't quite so immediate" (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981, p. 159).

Women, on the other hand, traditionally may have been exposed to stronger sanctions for noncompliance with family demands. Thus, Rosen and Jerdee (1974) found that when faced with competing demands at work and at home, less commitment to the job is expected for women than for men. The boundaries between work and family roles are, in effect, asymmetrically permeable for women and men (Pleck, 1977). It is not yet clear whether societal sanctions regarding work and family role performance by women are changing.

Sanctions for noncompliance may arise not only from other role senders but from the focal person as well (i.e., guilt). If sanctions do strengthen the impact of role pressures, it would be expected that, all other things equal, persons who are exposed to strong sanctions in both work and family roles would be most susceptible to work-family conflict.

Proposition 5A: The directionality of work-family confict is perceived only after a response to the conflict situation is made.

The definition of work-family conflict used here specifies the existence of mutually incompatible role pressures. No causal direction of role interference is implied in this definition. Yet a directional assumption of role interference (usually work interfering with family) often is implicit in the theory and the measurement of conflict and may be perceived by the focal person as well.

It is proposed that an individual must respond to the conflict (or anticipate a response) before an attribution of directional interference can be made. For example, a person who responds to simultaneous role pressures by devoting more time to work at the expense of family is likely to perceive that work interfered with family. Had the response to the conflict been different (e.g., attending a family picnic rather than a Saturday morning work meeting), the person would be more likely to attribute the conflict to the family domain. This raises the interesting question of whether employees "blame" (Beehr & Love, 1980) the perceived source of the conflict and whether the consequences of conflict vary as a function of this attribution.

Hall (1972) has argued that men enact their roles sequentially (work *then* family) whereas women, because of structural expectations, are faced with simultaneous (work *and* family) demands. Although this might suggest that women experience higher levels of work-family conflict than men, this expectation is not unequivocably supported in the literature. However, based on the earlier discussion of a possible gender difference in sanctions, the direction of role interference may vary by gender.

In order to address these issues, it is necessary to develop conflict scales that contain a balance of items that reflect the different directions of role interference. Furthermore, research that spans a significant portion of time before and after the conflict response is elicited also is required to investigate questions regarding attributions of causality to conflict episodes.

Proposition 5B: Role senders attribute the effects of work-family conflict to the internal dispositions of the focal person in a domain-specific fashion.

Research on attribution theory suggests that the actor (focal person) and the observer (role sender) may make differential attributions regarding the causes of the focal person's behavior (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). The actor is prone to make situational attributions, whereas the observer is likely to attribute the behavior to the internal dispositions of the focal person. In the context of work-family conflict, the focal person may attribute role attitude or performance changes to work-family interference, whereas the role sender may attribute performance deficits to the qualities (ability, motivation) of the focal person.

Furthermore, role senders typically observe the focal person's performance within one domain (i.e., work *or* family). Thus, the attributions of role senders tend to be domain specific. Attempts of the focal person to explain poor (work/family) performance in terms of extra-domain variables (family/work) are likely to be met with a good deal of skepticism. The impact of such differential attributions on the performance appraisal process seems worthy of future research.

Proposition 6A: Work-family conflict is related to a person's level of "career success."

It is often imagined that the hard-driving, successful employee is most susceptible to conflict between work and family roles. This notion is consistent with the model presented here to the extent that career success requires extensive time commitment to the work role and/or produces

strain or a rigid adherence to behavioral expectations. Although there is no empirical research that directly tests this assertion, several research programs are clearly relevant.

Korman and his colleagues have asked why so many "successful" managers are apparently alienated from themselves and/or others (Korman & Korman, 1980; Korman, Wittig-Berman, & Lang, 1981). Their data suggest that the inability to meet personal needs (because of disconfirmed expectations and contradictory role demands) and the loss of affiliative satisfaction (perhaps due to an extensive commitment to work at the expense of family) produce social and personal alienation (Korman et al., 1981). The present authors feel that the relationship between the level of career success and the independent variables in Korman's model needs to be established by future research.

Research by Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974) revealed that "successful" Bell System managers (those who reached middle management) exhibited increasing involvement in *both* work and (to a lesser extent) marital family, a condition that may arouse work-family conflict. It is interesting to note that a decline in marital happiness has been traced to a husband's upward mobility (Dizard, 1968). Further, Aldous, Osmond, and Hicks (1979) have proposed an inverted U relationship between husband's occupational success and the couple's marital satisfaction. Whether and how career success lays the foundation for future conflict, alienation, and marital discord is a critical question that needs considerably more research, especially in light of Vaillant's (1977) conclusion that the most successful business executives in his sample had the healthiest family lives.

Proposition 6B: Work-family conflict is related to the stage of a person's career.

Although it is proposed that conflict is associated with career stage, the specific nature of the relationship is open to question. On the one hand, it is possible that work-family conflict is strongest at the earlier stages of a person's career. This notion is consistent with the negative relationships obtained between family stage and conflict. Bailyn's (1980) "slow burn" model of career development also seems to be based on the assumption that the early career years are characterized by strong pressures from both the work and the family domains. Indeed, one major task of an employee's socialization period may be to manage the conflict between work and family roles (Feldman, 1981).

On the other hand, it is possible that work-family conflict is strongest during the midcareer stage. Bartolome and Evans (1979) concluded that managers in midcareer (ages 35-42) are likely to turn toward their family lives and to question their earlier preoccupation with work. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee's (1978) portrait of the midlife transition as a time for questioning of life-style seems consistent with Bartolome and Evans' observations. The increasing importance of nonwork during midcareer may produce strong pressures within the family domain that conflict with work role pressures.

Additional research is needed to clarify the impact of career stage on work-family conflict. Again, the model proposes that the strength of opposing role pressures arouses conflict. Thus, an appropriate research strategy would seek to identify the work and family pressures (induced by others and self) that are associated with different career stages. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that the impact of career stage on conflict may not be identical for males and females. For example, it is possible that the early career is particularly conflictual for women who have to contend with strong pressures to establish themselves at work and equally strong family demands produced by spouse and/or children. For men, on the other hand, the strongest opposing pressures may come during midcareer when the family is becoming more important and work remains a significant (if not central) component of their lives.

Proposition 7: Support from significant others is related to work-family conflict.

The emergence of the two-career couple has highlighted the importance of supportive relationships within the family (Hall & Hall, 1979). Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) have identified the "facilitating husband" as a critical element in promoting marital well-being. Such qualities as a strong family orientation (Bailyn, 1970) and profeminist sex-role attitudes (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983) may enable a husband to provide support to his wife. Moreover, recent research indicates that emotional support is important for women and men (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a).

Although it may take different forms, it is likely that spouse support is important for one-career households as well as two-career households.

Despite the acknowledged importance of social support, a more thorough specification of the support process is required. It is suggested that social support is related to conflict in two ways. First, supportive members of a person's role set(s) may directly reduce certain role pressures, thereby producing fewer time demands, less strain, and/or more flexible expectations for in-role behavior. Second, social support may moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and psychological well-being (the "buffering" effect). However, future research needs to go beyond general statements of social support to validate empirically the utility of specific behaviors in particular situations. As a starting point, existing models of social support (House, 1981) can be applied to work-family conflict by investigating the impact of specific dimensions of support — for example, emotional, instrumental, informational (House, 1981) — on time, strain, and behavioral pressures within the work and family domains.

Also, as Beehr and Love (1980) have suggested, an examination of the nature and effectiveness of support provided by alternative sources within a person's role set(s) is needed. Different role senders may be capable of providing support under different circumstances. As House has aptly summarized the issue, "Who gives what to whom regarding which problems?" (1981, p. 22).

Concluding Comments

The growing literature on work-family conflict undoubtedly reflects the belief that work and family lives are interdependent. The myth of separate worlds of work and family (Kanter, 1977) is surely eroding. Despite this progress, considerably more research testing more complete models of work-family conflict is required. Basic to any additional research is the development of reliable scales for the assessment of work-family conflict (Kopelman et al., 1983). The psychometric limitations of the open-ended and one- or two-item scales so characteristic of research in this area (see Table 1) are obvious.

In addition to reliability problems, brief scales may not capture the subtlety of a complex variable. It is the authors' view that scales designed to assess work-family conflict should tap the different forms of role pressure (e.g., time, strain, behavior) incompatibility and should contain items that reflect both work's interference with family and family's interference with work. If different forms of incompatibility and different directions of role interference have unique antecedents and consequences, global assessments of conflict may not reveal these relationships. Certainly the need for sound measuring devices cuts across all areas of scientific inquiry. This need is particularly urgent in research on the work-family interface; public policy decisions must rest on a solid foundation of accumulated knowledge.

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