Often the responsibilities of work and family interfere with one another, causing conflict to arise in one or both domains. This discord felt in the home domain is known as work-family conflict and can be defined as the extent to which people experiences pressures within their work role that are incompatible with pressures from their family role (e.g., not having time to cook dinner because of a work deadline that requires extra hours; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001). In contrast, family-work conflict is encountered in the work domain and can be defined as the extent to which people experiences pressures within their family role that are incompatible with pressures from their work role (e.g., missing an important business meeting to take children to the doctor).

An abundance of studies have been conducted on the negative effects of the incompatibility of work and family including health problems (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997), lowered job satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Boles, Wood, & Johnson, 2003), and lowered well-being (Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001). In a longitudinal study of the relationship of work and family conflict and health outcomes, Frone et al. found that family-work conflict was associated with poor physical health and high levels of depression, and work-family conflict was associated with high levels of alcohol consumption. Similarly, Grant-Vallone & Donaldson (2001) discovered that employees who reported high levels of work-family conflict reported lower levels of well-being than employees who reported low levels of work-family conflict both at the time of the initial data collection as well as six months later.

The established undesirability of work-family and family-work conflict has led researchers (e.g., Fox & Dwyer, 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001) to attempt to determine which family- and work-related stressors are associated with work-family conflict. Identifying these variables is essential, as it is the first step in the process of reducing the levels of work-family conflict that individuals experience.

The amount of time spent at work has been associated with the levels of work-family conflict experienced. In a review of the work-family conflict literature, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) concluded that there

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is a positive relationship between work-family conflict and the number of hours worked per week, including overtime. However, because these reviewed studies took place more than 20 years ago, their applicability to today’s changing workforce is somewhat limited. Since 1985, more women are working outside the home, not only in traditionally female professions, but also in professions that break gender-role stereotypes. Current research is needed to address these workforce developments to determine whether they do indeed affect the degree of work-family conflict experienced, especially in women.

Recently, Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte, and Croon (2004) explored the issue of work and family conflict in women and found that working part-time is associated with lower levels of work-family conflict, but not family-work conflict. These authors proposed that working part-time increases women’s control over their work, thereby reducing the interference experienced within their family roles, and that the lack of relationship between hours worked and family-work conflict is due to uncontrollable home circumstances such as sick children. However, because this study was conducted in the Netherlands, its generalizability to women in other countries is questionable due to varying work norms. In particular, working four days a week is considered full-time employment status in the Netherlands whereas the work week for full-time employees in the United States is generally five days. Also, women within Rijswijk et al.’s sample who worked full-time were more likely to be employed in managerial positions than women who worked part-time, adding the possibility that the type of employment is a confounding variable to the assessment of work-family conflict.

Previous research has shown that women are more involved than men in their family roles and spend more time engaged in home activities (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). In their 1998 study, Almeida, Maggs, and Galambos found that women were recurrently involved with the division of household labor than men who worked part-time, adding the possibility that working part-time increases women’s control over their work, thereby reducing the interference experienced within their family roles, and that the lack of relationship between hours worked and family-work conflict is due to uncontrollable home circumstances such as sick children. However, because this study was conducted in the Netherlands, its generalizability to women in other countries is questionable due to varying work norms. In particular, working four days a week is considered full-time employment status in the Netherlands whereas the work week for full-time employees in the United States is generally five days. Also, women within Rijswijk et al.’s sample who worked full-time were more likely to be employed in managerial positions than women who worked part-time, adding the possibility that the type of employment is a confounding variable to the assessment of work-family conflict.

The purpose of this present study was to examine the impact of the division of household labor and the number of hours worked on work and family conflict, as well as to determine whether the relationships between these variables differ for men and women. First, we hypothesized that individuals in dual-income couples who work full-time or more than full-time would report more work-family conflict than those who work part-time, with women experiencing more work-family conflict than men. Second, it was expected that women who work part-time would be more satisfied with the division of household labor than women who work full-time or more than full-time. Similarly, it was proposed that individuals in dual-income couples who reported more equal divisions of household labor would experience less family-work conflict than individuals in dual-income couples who report unequal divisions. Finally, we hypothesized that individuals in dual-income couples who hire outside help in one or more of the following tasks (e.g., grocery shopping, preparing meals, doing laundry, cleaning house, paying bills, taking care of car maintenance, and/or performing minor household repairs) would experience less family-work conflict than individuals in dual-income couples who do not utilize outside help.

Method

Participants

Participants were 125 men and 125 women of dual-income couples. Men spent more time working per week than did women, 51 hours and 42 hours, respectively. Of all female participants, 48.0% worked full-time, 37.4% worked over full-time, 14.6% worked part-time. In contrast, 32.4% of the men worked full-time, 64.0% worked over full-time, and 3.6% worked part-time. The sample was mostly White (85.2%), followed by 11.2% Black, and 2% Hispanic participants, with 1.6% identifying themselves as other. Men (M = 47.20, SD = 9.91) were slightly older than women (M = 45.64, SD = 9.27), and couples had an average

About balancing work and family responsibilities, therefore reducing the amount of family-work conflict experienced. Duxbury and Higgins (1991) suggested that outside assistance in household tasks could have lessened the degree of family conflict experienced by women in their sample of dual-career couples to levels similar to those experienced by men. In another study, Fox and Dwyer (1999) found that a lack of spousal help and a lack of childcare were significantly related to family-work conflict in their sample of female nurses. As an explanation for these results, the researchers proposed that persons who are able to hire household and childcare assistance can avoid worrying about household responsibilities during work hours.

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of 1.68 children. Family income varied from $20,000 to over $150,000, with a median range between $100,000 and $124,999. The majority of participants had received at least some undergraduate education.

**Materials**

**Demographics.** Each spouse in the dual-income couple received a separate but identical questionnaire. All participants were asked to report demographics including gender, age, date married, ethnic identification, number of children, education, and family income. They also reported the average number of hours worked per week including overtime. The questionnaires contained 26 items assessing three variables: division of housework, fairness of the division of labor in the household, and work-family/family-work conflict.

**Division of housework.** Using the scale developed by Grote and Clark (2001), participants were asked questions concerning seven household tasks: grocery shopping, preparing meals, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, paying the bills, taking care of the car, and performing minor household repairs. The participants were asked to identify which person (i.e., themselves, their partner, or someone from outside the home) primarily performs the task. They also could indicate that the task was not completed. For the purpose of this study, only the number of tasks completed by outside help was assessed. The authors of the current study also added an additional question, “How satisfied are you with the current division of housework,” to assess their overall satisfaction with the division of housework. Participants could respond very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.

**Fairness of the division of labor in the household.** Participants evaluated the fairness of the division of labor in the household using a 2-question measure developed by Grote and Clark (2001). For the first question, the respondents were asked to rate how fair they thought the division of labor was for each of the seven tasks on the division of housework scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1 (not fair) to 5 (very fair). The second question asked, “Considering the overall amount of household tasks you and your partner do, to what extent do you think your total share is fair?” Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not fair) to 5 (very fair). These questions resulted in a total score with a maximum score of 40. Grote and Clark found alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .72 for their female participants and .67 to .75 for their male participants. The current authors found alpha coefficients of .85 for female participants and .86 for male participants.

**Work-family conflict and family-work conflict.** The five-item Work-Family Conflict Scale and five-item Family-Work Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) were used. An example item from the Work-Family Conflict Scale includes “Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands of my job.” An example item from the Family-Work Conflict Scale is “Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.” A Likert scale was used ranging from 1 to 5, strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores indicating greater work-family and family-work conflict. The Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict scales were scored separately, with possible scores on each scale ranging from 0 to 50. Netemeyer et al. reported alpha coefficients of .88-.89 and .83-.89 for the Work-Family and Family-Work Conflict scales, respectively, and provided evidence for the construct validity of their scales by showing negative correlations between work-family conflict and family-work conflict and organizational commitment and job satisfaction. They also found positive correlations between work-family conflict and family-work conflict and job tension, role conflict, role ambiguity, intention-to-leave an organization, and search-for-another-job. The current authors found alpha coefficients of .92 for the Work-Family Conflict Scale and .89 for the Family-Work Conflict Scale.

**Procedure**

Researchers distributed 355 questionnaires to dual-income couples using the snowball sampling technique. Participants were instructed to fill out the questionnaires independently and not to discuss their responses with their spouses. The responses were anonymous and each couple chose a code word that was used to match spouses with one another. In the cases where the code word failed to identify paired spouses, the wedding date was used instead. Of the dual-income couples approached, 143 pairs of completed questionnaires were returned by mail, yielding a 40% response rate. The authors of this study eliminated 14 respondents who lived outside of the U.S., as well as 22 respondents who did not answer a majority of questions. An additional 23 dual-income questionnaires were received that did not have a match and therefore were not used in this study. This resulted in a final sample of 250 dual-income participants.

**Results**

To determine whether part-time, full-time, or over-full-time employment status affected the level of work-family conflict experienced by individuals in dual-income couples, a one-way analysis of variance...
(ANOVA) was utilized. Results showed that employment status had a statistically significant impact on work-family conflict $F(2, 229) = 22.352, p = .01$. The Scheffe post hoc analysis indicated that the significant difference ($p = .05$) occurred between the over full-time ($M = 15.19$) and part-time groups ($M = 9.27$), and the over full-time and full-time groups ($M = 11.62$).

An independent samples $t$ test revealed that men and women differed in the degree of work-family conflict experienced $t(123) = 2.113, p = .036$. Men ($M = 13.87, SD = 5.12$) reported higher levels of work-family conflict than did women ($M = 12.46, SD = 5.32$).

A one-way ANOVA revealed that women who work part-time, full-time, and over full-time differ significantly in their reports of satisfaction with the division of household labor, $F(2, 121) = 3.29, p = .041$. The Scheffe post hoc analysis did not indicate significant differences between groups; however, difference between the part-time ($M = 3.33$) and full-time ($M = 3.03$) groups approached significance ($p = .073$). Part-time was categorized as working between 1 and 29 hours, full-time was between 30 and 45 hours, and over full-time was 46 hours or more. Time spent working at home was included in the total number of hours worked per week for all three groups.

An independent samples $t$ test showed that individuals in dual-income couples who reported equal divisions of household labor experienced less family-work conflict than individuals in dual-income couples who reported unequal divisions of household labor, $t(259) = 2.178, p = .030$.

An independent samples $t$ test was used to compare the degree of family-work conflict reported by individuals in dual-income couples who utilized outside help for one or more household task to those individuals in dual-income couples did not. The results did not show differences between the two groups, $t(243) = -1.191, p = .235$.

**Discussion**

The first hypothesis, that employment status (part-time, full-time, or more than full-time) would affect the degree of work-family conflict experienced by individuals in dual-income couples, was supported by the data. However, contrary to our expectations and to previous research (e.g., Cinnamon & Rich, 2002), men experienced more work-family conflict than did women. One possible explanation for this finding is that on average the women in our sample worked significantly fewer hours per week than their male partners, which could result in less opportunity for work to interfere with family. Also, it is conceivable that the men in this sample placed a higher importance on their family roles than men have traditionally done and therefore experienced more distress when their work interfered with their family. Future research on this topic should assess whether men and women with differing role priorities (e.g., work, home, or both) report differing levels of work-family and family-work conflict, while controlling for the number of hours spent working each week.

The second hypothesis, that women who work full-time or more than full-time would be less satisfied with the division of household labor than women who work part-time, also was supported. This result, coupled with the previously mentioned finding that part-time employment status is associated with the lowest levels of work-family conflict, provides compelling evidence for the benefits of working less than thirty hours per week. Surprisingly, however, women who worked over full-time were more satisfied with the division of household labor than women who worked full-time. Perhaps women who work more than forty-five hours per week are less concerned with household chores, and rather than causing themselves to become stressed about these home responsibilities, they and their spouses simply acknowledge that some tasks may not be completed. Future research should address this possibility.

The hypothesis that individuals in dual-income couples reporting equal divisions of household labor would experience less family-work conflict than individuals reporting unequal divisions was supported by the data. It is important to note that the scale used to measure the division of household labor did not evaluate the actual amount of housework done by each partner, but instead assessed the degree to which individuals believed the division of household labor was fair. Future research should examine whether individuals’ perceptions of the amount of housework being performed by their spouses is an accurate reflection of the spouses’ actual contribution to household chores. Also, as noted by Chadwick, Albrecht, and Kunz (1976), it is the disparity between spouses’ ideas of family roles that causes conflict in the home, with the greatest conflict occurring when there are differences in expectations of spousal help in housework and actual spousal performance of these tasks. If family role expectations are discussed and agreed upon in the beginning of the marriage, the division of household labor may be less likely to cause conflict.

Finally, the hypothesis that couples who hire outside help for household tasks would experience less family-work conflict than couples who do not utilize outside help did not find support in the data. One possible explanation for this is that participants were asked about assistance from outside resources only on specific home tasks, not on childcare. The authors
of this study surmise that couples experience more family-work conflict as a result of concern for their children rather than for housework, so had outside help for childcare been assessed, the results may have been different. Also, the sample size of couples who did not utilize outside help was twice that of the couples who did, which is a possible explanation of the nonsignificant results. Future research should address the issue of whether childcare or housework is the main source of anxiety surrounding family-work conflict, and also should explore whether help with childcare reduces the amount of family-work conflict experienced.

This study has some limitations, mainly in regards to the sample. First, because the median family income was so high, this sample is not representative of the general population, calling into question the generalizability of the results to groups with low socioeconomic status. In addition, there was little racial variability, and efforts are being made to reduce the homogeneity of the sample for future research. Also, even though participants were instructed not to discuss the questionnaire with their spouses, there is no guarantee that they did not do so. Participants who did converse with their spouses about the questionnaire might not have been completely honest in their responses.

Despite these mentioned limitations, this study remains as an important contribution to the general knowledge of work-family conflict, family-work conflict, hours worked, and the division of household labor. Several factors thought to be related to work-family and family-work conflict were assessed, with results indicating that hours worked impacts work-family conflict as well as satisfaction with the division of household labor, and that equality of the division of household labor affects the degree of family-work conflict experienced. Future research should be conducted to determine whether these findings can be replicated using other samples.

References