

Volume 23, No. 11, 2002

Edited by/Édité par
Gloria E. Miller
University of Regina

Gender & Diversity in Organizations
Genre et Diversité

Proceedings
of the Annual Conference
of the
Administrative Sciences
Association of Canada
Gender & Diversity in
Organizations Division

Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 25-28, 2002

Copies of these Proceedings
may be ordered from:

Actes
de Congrès annuel
de la section
Genres et diversité de
l'association des
sciences administrative
du Canada

Winnipeg, Manitoba
25-28 mai 2002

Des exemplaires de ces
actes peuvent être obtenus de:

Dr. Sue-Bruning
I.H. Asper School of Business
The University of Manitoba
181 Freedman Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 5V4

Office/Bureau: (204) 474-6566
Fax/Télécopieur: (204) 474-7545
E-mail/ Address: bruningn@ms.umanitoba.ca

ASAC 2002
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Mary Runté
Albert J. Mills
Faculty of Commerce
Saint Mary's University

THE DISCOURSE OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: A CRITIQUE

Conflict and depletion of personal resources are presented within the work-family literature as inevitable outcomes of the interaction of the responsibilities of the two domains. Overlooked in the literature, however, is the role of discourse as an antecedent to these outcomes. A critical post-structuralist analysis of this discourse suggests that it may serve to privilege, rather than merely describe, the existing power relationships.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, mainstream researchers have drawn attention to the interactions of the various domains of an individual's life that persist despite temporal and spatial separation (e.g. Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991). Two broad domains that have generated considerable research attention are the intersection of work and family. Gutek, et al (1991) identified a reciprocal conflict between these spheres: the actions and interactions in one domain impact upon actions and interactions in the other domain. Two interrelated types of conflict result: work-family conflict, the consequence of work demands interfering with the satisfaction of family demands; and family-work conflict, where the expectations in the family domain impede the fulfillment of work responsibilities. In this paper the term work-family conflict will be used to represent the reciprocal interaction of these domains and thus serves as an encompassing term for both work-family and family-work conflict.

The antecedents of work and family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict are well documented in the literature and assume an incompatibility between the role expectations of each domain. Conflict and depletion of personal resources are presented as inevitable outcomes of the interaction of the responsibilities of the two domains. Overlooked in the literature, however, is the role of discourse as both an antecedent to, and heuristic for making sense of, these outcomes. This paper incorporates a critical and post-structuralist analysis of the discourses that dominate the extant literature on the interaction and intersections of the domains of work and family. A deconstructive approach calls into question the knowledge claims of these texts, and reveals how the dominant discourse presents as inherently neutral processes that actually serve to privilege the existing power relationships. Similarly, a deconstruction of the hierarchical dichotomies imbued in the discourse reveals that these too serve the patriarchal status quo.

Deconstructing the Discourse of Work and Family Conflict: A Framework

Discourses “are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them” (Weedon, 1987:108.) The discourses of “work” and “family” define the interaction of the domains, as well as define the domains themselves. Discursive fields consist of competing discourses that organize social institutions and processes. The discursive field makes available space for a range of modes of subjectivity, positioning individuals in different ways as social subjects, establishing the roles and defining the rules for interaction (Parker 1992: 9-10). Within a discursive field not all discourses carry equal weight or power; one set of discourses that reflects particular power relationships dominates. Within the discursive fields of work and family, the dominant discourses will establish the settings for each domain, define the characters and their interaction as well as establish the rules for integration of, or movement between, the domains. Foucault (1972) argues that the dominance of particular discourses make it possible for only certain behaviours but not others to occur in particular times, places and

institutional locations. Therefore, although multiple discourses exist within the discursive fields of work and family, the rules that shape behaviour are, we contend, a product of the dominance of the mainstream discourse.

Deconstruction offers a way of examining human behaviour as textual discourses. Through deconstruction we can expose and examine the “rule-based aspects of people’s lives that involve the reproduction of behavior” (Kilduff, 1993: 14-15). Hence, exposure of the discourses of work and family illuminates patterns of socially reinforced behaviour that are perceived as necessary and inevitable. As we will demonstrate, the limitations and incompatibilities of the dominant discourses of work and family create dissonance for employees, their families, and their employers. The dissonance resulting from the (apparently) inevitable depletion of personal and organizational resources engenders a discourse of conflict—the (apparently) inevitable consequence of the interaction of the domains.

Deconstruction largely relies on the identification of the oppositions inherent in all texts: normal-abnormal (Derrida, 1988); masculine-feminine (Martin, 1990); and public-private (Bradshaw, 1996). One term in the dichotomy is presented as hierarchically superior and the other simultaneously devalued or excluded. “Deconstructing binary opposites also challenges existing knowledge claims and allows us to examine the links between discourse and institutional forms that create relations of power” (Bradshaw, 1996: 99).

Work and family are presented in the work-family literature as existing in a dichotomous and competing relationship with disparate goals and demands. The delineation of the two competing spheres of work and family in the literature on “work-family conflict” reflects and reinforces a binary opposition that engenders the valuing and devaluing of the respective spheres. This delineation mirrors the opposition and disparate valuing of the male and female: the work domain is characterized by the masculine; the family domain is characterized by the feminine. Recognizing that “text can help to legitimize the unequal relations of the genders by positioning them in a particular way” (Lamsa, and Sintonen 2001), analysis of the dominant discourse on work and family suggests that it perpetuates patriarchal power by maintaining gendered roles.

Discourse may also have the power to transform social institutions and practice; the radical and socialist-feminist discourse of work and family challenges the dominant patriarchal discourse. Much of the feminist discourse on work and family focuses on the gendering of the domains, questioning ‘rational man’ as the champion of the work domain and encouraging the movement of women from the home to the workplace. The extant hierarchical distinction of the work domain over the family domain is nevertheless maintained within the feminist discourses. Much of the radical and socialist-feminist discourse seeks to rend the relationship between the female and the family, based on the notion that the ‘family’ is a form of “domestic labour” that functions to reproduce capitalism (cf. Kuhn & Wolpe, 1978).

The Discourse of Work

The Incommensurability of Work and Family

Prior to the Industrial Revolution a primary form of economic activity involved extended families working the land on which they also lived: the concepts of ‘work’ and ‘home’ were intertwined and had very different meanings from how they are currently understood (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988). The centering of economic activity within manufactories and away from dwelling places was the basis of a schism between ‘work’ and ‘home’. This emerging discourse of the public/private spheres of divide developed out of a myriad of activities, including the demise of the barter system and the rise of wage labour. The term ‘work’ took on new meaning as *paid* activity that is primarily undertaken at a ‘workplace’. The notions of ‘domesticity,’ ‘home,’ and ‘family’ were contained within the changing work spaces but were developed and changed through various activities and events, including the exclusion of women from a number of workplaces through direct violence and legal action; legal prohibitions against child labour and the development of schools, which were organized in such a way as to place competing demands on working parents; and the emergence of a “domestic idyll” whereby the ‘non-working wife’ became a symbol of male economic status (cf. Ryan, 1979; Struminger, 1979; Weeks, 1990).

Increasingly over time the workplace became associated with men and masculinity in direct contrast to the 'domestic sphere' that was equated with women and femininity.

For all of the nineteenth and much of twentieth centuries the male employee was expected to have a primary commitment to work, while the female was, at best, only expected to have a temporary association with the workplace (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988). As increasing numbers of women joined the 'workforce' throughout the last century public discourse was engaged with the role of women and the nature of work (Weeks, 1991). This resulted in broader notions of womanhood and work but left the idea of separate work/domestic domains relatively untouched. Interestingly enough it was not until a substantial number of women had joined and became a permanent part of the workforce that the notion of work-family conflict began to appear in the research literature. With expectations of a woman's domestic 'duties' relatively unchanged (cf. Hochschild, 1997) the focus of the work-family debate was on the ability of *women* to balance home and work lives. This broadened over times to include the problems faced by male employees in 'dual earner couples' (and, more recently, single fathers) who 'confront' the issue of domestic responsibilities. The employee consequently is trapped in a metaphorical tug of war; the competing interests of each domain exacting enduring personal (Hochschild, 1997) and professional (Hundley, 2000) consequences regardless of how balance is established.

Boundary Crossing: The Superordinate positioning of work

The discourse of work accepts as a given the incompatibility of the work and family spheres. Also unquestioned is the assumption that, as employees maneuver between the domains of work and family, the organizational needs are superordinate to the needs of the family. The relationship between employment practices and the deleterious organizational outcomes of work-family conflict is increasing becoming the focus of employer's personnel practices (Osterman, 1995). A broad range of benefits embracing leave provisions, flexible work scheduling and child care support have been proposed as strategies to facilitate the movement of employees between the domains of work and family (e.g. Waldfogel, 1998). Osterman (1995) cautions that the increase in the provision of these benefits serve as "one sided and uneven commitment that is in the narrow interest of employers." Such programs are established to maximize organizational productivity. The measure of successful mobility between the domains is that these endeavors to support familial responsibilities do not compromise the work organization's goals. Criteria for program success as presented in mainstream literature include: reduced absenteeism, decreased turnover, and increased productivity (e.g. Miller, 1984). The implications of these programs for familial outcomes is not perceived as relevant to the discourse and so remains unexamined.

Perlow (1990) suggests that it is the behavioural structuring of the workplace, the discourse of what constitutes work, that is creating heightened work-family conflict. Perlow reported that the engineers in her study rejected participation in programs such as flex-place, flex time, and job sharing, because they perceived that such programs had negative consequences for career success. Work-family programs have limited benefit because employees are reluctant to use them. The barriers to successful adoption of such programs are centered on the assumption that there is a direct relationship between presence at and contribution to work. Work is to be visible to supervisors and must always be an employee's top priority. Deviation from these norms will result in retarded career growth and remuneration. Employees working flexible shifts therefore cannot meet the behavioural expectations of the workplace because, from an organizational perspective, employees cannot succeed unless they are physically present in the workplace. With this type of workplace organization, Perlow (1990) suggests that it is impossible for these types of work/family programs to be effective or for organizations to maximize the benefit from maintaining these workers. Perlow's solution is to restructure the way work is carried out, and the behavioural expectations inherent in the completion of work tasks and the associated rewards.

Work and Identity

A crucial aspect of the dominance of the work domain is its role in identity formation. When individuals meet for the first time, it is usually their work identity that is exchanged first, as the most encompassing, defining and relevant information in judging potential compatibility, status differentials,

and the appropriate basis of interaction (Gini, 1988). We differentiate ourselves as individuals largely on the basis of our work identities.

The wide range of highly specialized roles and statuses differentiated within the work domain stand in sharp contrast with the limited number of roles and statuses available within the family domain. With essentially everyone progressing from the role of son or daughter to that of father or mother, uncle or aunt, these universal roles provide relatively little potential for individual differentiation. Although one's identity as a father or mother may be personally significant and rewarding within the private sphere, such universal roles provide only limited potential to distinguish oneself from other parents encountered in the public sphere. Consequently, many individuals take as their defining characteristic the unique identity offered by their participation in the work domain, to the point where career becomes not merely an economic necessity but also a vocation (Gini, 1988). Given the primacy of this work role in the definition of self, successful maintenance and enhancement of this identity is necessarily given priority over ultimate fulfillment of family roles.

Gender Positioning in Work Discourse

The discourse of work is male-dominated (Mills & Tancred, 1991). A "good" employee or manager is seen to exhibit primarily masculine traits, such as controlled emotionality, assertiveness and goal orientation; the family role is seen as feminine, requiring antithetical skills, such as sensitivity and process orientation (Kanter, 1977).

The dominant discourse defining the scope of work is still rooted in the notion that only financially remunerated activities constitute "work." Parent-work is not embraced by this discourse. Hence, breaks in paid market-employment for the fulfillment of parental responsibilities are considered "gaps" in one's employment history, for which a wage penalty may be exacted because of an alleged deterioration in one's human capital (cf. Miree & Frieze, 1999). In contrast to women without children, 'working mothers' are often characterized as 'working' fewer hours, interrupting market-employment more frequently and for longer durations, give less time commitment to paid work (Becker, 1985; Hundley, 2000; Koren & Neumark, 1992; Taniguchi, 1999).

The dominant discourse of work excludes the labour of the family domain. If identity is to be found in one's work, and parent-work is not "real work", then those who do not engage in market-work outside of the home (predominantly women) lack identity. She is "just a housewife." The identity of the woman is imbued in the discourse of family. Within the family domain, role expectations are most clearly defined for mothers; fathers in western culture have been socialized to exhibit less of these feminized behaviours, even when caring for children. There is a dearth of empirical research examining the incompatibility of the social roles of parent and those of employee, although evidence of the gendered nature of these subject positions as they exist within the dominant discourse suggests an inherent incompatibility. Difficulty in shifting between the behavioural expectations of subject position can be problematic and generates dissonance and stress—work-family conflict.

The Discourse of Family

What is Family?

Literature on work-family conflict and family composition has focused almost exclusively on a limited discourse of family: husband, wife and child(ren). The role of the extended family as a moderator of work-family strain and time conflict, for example, is unexamined. Practical assistance, such as childcare provided by extended family might mitigate an employed parent's experience of work family conflict. Antithetically, extended family may also exacerbate work-family conflict. Other family members may place social pressure for role conformity on the parent. Further, there are escalating demands for elder care. The care of aging parents as a source of work-family conflict has come to the attention of researchers only recently (Hepburn & Barling, 1996), although these familial responsibilities have been established norms in many cultures. Similarly, the focus on nuclear family reflects a cultural bias that overlooks the significance of various forms of extended family that characterize many minority cultures and may place even more demanding role expectations on its members. Similarly, adoption, as a source of

family extension, is not examined in the literature on work-family conflict, nor other changing cultural norms of family composition, including the increase in both the number of single parent families and same sex parents.

Implicit in the dominant discourse too is the belief that unattached adults are likely to be more career oriented, less subject to demands from their private lives, and so more available to the demands of the employer. That these adults may be responsible for elder care, may be seeking to establish a family, or may have other equally demanding commitments is seldom addressed. The definition of the discourse as one on work-family conflict clearly disadvantages parents (especially women, who are assumed to take the primary responsibility for child and family welfare) in the competition for advancement and remuneration, because the greater availability of the unmarried adult to the employer is simply assumed. By the same token, unmarried workers are subjected to increased levels of exploitation on the grounds that there can be no legitimate claims on their time and resources from outside the workplace. Where the discourse does allow for a broadened definition of family equivalent commitments, these provisions appear to privilege single males who wish to access programs such as flex-time, flex-place to facilitate access to avocational pursuits, which both trivializes and undermines the legitimate role expectations of those committed to the family and family equivalent domains. In short, the dominant discourse of 'family' limits the subject positions available to men and women. A dichotomy of the nuclear family and the "other" is created. Responding to the responsibilities of the "other"—the extended family or the "nontraditional" family forms and obligations are un-represented and therefore devalued.

Gendering of Family Domains

The family domain is frequently characterized in the literature as a being an inherently female-dominated sphere: "In conservative discourse...the naturalness of women's responsibility for domestic labor and childcare is balanced by the naturalness of men's involvement in the worlds of work and politics" (Weedon, 1987: 38). The skills and competencies requisite for the maintenance of the home are those characterized as "feminine." And feminine characteristics are less valued than the male characteristics equated with workplace competence. Although responsibility for maintaining the family sphere is principally placed on the female, power in the family is maintained by the male: the home is his "castle" and the female is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that a place of comfort is maintained for his benefit (even if she too is working outside of the home).

The implications of boundary crossing between the work and family domains have been examined in terms of outcomes for family members. The discourse, however, has focused almost exclusively on the consequences of women's engagement in the work domain either for the principles of the work domain (the employer) or the family domain (the spouse and children). The involvement of fathers in the family domain and the implications of this engagement for employers and other family members do not dominate the discourse. If examined, the role of the father is presented as a variable linked to the market engagement by the mother. Fathers' engagement in the family domain is measured as a responding variable to mothers' engagement in market work.

The dominant discourse shaping research on family supports the contention: if there is a problem—it's the mother's fault. A number of studies, for example, use information about mothers' employment as a proxy for parent-child processes and then testing to see if mothers' employment affected their children's developmental outcomes. The results have been mixed but debate has centered on the 'fitness' of the working mother as a caregiver. Belsky & Eggebeen (1991), for example, contend that early maternal employment has negative implications for children's social and behavioral and cognitive outcomes (see also studies by Belsky, 1986; Desai, Chase-Lansdale, & Michael, 1989). Parcel & Menaghen (1994), on the other hand, argue that the effects of maternal employment on child behavior, if any, are minimal and that there are no net effects of early maternal employment on child cognitive outcomes. The discourse of work and family supports the maintenance of the mother in the family domain (see also Greenstein, 1995; Liebowitz, 1977).

Studies reporting deleterious effects from maternal employment have generated considerable controversy. As important as what a discourse reveals, is what it conceals. A significant limitation of

these studies is the failure to consider intervening variables, such as quality of alternate care, the family's socio-economic status (Belsky, 1986), and child characteristics (Belsky, 1986; Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; Desai et al, 1989). The discourse of family assumes that child behaviour must be linked to the mother's behaviour. Hence the mother's engagement in market work is necessarily responsible for any negative outcome for the children. Using the same data set as Belsky (1986) and Belsky and Eggebeen (1991), McCarthy and Rosenthal (1991) report that actual variance of children's adjustment accounted for by maternal employment is only 2.9%; the family's socioeconomic status was a more significant predictor of adjustment patterns.

The subject positions adopted by the family members in relation to the discourses of work and family will also act upon children's functioning. McCarthy and Rosenthal (1991) report that maternal job satisfaction moderates the effect of mothers' engagement in market-work on children's patterns of adjustment. Similarly, in a sample of 240 ninth graders, Paulson (1996) found that maternal employment influenced adolescent achievement only in families where mothers' and fathers' attitudes toward maternal employment were not consistent with mothers' employment. If such engagement is perceived to be "unnatural" and therefore aberrant, the discourse of family will reflect this orientation. The personal resources that mothers bring to their childrearing — self-esteem, locus of control, educational attainment, and age — also have significant effects on children's home environments (Parcel & Menaghan, 1994; McCarthy & Rosenthal, 1991.) The dominant discourse of family creates subject positions that center responsibility for child development on the mother.

The subject position of father is unexamined in the literature in relation to the effect on children's adjustment when fathers maintain parental care when mothers are market-employed. The growth of this phenomenon, as well as an extension of family benefits such as parental leave to fathers, makes this research agenda timely. Further, the extant research has not differentiated between non-parental care options. Children identified by researchers as having been placed in non-parental care may, in fact, be placed in the care of extended family members with whom the children have significant attachment. The discourse of family excludes the role of the extended family. The implications of extended family provided care on child outcomes and on the experience of work-family conflict experienced by employed parents is a gap in the literature.

A dramatic growth in dual-earner households has prompted research on the interaction of the spousal dyad on work-family conflict. The number of hours spouses devote to work each week has been examined as a predictor of work-family conflict for the other parent; this effect is consistently more pronounced for women than for men. Keith and Schaffer (1980) reported that an increase in the number of hours worked by a husband resulted in higher levels of work-family conflict for the market-employed mother. This conclusion is surprising given that childcare and family maintenance remains overwhelmingly a female responsibility, mitigated only slightly by the number of hours the mother works outside of the home, and by the number of hours worked by a father (Hochschild, 1997). Women's subject positions related to motherhood may not be precluded by engagement in market-work. A mother may feel the time pressure more acutely because she may be trying to maximize time with family to a greater degree than attempted by fathers.

The discourse of family is broadening to include an increased role for fathers. The social expectations of fathers have shifted over the past three decades. The "new father" now is expected to be an equal parenting partner of the mother (Goldscheider & Wake, 1991). Despite changing expectations, research shows that although the level of paternal involvement has increased (Statistics Canada, 1997), fathers continue to devote significantly less time than mothers to the rearing of their children (Acock & Demo, 1994). The relative time fathers in intact families were directly engaged with children was assessed by Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, and Hofferth (2001) to be 67% that of mothers' on weekdays and 87% that of mothers' on weekends.

As a result of the juxtaposition of this shift in the discourse of fatherhood, with the increase in maternal employment, researchers have measured fathers' involvement in parental work as a function of mothers' time commitments to work. Research has shown only a limited correlation. Keith and Schaffer

(1980) report that fathers' perception of work-family conflict was not heightened by an increase in the number of working hours by the mothers. Parasuraman et al (1989) identified that spouses of market-employed women had decreased job satisfaction only if family responsibilities decreased their time commitment to work. Yeung, et al (2001) reported that the "new father" role is emerging only on weekends in intact families. Fathers' work hours have a negative relationship with the time they spend with a child on weekdays. Mothers' work hours have no effect on children's time with fathers; and mothers' relative financial contribution has a positive effect on fathers' time with children only on weekends. The number of hours worked by the mother may not be as deterministic of work-family conflict for fathers as for mothers as long as the father's time commitment to work is not depleted. The weekend-weekday difference in mothers' income effect, the presentation of maternal responsibility (blame) for child development, and the disproportionate time spent by fathers with children suggests that the discourse of family has not shifted to include the father as "an equal partner" (Goldscheider & Wake, 1991).

Feminist Discourse of Family

Feminist discourse challenges the power relations, particularly the economic relations, in both the family and work domain "which keep women trapped.[...] Radical-and socialist-feminist discourses theorize the family as the instrument par excellence of the oppression of women" (Weedon, 1997:39-40); Allen (1993: 382-3) contends that women must "get out of" motherhood in order to "experience the priorities and alternatives we create as our own" . The family domain is identified as a tool of the patriarchy that oppresses women.

The feminist discourse on work and family acts to challenge the barriers to women's entrance and advancement within the work domain. Barriers to advancement, such as "good childcare, the structure of labour force jobs, women's low wages, the limited nature of maternity leave, and the absence of paternity leave" are exposed for leaving women "few alternatives to mothering" (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990: 32).. All these agendas, however, share a common theme with the conservative, patriarchal discourse. In the seeking of power for women, the feminist discourse on work and family also accepts the male-defined view of power as a function of capital. The dominance of the work domain and the suppression of the family are maintained.

The Discourse of Conflict

Considerable empirical evidence has been marshalled in support of the dominant discourse that the interaction of the domains of work and family generates conflict. This research is premised, however, on role expectations as defined within the dominant discourses, and is therefore ultimately reinforcing of the status quo. Inherent in this research is the assumption that such conflict is the inevitable result of competition for the limited resource of the employee's time and commitment. Time expended on role performance in one domain, it is argued, necessarily depletes time available for the demands of the other domain. Individuals have a finite amount of energy and when involved in multiple roles, the demands of these roles will deplete available resources (Becker, 1985). Depletion of resources will lead to decreased productivity of the employee (organizational outcome), and diminished personal satisfaction, familial disruption, and increased burnout for the employee (personal outcomes). Inter-role conflict results: the incompatibility of demands from one role impedes an individual's ability to meet the expectations of the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), for example, argue for three sources of inter-role conflict in the work-family interchange: time based conflict; strain based conflict and behaviour based conflict.

Time-based conflict

The number of hours of market-work engaged in by an employed spouse exacerbates the experience of work-family conflict for mothers. Increasingly, mothers are employed on a full time or part time basis. The number of hours worked each week has a significant effect on reports of work-family conflict, particularly for women (Voydanoff, 1988). But the relationship between hours worked and perception of work-family conflict also reflects women's subject positions within the dominant discourse

of family and the stress inherent in violating the role of the “good mother”. The expectation of the family discourse that women will continue to be responsible for other domestic responsibilities regardless of hours of market work (Hochschild, 1997) is itself chiefly responsible for this increased effect on work-family conflict for women. Given the increased involvement of fathers in child-care responsibilities over the past decade, however, the limitations of these dominant discourses are revealed. Even this minor and preliminary shift in the expectations of the social role of father demonstrates that these roles need not be as fixed as the dominant discourses have assumed, thus leaving open the question of whether a more thorough-going revision of role expectations might not in fact relieve much of the supposedly inherent tensions at the work-family boundary. The absence of research on work-time as mediator of work family conflict since the 1980s, when the trend towards more father involvement in child-rearing first became apparent, suggests that work-time may no longer be sustainable as a credible factor in inter-role conflict.

Strain-Based Conflict

Strain-based conflict refers to when strain in one-role 'spills over' and affects one's performance in the other role. There is considerable evidence that work stressors can produce emotional or strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability (Burke & Bradshaw, 1981). Family centered responsibilities can generate similar outcomes (Lewis & Cooper, 1987).

Additive and interactive strain

The multiple role demands of the work and home domains are additive with the strain and stresses manifested at home (work) combining with the strain experienced at work (home). Role overload results from this accumulated stress and leads to illness and decreased personal and job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986). Greenhaus & Parasuraman (1986) further suggest that work and home conflicts are interactive, with the greatest stress arising in situations of simultaneous role pressures from both home and work: the summative stress is greater than the stress caused by the components independently.

The major discourses assume, however, that such strain is inevitable. At what point, however, did it become acceptable to assume that disruptive and dysfunctional levels of stress were the norm in the work place? Even the most committed family member can plan for seasonal or occasional periods of peak work demand, and even the most draconian employer will briefly release a worker to respond to a family crises. For strain-based conflict to be a significant source of work-family conflict, however, one needs to accept that such strain is routine. Any work site may be subject to occasional deadline pressure, unexpected peak demand, or unforeseen crises, but where such pressures are constant, there are only two possible explanations: the deliberate exploitation of workers through unsustainable speedups, quotas, and the like; or incompetent forward planning. Competent management projects likely demand and staffs accordingly. The discourses of downsizing, global competition, profitability and the cult of efficiency are the fundamental pressures that create work environments in which stress is maintained at such high levels that any additional strain (such as spillovers from home) become unmanageable. By focusing on the problem of spillover from the family domain and on cumulative strain effects, the dominant discourse distracts attention from the employer's responsibility to provide a humane work environment. Indeed, the very phrase "spill-over" implies that the work and family domains should remain strictly separated. Programs intended to reduce work-family conflict are thus revealed as attempts to minimize external pressures so that internal work demands may be maximized.

Of course, strain-based conflict is also operative at the level interpersonal relationships. Galinsky and Stein (1990) noted that the relationship between an employee and his or her supervisor was a significant source of stress for employed parents. Supervisory work-family support is evidenced by knowledge of benefits, flexibility in responding to the spill-over of family issues into the workplace, and a perception that providing such supports is part of the role of supervisor. The direct effect of supervisors' support on employees' perception of work-family conflict has not been measured, however, nor has the effect of such support on organizational outcomes.

Behaviour based Conflict

Behaviour-based conflict refers to incompatibility between the behaviour patterns desirable for the two domains. There is, however, little empirical research to support the incompatibility of the social roles of parent and those of employee, beyond the false dichotomy produced by the gendering of these roles. Rather than viewing how work and family may harm the other, however, a smaller number of researchers (e.g., Bowles & Kington, 1998) have focused on how family and work can be supportive of one another, resulting in a cumulative appreciation of commitment and energy, rather than a depletion. Obviously, employment provides for housing, food and the necessities to maintain a family. At the same time, family can also be an important source of emotional support as one tackles the myriad of potential problems related to work. Energy may be renewed through interaction with one's spouse or children in a similar manner as health is improved by interaction with family members. Non-work demands, including family, can either add support to the person in performance of work, or deplete personal resources from one's work, such as time, energy and commitment.

Summary

Several limitations to the work-family discourse have been raised which suggest the need for a shift in the dominant discourse—a redefinition of the domains of work and family. Although recognizing that the spheres of work and family interact, the emphasis of the dominant discourse is placed on mitigating and managing the overlap not on integration of the domains. For example, research assessing “family-friendly” human resource policies discuss the issue's importance for facilitating or easing the transition between the domains of work and home to minimize conflict and maximize the potential of the employee as a productive agent. Although some work-family initiatives, such as on-site childcare, may be seen to reinforce the integration of the domains of work and family, the nature of the interaction remains work-defined. Commitment to children must not diminish commitment to the employer, despite movement of the family into the work domain. The underlying assumption that these spheres must be separated has remained intact, moderated only to allow smoother movement between them.

Further, this discourse accepts traditional notions about what (and who) works, and what (and who) constitutes a family. Barnett (1999, p144) suggests a “work-life systems model” of work-life relationships that “reflects workers' experiences as they craft a new lifestyle that integrates work, family, and community, while taking into account factors [such as] positive aspects of work-life integration, the quality of family life, and the nature of work” as a way to reconceive the complex relationships inherent in the lives of working people, and to escape the trap of “spherical” thinking about work-family issues.

References

- Acock, A. C., & Demo, D. H. (1994). *Family diversity and well-being*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Allen, J. (2003). *Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women*. In A. M. Jagger and P. S. Rotenberg (Eds.), *Feminist Frameworks*: 380-394. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Anderson, B.S., & Zinsler, J. P. (1988) *A History of Their Own. Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Armstrong, P., & Armstrong, H. (1990) *Theorizing Women's Work*. Toronto: Garamond.
- Barnett, R.C., (1999). A new work-life model for the twenty-first century. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 562, 143-158.
- Becker, G. (1985). Human capital, effort and the sexual division of labor, *Journal of Labor Economics*, 3, 33-38.
- Belsky, J. (1986). Infant day care: A cause for concern? *Zero to Three*, 6, 1-7.

- Belsky, J., & Eggebeen, D., (1991). Early and extensive maternal employment and young children's socioemotional development: children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 1083-1101.
- Bowles, J. & Kington, R. S., (1998). The impact of family function on health of African American elderly. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 29, 337-347.
- Bradshaw, P. (1996). Women as Constituent Directors: Re-reading Current Texts Using a Feminist-Postmodernist Approach. In D.M. Boje, R. P. Gephart, Jr., & T. J. Thatchenkery (Eds.), *Postmodern management and organization theory*: 95-125. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Burke, R. J. & Bradshaw, P., (1981). Occupational and life stress and the family, *Small Group Behavior*, 12, 329-375.
- Derrida, J. (1988). *Limited Inc.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Desai, S.; Chase-Lansdale, P.L.; and Michael, R. T.; (1989). Mother or Market? Effects of Maternal Employment on the Intellectual Ability of 4-Year-Old Children; *Demography*, 26: 545-562.
- Estes, S. B., & Glass, J., (1996) Job Changes following childbirth: are women trading compensation for family-responsive work conditions. *Work and Occupations*, 23, (4), 405-436.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge.* London: Routledge.
- Galinsky, E., & Stein, P. J., (1990). The impact of human resource policies: Balancing work and family life. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11, 368-383.
- Gini, A. (1988). Work, identity and self: How we are formed by the work we do, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17: 707-714.
- Goldscheider E K., & Waite, L. J. (1991). *New families, no families?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gotlieb, B. H., Kelloway, E. K., & Barnham, E., (1998). *Flexible work arrangements: Managing the work-family boundary.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Greenhaus, J. H. & Parasuraman, S. (1986). A work-non-work interactive perspective of stress and its consequences. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour and Management*, 8, 37-60.
- Greenhaus, J.H., & Beutell, N., (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 76-88.
- Greenstein, T.N. (1995). Are the "Most Advantaged" Children Truly Disadvantaged by Early Maternal Employment? Effects on Child Cognitive Outcomes, *Journal of Family Issues*, 16:149.
- Gutek, B., Searle, S., & Klepa, L. (1991). Rational versus gender role-explanations for work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 560-568.
- Hepburn, C.G., & Barling, J. (1996). Eldercare responsibilities, inter-role conflict, and employee absence: A daily study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1, 311-318.
- Hochschild, A. R., (1997). *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work.* New York: Metropolitan Books.

- Hundley, G., (2000). Male/female earnings differences in self-employment: The effects of marriage, children, and the household division of labor. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54, (1), 95-114.
- Kanter, R. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kuhn, A., & Wolpe, A. (1978) [Eds.] *Feminism and Materialism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Keith, R & Schaffer, R., (1980). Role strain and depression in two job families. *Family Relations*, 29, 329-346.
- Kilduff, M. 1993. Deconstructing organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 18: 23-31.
- Korenman, S & Neumark, D. (1992). Marriage, motherhood and wages. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 27, 277-303.
- Lamsa, A. M., Sintonen, T. (2001). A discursive approach to understanding women leaders in working life, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 24: 255-257.
- Leibowitz, A. 1977. "Parental Inputs and Children's Achievement." *Journal of Human Resources* 12:243-51.
- Lewis, S., & Cooper, C. (1987). Stress in two earner couples and stage in the life cycle. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 60, 289-303.
- Martin, J. (1990). Deconstructing organizational taboos: The suppression of gender conflict in organizations. *Organization Science*, 1: 339-359.
- McCartney, K., Rosenthal, S., (1991). Maternal employment should be studied within social ecologies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 1103-1108.
- Miller, R. I. 1984. The effects of employer-supported child care on employee absenteeism, productivity, recruitment or job satisfaction: What is claimed and what is known. *Personnel Psychology*, 37, 212-226.
- Mills, A. J. & Tancred, P. [Eds.] (1992) *Gendering Organizational Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miree, C. E., & Frieze, I. H., (1999). Children and careers: A longitudinal study of the impact of young children on critical career outcomes of MBAs, *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*.
- Osterman, P., (1995). Work/family programs and the employment relationship. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 681-701.
- Parasuraman, S., Greenhaus, J. H., & Granrose, C. S. (1992). Role stressors, social support, and well-being among two-career couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 339-356.
- Parcel, T. L., & Menaghan, E.G. (1994). *Parents' jobs and children's lives*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse Dynamics. Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Paulson, S. E. (1996). Maternal employment and adolescent achievement revisited: An ecological perspective, *Family Relations*, 45, 201-28.
- Perlow, L., (1998). Boundary control: The social ordering of work and family time in a high-tech corporation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 328-357.

- Ryan, M. (1979) *Womanhood in America*. New York: Viewpoints.
- Struminger, L. S. (1979) *Women and the making of the working class: Lyon, 1830-1870*. Vermont: Eden Press.
- Taniguchi, H. (1999). The timing of childbirth and women's wages, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61, 1108-1120.
- Voydanoff, P (1988). Work role characteristics, family structure demands, and work-family conflict, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50, 749-761.
- Waldfogel, J., (1998) The family gap for young women in the United States and Britain: Can maternity leave make a difference?. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 16,(3), 505-545.
- Weedon, C., (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wood, R., Corocran, M, & Courant, P, (1993). Pay differentials among the highly paid: the male-female earnings gap in lawyers' salaries, *Journal of Labor Economics*, 11,417-441.
- Yeung, W. J.; Sandberg, J. F.; Davis-Kean, P.E.; Hofferth, S. L., (2001). Children's Time With Fathers in Intact Families, *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 63, 136-145.
- Weeks, J. (1990) *Sex, Politics & Society*. London: Longman.