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Jennifer Reid Keene

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, jkeene@unlv.nevada.edu

Jill Quadagno

Florida State University

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PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: GENDER DIFFERENCE OR GENDER SIMILARITY?

JENNIFER REID KEENE*
University of Nevada–Las Vegas

JILL QUADAGNO
Florida State University

ABSTRACT: *This article uses the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) and the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) to examine two issues: the relationship of work characteristics, family characteristics, and work-family spillover to perceptions of work-family balance; and models of “gender difference” versus “gender similarity.” The GSS analysis supports the gender similarity model. It demonstrates that work demands such as the number of hours worked per week and work spillover into family life are the most salient predictors of feelings of imbalance for both women and men. The NSCW includes subtler measures of family spillover into work as well as measures of specific job characteristics and child care. The NSCW results support a gender difference model. They indicate that when family demands reduce work quality, there is a decreased likelihood of perceived balance. However, men and women experience balance in gendered ways. Women report more balance when they give priority to family; men report less balance when they have no personal time for themselves due to work and more balance when they make scheduling changes due to family.*

Although rates of women’s labor force participation have dramatically increased in the past half century, the organization of labor in the workplace and in the family has not changed commensurately (Brewster and Padavic 2000; Gerson 1998). In family life, men’s contribution to household chores has more than doubled; however, women, even those who work full-time year-round, still maintain primary responsibility for the home and child care (Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg 1998; Hochschild 1989; Moen 1992). In the workplace most employers continue to orient their expectations based on a male model that presumes the presence of a nonworking spouse to manage a worker’s personal needs and children (Acker 1990; Gerson 1998).

*Direct all correspondence to: Jennifer Reid Keene, Department of Sociology, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 4550433, University of Nevada–Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV 89154; e-mail: jkeene@unlv.nevada.edu.

Research on the work-family interface has traditionally taken a role theory perspective to determine the effect of multiple role engagement on life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Some studies find that multiple role commitments lead to mental and physical exhaustion and increased stress (Goode 1960; Mui 1992; Pearlin 1989). Others indicate that multiple roles have positive consequences, such as increasing economic resources, improving self-esteem, and enhancing social integration (Barnett 1999; Baruch and Barnett 1986; Crosby 1991; Moen, Robison, and Dempster-McClain 1995). Recent research has moved beyond the role strain/role enhancement dichotomy to consider the determinants of perceptions of role *balance* (Marks and MacDermid 1996; Marks et al. 2001; Voydanoff 2002) or work-family fit (Pittman 1994). We compare results from two data sets, the General Social Survey (GSS) and the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), first, to analyze the effects of work characteristics, family characteristics, and work-family spillover on perceptions of work-family balance and, second, to test models of "gender difference" versus "gender similarity."

EXPLAINING PERCEIVED WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

Research suggests that three general groups of factors relate to how well men and women are able to manage multiple demands from work and family: job characteristics, family characteristics, and spillover between work and family.

Job Characteristics

One might expect job characteristics to be important predictors of perceived work-family balance because they determine workers' freedom to negotiate between competing demands and thus their ability to balance multiple obligations. Some research demonstrates that higher-level occupations are more accommodating to family life than are lower-level occupations (Glass and Camarigg 1992). Yet evidence on the significance of job characteristics for perceived balance is inconclusive. In their analysis of data from the GSS, Milkie and Peltola (1999) find that work demands such as number of hours worked per week influence role balance. In her study of physicians, Hecht (2001) too finds that greater scheduling flexibility at work is positively associated with well-being. However, Moen and Yu (1999) find that autonomy and scheduling flexibility are not associated with overall feelings of work-life satisfaction. Thus, although job characteristics appear to be important, their relationship to perceived work-family balance is unresolved.

Family Characteristics

A number of studies suggest that family characteristics are likely to have an important impact on well-being, role satisfaction, and perceptions of balance. Child care responsibility is one family factor that has been found significant in several studies. In interviews with a sample of 1,446 middle- and upper-middle-class parents whose children attended day care, Hochschild (1997) found that only 9 percent reported feeling that they balance the demands of work and family

“very well.” Similarly, Greif, DeMaris, and Hood (1993) asked 1,132 single fathers about the difficulty of combining working and child rearing. Twenty-one percent of the respondents perceived this problem as “very difficult,” 61.8 percent said it was “somewhat difficult,” and only 16.8 percent said it was “not difficult at all.”

Another relevant family characteristic is family structure. One study of the effect of family-friendly workplace policies on work-family balance and job satisfaction reports that predictors of balance vary across different subpopulations of employees (Saltzstein, Ting, and Hall Saltzstein 2001). Specifically, family involvement has a negative impact on satisfaction with work-family balance among traditional men with unemployed spouses and children at home and also among mothers in dual-income households. White (1999) also explicitly examined predictors of work-family balance and found that family factors and life stage are important determinants of balance.

Role Spillover

A number of recent studies have found that family and job demands per se are less salient than role spillover in predicting role satisfaction, well-being, and perceptions of balance (Barnett and Rivers 1996; Kossek and Ozeki 1998; Lambert 1991; Stephens and Franks 1995; Voydanoff 2002). “Spillover” is defined as the reciprocal tension between the roles and obligations of being a parent or a spouse, on the one hand, and an employee, on the other (Frone, Russell, and Cooper 1992a, 1992b; Kossek and Ozeki 1998). Family spillover occurs when family responsibilities encroach on workers’ attitudes, capabilities, or energies, making it more difficult for them to meet job obligations (Crouter 1984b; Kanter 1977; Lambert 1991). Work spillover occurs when emotions, attitudes, and behaviors generated in the workplace carry over into family life, or when work limits time spent with family (Crouter 1984a; Kelly and Voydanoff 1985; Lambert 1991).

Role spillover is measured in a variety of ways, including how often respondents report interference across domains (Frone, Russell, and Cooper 1992a, 1992b; MacEwen and Barling 1994), “work to family conflict” or “family to work conflict” (Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian 1996), or tradeoffs or adjustments to balance work and family life (Keene and Reynolds forthcoming; Milkie and Peltola 1999). One meta-analysis finds a consistently negative relationship between work and family spillover and both job and life satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki 1998). Overall, implicitly or explicitly, research on work-family spillover is concerned with factors that relate to work-family conflict or work-family balance. Clearly, spillover and balance are linked; however, it remains unclear how gender relates to individuals’ experience of spillover and their perceived balance.

GENDER SIMILARITY VERSUS GENDER DIFFERENCE

In the past, men were expected to give precedence to their work lives and women were expected to devote themselves to their families (Ferree 1990). The convergence in women’s and men’s labor force participation rates suggests that these gendered expectations may no longer apply. However, there remains an unequal

household division of labor, often supported by men's and women's gendered beliefs about appropriate work and family roles (Gager 1998; Hochschild 1989; Komter 1989; Spain and Bianchi 1996).

One approach to these issues is the "gender similarity" model, which predicts that the convergence in men's and women's work and family demands should lead to a convergence in attitudes toward work and family responsibilities and feelings of work-family balance (Bielby 1992; Loscocco and Leicht 1993). Some research has found few gender differences in workplace motivations or behaviors and increasing similarity in women's and men's leadership styles, job satisfaction, and job-related distress (Barnett and Hyde 2001). Other research has found that parental identity is a more salient predictor than gender of psychological distress and vulnerability to parental role strains (Simon 1992).

In contrast, the "gender difference" model posits that normative differences between men and women remain, with the family still primarily defined as women's sphere and paid work as men's domain (Bielby and Bielby 1989; Ferree 1990; Pleck 1977). The seminal gender difference model is Pleck's (1977) "work-family role system." Pleck identified the asymmetrical boundaries between work and family and illustrated implicit role expectations for women compared to men. According to this model, family responsibilities are allowed, even expected, to intrude on work obligations for women. For men, the boundary between work and family is asymmetrically permeable, but in the opposite direction. Work responsibilities are not only allowed, but they are expected to impinge on men's family lives (Pleck 1977).

In support of the gender difference model, Bielby and Bielby (1989) find that married women prioritize family over work, whereas men have more license to create noncompeting work and family identities. Further, work concerns create a greater sense of work-family conflict among men whereas family concerns increase feelings of work-family conflict among women (Voydanoff 1988).

In an analysis of the GSS, Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that employed, married men and women report similar levels of work-family balance. However, they also found gender differences in sources of imbalance using the respondent's answer to the question, "How successful do you feel in balancing your paid work and family life?" as the dependent variable, they found that among men, imbalance is associated with working more hours, having a spouse who works fewer hours, marital unhappiness, perceived unfairness in the division of household labor, and making tradeoffs (spillover) between work and family. Among women, only marital unhappiness, the presence of young children, and tradeoffs at home in favor of work (work to family spillover) is associated with imbalance (Milkie and Peltola 1999). Thus distinct types of spillover differentially relate to women's and men's perceived balance.

In another recent study, Marks et al. (2001) examined how gendered marital roles associate with various correlates of balance among eighty white married couples. They found no difference between women and men in the effects of parental attachment to children and marital satisfaction on balance; however, they did find significant gender differences associated with traditional gender roles in the effects of time use variables. Although Marks et al. draw on the analysis

conducted by Milkie and Peltola, they do not control for individuals' experiences of spillover or adjustments made in one domain in response to demands in the other. Overall, then, there is evidence that men and women experience role demands and spillover in different ways, but it is unclear exactly what factors predict greater perceptions of balance.

Even if female and male workers report similar levels of balance, gender differences may exist in the effects of job characteristics on perceived work-family balance for two reasons. First, the persistence of occupational sex segregation ensures that women and men are in different jobs and therefore have different experiences at work (Barnett and Hyde 2001; Padavic and Reskin 2002). Second, because women and men continue to maintain responsibility for different household tasks, some job characteristics may promote or hinder women's perceived balance more than men's. To our knowledge, no studies specifically examine gender differences in the relationship of particular job characteristics to work-family balance.

HYPOTHESES

Previous research suggests that work-family balance is a relevant issue for many men and women but that even if women and men report similar levels of balance, the processes through which they construct their perceptions of balance may differ. After evaluating the research on factors that predict perceived success in work-family balance, we posit six hypotheses. The first three concern the effects of work and family demands on balance; the last three address gender differences in predictors of work-family balance.

1. No gender differences exist in levels of perceived balance.
2. Greater work demands, indicated by work hours and occupation, will negatively relate to perceived balance.
3. Greater family demands, indicated by children in the home, the household division of labor, and spouse's employment will negatively relate to perceived balance.
4. Greater spillover between work and family will negatively relate to perceived balance for both men and women.
 - a. Work to family spillover will negatively relate to perceived balance for women (and not men).
 - b. Family to work spillover will negatively relate to perceived balance for men (and not women).
5. Job characteristics, specifically perceived job autonomy and scheduling flexibility, will positively relate to perceived balance. Further, greater job autonomy and scheduling flexibility will predict greater perceived balance among women than among men, because women's family demands continue to surpass those of men.
6. Greater perceived job demands will negatively relate to perceived balance, particularly for women. More demanding jobs leave less energy for family responsibilities, a dilemma that particularly affects women.

To test these hypotheses, we compare results from the 1996 Sex and Gender Module of the General Social Survey and the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW).¹ Although we recognize that the work-family balancing act is also of concern to unpaid workers and single people, we limit our analysis to the experiences of married, employed women and men.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

The GSS Sample

The GSS is a national full-probability sample of standard multistage cluster design with a response rate of 76 percent. It comprises a total of 2,904 completed interviews with respondents who were eighteen or older and who lived in non-institutional arrangements in the United States. Because we are interested only in the experiences of married, employed people, we limited our sample and employ the Sex and Gender Module, which is a subsample of the 1996 GSS consisting of 1,460 randomly selected individuals. Further selection for married, employed people under age sixty-five created a final sample for the logistic regression analysis of 444 respondents, 243 men, and 201 women.

The GSS includes basic demographic information, work life characteristics, and family composition. The data set also includes questions about the household division of labor and indicators of work and family spillover. Finally, the survey includes a specific question to assess individuals' feelings of success in balancing work and family life.

Dependent Variable

Perceived Work-Family Balance. The dependent variable for this analysis is respondent's perceived success in work-family balance. We use the response to the question, "How successful do you feel at balancing your paid work and your family life?"² We construct a dichotomous measure indicating whether the respondent reported feeling "completely" ($n = 28$) or "very" ($n = 149$) successful in balancing work and family life (coded 1) versus "somewhat" ($n = 208$), "not very" ($n = 55$), or "not at all" ($n = 12$) successful (coded 0).

Independent Variables

Demographic Characteristics. We control for several demographic indicators: age (in years), education (1 = greater than a high school education, 0 = high school education or less), income (midpoints of 21 income categories), race (1 = white), and gender (1 = female).

Work Life Characteristics. To measure work life characteristics, we use two indicators to capture time commitment and job flexibility. First, we include the number of weekly hours the respondent works for pay. Second, because research suggests that higher-level occupations are more accommodating to family life

than are lower-level occupations (Glass and Camarigg 1992), we include a dummy variable for the respondent's occupational level, indicating either professional (coded 1) or nonprofessional occupation.

Family Life Characteristics. To measure family characteristics and demands, we include two indicators of the spouse's work situation: the number of weekly hours the respondent's spouse works for pay and a dummy variable indicating whether the spouse works in a professional occupation (coded 1). To indicate the presence of children living in the household, we use three variables indicating the number of children ages 0–5, 6–12, and 13–17. We measure the relative amount of housework that the respondent contributes with the following question: "We're interested in knowing how much of the work around your home is done by different people. We don't mean taking care of children—just regular work around the house like cooking, grocery shopping, and doing little repair jobs. How much of this work do you do?" Response categories ranged from "none or very little" to "some," "about half," "most," and "all."

Role Spillover. We measure work and family role spillover with six dummy variables. To measure work adjustments due to family responsibilities (family to work spillover), we use three dummy variables based on the following set of questions: "In your present job, have you ever done any of the following because of your responsibilities to members of your family? (a) refuse a job promotion, (b) refuse to work extra hours, (c) cut back on your work." Each question has two answer categories, yes (coded 1) or no (coded 0). To measure family adjustments due to work conflicts (work to family spillover), we use three dummy variables based on a second set of questions with the same two answer categories: "In your present job, have you ever done any of the following because of your responsibilities to the job? (a) missed a family occasion or holiday, (b) been unable to care for a sick child or relative, (c) been unable to do the work you usually do around the house?"

The NSCW Sample

The NSCW is a study of the work and personal and family lives of the U.S. workforce (Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman 1993). It contains questions on work and family spillover that are different from those in the GSS, as well as on the effects of explicit job characteristics (job demands, autonomy, and flexibility) that are not available in the GSS. The overall sample for the 1992 wave of the survey was 3,718 individuals between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four living in non-institutional arrangements in the contiguous forty-eight states.

To permit the inclusion of a larger number of questions than could reasonably be asked of every respondent, some questions were asked only of randomly defined subsamples. The work to family spillover measures were asked of only a subsample of respondents, thus limiting the number of valid responses on these items for the logistic regression analysis. After limiting the sample of waged and salaried workers to only those who were married and who were asked relevant questions about work-family spillover, the total sample size for the logistic regression

analysis was 479 married workers, 237 men and 242 women, which is comparable to the size of the GSS sample.

Dependent Variable

Perceived Work-Family Balance. The dependent variable in the analysis is identical to the GSS question; however, the response categories are slightly different. In the NSCW, responses were coded 1 if respondents reported feeling “very” successfully balanced ($n = 190$) and 0 if respondents reported feeling “somewhat balanced” ($n = 291$), “somewhat unbalanced” ($n = 30$), or “not at all balanced” ($n = 3$).³ Thus in both analyses the dependent variables are designed to distinguish those respondents who identify themselves at the highest levels of successful balance from those who feel ambivalent or decidedly unbalanced about their success.

Independent Variables

Demographic Variables. As with the GSS data, we control for several demographic characteristics, including age (years), education (1 = greater than a high school education, 0 = high school education or less), respondent’s logged income, race (1 = white), and gender (1 = female).

Work Life Characteristics. To measure work life characteristics, we again use indicators of time commitment and flexibility. First, we include the number of hours per week that the respondent works for pay. We include a dummy variable for respondent occupations, indicating either professional-managerial (coded 1) or nonprofessional occupations. In the GSS data, we employ time commitment and occupation as proxies for job demands and flexibility. A benefit of the NSCW data set is that it includes more specific measures of these two aspects of work life. In addition to the above work characteristics, the NSCW contains indicators of job demands, job autonomy, and scheduling flexibility. A scale of *job demands* comprises four items indicating the extent to which the respondent agrees that (a) their job requires working very fast, (b) their job requires working very hard, (c) they are asked to do excessive amounts of work, and (d) they have deadlines that are difficult to meet (Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman 1993). Response categories range from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree. Items were reverse coded and then averaged so that higher values on the scale indicate greater demands. The scale has an alpha of .71.

The scale of *job autonomy* was created by averaging two items assessing the extent to which the respondent agrees with the statements, “I have a lot to say about what happens on my job” and “I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my work” (Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman 1993). The original response categories are the same as the job demands items and were reverse coded so that higher values on the scale indicate greater job autonomy. The scale ranges from 1 to 4 and has an alpha of .70.

To indicate *scheduling flexibility*, we use the respondent’s answer to the question, “Overall, how much control would you say you have in scheduling your work

hours: none, very little, some, a lot, or complete flexibility?" Response categories range from 1 = none to 5 = complete flexibility.

Family Life Characteristics. As with the GSS data, we include a continuous measure of spouse's work hours as well as a dummy variable indicating if the spouse is a professional worker (coded 1). To measure the impact of young children in the household, a dummy variable indicates if the respondent has children under six years old in the household. We also include a continuous measure of how many children under the age of eighteen live in the household.

The GSS data set does not include an indicator of child care and, indeed, specifically excludes child care from the only available housework measure. In contrast, the NSCW data set includes individual items regarding different household and child care chores. To measure the relative amount of housework and child care each partner contributes, we use two additive scales. The household chores measure ranges from 0 to 5 and assesses how many of the following the respondent takes primary responsibility for: cooking, repairs, cleaning, shopping, and paying bills. Child care questions were asked only of those respondents with biological, step-, adopted, or foster children age sixteen or under living full-time in the household. These two items are, "Who takes greatest responsibility for routine care of children?" and "Who takes greatest responsibility for helping children with homework?" The child care measure ranges from 0 to 2.

Role Spillover. The NSCW includes different indicators of work and family spillover from those available in the GSS. Work to family spillover is captured by five dummy variables indicating whether or not *in the last three months* respondents' jobs had an effect on (1) their personal time, (2) their family time, (3) their energy to do things with family and friends, (4) their ability to do household chores, and (5) their mood. The five separate dichotomous measures are coded 1 if respondents answered "very often," "often," or "sometimes" and 0 if "rarely" or "never."

The NSCW includes family to work spillover items that are arguably less distinctly gendered than those in the GSS and may therefore bring an added dimension to the analysis. To examine family spillover, we employ four dichotomous variables indicating whether or not *during the past year* family or personal responsibilities caused the respondent to (1) work fewer hours or make scheduling changes, (2) refuse overtime, (3) be distracted or less productive or have lower work quality, and (4) have problems with their supervisors or coworkers. Each variable is coded 1 if the respondent said yes and 0 if no. While the GSS included items that gauged whether the respondent made scheduling changes or refused overtime, the NSCW allows us to analyze whether gender differences exist in work quality and whether working relationships suffered as a result of family interference.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the all variables included in the logistic regression analyses of both data sets. We employ and compare these two data sets specifically because they are so similar across our chosen dependent and independent variables.

TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics for All Variables Included in the Analysis, GSS and NSCW

	<i>GSS* Mean or Percentage (St. Dev.)</i>	<i>NSCW* Mean or Percentage (St. Dev.)</i>
Perceived work-family balance		
Percent successfully balanced	38.59	36.12
Demographics		
Age (years)	42.31 (10.97)	40.65 (10.25)
Percent with more than high school education	63.36	58.66
Percent white	86.08	80.58
Percent female	45.24	50.52
Respondent's income	34,002.05 (24,826.88)	27,523.94 (18,528.62)
Work characteristics		
Respondent's work hours per week	42.92 (14.32)	41.79 (11.53)
Percent professional workers	36.85	38.83
Job autonomy	—	2.91 (.69)
Job demands	—	2.58 (.52)
Scheduling flexibility	—	2.76 (1.44)
Family characteristics		
Spouse's work hours per week	31.79 (21.03)	31.03 (20.28)
Percent spouse professional worker	36.03	30.06
Respondent's share of housework	3.10 (.91)	2.66 (1.16)
Respondent's share of child care	—	0.4948 (.69)
Children <6 years	0.34 (.68)	0.26 (.44)
Children 6–12 years	0.38 (.74)	—
Children 13–17 years	0.27 (.56)	—
Number of children <18 in household	—	1.07 (1.14)
Work to family spillover		
Percent missed family occasion	51.38	—
Percent unable to care for sick child/relative	21.49	—
Percent unable to do housework	54.25	—
Percent no personal time	—	63.26
Percent no family time	—	57.41
Percent no energy	—	59.08
Percent chores not done	—	69.10
Percent bad moods	—	62.63
Family to work spillover		
Percent refused a job promotion	16.68	—
Percent refused to work extra hours	31.73	—
Percent cut back on work	31.63	—
Percent worked fewer hours or made scheduling changes	—	27.35
Percent refused overtime	—	16.49
Percent distracted/less productive or work quality suffered	—	24.84
Percent had problems with supervisor or coworkers	—	8.14

Note: All numbers are means (standard deviations in parentheses) or percentages as noted.

*GSS $n = 444$; NSCW = 479.

RESULTS**Bivariate Gender Differences**

We begin by examining bivariate gender differences in the independent variables. Table 2 presents means and percentages for independent variables with significant gender differences for each sample. In both data sets men have significantly higher earnings than do women (GSS: $t = -7.209$, $p < .001$; NSCW: $t = -8.662$, $p < .001$). Similarly, men work longer hours than women in both data sets (GSS: $t = -5.851$, $p < .001$; NSCW: $t = -9.287$, $p < .001$). In both data sets the mean number of spouse's work hours is significantly greater for men than for women (GSS: $t = 10.713$, $p < .001$; NSCW: $t = 7.540$, $p < .001$). In the NSCW women report greater control over their work schedules than do men ($t = 2.081$, $p < .05$). Regarding family characteristics, women in both samples report primary responsibility for more household chores (GSS: $t = 18.754$, $p < .001$; NSCW: $t = 10.678$, $p < .001$), and in the NSCW women take greater responsibility for child care ($t = 7.722$, $p < .001$). In the GSS only one indicator of work to family spillover indicated significant gender differences, with a greater percentage of men than women reporting having missed a family occasion ($\chi^2 = 28.514$, $p < .001$). In the NSCW we find gender differences in family to work spillover, with more women reporting having made scheduling changes ($\chi^2 = 7.853$, $p < .01$) and being distracted or less productive due to family responsibilities ($\chi^2 = 15.515$, $p < .001$).

TABLE 2
Selected Bivariate Statistics Showing Significant Gender Differences
in Independent Variables, GSS and NSCW

	GSS		NSCW	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Demographic characteristics				
Mean respondent's income	41,754.00	25,416.00	10.27	9.83
Work characteristics				
Mean respondent's work hours	46.27	38.72	45.90	37.37
Mean spouse's work hours	23.25	42.13	24.96	37.70
Mean level of scheduling control	—	—	2.58	2.84
Family characteristics				
Mean level of housework	2.74	3.55	1.93	3.41
Mean level of child care	—	—	0.44	0.82
Work and family spillover				
Percent missed family occasion or holiday due to work	62.25	37.07	—	—
Percent made scheduling changes due to family	—	—	21.43	32.80
Percent distracted / less productive due to family	—	—	17.20	32.80

Regression Analysis Plan

We use logistic regression analysis to predict the likelihood that respondents feel they are very or completely successfully balanced between work and family life. We begin with the GSS sample and then predict the likelihood of feeling balanced in the NSCW. For both samples, we examine women and men together and include specific interaction terms to investigate gender differences. Chow tests confirmed that a pooled model that includes appropriate interactions by gender is an effective analytic plan (McClendon 1994).

For each data set, the logistic regression analysis proceeds as follows. To begin, each model controls for demographic characteristics. The second model includes work life demands and job characteristics in addition to family economic factors and family demands such as children, child care, and housework. The third model includes role spillover measures. For each sample, the final model explores specific interactions between gender and independent variables.

GSS Logistic Regression Results

Beginning with the GSS sample, Table 3 presents logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood that respondents report feeling very or completely successfully balanced (coded 1). In Model 1, none of the demographic predictors are significant. In support of Hypothesis 1, gender is not a significant predictor. With the addition of work characteristics in Model 2, we find that respondent's work hours has a significant negative relationship to the likelihood of feeling balanced. These results support our second hypothesis that greater work demands would relate to less balance. The odds ratio for work hours, which is more easily interpretable than the coefficient, indicates that compared to those working the average number of hours per week, an additional hour of work is associated with a 2 percent reduction in the likelihood of feeling balanced ($1 - .980 = .020$). In this model, respondent's occupation is not a significant predictor, and, surprisingly, neither are the family life variables. Spouse's work characteristics, the number of children living at home, and respondent's housework responsibilities are unrelated to balance. These results fail to support our third hypothesis that greater family demands negatively affect balance. The inclusion of work and family factors adds only minimally to the model's explanatory power, indicating that role occupancy and demands do not sufficiently predict the likelihood of feeling balanced.

Model 3 enters indicators of work and family spillover. Entering each spillover item separately allows us to specify which kinds of interference across domains are the most problematic. The addition of the spillover items adds a substantial improvement in model fit and does not affect the coefficient for respondent's work hours, while the family life characteristics remain insignificant predictors. In support of Hypothesis 4, Model 3 shows that greater spillover has a negative association with the likelihood of feeling balanced. Two of the work spillover variables show a negative association with perceived work-family balance. Those respondents who missed a family occasion or holiday were 43 percent less likely to feel balanced than those who did not experience this kind of intrusion on family

TABLE 3

Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Likelihood of Feeling Very or Completely Successfully Balanced between Work and Family Life, GSS

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Demographics						
Age	0.002	1.002	0.003	1.003	-0.003	0.997
Education	0.014	1.014	-0.079	0.924	-0.106	0.899
White	-0.070	0.932	-0.073	0.929	-0.086	0.918
Female	0.024	1.024	-0.108	0.898	-0.258	0.772
Respondent's income	0.000	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	1.000
Work characteristics						
Work hours			-0.02**	0.980	-.018*	0.982
Professional occupation			0.088	1.092	0.110	1.117
Family characteristics						
Spouse's work hours			0.007	1.007	0.008	1.008
Spouse's occupation			0.036	1.036	-0.007	0.993
Children 0-5			0.161	1.174	0.240	1.271
Children 6-12			-0.165	0.848	-0.099	0.906
Children 13-17			-0.105	0.900	-0.137	0.872
Contribution to housework			-0.172	0.842	-0.119	0.887
Work to family spillover						
Missed family occasion					-0.565*	0.568
Been unable to care for sick child/relative					-0.366	0.694
Been unable to do housework					-0.512*	0.599
Family to work spillover						
Refused a job promotion					0.038	1.039
Refused to work extra hours					-0.466 ⁺	0.628
Cut back on work					0.096	1.100
Intercept	-0.571	0.565	0.625	1.868	1.292	3.640
-2 Log likelihood	591.967		580.096		553.813	
df	5		13		19	
N	444		444		444	
χ^2 for improvement in model fit	0.332		12.204		38.486**	

Note: No significant interactions by gender.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ⁺ $p < .10$.

life ($1 - .568 = .432$). Similarly, being unable to do household chores because of work responsibilities decreased the likelihood of feeling balanced by 40 percent ($1 - .599 = .401$). The negative coefficient for refusing to work extra hours due to family responsibilities is only marginally significant ($1 - .628 = .372$). From this final model we conclude that work to family spillover is a stronger predictor of

imbalance than is family to work spillover. In exploratory models, we tested for interactions between work and family spillover variables and gender and found none, indicating that the effects are uniform for women and men. Thus in the GSS we fail to find support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b, which predicted gender differences in the effects of work and family spillover on perceived balance.

To summarize, from the GSS analysis, work demands such as the number of hours worked per week and work intrusions into family life are the most salient predictors of perceptions of balance between work and family life. Further, we conclude that women and men experience the negative effects of work demands and work spillover similarly. To address Hypotheses 5 and 6, that scheduling flexibility, autonomy, and perceived job demands relate to balance and that the effects are gendered, we turn to the results of similar logistic regression analyses using the NSCW sample.

NSCW Logistic Regression Results

Table 4 presents logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood that respondents feel very successfully balanced between work and family using the NSCW. In Model 1 we find three demographic variables that have a statistically significant association with the likelihood of feeling very successfully balanced. The odds ratio for age indicates that compared to those who are the average age, each additional year increases the likelihood of balance by 2.6 percent ($1 - 1.026 = -.026$). Conversely, two demographic variables have a negative association with perceived balance. Those with more than a high school education are 37 percent more likely than others to feel unbalanced between work and family life ($1 - .627 = .373$). Similarly, the odds ratio for white tells us that white workers are 54 percent more likely than nonwhite workers to feel unbalanced ($1 - .462 = .538$). As with the GSS analyses, we find support for Hypothesis 1 that gender is not a significant predictor of the likelihood of feeling balanced.

The second model adds work and family characteristics and has a minor impact on the net effects of the demographic variables, although with the exception of age, their direction and significance remain unchanged. As with the GSS sample, we find that, compared to those who work the average number of hours, an additional hour of work corresponds with a 2 percent reduction in the odds of feeling balanced ($1 - .977 = .023$). Thus we find support for Hypothesis 2 that greater work demands have a negative relationship to the likelihood of feeling balanced. While respondent's occupation is not a significant predictor, we find partial support for Hypothesis 5 that job autonomy is positively associated with balance. Compared to those with the average level of job autonomy, greater autonomy predicts a 70 percent increase in the likelihood of feeling balanced ($1 - 1.704 = .704$). However, increased job demands have a negative association with balance, although the effect is only marginally significant. Surprisingly, we do not find evidence to support Hypotheses 5 and 6 regarding the effects of scheduling flexibility and perceived job demands on balance.

As with the GSS, we find that family characteristics are not salient predictors

TABLE 4
Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Likelihood of Feeling
Very Successfully Balanced between Work and Family Life, NSCW

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Demographics								
Age	0.026**	1.026	0.010	1.010	0.010	1.010	0.013	1.013
Education	-0.467*	0.627	-0.507*	0.602	-0.41 ⁺	0.664	-0.421 ⁺	0.656
White	-0.773**	0.462	-0.943***	0.389	-1.028***	0.358	-1.075***	0.341
Female	0.086	1.089	-0.153	0.858	-0.018	0.982	-0.469	0.626
Respondent's income	-0.153	0.858	0.056	1.058	0.133	1.142	0.059	1.061
Work characteristics								
Work hours			-0.023*	0.977	-0.016	0.984	-0.021 ⁺	0.979
Professional occupation			-0.061	0.941	-0.095	0.712	-0.093	0.911
Job autonomy			0.533**	1.704	0.436*	1.546	0.440*	1.569
Job demands			-0.369 ⁺	0.692	-0.003	0.997	-0.027	0.973
Scheduling flexibility			-0.049	0.692	-0.058	0.944	-0.071	0.932
Family characteristics								
Spouse's work hours			0.006	1.006	0.007	1.007	0.007	1.007
Spouse's occupation			0.102	1.108	0.095	1.100	0.191	1.210
Number of children in household			-0.066	0.936	-0.069	0.933	-0.029	0.971
Number of children under 6 years			-0.353	0.702	-0.235	0.791	-0.209	0.811
Contribution to housework			0.194	1.214	0.199	1.221	0.220 ⁺	1.246
Contribution to child care			-0.375 ⁺	0.687	-0.364	0.695	-0.399 ⁺	0.671
Work to family spillover								
No personal time					0.122	1.130	-0.467	0.627
No family time					-0.441	0.644	-0.402	0.669
No energy					-0.485 ⁺	0.616	0.513 ⁺	0.599
Chores not done					-0.372	0.689	-0.452	0.636
Bad moods					-0.200	0.818	-0.088	0.916
Family to work spillover								
Worked fewer hours or made scheduling changes					0.352	1.422	1.508***	4.516
Refused overtime					-0.188	0.829	-1.476**	0.229
Distracted/less productive or work quality suffered					-0.725*	0.484	-0.853**	0.426
Had problems with supervisor or coworkers					0.386	1.470	0.310	1.363
Interaction terms								
Female × scheduling changes							-1.909**	0.148
Female × refused overtime							2.078**	7.986
Female × personal time							1.029*	2.781
Intercept	0.743	2.102	-0.325	0.722	-1.284	0.581	-0.213	0.808
-2 Log likelihood	600.472		565.436		532.602		511.823	
df	5		16		25		28	
N	479		479		479		479	
χ^2 for improvement in model fit	26.145***		35.036***		32.834***		20.779***	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ⁺ $p < .10$.

of the likelihood of feeling balanced. Indeed, only one predictor, child care, is even marginally statistically significant. In weak support of Hypothesis 3, greater responsibility for child care decreases the likelihood of feeling balanced by about 31 percent ($1 - .687 = .313$). At this stage in the analysis, we find similar results across the two samples; however, the inclusion of more specific job characteristics in the NSCW demonstrates that job autonomy, as well as work hours, has an effect on perceived balance.

Model 3 includes work and family spillover variables. As with the GSS analysis, entering each job spillover item separately allows us to specify which kinds of interference across domains are the most problematic. The net effects of race remain significant in this model, although age and education are no longer significant. Similarly, with the inclusion of spillover variables, the measure of work hours is no longer significant. When we employ alternative work spillover items not available in the GSS, we find no evidence of work spillover into family life and therefore no support for Hypothesis 4 regarding the effect of work spillover on balance. Indeed, only having no energy due to work is even marginally significant. This suggests that the work spillover items in the GSS are substantively different from the spillover captured in the NSCW variables.

With the inclusion of the family spillover items, we find support for Hypothesis 4 regarding the negative impact of family spillover on balance. Recall that in the GSS, none of the family spillover variables were significant predictors of balance. The NSCW includes family spillover variables that were unavailable in the GSS. When workers have been distracted, feel less productive, or produced lower-quality work due to family responsibilities, the effect is significant in the NSCW. Workers who report having been less productive at work because of family responsibilities are 52 percent less likely to report feeling very successfully balanced between work and family than those who did not experience this type of family spillover ($1 - .484 = .516$). Contrary to the GSS results, in the NSCW, family to work spillover that results in lowered work quality is particularly imbalancing for workers.

The final regression model addresses Hypotheses 4a through 6 and tests whether the effects of work and family spillover variables and specific job characteristics vary by gender.⁴ Although we tested for gender differences in the effects of job characteristics, we are surprised to find no support for Hypothesis 5 or 6. In the final model, we include three interaction terms demonstrating support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b that the effects of three of the spillover items operate differently for women and men. For ease of interpretation, we discuss the interactions in terms of predicted probabilities for women and men who experience these different types of spillover. Table 5 presents predicted probabilities that women and men feel very successfully balanced based on the following formula:

$$P_i = \exp(Z_i) / (1 + \exp(Z_i))$$

P_i is the probability of feeling very successfully balanced, and Z_i is the sum of the coefficient estimates multiplied by the mean for each independent variable (Aldrich and Nelson 1984; Brewster and Padavic 2002).

TABLE 5
 Predicted Probability of Feeling Very Successfully Balanced by
 Role Spillover and Gender, NSCW

	<i>Had No Personal Time Due to Work</i>	<i>Made Scheduling Changes Due to Family</i>	<i>Refused Overtime Due to Family</i>
Men	0.884	0.964	0.725
Women	0.974	0.715	0.929

The first column of Table 5 addresses Hypothesis 4a and demonstrates that having no personal time due to work is particularly imbalancing for men. The probabilities of feeling very balanced for women and men who report having no personal time are .97 and .88, respectively. Men who report having no personal time are 22 percent less likely than women to feel very balanced ($.88 - .97 / .88 = -.22$). Although we find a gender difference, it is not in the expected direction. Thus we do not find support for Hypothesis 4a, which posited that work to family spillover would be particularly problematic for women. It may be the case that women who report no personal time do not feel imbalanced because they are devoting most of their nonwork hours to their families. They may feel that family is an important priority and are therefore accustomed to having little personal time. Men apparently do not share these expectations.

The second column of Table 5 addresses Hypothesis 4b and demonstrates the relative difference in the effect of making scheduling changes for women compared to men. For a woman who made scheduling changes at work, the probability that she feels very balanced is .71, whereas for a man the probability is .96. Comparing these probabilities, we find that men who make scheduling changes due to family life are 22 percent more likely than women who do the same to feel balanced between work and family ($.96 - .71 / .96 = .22$). Contrary to our expectation in Hypothesis 4b, men who make scheduling changes due to family are more rather than less likely to feel balanced. One interpretation of this finding is that societal expectations regarding men's role as breadwinners may allow men to benefit from altering their schedules to make work a priority, while women's less positive reaction may reflect societal expectations that women place family responsibilities ahead of work demands.

Finally, the effect of refusing overtime is also contingent on gender. For women who refuse overtime work due to family, the probability of feeling balanced is .93; for men the probability is .72. Thus a woman who refuses overtime is about 16 percent more likely than a man to feel very balanced between work and family ($.93 - .72 / .93 = .155$). This finding is consistent with the finding reported above regarding scheduling changes and again suggests that men may feel they are meeting societal expectations when they give priority to work and women when they give priority to family. It may also reflect the fact that men generally are responsible for household tasks that have greater flexibility such as yard work or home maintenance, allowing them to avoid family-work conflict more readily than women (Robinson and Godbey 1997).

DISCUSSION

Employing two data sets to address the same set of hypotheses allows us to draw on the strengths of each to provide a nuanced understanding of the work-family balancing act. The GSS analysis provides a baseline model, while the NSCW provides a more in-depth examination of work and family characteristics and spillover effects. The GSS is a useful starting point, but the NSCW provides a somewhat richer picture of how men and women perceive their ability to balance work and family life.

We found support for our hypothesis that greater work and family demands would have a negative effect on perceived balance. Beginning with work demands, in the GSS the number of hours worked and work spillover into family life are the most important predictors of imbalance. We find a greater likelihood of perceived imbalance among respondents whose work responsibilities force them to miss a family occasion or make it difficult to keep up with housework. However, the GSS provides an incomplete picture of how men and women balance work and family life because it has no measures of job characteristics and only limited measures of work and family.

The NSCW analysis augments our understanding of these relationships by highlighting the salience of specific job qualities rather than simply occupation or work hours as predictors of work-family balance. In this sample greater job autonomy is associated with more balance, a finding that suggests that jobs that allow workers greater control over their work also help them to achieve more balance in their personal lives. Overall, the NSCW analysis suggests that measures of job demands such as work hours or occupation *per se* do not adequately measure the complexities of work life that promote or undermine workers' feelings of balance.

We now turn to the analysis of family demands and perceived balance. The two data sets differ in their indicators of family life demands and characteristics. The GSS includes a measure of housework and numbers of children in the household by age but does not measure actual contribution to child care. In the regression analyses none of the family characteristics are significant predictors of balance. Looking only at the GSS might lead one to conclude that work life factors far outweigh family factors in predicting balance. Indeed, family life does not even enter into the equation. However, the NSCW data tell a slightly different story. The NSCW includes separate measures of housework and child care, and results suggest that it is necessary to differentiate between the two. Although the effects are only marginally significant, having greater responsibility for housework predicts slightly greater balance while having greater responsibility for child care predicts less balance. We feel that this finding merits further attention. Finally, an important factor in the NSCW for predicting balance is family to work spillover. Workers in this sample whose family demands intrude on their work responsibilities are less likely to report a sense of balance.

Some research suggests that family responsibilities remain women's primary domain while the workplace remains the primary domain for men. Other studies support the view that gender similarity is increasing. The bivariate analysis shows gender differences in the division of labor in both samples, with men working

more hours and women reporting greater responsibility for household chores and child care. Women in this sample are also more likely than men to make scheduling changes at work and to feel more distracted or less productive at work because of the intrusion of family concerns. The multivariate results also support a gender difference model. It demonstrates that the effect of family spillover to work on perceived balance varies by gender. Although the cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to interpret the causal direction among spillover variables and perceived balance, we do find associations between making scheduling changes and balance among men and between refusing to work over time and balance among women. Among men we also find a negative relationship between balance and a lack of personal time, but not among women.

The comparison of two similar data sets is an advantage of this research. However, there are also a few limitations that merit discussion. First, as stated, we are limited by the cross-sectional nature of the research design and therefore cannot make causal statements about the relationships between independent and dependent variables. For example, we cannot determine the causal relationship between feeling balanced and refusing overtime. Do women who refuse to work overtime feel more balanced, or do women who feel more balanced refuse overtime? Longitudinal data would significantly strengthen the scope of this study and may elucidate the factors that predict perceived balance over the short and long term. Second, we concede that although other research employs single-item measures of work-family balance as dependent variables (see Milkie and Peltola 1999; Saltzstein, Ting, and Hall Saltzstein 2001; White 1999), a more complex measure of balance such as that suggested by Clark (2001) may elucidate distinct facets of perceived balance. Future research should explore multiple dimensions of work-family balance. Finally, these analyses focus only on married workers. Future research should examine these processes for single parents and for those who may have chosen part-time work arrangements.

CONCLUSION

Before the 1980s scholars conceptualized the work-family balancing act as a "woman's problem" and assumed that men integrated their work and family roles without conflict (Kanter 1977). Our first objective in this article has been to analyze the effects of work characteristics, family characteristics, and work-family spillover on perceptions of work-family balance. Our results lend support to other research on the impact of work arrangements on the work-family interface. The initial analysis of the GSS suggested that the greater the demands from work, the less likely an individual is to feel balanced. People who work long hours and people whose work responsibilities intrude into family life are susceptible to feeling that they are unable to maintain balance in their lives. It is particularly stressful when work demands force people to miss family occasions such as a child's sporting event or a spouse's birthday party. If we had undertaken our analysis using only the GSS, this would have been our main conclusion. When we explored further, however, we found that using a simple measure of work demands such as "occupation" or "work hours" was an insufficient predictor of

balance. Rather what mattered more was job autonomy. When men and women have autonomy in their jobs, they are better able to achieve a sense of balance in their personal lives.

While most organizations continue to operate on the basis of outdated gender beliefs that ignore women's increased labor force participation (Gerson 1998), some workplaces have begun to institute family-friendly policies (Glass and Estes 1997; Glass and Fujimoto 1995). Based on our results, granting greater job autonomy is one of the most beneficial arrangements for workers' sense of balance. In addition to job autonomy, other family-friendly workplace arrangements have positive outcomes for employees and employers. Research shows that the use of resources such as on-site child care increases greater job satisfaction and perceived work-family balance (Ezra and Deckman 1996), improves motivation and productivity and employee retention, decreases health care costs and stress-related illnesses, and lowers absenteeism (Landauer 1997). Thus it is in employers' best interests to institute workplace policies that relieve women (and men) of their concerns about families by implementing family-friendly policies and programs. It is also important to consider which combinations of job qualities empower workers, advance their sense of balance, and help to ameliorate the tensions between work and family obligations.

For our second objective, to compare gender similarity and gender difference models, we have found some support for the convergence of women's and men's work experiences, as both women and men must make adjustments in their personal lives to meet their obligations to their employers and adjustments at work to maintain their family responsibilities. While men and women respond similarly on some measures, our overall analysis supports the gender difference model. Gender differences were observed in the household division of labor, with men working more hours and women doing more household chores and spending more time caring for children. Women not only respond differently than men to competing demands but also interpret the meaning of competing demands differently. Finally, our analyses show that both men and women make more adjustments at home to oblige work requirements than at work due to family demands but that men and women continue to interpret these intrusions in "gendered" ways.

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NOTES

1. Although the 1997 wave of the NSCW would be more temporally proximate to the 1996 GSS sample, the NSCW 1997 did not ask the specific question regarding work-family balance, though it did ask a variety of related questions. Although we try to capitalize on the strengths of each data set, we felt it was important to employ identical dependent variables.

2. Although our dependent variable is based on a single-item measure, we do not anticipate threats to validity since we are interested in respondent's *perceived* balance. Furthermore, to address the issue of reliability, it is useful to examine bivariate correlations with measures of success in family and work life measured on the same scale. The correlations between perceived balance and perceived success in family life (.408) and perceived success in work life (.334) are relatively modest and do not suggest a robust underlying concept.
3. As with the GSS, the single-item dependent variable in the NSCW merits an examination of correlations with other measures of work and family success. The correlations between perceived work-family balance and perceived success in personal and family life (.41) and perceived success in work life (.23) are not strong and suggest that the measures are distinct.
4. In exploratory models, we tested for interactions between other independent variables and gender. In the interest of statistical parsimony and efficiency, the final model includes only significant interaction effects.

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