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Schedule Flexibility And The Impact On Work-To-Family Conflict Among Low Earners And High Earners

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SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY AND THE IMPACT ON WORK-TO-FAMILY CONFLICT
AMONG LOW EARNERS AND HIGH EARNERS

by

Brittany Rose Love
Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2013

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

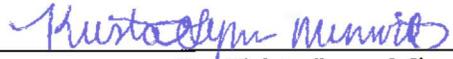
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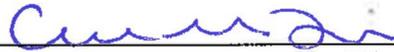
This thesis, submitted by Brittany Love in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



Dr. Krista Lynn Minnotte

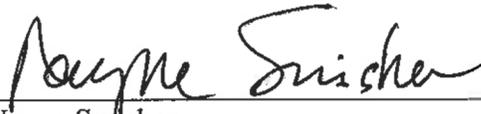


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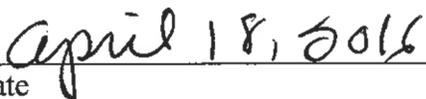


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This thesis is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



Wayne Swisher
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies



Date

PERMISSION

Title Schedule Flexibility and the Impact on Work-to-Family Conflict among Low Earners and High Earners

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ABSTRACT

Today many Americans struggle to balance work and family life, and schedule flexibility is one mechanism that can be used to reduce conflict between work and family. Since social class is understudied in work-family scholarship, this study will compare the experiences of high and low earners, with a focus on examining the relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict. Using secondary data from the 2008 National Study of Changing Workforce (NSCW), this study explores whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners ($N = 1,665$). Results indicated that both low and high earners experienced less work-to-family conflict when they had access to schedule flexibility. However, the relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict was stronger for low earners compared to high earners. These findings were discussed in further detail, with implications for individuals and workplaces presented.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Chapter

The goal of this thesis is to examine whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners. Chapter One will introduce why studying this topic is important and describe the overall goal of this thesis. It will also explain what is currently known about how schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict, and the relevance of analyzing social class differences. Finally, an overview of the next four chapters of this thesis will be presented.

Introduction and Goal of Thesis

The rise of women in the workforce has brought about changes in work and family, such as an increase in the number of dual-earner families. With both men and women working for pay and taking care of family demands, managing work and family responsibilities has increasingly become an issue. These struggles become even more complex due to structural lag in the workplace, with workplaces failing to adjust to the changing needs of the workforce. One example of this pattern is that most workplaces still adhere to ideal worker norms. The ideal worker is typically viewed as a male breadwinner who devotes the majority of his time to work without any personal distractions from family, while receiving support from a female homemaker (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Davies & Frink, 2014; Williams, Blair-Loy & Berdahl, 2013). As such, the struggles faced by dual-earner families have increased because they must manage two jobs while encountering workplaces that are not supportive.

Given these patterns, 70 percent of U.S. men and women report some type of interference between work and family/personal responsibilities, creating conflict between family and work demands (Kelly, Moen, & Tranby, 2011). Although rates of conflict between work and family are high, this does not mean that every household experiences the same amount of conflict. Indeed, social class is one potential factor influencing how and how much work and family interference might occur. For example, low earners might experience more conflict due to fewer resources or less accessibility to family-friendly benefits compared to high earners, who most likely have multiple resources and greater access to family-friendly benefits. Social class may be especially important because of increasing income inequality in the United States since the 1970s (McCall & Percheski, 2010).

Within the work-family literature there is an abundance of research that uncovers antecedents of work-to-family conflict. One main area of this literature explores how work-domain variables contribute to work-to-family conflict. Studies show that job involvement (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Bates, 2010), hours spent at work, lack of work support, less access to schedule flexibility (Michel et al., 2010), job stress (Byron, 2005), workload (Van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012), and job satisfaction (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002) all contribute to increased work-to-family conflict. Other non-work variables also contribute to increased interference between work and family, such as number of children and low levels of family support (Byron, 2005). Other factors that scholars have linked to work-to-family conflict include gender (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Minnotte, Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, & Kiger, 2010; Van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012) and race (Frone et al., 1992). There is less research, however, on how social class comes into play. This study extends work-family scholarship by looking at social class using a comparative approach. In particular, this thesis explores schedule flexibility

and how it impacts work-to-family conflict among high and low earners. It is important to study schedule flexibility because it can help employees manage other responsibilities outside of work. It is anticipated that low earners will experience work-to-family conflict differently than high earners based on differential access to schedule flexibility. This study, guided by role theory, will use secondary data from the 2008 National Study of Changing Workforce (NSCW) to explore these relationships.

Summary and Overview of Thesis

Chapter One introduced the research question of this study. Chapter Two will introduce the theoretical framework guiding this thesis and will review previous literature regarding work-to-family conflict, schedule flexibility, and social class. Variables central to this thesis will be conceptualized and defined. The relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict among low and high earners will be examined using quantitative research methods. These methods will be described in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will present the results from the statistical analyses. Finally, Chapter Five will discuss the results and place them in context of the previous literature and the theoretical framework guiding this thesis. A discussion of the limitations of this thesis and suggestions for future research will also be addressed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this thesis is to examine how schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict among high and low earners. In order to address this question, Chapter Two includes an overview of the theoretical framework that will be used to inform the research question, a discussion of the previous literature, and a presentation of the proposed research question and hypotheses.

Theoretical Framework

Role Theory

In previous work-family research, work and family are often assumed to conflict with one another (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). This assumption can be explained by the incompatibility individuals experience between work and family roles. With both work and family taking up large amounts of time and energy, these roles can compete with each other. Given this possibility, the theoretical framework that will be used for this study is role theory. A role is a set of expectations for behaviors based on an individual's social position (Biddle, 1986, p. 67). Examples of roles include student, neighbor, parent, and mentor. Role theory can be used to examine a variety of social processes, such as phases of socialization, interdependences among individuals, processes of conformity, the division of labor, or the characteristics and organization of social positions (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). When looking at work and family, role theory can be used to explain how work and family can conflict with each other based on the incompatible demands of each domain.

According to role theorists, the more roles an individual occupies, the greater the pressure the individual experiences, which can make it harder to manage multiple roles. As such, holding multiple roles can lead to negative outcomes, such as work-family conflict (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Based on the assumption that there is a scarcity of resources, including time and attention, work and family have been characterized as involving tension and conflict with each other (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Because work and family are separate domains, the time and energy spent on work may lead to decreased time and energy spent on family and vice versa (Barnett & Gareis, 2006). That is, the enactment of one role may lead to reduced availability, increased strain, or interference with another role. In summary, the more roles an individual occupies the more likely role conflict is to occur. Since work is a primary role of many individuals, workplaces can implement supportive strategies to help workers manage other roles, such as family. One way to do this is to allow employees schedule flexibility to help them manage multiple roles, and hopefully decrease work-to-family conflict.

Background and Conceptualization

Work-to-Family Conflict

The transformation to the dual-earner household as the dominant family form has altered how work and family roles interact. As such, conflict between work and family has become a topic of increasing interest among work-family scholars. When these two domains are at odds with one another, we see what scholars define as work-family conflict. More specifically, work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). This is a bidirectional concept in which family can impact work (family-to-work conflict) and work can impact family (work-to-family conflict) in negative ways. This thesis

focuses on work-to-family conflict. An example of this is if a parent is scheduled to pick up their child from school, but their employer needs them to stay for a meeting instead. This thesis explores how one family-friendly workplace benefit, schedule flexibility, impacts work-to-family conflict among low and high earners. In order to explore these relationships, two hypotheses regarding the relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict will be formulated. Additionally, a research question about whether low earners experience work-to-family conflict differently than high earners based on schedule flexibility will be presented.

Schedule Flexibility and Work-to-Family Conflict

Workplaces may offer a variety of family-friendly benefits that help employees manage time more effectively. Some benefits include teleworking, parental leave, paid time off, flexible work arrangements, and on-site child care. There are a variety of flexible work arrangements, including flextime (schedule flexibility), flexplace, and telework that some employees can utilize to help manage work and family issues. One type of flexible work arrangement used to decrease work-to-family conflict is schedule flexibility (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Carlson, Grzywacz, & Kacmar, 2009; Shockley & Allen, 2007). Schedule flexibility is defined as “a work arrangement that allows employees to decide the time of day they start and stop their job-related work, which is usually around a band of core hours” (Blair-Loy, 2009, p. 282). Based on a recent study, 79 percent of employers now allow at least some employees to periodically change their starting and quitting times (Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2008). Although some workplaces are implementing schedule flexibility, this does not always mean employees use it, or that all employees have access to it.

Schedule flexibility can be used to decrease work-to-family conflict because it gives individuals more flexibility to arrange work and family responsibilities (Carlson et al., 2009; Schockley & Allen, 2007). Previous research shows that schedule flexibility can lead to positive work-family outcomes, such as decreased work-to-family conflict (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Kacmar, 2010; Kelly et al., 2011). Given the association between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Schedule flexibility will be negatively associated with work-to-family conflict among both low and high earners.

Work-Family Issues and Social Class

Work conditions vary across workers, including differential access to benefits and resources based on occupation and income. Recent changes in the distribution of income in the U.S. call attention to the importance of social class. For example, income distribution of income shares held by the top 5 percent has dramatically increased from 1979 to 2005 as reflected in data from 2008 (McCall & Percheski, 2010). On the other hand, income for median households has barely moved. The rapid increase of income held by the top 1 percent and minimal income changes to low to middle income households has led to large income inequalities (McCall & Percheski, 2010). Changing family formation patterns have been identified as one factor contributing to U.S. income inequality.

Family formation patterns have changed markedly in the U.S., with decreases in marriage rates and increasing marital instability. These patterns have been more concentrated among economically disadvantaged groups. Lower income individuals are less likely to be living in married households, which contributes to greater income inequality. Changes in work and family have also led to differences in how families experience income inequality. Not every

family is in the same economic position, and these circumstances can lead to differences in how families experience work-to-family conflict. Different economic positions can lead to differences in education, occupational status, and differential access to resources that can be useful to manage work-to-family conflict (Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Drescher-Burke, 2005). This study will explore whether low and high earners experience work-to-family conflict differently.

The changing dynamics of family and rising income inequality create challenges within the workforce. Previous studies show that there is often a mismatch between workers and workplaces (Blair-Loy, 2009; Gerstel & Clawson, 2014; Golden, 2001; Lyness, Gornick, Stone, & Grotto, 2012). This mismatch is partly due to the fact that workers value schedule flexibility, but workplaces sometimes lack schedule flexibility. Schedule flexibility is a resource to employees, yet the access to this benefit is not equally distributed (Swanberg, Watson, & Eastman, 2014). One study showed that professionals are more likely to have schedule flexibility than low income workers, while other work suggests that low income workers sometimes have flexible schedules that are controlled by management. For example, low income workers are most likely to have irregular schedules and be subjected to erratic and unstable on-call, call-in, just-in-time and split-shift schedules (Golden, 2015). This form of scheduling is good for the employer, because it offers the employer considerable control over schedules, rather than the employee. In summary, there are differences in schedule flexibility between high earners and low earners. Professional workers are more likely to control their schedules, whereas the schedules of low income workers are more likely to be controlled by their employers.

Despite trends of widening income inequality, social class has rarely been studied in the work-family literature. When it has been researched it has typically been studied in terms of how lifestyle choices, social capital, and cultural capital impact work and family responsibilities. For example, working-class individuals view strong family values as necessary to attaining a high quality of life (Williams, 2008). Williams states that these families rarely talk about work, whereas upper-middle class families have different priorities concerning work and family (2008). The emphasis for upper middle class is often placed on work and income, rather than time spent with family. These different family norms can lead to differences in how social classes experience work-to-family conflict, although such differences remain largely unexplored.

Other scholars look at the workplace itself and how employees' work lives may impact their home lives. Some occupations are more demanding than others, requiring long hours and high job involvement (Schieman, Whitestone, & Van Gundy, 2006). Many high status occupations are highly focused on their clients, making hours rigid and unpredictable (Blair-Loy, 2009). In general, workers in high-status occupations who have more responsibilities, high demands, and high job involvement are more focused on their work lives than low-status workers (Schieman et al., 2006). Schieman, Whitestone, and Van Gundy (2006) concluded that even though high status occupations provide many resources, the stress that comes with such occupations often leads to higher levels of conflict between work and family. Another study found that professionals work long hours and have class advantage, whereas low-wage workers work fewer hours but want more hours and are disadvantaged (Gerstel & Clawson, 2014). Class advantages include income and educational requirements associated within the occupational structure, as well as the availability of resources and family-friendly benefits. From these social

class differences, work-to-family conflict may differ based on hours worked and workers' positions in the workforce.

One variable that should be taken into consideration in determining differences between classes is scheduling flexibility. Previous studies reported notable schedule control inequalities that exist between occupational groups (Gerstel & Clawson, 2014; Kelly et al., 2011). Professional workers had more schedule control in deciding the times and days they worked. In contrast, those in working-class occupations had more rigid schedules and less control over the days and times they worked. Those with class advantage did work more hours, but they were able to use their control to determine their schedules (Gerstel & Clawson, 2014). Because working-class employees have less schedule control and more rigidity than professional workers, they have fewer resources to deal with work-to-family conflict.

Along these lines, other work looks at low and high-wage employees' reported work-to-family conflict. DiRenzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2011) found that high-wage employees experience greater work-to-family conflict than low-wage employees. This occurred because high-wage employees were more likely to have increased job demands and longer work hours associated with their high-level positions (DiRenzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2011). In contrast, employees in low-wage jobs have less control over schedules and have fewer resources than high-wage workers, therefore, they often rely on informal support systems to help with family responsibilities (Ammons & Kelly, 2008; Hennessy, 2009; Williams, 2008). This previous literature highlights the class variations within the workplace that may differentially impact work-to-family conflict across social classes. High and low earners are focused on in this thesis because they have notable differences in work conditions and available resources. High earners have more job demands than low earners, often creating different experiences in work and family

life (Schieman & Glavin, 2016), whereas low earners work fewer hours and have fewer job demands (DiRenzo et al., 2011).

One mechanism that scholars have studied that may reduce work-to-family conflict is schedule flexibility. A previous study stated that schedule flexibility can be employee based or employer based (Williams et al., 2013). If schedule flexibility is through the employer, employees have less control over their schedules, whereas if it is employee driven, employees are more likely to have control over their own schedules (Blair-Loy, 2009, Gerstel & Clawson, 2014; Swanberg et al., 2014). Low earners were more likely to have employer driven schedules, while high earners were more likely to have employee driven schedules (Williams et al., 2013). This thesis focuses on the impact of employee-driven schedule flexibility because it is more likely to reduce work-to-family conflict. Overall, the evidence suggests class position impacts employees' access to resources and benefits that will help them manage work and family responsibilities. Based on this past scholarship, the second hypothesis is:

H2: High earners will report more schedule flexibility than low earners.

Research Question

Since schedule flexibility is unequally distributed, the impact this resource may have on employees' work-to-family conflict may differ between low earners and high earners. For example, high earners are more likely to have control over their schedules than low earners (Blair-Loy, 2009, Gerstel & Clawson, 2014; Swanberg et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2013). Furthermore, high earners are likely to have more resources aiding them in managing work and family responsibilities, which may minimize work-to-family conflict (Kelly et al., 2011). Access to schedule flexibility may help employees engage in work and family responsibilities in a more effective manner, thereby reducing work-to-family conflict. When looking at low earners, they

are less likely to have schedule flexibility and other resources to manage work and family (Lyness et al., 2012; Swanberg et al., 2005; Swanberg et al., 2014). For example, low earners have limited access to valuable resources, such as formal-high quality child care. They might work two jobs to pay for child care, or they might rely on their families to provide care. In contrast, high earners have greater resources with which to purchase high quality formal child care or nannies. Given these patterns, does schedule flexibility impact how high and low earners combine their work and family responsibilities in different ways? This leads to the research question:

RQ1: Does schedule flexibility impact work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners?

Control Variables and Work-to-Family Conflict

This thesis controls for gender, age, race, education, marital status, number of children, occupation, hours worked, and job autonomy. It is important to control for gender because previous work has found differences in men and women's reported work-to-family conflict (Frone et al., 1992; Hill, 2005; Minnotte et al., 2010; Van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012; Voydanoff, 2005). This thesis also takes into account age because work-to-family conflict likely varies across a lifetime (Huffman, Culbertson, Henning, & Goh, 2013; Voydanoff, 2005). Race is taken into account because work-to-family conflict varies across racial groups, with Whites reporting less work-to-family conflict than non-Whites (Frone et al., 1992; Voydanoff, 2005).

Education is also important to include because those with higher education are more likely to experience work-to-family conflict (Rupanner, 2011; Schieman & Glavin, 2011; Voydanoff, 2004). Marital status is taken into account because being married is associated with higher work-to-family conflict (Frone et al., 1992; Voydanoff, 1988). Number of children is

controlled for because having children will likely lead to increased work-to-family conflict (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Voydanoff, 2004). Occupational status will be taken into account because low status occupations may be associated with increased work-to-family conflict due to lack of available resources. Controlling for hours worked is important because the more hours individuals work, the more likely they will experience work-to-family conflict (Hill, 2005). Finally, job autonomy will be taken into account because it may lead to decreased work-to-family conflict (Michel et al., 2010; Voydanoff, 2004).

Summary and Overview

In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework of this thesis, role theory, was described and used to explain the relevance of studying work-to-family conflict among individuals of different social classes. Previous relevant literature was presented, with hypotheses and one research question formulated based on past scholarship. In Chapter Three, the method that will be used to test the hypotheses and address the research question will be explained. Additionally, a description of the dataset, sample, and the analytic strategy will be presented. Finally, Chapter Three will explain how each variable was measured.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to examine how schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict among low and high earners. In order to address this question, this study uses a nationally representative secondary dataset. In this chapter, a description of the data and sampling process will be presented first. Second, a description of the measurement of the dependent variable, work-to-family conflict, will be given along with descriptions of the independent and control variables. Finally, an explanation of the analytic strategy will be presented.

Data and Sample

To address the research question, a secondary dataset, the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce ($N = 3,502$) will be used. The 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce consists of information gathered from a sample of U.S. workers. The questionnaire addresses both their work and personal lives. The survey is conducted approximately every five years, and uses questions developed by the Families and Work Institute. A total of 3,502 interviews took place with employed adults between November 2007 and April 2008. Coding of open-ended responses was done by interviewers, with the exception of occupation and industry which were coded by the U.S. Bureau of the Census using 1990 three-digit occupation (SOC) and industry (SIC) classifications (Family and Work Institute, 2008). Interviews were conducted by telephone using random-digit-dial methods. Up to 60 calls were made to each number. Those eligible for the sample included people who worked at a paid job or operated an income-

producing business, were 18 years or older, were employed in the civilian labor force, resided in the contiguous 48 states, and lived in a household with a telephone.

A subset of cases was selected for this study based on household income to look at low and high earners. *Household income* was measured by asking respondents to indicate their total household income. The following quartile categorizations were obtained: (1) less than \$37,449; (2) \$37,450-\$67,599; (3) \$67,600-\$105,176; and (4) \$105,177 and above. This study focuses on the bottom 25 percent (low earners = 1) and the top 25 percent (high earners = 4). This will allow for a comparison of low and high earners. After selecting for low and high earners, the total number of cases used for this study is 1,665.

Measures

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study is *work-to-family conflict*. This variable was measured on a scale from (1) never to (5) very often, based on the following questions: “How often have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?”, “How often have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?”, “How often has work kept you from doing as good a job at home as you could?”, “How often have you not been in as good a mood as you would like to be at home because of your job?”, and “How often has your job kept you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?” The scores for these items were averaged. The scale had an alpha reliability coefficient of .85 for low earners and .86 for high earners.

Independent Variable

Schedule flexibility was measured with one item asking respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement: “I have the schedule flexibility I need at work to manage family/personal responsibilities”. Respondents were asked to rate their responses from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree.

Control Variables

The control variables used for this study are occupation, gender, age, race, marital status, number of children, education, hours worked, and job autonomy. *Occupation* was measured by asking respondents to report their main occupation. Occupation was categorized into seven occupational statuses. The categories include: (1) executives/administrators/managers; (2) professionals; (3) technical; (4) sales; (5) administrator support; (6) service; and (7) production/operator/repair. These seven classifications were used to create a series of dummy variables for each occupation. Each occupation was coded as (1) respondent has this occupation and (0) respondent does not have this occupation. The comparison group was the modal category for each group, which was production/operator/repair for low earners and professionals for high earners.

Gender was coded into a dummy variable, with women coded as 0 and men as 1. *Age* was measured by respondents’ reported age in years at the time of the questionnaire. *Race* was coded as a dummy variable: (0) self identifies as other than White non-Hispanic and (1) self identifies as White non-Hispanic. *Marital status* was recoded into a dummy variable with (1) spouse or partner in residence and (0) all other situations. *Number of children* was the number of children at home under the age of eighteen the respondent reported. *Education* was an ordinal variable with the coding as follows: (1) Less than a high school diploma; (2) high school diploma

or GED; (3) some college; (4) associates degree; (5) 4 year college degree; and (6) graduate or professional degree. *Hours worked* was the respondent's reported hours worked per week at all jobs.

Job autonomy was measured with the following items: "I have freedom to decide what I do on my job", "It is basically my own responsibility to decide how the job gets done", "I have a lot to say about what happens on my job", and "I feel I can really be myself on my job". Job autonomy was then measured on a scale from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. The scores for these items were summed then averaged. The scale had an alpha reliability coefficient of .76 for low earners and .79 for high earners.

Analytic Strategy

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict among low and high earners. First, descriptive statistics of all the variables in the analysis will be provided, along with *t* tests examining any significant differences in the means of the non-dummy variables for low and high earners. Second, a bivariate correlation matrix will be presented, with separate correlations for low and high earners. Finally, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression will be used to test the relationship between work-to-family conflict and the independent and control variables. Separate regressions will be conducted for low earners and high earners to see if the relationships vary between the groups.

Summary and Overview of Next Chapter

Chapter Three described the dataset used and the sampling process, the variables and how they were measured, and the analytic strategy to be used in this study. The next chapter will present the descriptive statistics, the *t* test analyses, correlations, and the OLS regression analyses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This thesis examines whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners. The 2008 NSCW ($N = 1,665$) was used to explore the two hypotheses and one research question. First, this chapter will discuss the descriptive statistics and t test comparisons between low and high earners. Next, the bivariate correlations will be explained. Lastly, the OLS regression analyses will be presented.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the variables are shown in Table 1. On a scale of 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree), high earners had significantly ($t = -1.998$, $df = 1663$, $p < .05$) higher levels of work-to-family conflict ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .84$) than low earners ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .93$). On average, high earners had significantly ($t = -2.175$, $df = 1631$, $p < .05$) higher levels of schedule flexibility ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .85$) than low earners ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .96$) on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). This t test finding supports Hypothesis 2, which stated high earners will report more schedule flexibility than low earners. On a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), high earners had, on average, significantly ($t = -9.841$, $df = 1663$, $p < .001$) higher levels of job autonomy ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .65$) than low earners ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .77$). The next descriptive statistics are for the control variables. Roughly 53 percent of the low earners were women, and 59 percent of high earners were men. The average age of low earners was approximately 41 years ($SD = 15.50$) compared to an average of about 49 years ($SD = 9.83$) for high earners. The mean for age was significantly

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics* ($N = 831$ for low earners and 834 high earners)

Variable	Low Earners		High Earners	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Schedule flexibility	3.23	.96	3.37*	.85
Work-to-family conflict	2.39	.93	2.48*	.84
Job autonomy	3.06	.77	3.40*	.65
Gender ^a	.47	-	.59	-
Age	40.64	15.50	49.00*	9.83
Race ^b	.69	-	.87	-
Marital status ^c	.34	-	.93	-
Education	2.43	.92	3.57*	1.10
Number of children	1.70*	1.22	1.36	1.08
Work hours	38.91	15.43	48.05*	15.64
Executives/managers ^d	.08	-	.28	-
Professionals ^d	.08	-	.29	-
Technical ^d	.03	-	.04	-
Sales ^d	.14	-	.13	-
Administrative support ^d	.15	-	.08	-
Service ^d	.26	-	.06	-
Production ^d	.26	-	.12	-

^a The mean is the proportion of respondents that are male. ^b The mean is the proportion of respondents that are white non-Hispanic. ^c The mean is the proportion of respondents that have a partner or spouse living with them. ^d The mean is the proportion of respondents that have this occupation. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. * (A t test of the difference between the means was significant at the .05 level or higher; t tests were only performed on non-dummy variables), with * placed next to the higher mean.

($t = -13.079$, $df = 1649$, $p < .001$) higher for high earners than low earners. In terms of race, the majority of both low earners (69%) and high earners (87%) were white. Among low earners, 34 percent were married, and among high earners 93 percent were married. On average, high earners had significantly ($t = -23.457$, $df = 1663$, $p < .001$) higher levels of education ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.10$) than low earners ($M = 2.43$, $SD = .92$). This indicates that, on average, low earners'

highest level of education was a high school degree or GED, and high earners' highest level of education was some college.

On average, low earners had significantly ($t = 4.032, df = 776, p < .001$) more children living at home ($M = 1.70, SD = 1.22$) than high earners ($M = 1.36, SD = 1.08$). High earners, on average, had worked significantly ($t = -11.886, df = 1630, p < .001$) more hours ($M = 48.05, SD = 15.64$) than low earners ($M = 38.91, SD = 15.43$). Low earners were most likely to work in sales (14%), administrative support (15%), service (26%), and production (26%) occupations. High earners were most likely to work in executive/manager (28%), professional (29%), and technical (4%) occupations.

Bivariate Correlations

Separate bivariate correlations were performed for low earners and high earners to see how the non-dummy variables were related to each other. These are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Correlations among Non-Dummy Variables* ($N = 831$ for low earners and 834 high earners)

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7
X1: Work-to-family conflict	-	-.39***	-.28***	-.09**	.05	.20***	-.02
X2: Schedule flexibility	-.27***	-	.36***	.08*	-.03	-.20***	.10
X3: Job autonomy	-.18***	.43***	-	.13***	-.03	.05	.11
X4: Age	-.20***	.10**	.11**	-	.12***	.06	-.36***
X5: Education	.12**	-.03	.02	-.01	-	.10**	-.10
X6: Work hours	.26***	-.15***	.06	-.04	.02	-	-.08
X7: Number of children	.17***	.05	.05	-.43***	.14**	.02	-

Note: Correlation above the diagonal are for low earners and those below the diagonal are for high earners. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For both low earners and high earners, work-to-family conflict was significantly and negatively correlated with schedule flexibility ($r = -.39, p < .001$; $r = -.27, p < .001$), job autonomy ($r = -.28, p < .001$; $r = -.18, p < .001$), and age ($r = -.09, p < .01$; $r = -.20, p < .001$).

There was a significant and positive correlation for both low earners and high earners between work hours ($r = .20, p < .001$; $r = .26, p < .001$) and work-to-family conflict. There was a significant and positive correlation between work-to-family conflict and education ($r = .12, p < .01$) and number of children ($r = .17, p < .001$) for high earners.

Schedule flexibility was also correlated with a number of variables. For both low earners and high earners, schedule flexibility was significantly and positively correlated with job autonomy ($r = .36, p < .001$; $r = .43, p < .001$) and age ($r = .08, p < .05$; $r = .10, p < .01$). Among low earners and high earners, schedule flexibility was significantly and negatively correlated with work hours ($r = -.20, p < .001$; $r = -.15, p < .001$).

Regression Results

Separate OLS regression analyses were conducted to examine whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners. Table 3 displays the results of these analyses. The results show that 23% of the variance in work-to-family conflict among low earners, and about 13% of the variance in work-to-family conflict among high earners was explained by the control variables and the independent variable. In order to test the two hypotheses and explore the research question, work-to-family conflict was regressed on schedule flexibility and the control variables. Hypothesis 1 stated that schedule flexibility will be negatively associated with work-to-family conflict among both low and high earners. The results support Hypothesis 1, because schedule flexibility was significantly and negatively related to work-to-family conflict among both low earners ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$) and high earners ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$).

It is also important to note that two of the control variables were significantly associated

Table 2. *OLS Regression Predicting Work-to-Family Conflict (N = 831 low earners and 834 high earners)*

	Low Earners			High Earners		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Schedule flexibility	-0.28***	0.06	-0.29	-0.12*	0.05	-0.12
Job autonomy	-0.28***	0.07	-0.22	-0.21**	0.07	-0.16
Gender	-0.14	0.13	-0.07	-0.03	0.09	-0.02
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.09	-0.00	0.01	-0.04
Education	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.05
Work hours	0.01**	0.00	0.15	0.01***	0.00	0.22
Marital status	-0.01	0.11	-0.01	0.03	0.19	0.01
Number of children	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.10*	0.04	0.13
Race	0.23*	0.11	0.12	0.07	0.12	0.03
Executives	-0.28	0.21	-0.08	0.20	0.11	0.10
Professionals ^a	-0.28	0.21	-0.09	-	-	-
Technical	-0.15	0.32	-0.03	-0.23	0.20	-0.06
Sales	0.04	0.17	0.01	0.05	0.14	0.02
Administrative support	-0.49*	0.19	-0.17	-0.28	0.16	-0.09
Service	-0.21	0.15	-0.1	0.13	0.20	0.03
Production ^b	-	-	-	-0.03	0.15	-0.01
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²		0.23			0.13	

^a This was the occupation category that was used as the comparison group for high earners. ^b This was the occupation category that was used as the comparison group for low earners. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

with work-to-family conflict among both low and high earners. Job autonomy was negatively associated with work-to-family conflict among low earners ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$) and high earners ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$). This means that for both low earners and high earners, the more job autonomy they had, the less likely they were to experience work-to-family conflict. The variable work hours was positively associated with work-to-family conflict among low earners ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and high earners ($\beta = .22, p < .001$). This means that for both low and high earners, the more work hours individuals reported, the higher the levels of work-to-family conflict. Regarding Research Question 1, which asked whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low and high earners, the results suggest that the relationship with schedule flexibility was stronger for low earners ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$) compared to high earners ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$). This finding suggests that schedule flexibility matters more for low earners than for high earners.

Summary and Overview

In this chapter, the results of the analysis exploring whether schedule flexibility is differentially related to low earners' and high earners' work-to-family conflict was presented. High earners reported more schedule flexibility than low earners. Negative relationships were found between both job autonomy and schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict among low earners and high earners. Additionally, schedule flexibility appeared to matter more for low earners than it did for high earners. A positive and significant relationship was found between work hours and work-to-family conflict for both groups. The results of this chapter will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five. The results will also be related back to previous literature and role theory. Finally, limitations of this thesis and suggestions for future research will be presented.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to examine whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low earners and high earners. Using the data from the 2008 NSCW ($N = 1,665$), this thesis analyzed two hypotheses and one research question regarding low earners' and high earners' work-to-family conflict. In this chapter, a summary of the results will be presented. The results will then be related back to role theory and relevant literature. Next, implications of these findings will be discussed, along with limitations of this study. Finally, areas of future research will be suggested, which will be followed by a conclusion.

Discussion of Results

Control Variables and Work-to-Family Conflict

Before discussing the relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict, it is important to discuss control variables that were significantly related to work-to-family conflict. The findings from the OLS regression showed that two control variables were significantly related to work-to-family conflict among both low earners and high earners: job autonomy and work hours. Job autonomy was negatively associated with low earners' and high earners' work-to-family conflict, with those who had higher levels of job autonomy reporting lower levels of work-to-family conflict. This finding is consistent with previous literature stating that higher job autonomy leads to decreased work-to-family conflict (Michel et al., 2010). The ability of employees to structure work so it accommodates work and family demands may lead to decreased work-to-family conflict. For example, enabling control over work may contribute to

work-to-family balance (Voydanoff, 2004) because it allows workers the ability to manage their work responsibilities to align with their family responsibilities. Work hours was positively associated with low earners' and high earners' work-to-family conflict, with earners who worked more hours reporting higher levels of work-to-family conflict. This relationship was stronger for high earners than it was for low earners. This finding is consistent with previous literature stating that the more hours employees work, the more likely they are to experience work-to-family conflict (Hill, 2005). One reason behind this finding is that more hours spent at work results in less time available for family responsibilities (Adkins & Premeaux, 2012).

Schedule Flexibility and Work-to-Family Conflict

For both low and high earners, schedule flexibility was significantly and negatively related to work-to-family conflict, which is consistent with previous literature (Berg, Kalleberg, & Applebaum, 2003; Carlson et al., 2010; Lyness et al., 2012; Weeden, 2005). In terms of the research question, the results suggest that there was a difference in the magnitude of the relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict among high and low earners, with schedule flexibility mattering more for low earners' work-to-family conflict than it does for high earners' work-to-family conflict. This may be because schedule flexibility is unequally distributed among low earners and high earners, as low earners have less access to schedule flexibility than high earners (Berg et al., 2003; Carlson et al., 2010; Golden, 2001; Swanberg et al., 2005; Swanberg et al., 2014; Weeden, 2005; Williams et al., 2013). Further, low earners may have schedule flexibility, but only in terms of making minor changes to irregular schedules, evening shifts, and unpredictable work hours (Berg et al., 2003; Golden, 2001; Swanberg et al., 2005).

Another reason schedule flexibility may matter less for high earners is that they are more likely to have economic resources to minimize work-to-family conflict than low-wage workers (Berg et al., 2003). Because high status workers are more likely to be financially stable, they are better able to access formal child care or other supports to deal with family responsibilities that may otherwise lead to work-to-family conflict. One reason why schedule flexibility might matter more for low earners is that they often rely on extended family to help them take care of children because they cannot afford formal day care. Reliance on informal care may create issues for low earners because it is generally less reliable than formal care. Another reason that it might matter more for low earners is because many of these employees are working more than one job, making it harder to manage work and family. For example, if an individual is working two or more jobs, having access to schedule flexibility will allow them to manage their hours at multiple jobs to better mesh with their family responsibilities.

In relation to role theory, the results of this study suggest that when an individual occupies multiple roles, conflict often occurs. Since work and family are key roles for families, they require an abundance of time and energy. The amount of time and energy put into work and family can lead to conflict between the two roles. For example, when concentrating on one role, such as work, there is little time to fulfill obligations related to family roles. Implementing a family-friendly benefit, such as schedule flexibility, can help limit the amount of conflict experienced between work and family for both low and high earners, as demonstrated in this thesis.

Implications

The main goal of this thesis was to examine whether schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict differently among low earners and high earners. A key finding is that schedule

flexibility impacts both low earners' and high earners' work-to-family conflict. However, the findings suggest that it matters more for low earners than high earners. Workplaces should take appropriate actions to reduce employees' work-to-family conflict, especially among low earners. Such actions may include implementing employee-driven schedule flexibility so that it benefits the employee rather than the employer. This will allow employees greater control over their schedules and help them manage work and family responsibilities. Since schedule flexibility is seen as a viable solution to manage work and family that costs little to implement (Weeden, 2005), workplaces should offer this benefit to all of their employees. In addition, implementing schedule flexibility enhances worker performance and productivity, making it beneficial for employers (Weeden, 2005).

Not only does implementing schedule flexibility help employees manage work and family, but it may also be beneficial to the employer. Studies show that by implementing schedule flexibility, employees exhibit higher job commitment, higher job satisfaction, higher performance, lower turnover, and higher organizational commitment (Allen, 2001; Eaton, 2003). By adding schedule flexibility, the employer benefits by contributing to employees' overall organizational commitment and job performance within the workplace.

Schedule flexibility can be easily integrated into professional occupations among salaried workers, but for hourly workers, rigid schedules make it harder for employers to implement. Alternative options that can be offered include implementing schedule predictability and varying the timing of work (Lambert, Haley-Lock, & Henly, 2012). These alternatives are best for hourly jobs when work hours are fluctuating (Lambert et al., 2012). Implementing these options would help those with rigid schedules to manage their work and family responsibilities.

In terms of the individual, having schedule flexibility may lead to a variety of positive outcomes. For example, individuals may experience less stress, better mental and physical well-being, and improved work-family balance when they have access to schedule flexibility. By having the option of schedule flexibility, it may help individuals feel less pressure and stress from the job, which can lead to positive outcomes on the job and at home. Individuals, then, should consider whether companies offer schedule flexibility when deciding whether to apply for jobs or accept a job offer.

Limitations

A few limitations of this thesis should be mentioned. This study only focuses on two groups of earners: low earners and high earners. These groups were categorized based on the top and bottom 25 percent of earners within the 2008 NSCW survey. This excludes a large group of employees - the middle class - that falls between these two income categories. Another limitation is that the 2008 NSCW has limited data on the elite class or upper class. High earners were largely comprised of those who would technically reside in the upper-middle class. Additionally, since this thesis is quantitative, qualitative methods could be used to gain a deeper understanding of employees' schedule flexibility and the impact it has on their work-to-family conflict. Finally, this study only focuses on employee driven schedule flexibility. Adding employer driven schedule flexibility will allow a broader exploration of schedule flexibility.

Suggestions for Future Research

To gain a better understanding of class differences in schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict, adding the middle class would provide a richer comparison of all work-to-family conflict experiences. This study focuses on one family-friendly policy that could help employees manage work and family responsibilities, and future research could explore other flexible work

arrangements, such as flexplace, job sharing, or compressed work weeks. This study confirmed that schedule flexibility does benefit employees and their reported work-to-family conflict, but other flexible work arrangements should be also explored. Another suggestion would be to look at both forms of schedule flexibility: employee driven and employer driven. This would allow for a broader comparison of how control over their schedules impact work-to-family conflict. Finally, it might be useful for future research to look at whether workers actually use schedule flexibility, and whether patterns of use vary by social class.

Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the differential relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict among low and high earners. Because low earners and high earners have different occupational characteristics, it is important to look at the ways they differ in terms of work-to-family conflict. Comparative studies that look at differences between low earners and high earners are limited, and the results of this study help us to further understand the differences between the two groups.

The primary contribution of this thesis to the existing literature is the finding that schedule flexibility impacts work-to-family conflict among both low earners and high earners. This finding is important because it shows that schedule flexibility can be used as a tool to reduce employees' work-to-family conflict. Another important finding was that schedule flexibility matters more for low earners than for high earners. This finding is important because it shows that there are class differences in relation to employees' schedule flexibility and their reported work-to-family conflict. Overall, there appears to be a differential relationship between schedule flexibility and work-to-family conflict for low and high earners.

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