

assumes primacy. Adolescents attempt to resolve parents' examples and influence with expanding social ideology in order to create the adult self. Examination of youth from this first generation of dual-earner families illuminates this larger process of self-development in social and historical perspective and thus provides insights into the next generation of working parents.

## 13 Adolescents' assessments of parental role management in dual-earner families

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Many parents, especially those in dual-earner families, experience work-family role conflict (Crouter et al. 2001; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Kandel, Davies, and Raveis 1985). While this conflict can affect all members of the family, not just the workers, relatively little is known about how work-family conflict is experienced by other members of the household, particularly children. This is an important omission because just as parents' occupations can shape adolescents' career aspirations (see Kalil, Levine, and Ziol-Guest, this volume), parents' ability to role manage – to negotiate the demands of work and family – may also influence adolescents' goals for work and family life. As such, it is important to know what aspects of parental work and children's family life enter most prominently into adolescents' assessments of parents' work-family role management.

The last few decades have brought significant changes to the family context in which children are raised, especially with regard to the work patterns of two-parent families (US Bureau of the Census 2001). In the majority of two-parent families both parents are employed,<sup>1</sup> and both remain fairly committed (either out of desire or economic necessity) to their work roles throughout their adult lives. This demographic shift first drew attention to how children's well-being was affected by mothers' employment, with a particular focus on the impact of mothers' absence on children's emotional and cognitive development. Early studies tended to contrast working and non-working mothers (see Spitze 1991 for a review). However, questions regarding variation in the experiences of children *within* the population of children raised by working mothers – and, in particular, the experiences of adolescents in dual-earner families – have been largely left unanswered.

In this chapter, the focus on adolescents is motivated by the realization that adolescence is an important period of identity formation and a time when children start thinking about future personal, occupational, and ideological commitments (Erikson 1964; Taylor 1989). Parents provide the most immediate role models for their children's social learning, and the way parents manage their work and family roles may help to shape

adolescents' work and family values and provide learning examples of how adolescents can manage role conflict in their own lives.

Adolescents experience their parents' jobs within the context of the family. Thus, to understand how adolescents are influenced by their parents' employment, this context must be considered. While adolescents may know their parents' job titles and have a sense of their parents' general job duties, they are more apt to experience their parents' jobs through the impact these jobs have on their own daily lives. However, in parental work research, this intersection of work and family life from the *adolescent's perspective* remains largely unexplored.

This chapter uses a role-conflict framework to examine the intersection of work and family life. This framework expands the scope of inquiry and refocuses attention from whether children are affected by mother's employment to how children's lives are shaped by the work experiences of mothers *and* fathers. A particular drawback of previous research is that it has examined mothers' employment status outside the context of the family. This abstraction treats mothers the same regardless of whether they are married with a working spouse, single with additional social and economic support, or single without any support. Such a paradigm is potentially problematic, particularly when looking at two-parent families. First, because couples may make employment decisions jointly, the simple working versus non-working mother distinction is unable to ascertain whether or not associations with maternal employment are in part associations with characteristics of *paternal* employment. And second, it does not consider how parents are managing both work and family roles and thus treats all working families as equal.

To examine how parents and their adolescents experience parental work-family conflict, this chapter uses data from surveys administered to parents and adolescents in the 500 Family Study. The first set of analyses examines how parents' subjective experiences of work-family role conflict are associated with time constraints and strain in both the work and family domains. This preliminary step towards understanding adolescents' assessments reveals significant differences in the way that mothers and fathers experience role conflict. Parental work characteristics are then used to model *adolescents'* assessments of each parent's ability to manage work and family roles. This part of the analysis examines adolescents' own perceptions of conflict between work and family, and adds their perspective on family relationships. These analyses show that although parents experience moderate to high levels of work-family conflict, their adolescents make rather favorable assessments of their ability to manage work and family roles. This finding may stem from the fact that parents' experiences of role conflict and adolescents' assessments of

their parents' ability to manage conflict are fundamentally rooted in fairly similar aspects of the work-family experience.

### Defining work-family conflict

A discussion of adolescents' assessments of parental role management begins with the closely related concept of *role conflict*. Role conflict occurs when there are two or more sets of demands or expectations that are difficult to meet simultaneously (Kahn et al. 1964). These conflicts can arise because: (1) two sets of actors make competing demands on the individual; (2) one actor makes multiple demands that conflict with one another; or (3) the individual's own actions conflict with his or her expectations or values. More specifically, inter-role conflict is experienced when membership in one group makes it difficult to fulfill obligations in another.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) apply this notion of inter-role conflict to define the experience of work-family role conflict (WFRC). They describe WFRC as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects" (1985: 77). They elaborate on the concept by making distinctions between three forms of work-family role conflict, two of which are relevant to this analysis. The first, *time-based* conflict, occurs because of competing time demands made on parents by family and work domains. Time spent on work-related activities translates into time away from children, spouses, and less time for individual pursuits; similarly, family obligations may conflict with career pursuits. The second, *strain-based* conflict, arises when stress produced in one domain is carried over to the other, making it difficult to fulfill the role obligations of the second domain. For example, this can take the form of coming home from work (or going into work) feeling tired, depressed, or irritable.

This model of role conflict conceptualizes WFRC as being potentially bi-directional. That is, work can intrude on home and home can intrude on work. However, the few studies that include bi-directional effects consistently find that compared to family intrusions on work, work intrusions on home life are more frequent and pervasive (Eagle, Miles, and Icenogle 1997). Thus, how work shapes family life has been the focus of most role conflict research.

### Work-family conflict as experienced by men and women

Given the multiple tasks involved in the roles of wife, mother, and worker, it is surprising that research does not always find higher levels of

work–family conflict among women compared to men (higher: Hammer, Allen, and Grisby 1997; lower or no difference: Eagle, Miles, and Icenogle 1997). This lack of consistent evidence might stem from the degree to which dual-earner couples follow traditional gender role patterns in accommodating careers of spouses. When WFRC exists in a given household, wives may be more likely than husbands to restructure their work in order to meet family needs (Karambayya and Reilly 1992). Studies have also shown that women are more likely than men to relieve their role conflict by relying on their social networks (Jones and Fletcher 1993).

However, the absence of large gender differences in WFRC might also stem from differences in the way men and women experience work–family conflict. If the primary factors that influence women’s WFRC are related to concern over childcare or household task burdens, women can reduce WFRC by making alternative child care arrangements or by purchasing household services (see, e.g., Stuenkel, this volume). On the other hand, if men’s experience of conflict is tied to the emotional demands and physicality of work, then the family strategies for reducing role conflict are not as readily apparent.

To move past simple speculations, WFRC research needs to be reframed to include the work and family experiences of couples. Early research inferred couples’ experiences by using the reports that men and women gave of their spouses’ work schedules. Data sets that included married couples and contained multiple measures of work and family domains were rare; thus, only a handful of studies on WFRC have been able to examine the couple as a unit. These studies suggest that there are crossover effects, such that characteristics of a spouse’s job also influence one’s own experiences of WFRC (Hammer, Allen, and Grisby 1997; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, and Granrose 1992). Additional analyses of daily psychological states suggest that the crossover effects may be greater for women since the flow of negative emotions runs predominantly from husbands to wives (Larson and Richards 1994).

### Parents’ work and children’s well-being

The earliest studies concerning work and children’s well-being focused on young child outcomes, primarily because it was believed that children’s emotional and cognitive development was being jeopardized by their working mothers’ absence (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter 2000). While some researchers uncovered a relationship between maternal employment during children’s infancy and children’s subsequent cognitive and social outcomes (Han, Waldfogel, and Brooks-Gunn 2001),

others found that either maternal employment had no direct effect or, in some cases, enhanced cognitive outcomes for children (Vandell and Ramanan 1992).

Relatively few studies have examined how work is related to adolescent outcomes. Much of the research on parental work and adolescents has focused on the link between parental work stress and parent–child relationships, since the quality of parental relationships are important for healthy adolescent psychological adjustment (Crouter et al. 1999). Data collected from surveys and time diaries provide evidence that parents’ work stress does affect parental–child interaction. Fathers’ work-related stress is particularly pervasive; fathers’ negative emotions are more likely than mothers’ to spill over to other family members (for a review of emotional transmission literature, see Larson and Almeida 1999). Perhaps in an attempt to decrease the impact of stress on children, parents are also more likely to withdraw from children after particularly stressful days at work (Repetti and Wood 1997).

The demands of work, particularly hours of work, also tend to decrease parents’ knowledge about their adolescents’ lives, especially among fathers (Crouter et al. 1999). Interestingly, fathers know more about their children’s daily experiences the more time mothers spend working – a finding that is consistent with studies that indicate an increase in father’s involvement the more time mothers spend at work (Coltrane 1996). Compared to fathers, however, mothers maintain a rather high level of involvement and knowledge about children’s lives regardless of their work commitments.

Such behavior may stem from gender differences in parenting and family roles, even in families where parents hold fairly egalitarian views about general household management. These differences in family roles should reveal themselves in the ways parents experience role conflict. Being an economic provider is still a major aspect of men’s family role, while for women adoption of the worker role is considered a matter of choice (Coltrane 1996). Contributing time and energy to work – even if it means less time with children or spouses – is consistent with expectations of men’s family roles.

In contrast, a major part of women’s family roles is devoting time and energy to the management of household affairs and overseeing the well-being of other family members. Regardless of their work status, women are still primarily responsible for housework and childrearing (Bianchi et al. 2000). Perhaps even more important, their status as wage contributor does not exempt them from taking on the burdens of being the family manager. Even in egalitarian households women are still primarily responsible for paying bills, scheduling doctor appointments, attending

school meetings, arranging for household repairs, and maintaining family ties to extended kinship networks and the community (Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Add to this the less-visible work of caring, which makes psychological demands on women. Women's role conflict is thus likely to be high and deeply rooted in aspects of both work and family life.<sup>2</sup>

### Children's perspective

Why should children's views on the matter be examined? Children's perspective on work-family conflict provides a point of contrast to how mothers and fathers define their levels of work-family conflict, while still being tied to the gender role expectations of the teen. Adolescents may have a different perspective on work-family conflict because their desires and expectations for parenting roles may not be the same as those that parents hold for themselves.

While the majority of parents report having too little time with their children, their teens are much less likely to report that they spend too little time with their parents (Galinsky 1999). This discrepancy may stem in part from having different generational perspectives. The older generation may mark time in relation to the past; thus time is a precious commodity that passes too quickly. Among youth, time may be marked by reference to the future; time seems to stretch out endlessly before them. In addition, adults are socialized to feel guilty about spending time away from children, while children are socialized to think of time away from parents as an expression of independence. There is no doubt that children expect a minimal amount of parental presence – ethnographic data show that children are particularly starved for interaction with fathers (Galinsky 1999). However, teenagers' lives may be filled with school, recreational activities, peer group interactions, romantic interests, and even their own work. Adolescents (especially older ones) may be less likely to notice parental absence than parents are to notice theirs.

Parents may also not realize that their work can have positive socializing benefits on family life. Wilson (1996) argues that employment has more than just economic benefits for children. Work schedules provide neighborhoods and homes with a daily rhythm that structures children's lives. While Wilson makes this argument primarily to emphasize the importance of work in poor communities, his argument suggests that work has the potential to structure family life if work itself is patterned and predictable. In addition to organizing time, certain types of jobs can help build skills that might translate into more effective parenting at home.

For instance, researchers theorize that exposure to job autonomy discourages authoritarian parenting styles, leading to better parenting and possibly fewer adolescent problem behaviors (Galinsky 1999). Similarly, the level of job task complexity has been found to be related to a mother's ability to provide a positive home environment (Parcel and Menaghan 1994a).

Another reason that adolescents may have a different perspective on work-family conflict may be that parents may actually *do* a better job than they think at managing work-family conflict. Figures from the Gallup Youth Survey (Bezilla 1993) indicate that the majority of teens acknowledge that parents face problems and pressures that are greater than their own (65 percent), but most of them assess their parents as handling these problems and pressures very well (54 percent). An overwhelming majority of adolescents also report that they get along at least fairly well with their parents (96 percent), suggesting that most parent-child relationships are not particularly strained. Although children's assessments of parents may be biased upwards – they may be reluctant to make negative assessments of parents – the way their assessments relate to characteristics of parents' jobs and parents' own reports of role conflict could still provide reliable information about the degree to which parents moderate the effects of work on family life.

### Hypotheses

#### *Parents' perceptions of work-family role conflict (WFRC)*

Role conflict theory provides a useful framework for deriving hypotheses about how role conflict is related to both characteristics of work and circumstances at home. Specifically, predictions can be made about how work-family role conflict derives from both time-based conflict and strain-based conflict:

*Hypothesis 1<sub>p</sub>*. Parents will perceive higher levels of WFRC when they work longer hours, work non-standard shifts, are often on call, have lower job autonomy, or experience higher levels of work strain.

*Hypothesis 2<sub>p</sub>*. Parents will perceive lower levels of WFRC when they work in family-friendly environments. Some work environments are more family-friendly than others, and those parents who work in family-friendly environments should feel less pressure to choose work over family.

*Hypothesis 3p.* Net of their own work characteristics, wives and husbands will report higher WFRC when their spouse also expresses high levels of WFRC. When work and family conflict, a spouse may be called upon to take on more of the home responsibilities – essentially increasing the demands that the family makes on the spouse.

*Hypothesis 4p.* Parents will express higher levels of WFRC when there are shortages in time spent with family members. At first glance, this hypothesis may seem little more than stating a definition: role conflict is a shortage of time and strain in roles. However, net of work characteristics – that is, net of the actual structural aspects of work–family conflict – parents experience role conflict because certain aspects of family life are not meeting their ideals. Since the focus in the media has been on family time, this analysis considers how involvement with children and shared spousal leisure time enters into parents' experiences of role conflict.

*Hypothesis 5p.* Compared to fathers, mothers should report higher levels of WFRC since role responsibilities attached to parent, spouse, and worker potentially conflict more often for women than for men.

*Hypothesis 6p.* The associations between WFRC, work characteristics, and family life will be stronger among mothers than among fathers since mothers are more likely than fathers to be family managers.

#### *Adolescents' perceptions of work–family role management (WFRM)*

Because there is relatively little research that focuses on adolescents' perceptions of work and family life, there is not much by way of theory to predict which family experiences enter most prominently into adolescents' assessments of parents' ability to manage both work and family responsibilities. While public attention has tended to focus on the negative impact that work has on family time, it is not known whether adolescents are more inclined to make their assessments based on quality of relationships or on quantity of interactions.

The literature on work–family conflict has found little direct relationship between parents' job characteristics and various family outcomes. This is likely because parents act in ways to intervene or moderate the effects of work on family life. However, when making assessments of parental role management, adolescents should still be particularly sensitive to those aspects of work that impinge on the daily routines of family life.

*Hypothesis 1A.* The greater the frequency of work interruptions on family life, the poorer adolescents rate their parents' role management.

*Hypothesis 2A.* The more maternal and paternal acceptance, the better assessments children make of their parents. Given that adolescence is marked by increasing independence, children are likely to be more sensitive to the interpersonal aspects of their relationships with parents, rather than the amount of quality time they spend together.

*Hypothesis 3A.* Home-life characteristics will be more significant predictors of the assessments adolescents make of mothers' WFRC compared to those they make of fathers' WFRC. Very little is known as to whether adolescents hold their mothers or fathers more responsible for certain aspects of family life. However, mothers are more often the managers of children's day-to-day activities, while a father's work is central to his role in the family.

## Method

### *Sample*

The sample consists of 226 adolescents and their parents who participated in the 500 Family Study. Of the 361 adolescents in the study with available survey information, just under 68 percent were from two-parent, dual-earner families (some parents were looking for work at the time of the survey, but are not included in this analysis). Dual-earner families were defined as any household consisting of two parents (biological, adoptive, or fictive) who were both employed for pay at the time of the study. An additional 5 percent of the sample was dropped due to parent non-response. After exclusions, the adolescent–parent sample analyzed in this chapter consists of 226 mother–adolescent dyads and 198 father–adolescent dyads from dual-earner families.

The sample is predominantly non-Hispanic white (86 percent of adolescents), with slightly more adolescent females (52 percent) than males (48 percent). The average age of adolescents is 15½ (range = 11–19). Parents in the sample are highly educated (more than 50 percent of mothers and fathers hold at least a master's degree) and have relatively high incomes (mothers' average salary = \$44,000; fathers' = \$74,000). The average family size is 4.5. Results do not vary by any of these variables. Descriptive statistics for the measures used in analyses appear in table 13.1

Table 13.1 Variable descriptive statistics – mothers, fathers, and adolescents

Variable	Mothers				Fathers			
	Range	Mean	% in highest cat.	Std. dev.	Mean	% in highest cat.	Std. dev.	Diff – sig <sup>a</sup>
Dependent								
Work-family role conflict (WFRC)	1-3	2.26	39.27	.68	2.19	31.96	.64	
Work-family role management (WFRM)	1-3	2.49	63.18	.73	2.23	47.25	.81	***
Independent – parent perspective								
# of work hours	8-85 <sup>b</sup>	37.52	-	13.46	49.10	-	-	***
Non-standard work schedule	0-1	-	27.35	.45	-	17.10	8.46	***
Work autonomy	-2.8-1.24	-.03	-	.94	.08	-	.37	*
Work strain	-3.3-2.6	.00	-	.80	-.05	-	.90	
Work on demand	1-3	1.40	7.69	.63	1.69	18.46	.88	***
Family friendly work environment	0-1	-	86.61	.34	-	88.06	.77	***
Satisfied leisure time w/spouse	1-5	3.44	-	1.19	3.46	-	.33	
Shared activities with adolescent	10-30	21.41	-	1.87	21.03	-	1.06	
Marital satisfaction	1-3	2.44	-	.73	2.48	-	1.99	**
Ease of parenting	1-5	3.32	-	.73	3.37	-	.71	
Independent – adolescent perspective								
Brings work home/feels ignored	0-2	.62	9.18	.65	.66	10.80	.66	
Family work-interruptions	0-4	1.00	-	.70	1.31	-	.80	***
Shared activities with parents <sup>c</sup>	10-30	20.60	-	2.12	20.60	-	2.12	
Organization of the household <sup>c</sup>	0-3	1.94	-	.53	1.94	-	.53	
Parent makes time for adolescent	0-4	1.93	-	1.13	1.88	-	1.09	
Maternal/paternal closeness	8-32	21.10	-	3.84	19.76	-	3.38	***

<sup>a</sup> t-tests for significant differences between mothers and fathers.

<sup>b</sup> One father, an occupational therapist, holds 2+ jobs and has a wife that is employed part-time. Without his work hours, the range for this variable is 8-66. Results are the same with and without this case included in the analyses.

<sup>c</sup> Some measures are collected in reference to both parents at the same time, or in reference to the household. Averages and standard deviations are listed in the table as identical for mothers and fathers. Testing for differences was not applicable in these instances.

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Measures

*Work-family role conflict (WFRC) and work-family role management (WFRM)* The primary dependent variables are work-family role conflict (WFRC) as reported by each parent, and work-family role management (WFRM) as reported by the adolescent for each parent. Parents were each asked how often they felt that work and family roles conflict (WFRC); adolescents were asked how well their parents balanced work and family life (WFRM).

Parents' reports on conflict clustered at the center, with very few parents reporting that they experience work-family conflict either "never" or "always." The five categories for this set of variables were collapsed into three, distinguishing between parents who experienced "low," "medium," and "high" WFRC. Ideally, multiple items would be used to measure this construct – especially if there is interest in both the degree of work-family conflict (missing important family events, having trouble picking up children, being late for work because of family tasks, missing workdays because of child's illness, etc.) as well as the frequency. However, since such variables are lacking, a single global question regarding work-family role conflict is used. This question varies in the degree to which it correlates with other psychological variables (moderate correlations with variables such as coping and control) as well as other structural variables (such as work schedules and job flexibility). The patterns of correlation suggest that this measure captures both psychological dimensions of conflict (feeling role strain) as well as actual reports of occurrences (given the wording of the question).

Although adolescents were asked to rate their parents' WFRM on a five-point scale, fewer than 6 percent of cases appeared in the bottom three categories. These three categories were collapsed into a single category. The final variable thus has 3 categories that group adolescents' responses into "never/rarely/sometimes," "often," or "always." These categories were renamed to reflect three levels of performance: 1 = Fair; 2 = Good; and 3 = Excellent. T-test statistics indicate that mothers and fathers do not experience significantly different levels of conflict, but that adolescents are more likely to report better WFRM by mothers than by fathers (p < .001).

*Parents' perspective: job characteristics* To assess time constraints imposed by job responsibilities, a measure of total work hours is used. This measure is the sum of hours spent on work (including offsite hours and weekends) and hours from second jobs. While work hours may be a constraint on family time, the way these hours are scheduled may produce

an even more significant effect. Non-standard day schedules (or shift work) make adult family members unavailable just when other members are likely to be at home. Work schedules are categorized using a dummy variable that contrasts parents who work within regular business hours (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) against those who work outside those hours.

Since the freedom to structure one's work environment and schedule can mediate the impact of work hours, a measure for work autonomy is included. This variable, along with the measure of job strain, was constructed using factor analyses. The factor for work autonomy reflects items dealing with the opportunity to make one's own decisions; to have a say over what happens at one's job; and the freedom to plan one's day. The factor for work strain reflects finishing a work day feeling physically exhausted; coming home from work feeling angry or hostile; coming home from work feeling drained of energy; and, finding work stressful.

Parents may also feel less role conflict when they work in environments that are more tolerant of family-work interruptions. The extent that a work place is tolerant of family-work interruptions is measured using parents' responses regarding being able to make family-related phone calls without feeling guilty. This item was part of a series of "yes-no" questions regarding tolerance of family matters in the work place, but this was the only item that showed variance in responses.

The patterns of family life may also be disrupted when parents are asked to work on demand. A variable was created to distinguish among parents who were called in to work (1) once or twice a year or less; (2) once or twice a month; and (3) once or more a week.

*Home characteristics* Home characteristics are entered into models in order to capture how perceptions of family time and strained family roles are associated with WFRC. Time constraints and strains as they relate to spousal roles are first considered. Although a measure of the amount of time couples actually spend together is not available from survey data, a single item from a marital satisfaction scale was used to measure how satisfied wives and husbands were with the way they and their spouses managed leisure activities and the time they spend together. *Marital satisfaction* is also measured, using the global statement "Overall I am satisfied with my relationship with my spouse/partner." Both satisfaction with leisure time and marriage were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). However, given the heavily skewed responses to the marital satisfaction item, the "disagree" and "neutral" ratings were collapsed into one category. Although leisure and marital satisfaction are correlated ( $r_m = .38$ ;  $r_f = .42$ ), they make unique contributions to the models.

Time constraints and role strain as they pertain to parenting are captured using scales that measure each parent's report of sharing activities with their adolescent, and each parent's report of their parenting ease. The measure of *shared activities* was constructed using Rasch rating-scale analysis (Wright and Masters 1982) on ten items that asked how frequently each parent engaged in particular activities with their adolescent.<sup>3</sup> Each item was measured on a rating scale of 1 = Rarely to 3 = Almost everyday. According to parents, they and their adolescents engaged most frequently in talking and eating meals together, and least frequently in sports/athletic activities. The final scale of ten items ranges from 10 to 30.

For each parent, a measure of *ease of parenting* was constructed using four items that deal with various dimensions of parenthood, including items such as how their parenting experiences compared to their expectations, and how difficult it is to parent their particular adolescent. These items were reverse coded to reflect parenting ease (alpha: mothers = .70; fathers = .71).

Summary measures on the independent variables reveal significant differences between mothers and fathers. Mothers work fewer hours ( $p < .001$ ), are less likely to get called into work unexpectedly ( $p < .001$ ), and report a greater degree of interaction with their adolescent ( $p < .01$ ).

*Adolescents' perspective: parents' jobs and home-life characteristics* Parents' own reports of WFRC, hours of work, schedules, job autonomy, and work strain are used in the analyses of adolescent global assessments of WFRM. However, adolescents provided their unique perspective on the intersection of work and family by responding to questions on the occurrence of certain events as they relate to each of their parent's work. Adolescents were asked how often each parent brought work home from the office and, if their parents worked from home, whether adolescents felt ignored while their parents worked. They were combined to construct a variable that contrasts (0) adolescents who observe their parents work at home never/rarely; (1) adolescents who observe their parents work, but do not feel ignored while their parents do so; and (2) adolescents who observe their parents work and feel ignored.

The extent that work interrupts daily routines was measured using the average frequency with which each parent (1) worked longer than expected; (2) was called into work unexpectedly; and (3) missed school meetings or special events in which adolescents participated. The items were rated on a scale ranging from 0 = Never to 4 = Every day (alpha reliability for mother's job = .53; for father's job = .65). Higher values on the scale indicate more work-to-family interruptions.



A measure of the organizational climate of the home was constructed from the average agreement with the items (1) "Day-to-day life is disorganized and unpredictable" (reverse coded); (2) "We compromise when schedules conflict"; (3) "We are willing to help each other out when something needs to be done"; and (4) "There are many fights and arguments" (reverse coded). Each item was rated on a scale ranging from 0 = Never to 3 = Every day. Higher values on the scale indicate better organization of the home.

The remaining variables were all derived from questions based on adolescents' reports of their family life. Using the same items as those that appear in parents' reports of shared activities, a scale for *shared activities with parents* is composed for adolescents. Unfortunately, this measure comes from adolescents' reports on engaging in particular activities with either of their parents, and as such is not the best indicator for children's involvement with each parent. Nevertheless, Rasch analysis reveals a pattern in item ordering that is fairly similar to that of the scale constructed for parents' shared activities with adolescents. Adolescents are most likely to report sharing meals and talking about everyday events with parents, and least likely to report partaking in athletic activities with parents.<sup>4</sup> The item rating scale ranges from 1 = Rarely to 3 = Almost every day. The final scale of ten items ranges from 10 to 30.

The last two scales are based on identical items regarding adolescent-parent relationships. Each set of questions was asked about mothers and fathers separately. Rasch analyses revealed the same construct map for both maternal and paternal closeness. That is, the eight items that describe both maternal and paternal closeness are ordered identically. Adolescents were most likely to report that their mother/father accepts them for who they are, and least likely to say that their mother/father helps them to talk about their problems. Finally, adolescents' reports of how often each parent takes a day off from work to spend time with them are used to test whether adolescents are responsive to their parents' gestures of foregoing work to be with them.

A summary of the measures indicates that work interruptions from father's jobs were more frequent than those from mothers ( $p < .001$ ). Adolescents also indicate closer relationships with mothers than with fathers ( $p < .001$ ).

### Analytic strategy

Analyses were conducted in two separate stages. The first focuses on parental reports of work-family role conflict (WFRC). The second examines how adolescents assess their parents' work-family role

management (WFRM). Given the categorical nature of the dependent variables, the models are estimated using ordinal probit analyses. The model assumes that the ordinal variables serve as indicators of a normally distributed latent variable, and that a particular response is observed in the measure when the latent variable reaches a certain threshold. The model takes the form:

$$\text{Prob}(y = 1) = \Phi \left[ - \sum_{k=1}^k \beta_k x_k \right]$$

$$\text{Prob}(y = 2) = \Phi \left[ \mu_2 - \sum_{k=1}^k \beta_k x_k \right] - \Phi \left[ - \sum_{k=1}^k \beta_k x_k \right]$$

$$\text{Prob}(y = 3) = \Phi \left[ \mu_3 - \sum_{k=1}^k \beta_k x_k \right] - \Phi \left[ \mu_2 - \sum_{k=1}^k \beta_k x_k \right]$$

where  $\Phi$  is the normal cumulative distribution function,  $\mu$ s are the unknown threshold parameters (cutoff points) that separate the categories of the dependent variable,  $\beta$ s are the effect coefficients to be estimated, and  $k$  is the number of variables.

Models for mothers' and fathers' reports of their WFRC are estimated separately, as are adolescents' assessments of each parent. To provide a sense of the size of effects, the transformed coefficients are reported to reflect the change in probability (with all other variables held at the mean) of reporting a high level of WFRC (in the models for parents) or an excellent assessment of WFRM (in the models for adolescents). Effects are calculated in terms of a one standard deviation change in independent variables that are treated as continuous, and in terms of a discrete change in categorical variables.<sup>5</sup> Since standard errors are different for mothers and fathers, the calculated probabilities for changes in variables are not directly comparable. However, the scales of the independent variables are equivalent across the parent models, and thus coefficients can be compared.

### Results

#### *Predicting work-family conflict of mothers and fathers*

*Mother's self-reported WFRC* Table 13.2 displays the coefficients from two different sets of ordered probit models: one predicting mothers' reports of WFRC, the other predicting fathers' (categories for WFRC are



Table 13.2 Ordered probit models predicting mothers' and fathers' self-reported work-family role conflict (WFRC) from work and family characteristics - coefficients and changes in probabilities of predicting "high" conflict at the mean<sup>a,b</sup>

	Mother's self-reported WFRC						Father's self-reported WFRC					
	[1]	[2]	[3]	Δ	prob.	Δ	[1]	[2]	[3]	Δ	prob.	Δ
	Coef	Coef	Coef	Δ	prob.	Δ	Coef	Coef	Coef	Δ	prob.	Coef
<b>Work characteristics</b>												
# of work hours	.00	-.03	.00	-.02		-.01	-.01		-.02		-.01	-.02
Non-standard work schedule	.85	.13***	.93	.15***		-.33	-.33		-.04		-.29	-.04
Job autonomy	-.26	-.10**	-.29	-.12**		-.18	-.18		-.05		-.11	-.03
Work strain	.24	.07	.27	.08*		.59	.59		.17***		.52	.15***
Family-friendly work environment	-.37	-.05	-.48	-.06		-1.04	-1.04		-.11***		-1.19	-.13***
<b>Work on demand - less than monthly [ref]</b>												
Work on demand - monthly	.35	.06	.41	.07		-.04	-.04		.00		.07	.01
Work on demand - weekly	1.31	.13**	1.23	.12*		.42	.42		.06		.60	.09*
<b>Spouse's WFRC - Low [ref]</b>												
Spouse's WFRC - Med	.52	.08	.49	.07		.13	.13		.02		.25	.04
Spouse's WFRC - High	.79	.13**	.93	.15**		.43	.43		.07		.45	.07
<b>Home life characteristics - parents reporting</b>												
Leisure time w/ spouse		-.10	-.04						.02		-.30	-.12***
Marital satisfaction		-.02	.01						.02		.09	.03
Time with adolescent		-.13	-.08**						-.08**		-.03	-.03
Ease of parenting		-.39	-.13**						-.16**		-.35	-.08**
<b>Ancillary parameters</b>												
cut 1	-.88	-5.62	-5.06								-3.98	-5.37
cut 2	.73	-4.18	-3.32								-2.21	-3.27
N	175	175	175			179	179		179		179	179
Likelihood ratio	55.48	24.14	77.52			54.70	54.70		21.57		69.53	69.53
Df	12	4	16			12	12		4		16	16
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.16	.07	.22			.16	.16		.06		.21	.21

<sup>a</sup> Parent's reports of WFRC: 1 "Low" 2 "Medium" 3 "High"

<sup>b</sup> For dummy variables probabilities contrast against omitted category; for continuous variables, 1 std. error change in X. All other variables are held at their mean values. \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

low, medium, and high). Each set of analyses consists of three models, each predicting WFRC from: (1) work characteristics, including spouses' reports of their own WFRC; (2) characteristics family life only; and (3) characteristics of both work and family life.

In the first set of models, mothers' reports of role conflict are predicted from their total work hours, type of work-shift, job autonomy, work strain, the work environment, working on demand and their husbands' self-reported WFRC. The first model shows that mothers who report having greater work autonomy are less likely to experience a high level of WFRC. In contrast, higher WFRC is associated with having a non-day shift schedule; working on demand on a weekly basis; and being married to a husband who also experiences a high level of WFRC. Net of these other variables, WFRC is not associated with total weekly working hours, degree of work strain, or the family-friendliness of the work environment.

Model 2 shows the association between mothers' reports of WFRC and characteristics of their home lives. WFRC is not related to mothers' levels of satisfaction with the amount of leisure time they have with their husbands, nor with their overall satisfaction with their marriages. However, when a mother is less likely to report high WFRC she is more likely to share in activities with her adolescent, and the easier she finds her parenting role. Compared to the average mother, mothers who are about one standard deviation higher in their level of involvement are about 8 percent less likely to report high WFRC. Compared to the average mother, one who scores one standard deviation higher on parenting ease is about 13 percent less likely to report high WFRC.

Model 3 shows that controlling for variables across both work and family domains does not change the associations between WFRC and any of the variables mentioned earlier. The one exception is work strain, which becomes significant after controlling for home characteristics. This suggests that if it were not for particular family characteristics, mothers with high work strain might have reported higher levels of WFRC. However, this apparent suppression effect of family characteristics is rather small, given that work strain is significant at the p < .05 level. This final model explains approximately 22 percent of the variance in mother's work-family conflict.

*Father's self-reported WFRC* The right half of table 13.2 displays models predicting fathers' self-reported WFRC. Model 1 predicts WFRC using fathers' work characteristics. Of all the work characteristics considered, WFRC is only significantly associated with the degree of

work strain a father experiences and working in a family-friendly environment. Fathers who report a work strain level that is one standard deviation above the mean are about 17 percent more likely than the average father to experience a high level of WFRC, while those who work in a family-friendly environment are about 11 percent less likely to experience a high level of WFRC.

Considering only home characteristics (model 2), fathers' perceptions of WFRC are related to both satisfaction with the amount of leisure time they spend with their wives and reported ease of parenting. Increasing a father's satisfaction with his leisure time with spouse by one standard deviation would decrease the probability of having high WFRC by 12 percent, while a similar increase in parenting ease would decrease this probability of high WFRC by 8 percent.

Finally, model 3 shows that associations mentioned earlier remain significant when controlling for variables across both the work and family domains. The significance of spousal leisure time decreases slightly, suggesting that part of the association between leisure time and work-family conflict stems from its association with certain work characteristics. Overall, this final model explains about 21 percent of the variance in fathers' reports of work-family role conflict.

#### *Predicting adolescents' reports of parental work-family role management*

Two separate sets of ordered probit models are used to predict adolescents' assessments (fair, good, and excellent) of each parents' performance in managing work and family roles. Each set of analyses consists of three nested models that enter the following blocks of variables in turn: (1) work characteristics as reported by parents; (2) parents' reported WFRC; and (3) home-life characteristics as reported by adolescents.

Table 13.3 displays the coefficients from ordered probit models that predict adolescents' assessments of parents' work-family role management. Model 1 predicts WFRM from characteristics of parents' jobs. For mothers and fathers, the more hours spent on work, the less likely adolescents are to assess their role management as excellent. Interestingly, job autonomy only predicts assessments made of fathers, with those having greater job autonomy also being assessed more positively by their adolescents. The models explain about 5 percent and 4 percent of the variance, respectively, in adolescents' assessments of parental WFRM.

Model 2 adds to the first model parents' self-reported WFRC. In the model predicting WFRM of mothers, the greater the role conflict reported by mothers, the less likely adolescents are to make favorable

assessments of their management. Compared to adolescents who have mothers with low WFRC, those who have mothers with medium or high levels of WFRC are about 15 percent less likely to rate their mothers as having excellent role management. This relationship is similar for fathers' WFRC, although among fathers, role conflict is an even more significant predictor of adolescents' assessments ( $p < .01$ ).

Model 3 adds characteristics of adolescents' home life, including variables that capture how work might have a direct bearing on the adolescent's daily life. First, with respect to these new variables, the pattern of effects is somewhat different for the assessments made of mothers and fathers. While working from home does not significantly affect adolescents' assessments of fathers, mothers are penalized when they work from home and the adolescent feels ignored. Compared to adolescents whose mothers do not work from home, those who feel ignored while their mothers work from home are about 11 percent less likely to assess their mothers' role management as excellent. Interestingly, it appears that mothers (but not fathers) are also held responsible for the organization of the home. The more organized the home, the more likely an adolescent will rate their mother positively.

However, adolescents' assessments of mothers and fathers are similarly predicted from the way that work intersects with family life, as well as aspects of the parent-child relationship. Parents are less likely to receive positive assessments for role management the more often work interrupts family routines. A one standard deviation increase in work-family interruptions decreases the likelihood of an excellent assessment by about 11 percent for mothers and 27 percent for fathers. For assessments of both mothers and fathers, adolescents also take into account whether parents take time off to be with them. Compared to the average adolescent, those whose parents take time off an average of one standard deviation more often are about 11 and 14 percent more likely to assess their parents as having excellent role management. In addition, adolescents also take into account the quality of their relationships with their parents. The better the parent-child relationship, the better the adolescents' assessments of parents' role management.

Interestingly, in this final model the association with parents' reports of WFRC is significantly reduced, although mothers with medium levels of role conflict and fathers with high levels of role conflict are still less likely to receive positive assessments. Fathers' level of autonomy is also among the work variables that become non-significant, although now work hours become more significant in adolescents' assessments of fathers. Each of these models explains between 27 and 29 percent of the variance in adolescents' reports of parental role management.



Table 13.3 (cont.)

	Adolescents' assessments of Mother's WFRM						Adolescents' assessments of Father's WFRM					
	[1]		[2]		[3]		[1]		[2]		[3]	
	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.	Coef	$\Delta$ prob.
Parent takes time off					.26	.11**					.31	.14**
Organization of the household					.53	.12**					.22	.05
Positive relationship with parent					.13	.17***					.15	.20***
Ancillary Parameters												
cut 1	-1.88											
cut 2	-1.02		-2.57		2.09		-2.05		-3.02		-0.86	
N	190		-1.68		3.30		-1.31		-2.26		.17	
Likelihood ratio	16.45		190		190		168		168		168	
Df	5		22.45		95.29		15.47		25.53		93.88	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.05		7		15		5		7		14	
			.07		.29		.04		.07		.27	

<sup>a</sup> Adolescent assessments of parent's WFRM: 1 "Fair" 2 "Good" 3 "Excellent"

<sup>b</sup> For dummy variables probabilities contrast against omitted category; for continuous variables, 1std. error change in X. All other variables are held at their mean values.

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Unlike mothers' role conflict, fathers' role conflict is most closely tied to the emotional and physical stress of their jobs, as well as the extent to which their work environment is family-friendly. These effects remain significant even after controlling for aspects of family relationships, suggesting that they either enter directly into fathers' notions of role conflict, or that they impact family experiences in ways not captured in the model – perhaps by affecting a father's ability to pursue personal leisure activities. It seems that working in a family-friendly environment translates into less work-family conflict among men more often than among women, perhaps indicating differences in status and power at the work place. As Hochschild notes in *The Time Bind* (1997), work places vary in the degree of family-friendly policies that are offered, but so does workers' access to them and the degree to which they feel comfortable using them.

Not only is parents' role conflict tied to different aspects of work, but mothers' and fathers' subjective experiences of work-family role conflict are rooted in different aspects of family life. Mothers' experiences of work-family role conflict can be described as child-focused, while fathers' appear to be focused on both spouse and child. After controlling for work characteristics, mothers and fathers are both more likely to express high WFRM when they find it difficult to parent. However, mothers are also more likely to perceive work-family conflict the less they share in activities with their adolescents, while fathers' perceptions of WFRM are more closely tied to their satisfaction with the time they spend with their spouse.

Just as in previous research, these results indicate that mothers' role conflict is related to that of their husbands', but not vice versa. There are three reasons why this relationship is uni-directional. First, since this relationship remains significant even after controlling for aspects of the marital relationship, it may reflect the tendency for wives to have to adjust their work to that of their husbands, as well as to accommodate work to meet the needs of the family. Thus, the greater the work-family conflict of husbands, the more likely wives are to take on more of the household responsibilities, in turn increasing their own work-family conflict. Second, this relationship could arise from the emotional aspects of role conflict, since father's role conflict is best predicted from his level of work-related stress. The psychological literature on emotions shows that the direction of the "contagion" effect is from husbands to wives (Larson and Richards 1994). As such, a husband's role conflict could increase the emotional management that mothers have to do at home. Third, the relationship may arise from a reporting bias among wives. For instance, if wives are more likely to think of the collective experiences of the couple when responding to these types of survey questions,

then their reports of work-family conflict will also capture their spouses' experiences. It is likely that all three phenomena play a part in these findings.

#### *Adolescent views on parental role management*

The inclusion of adolescents' perspectives in these analyses provides an even better understanding of how parents' work shapes the daily experiences of other family members, and how work-family conflict is experienced within the household. In general, adolescents' assessments of their parents are rather favorable, despite moderate to high levels of role conflict reported by parents. This finding may be due in part to adolescents' reluctance to speak poorly of their parents. However, it is also true that many adolescents accept their parents' work roles as part of family life; the majority of the adolescents in this study (68 percent males; 70 percent females) expect to be part of a *dual-full-time-earner* family when they themselves have adolescent children (everyone expects to be at least in a part-time/full-time-earner family).

Although adolescents may accept their parents' roles as workers, their assessments of how parents manage work and family roles vary by work characteristics, and even more importantly, by how work intersects with family life. Among the most significant predictors of adolescents' assessments were whether they felt ignored when their mothers worked from home, and whether their parents' jobs caused family interruptions by keeping parents at work longer than expected, calling parents into work unexpectedly, or causing parents to miss important events in the adolescent's life.

Note also how beliefs about gender roles emerge from adolescents' assessments. Adolescents expect to have many of their daily needs met by their mothers since mothers (but not fathers) are penalized for ignoring them while working from home. In addition, adolescents also appear to hold mothers responsible for the organization of home life since this variable also increased the likelihood of better WFRM for mothers, but not fathers.

But perhaps just as intriguing is the absence of gender differences where one might expect them to be. Given the focus on the importance of maternal bonding, it is surprising that having a close relationship with fathers is just as important in adolescents' assessments of role management. Because work is an important part of the men's family roles, it is also surprising that work interruptions are no more tolerated when they stem from fathers' jobs than when they come from mothers'. Apparently while work roles are important for fulfilling family roles, adolescents expect

that home life will be protected from the intrusions of both mothers' and fathers' work.

Further, net of work characteristics, adolescents' assessments of their parents are also related to their parents' own perceptions of WFRC. Adolescents whose mothers experience medium levels of conflict are less likely to believe that their mothers do an excellent job of balancing work and family. In the case of fathers, high levels of conflict are associated with poorer assessments of their work-family role management. These findings suggest either that (1) these levels of parental WFRC are associated with other aspects of work (left out of the models) that also influence adolescents' assessments; or that (2) these parents are more inclined to negotiate work and family demands in ways that do not meet adolescents' expectations. The latter is suggested by the findings of Crouter et al.'s (1999) study on working fathers and their children. Their research shows that adolescents of fathers who experience greater work overload are more likely to see their fathers as less accepting and as being less able to take their perspective.

Finally, heightened concerns about whether parents are spending enough "quality time" with children may be closely associated with parents' own feelings of work-family conflict. But these analyses allay these fears to some extent. Either parents are *jointly*<sup>6</sup> doing an excellent job of sharing in activities with children despite challenging work circumstances, which is consistent with studies that find rather small differences in the amount of child-parent interaction among employed and non-employed mothers (for a review, see Bianchi et al. 2000), or adolescents are just not as concerned about spending time together as they are about sharing a close relationship with parents. Although that goal is met more easily when parents spend time with their children, at this stage of their childhood, adolescents assess their parents' management of roles by putting greater stock in having a patterned home life that has few interruptions, and having parents present during special moments in their lives than in necessarily sharing many activities with them. The one exception to this pattern of results may be in the case of fathers' total work hours. The significant effect of fathers' work hours on adolescents' assessments suggests that adolescents are sensitive to fathers' *presence*, even if that presence does not translate into sharing in activities. It may be that as children's economic needs are met by the wages of *both* parents, adolescents may see little justification for the extra hours that fathers seem to be putting in at work. Children may begin to believe that fathers are working long hours by choice rather than necessity. It would be interesting to test this hypothesis using a more economically heterogeneous sample of families.



Mothers and fathers tend to report moderate to high levels of work-family conflict. Yet most adolescents make very positive assessments of parents – especially of mothers. It was suggested that parents' experiences of role conflict and adolescents' assessments of parents' role management are fundamentally rooted in similar aspects of the work-family experience. This relationship may be even more applicable to mothers and adolescents than to fathers and adolescents. Although it is true that fathers' work imposes more on family life than mothers' work (via work-family interruptions), a shared notion of work-family conflict may direct mothers' and adolescents' attention to similar aspects of family life. This might explain why mothers are rated more positively than fathers, even though mothers experience higher (although not significant) levels of conflict.

To elaborate, setting aside the issue of whether mothers actually *do* manage their work and family roles better than fathers, there is an even more compelling story when the adolescents' point of view is also considered. Adolescents are concerned with the intrusions that work can have on family experiences, and their focus is on having the attention of their mothers and having a close relationship with them. That mothers are similarly sensitive to work factors that constrain their ability to manage family life, and that they are centrally focused on their relationships with their adolescents, suggest that mothers and adolescents share a perspective of what it means to balance work and family life. On the other hand, while fathers' perceptions of role conflict are also associated with their ability to parent, their perceptions are more closely related to their experiences with spouses and the emotional and physical aspects of their work. Fathers may not realize that their adolescents expect to have them present more often (even if not necessarily engaged in shared activities) and that their adolescents are affected by the intrusions that their work brings to family life and the quality of the relationship they share. If anything, this analysis suggests that while mothers play an important role in managing an adolescent's family life, adolescents hold their fathers to similar standards with regard to how they should manage their responsibilities of work and family.

#### *Study limitations and other considerations*

The small sample size and the unique characteristics of the sample (families with parents who have high levels of income and education) limit the ability to generalize these results to a more heterogeneous population. The intersection of work and family domains may give rise to a

considerably different pattern of role conflict in families that are more economically distressed, and where children are particularly vulnerable to adverse adolescent outcomes due to the communities in which they live. However, the absence of such confounding factors provides an opportunity to discover some of the fundamental differences (and similarities) in how mothers, fathers, and adolescents experience the intersection of work and family life. These families most likely represent the best case scenario – the favorable economic circumstances of these families certainly provide the means for relieving work-family conflict through the purchase of goods and services.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that even in such a small, homogeneous sample, significant relationships can be found between work, family, and the subjective experiences of role conflict, and that these relationships follow a pattern that is consistent with what is known about family dynamics. Perhaps this research will inspire scholars to examine work-family conflict in families from more diverse backgrounds, and to broaden the scope of work-family research by taking into consideration the perspective of children.

#### NOTES

1. According to 2001 figures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, roughly 68 percent of married-couple families with children under the age of eighteen were families where both parents were employed.
2. Responses to the Experience Sampling Method from the 500 Family Study also indicate that compared to fathers, mothers spend much more of their time thinking about their children, even when not directly involved with them.
3. Rather than taking a raw sum, the Rasch measurement model uses observations and probabilities of responses to construct a hierarchical ordering of items on a scale (thought to describe a single dimension), and the relative "strengths" of the persons who complete them. Thus, items at the "easy" end of the scale are those that almost all of the respondents would be able to give high responses to, while items at the "difficult" end are those to which almost all of respondents would give low responses. Rasch computes scores as logits, but for ease of discussion, the scores have all been rescaled to reflect a sum of the original item rating scale.
4. Because adolescents were asked to report in reference to *one or both* parents, the variable cannot capture the extent to which adolescents interact with each parent personally. However, the stronger correlation with mothers' reports of shared activities (as opposed to fathers') suggests that the variable captures the degree of interaction with mothers more so than with fathers. As such, caution should be used when interpreting how this variable operates in models predicting WFRM of fathers.
5. Standard deviations were calculated before model estimation. This is because list-wise deletion selected on a few independent variables. Effects are described

- as they would occur in the complete sample in order to more accurately describe average differences in a similar population of families.
6. Recall that this variable references "parents" and does not provide a separate measure for mothers and fathers.
  7. Perhaps this would explain why different measures of household labor (mothers' reports, fathers' reports, and ratios between the two) were never significant in any of the models.

## Commentary

*Rena L. Repetti, Tali Klima, and Tamar Kremer-Sadlik*

### **How might parents' work and family roles contribute to adolescents' future roles?**

*Marchena's chapter addresses an important and largely overlooked topic in the work-family literature, the experience of parents' role conflict from the perspective of a child living in the family. Using survey data from over 400 parent-adolescent dyads in the 500 Family Study, she examined how often teens thought their parents did a "good job of balancing work and family life." Overall, the teens gave their parents high marks, with the average response falling between "often" and "always." The generally positive impression conveyed by these teens is consistent with findings from another recent survey study involving over 1,000 children (Galinsky 1999). Interestingly, Marchena found differences in the teens' descriptions of mothers' and fathers' skill at role management. Whereas 63 percent said that their mothers "always" did a good job, fewer of the teens (47 percent) described fathers in this way. Marchena's analysis goes beyond descriptive findings to test hypotheses about the way that differences among adolescents in their perceptions of parents' role management are linked to aspects of their home lives and characteristics of their parents' jobs. For example, parents who devoted more hours to work were less likely to be seen as doing a good job of balancing roles. In this and many other ways Marchena's chapter suggests new avenues for work-family researchers to explore. We restrict our comments here to a single line of inquiry, one that is prompted by Marchena's focus on the adolescent offspring's perspective on work-family role management (WFRM). We ask: How might teens' evaluations of their parents' role management influence their thoughts about their own future roles?*

### **Adolescents' thoughts about their future roles**

*The chapter calls our attention to the rather unique position of adolescents in the family. While teens observe and evaluate their parents as children within the current family system, they are at the same time approaching and preparing for their own adult roles in a future family. Marchena notes that the role*



management children observe in their home may also influence their future work and family goals. Do working families reproduce themselves? Do some children expect to adopt the same patterns that they observe at home, while others anticipate using different strategies in order to improve on their parents' performance?

Galinsky's (1999) survey data provide a clue. In her study, most children said that they wanted to manage work and family life in a way that is "very similar" or "somewhat similar" to their parents. Galinsky also examined how adolescents' perceptions of parents' roles related to their hopes and expectations for their own future roles. Children were most likely to want to emulate their parents' role management if they believed their parents liked their work and put family before their jobs. Despite what appears to be a commonly held wish to model parents' role choices, the amount of time that children said their parents spent at work was inversely related to the amount of time that they hoped to spend at work as adults. Marchena's finding that adolescents believed their parents were doing a poorer job of balancing work and family life when they devoted more hours to work may help to explain this finding.

#### Adolescent girls' expectations

We know that men and women experience the balance of work and family roles differently (Kiecolt 2003). For example, even though women spend less time on household chores when their working hours increase, they still do more housework than men (Coltrane 2000; Hochschild 1997). Some estimates suggest that, in families with two employed parents, the fathers' proportion of child caregiving is about half the size of the mothers' proportion (Wood and Repetti 2004). In addition, women report feeling more torn between demands of work and family, and feel more responsible for their home and children (Hochschild 1989). Today, most adolescent girls are growing up in homes with mothers who juggle the roles of parent, worker, and spouse. As daughters they are privy to the challenges and the rewards that their mothers' experiences present for both mothers and their families. It is thus plausible that adolescent girls will turn to their mothers as models for how to manage their own work and family roles in the future. In fact, Galinsky found just that: boys and girls did not differ in their desire to emulate their fathers' WFRM, but daughters were more likely than sons to want to emulate their mothers' style of managing work and family. As they look toward adulthood, will adolescent girls expect their husbands to share equally in the running of the household and childcare? Do those who are planning to pursue demanding careers also anticipate feeling torn between work and home? Recall that Marchena reported differences in the teens' evaluations of how well mothers and fathers balanced work and family life. Do daughters expect to be better than their partners at managing work and family? In the work-family

realm, the expectations, hopes, and goals of adolescent girls strike us as having particular importance.

Studies of adolescent girls' gender role attitudes and career orientation and aspirations reveal that girls hold less traditional attitudes toward work and family roles than do boys (Bohannon and Blanton 1999; Ex and Janssens 1998; Galinsky 1999). One study found that adolescent girls were more inclined than adolescent boys to view a wife's career as equal in importance to her husband's, and to believe that men and women should share household and child-rearing duties (Tuck, Rolfe, and Adair 1994). At the same time, potential conflicts between their future work and family roles are inherent in the narratives that girls construct of their futures. For instance, while young females express a desire for careers, they also report strong maternal obligations and a willingness to move for their husbands' jobs at the expense of their own (Novack and Novack 1996). In another study, girls expected to start a career, get married, and become a parent within a time span of two years (Greene and Wheatley 1992). This projected life course was associated with girls' concerns about the temporal constraints of work and family, as well as pessimism about their futures. Thus, it seems that even as adolescent girls are planning ambitious careers, the seeds of work-family role conflict (WFRC) are already planted in their goals and plans.

#### The role of the developing self-concept

Adolescent girls' perceptions of their parents' role management, especially the ways in which they perceive their mothers' balancing of work and family responsibilities, may not have only a direct impact on their expectations, hopes, and goals for their future work-family roles. These perceptions may also indirectly influence their future roles through the developing self-concept. Self-concept refers to the way in which an individual describes herself. Developmental psychologists have found that during adolescence the self becomes increasingly differentiated into role-related multiple selves (Harter et al. 1997). This proliferation of selves is generally attributed to cognitive advances that allow adolescents to make greater and more subtle distinctions, as well as to handle the complex demands placed on adolescents in varying social contexts. Harter (1999) has demonstrated that individuals have different self-concepts in different social contexts. At times, these self-concepts may be contradictory or in conflict with one another, and contradictory self-concepts are associated with negative affect (Harter and Monsour 1992).

Interestingly, girls report more conflicting self-concepts than do boys in middle school and high school (Harter and Monsour 1992). Could the greater conflict felt by adolescent girls be shaped in part by perceptions of their mothers' WFRC? Perhaps a girl who sees her mother effectively balancing her two roles without