

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342902170>

# Work-Life Conflict during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Preprint · July 2020

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.32315.44329

CITATIONS

0

READS

618

4 authors, including:



**Scott Schieman**

University of Toronto

126 PUBLICATIONS 4,919 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Philip Badawy**

University of Toronto

9 PUBLICATIONS 6 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Melissa A. Milkie**

University of Toronto

54 PUBLICATIONS 5,833 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



The Canadian Quality of Work and Economic Life Study (C-QWELS) [View project](#)



Gender, Work-Family and Time [View project](#)

**\*\*\*\* This paper is currently under review. Please do not cite without authors' permission.**

**Work-Life Conflict During the COVID-19 Pandemic\***

SCOTT SCHIEMAN  
*University of Toronto*

PHILIP J. BADAWY  
*University of Toronto*

MELISSA MILKIE  
*University of Toronto*

ALEX BIERMAN  
*University of Calgary*

\* Funding from the University of Toronto COVID-19 Action Initiative 2020 and Tri-Council Bridge funding supports this research (Scott Schieman, PI).

Word count: 9,710

Key words: work-life conflict; COVID-19; parenthood; role integration; work-family conflict

## **Work-Life Conflict During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic upended work, family, and social life. These massive changes may have created fundamental shifts in exposure to work-life conflict. Using a national survey that followed Canadian workers from September 2019 into April and June 2020, we find that work-life conflict decreased among those without children at home. By contrast, for those with children, the patterns varied by age of youngest child. Among those with a child under thirteen, we did not observe decreases in work-life conflict. Likewise, in April we did not observe decreases in work-life conflict among those with a teenager, but by June their level of work-life conflict matched those without children. Overall, these patterns do not differ by gender. Our findings support a pattern of decline in work-life conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also indicate that changes differed across time and were circumscribed by parental statuses and age of youngest child.

## Work-Life Conflict During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In normal times, the boundaries between work and nonwork roles represent sites of potential tension that many people encounter in their everyday lives (Allen and Martin 2017; Kossek 2016). But 2020 has been anything but normal. In mid-March of 2020, as many employees began working at home due to government dictates for social distancing, the abrupt shift in the nature of work-nonwork boundaries generated potential repercussions for the extent of role conflict. While research on role conflict usually identifies the family as the primary domain of the “nonwork sphere” (Bellavia and Frone 2005), some have pushed to broaden this scope (Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva 2019; Kossek and Lambert 2004). According to Kossek and Lee (2017:2), the concept of *work-life conflict* “is an extension of work-family conflict reflecting the reality that the work role may interfere with individuals’ other personal life roles and interests.” People who experience high levels of work-life conflict report that their work role prevents them from concentrating on important things in their family or personal life; they have insufficient time or energy for the important people in their life because of their job; and they feel like their work role undercuts their capacity to perform home-related roles.

Population-based studies consistently demonstrate associations between work-life conflict and a range of unfavorable outcomes (Allen et al. 2000; Bellavia and Frone 2005; Yucel and Fan 2019). Given its importance for well-being, researchers have sought to understand the factors that contribute to work-life conflict (Kelly et al. 2014; Schieman, Milkie, and Glavin 2009). However, the natural social experiment of 2020 motivates a novel question: *How have levels of work-life conflict changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?* One prominent media narrative suggests that work-life conflict has increased. For example, an article in *Bloomberg* on April 23, 2020 titled “Three Hours Longer, the Pandemic Workday has Obliterated Work-Life

Balance,” asserted that “whatever boundaries remained between work and life have almost entirely disappeared.” Referencing data from NordVPN (Davis and Green 2020), the article claims that American workers who are working from home have increased their workday by three hours. An anecdote from a CEO at Dot Health (a Toronto tech start-up) is referenced to illustrate the three-hour increase in working time and its associated pressures. One proposition is that the inability to “go out in the evenings” has translated into workers’ greater availability beyond what might typically be demarcated as nonwork hours. The author writes, “With nothing much to do and nowhere to go, people feel like they have no legitimate excuse for being unavailable.” The implication is that employers will greedily squeeze out more work during this captive time. Yet, another way to view this claim is that social distancing requirements have restricted engagement of other personal life roles; there is simply less “life” for work to interfere with. However, this *restricted life spheres* perspective might not generalize to those with domestic role responsibilities that have potentially amplified during the stay-at-home period. In fact, the media narrative often focuses on the presence of children at home as a source of such amplification (Dizik 2020; Thomason and Williams 2020).

With these interrelated views in mind, we evaluate whether aggregate levels of work-life conflict have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic—and, if so, whether the strength of that change depends on the presence of children at home. Moreover, given claims that women—especially working mothers—have experienced more work-home challenges during the pandemic than men (Landivar, Ruppner, Scarborough, and Collins 2020; Lewis 2020; McCarthy et al. 2020; Rudolph et al. 2020), we consider the potential for gender differences in our analyses. To address these questions, we analyze data from the ongoing *Canadian Quality of Work and Economic Life Study* (C-QWELS). In September of 2019, we collected data from a

nationally representative sample of workers to profile the quality of work and economic life—not anticipating a world-wide pandemic. Then, during a pivotal period of far-reaching shocks to the economy, work and school/daycare arrangements, and severe restrictions on social life, we repeated that same survey in April and June. During this period, as governments implemented virus-mitigation strategies (e.g., social distancing), many workers were required to shift to remote work. For example, Central Canada closed non-essential work on March 24; the Prairies started closing between March 23 and April 1; the West Coast ordered certain types of businesses to close on March 26; Atlantic Canada started closing between March 18 and March 26; and Northern Canada began closing on March 18. Collectively, these shifts reconfigured the boundaries between work and non-work for many workers; more precisely, widespread “stay-at-home” requirements restricted the elements of *non-work* to a narrower range of the *home* sphere.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Amplified Role Integration versus Restricted Life Spheres*

The framework that we propose revolves around themes of *amplified role integration* and *restricted life spheres*. The former draws upon border and boundary theories to predict that, because of increased work-home role integration, aggregate levels of work-life conflict have likely increased during the pandemic. This view emphasizes the challenges of role segmentation and integration—with the ultimate consequence being more opportunities for work to spill over into nonwork life. We suspect these dynamics are heightened for those with greater domestic role responsibilities, thereby underscoring potential gendered patterns. Conversely, the restricted life spheres perspective emphasizes the narrowing of social contact that emerged due to shelter-

in-place orders (Government of Canada 2020). Such constraints limit the parameters of some nonwork roles, which in turn might foster a reduction in aggregate levels of work-life conflict.

*Increased levels of work-life conflict.* To inform the hypothesis of increased work-life conflict during the pandemic, we apply border and boundary theories' characterization of the work-family boundary as a continuum of complete segmentation to complete integration (Ashforth et al. 2000; Clark 2000; Nippert-Eng 1996). At the complete segmentation end of the continuum, we find the standard arrangement in which work is performed away from home at a fixed location. In high segmentation contexts, the spatial and temporal boundaries reflect the distinctiveness of the domains, with arrangements more akin to the "separate spheres" depiction of work and home in which each set of roles have different (often competing) expectations and responsibilities (Coontz 1992). Conversely, high integration exists when there is little distinction between work and nonwork roles, especially with respect to the location or timing of different role enactments. Greater role integration indicates more overlap in the spatial, temporal, and cognitive elements of different roles, which implies a greater ease of psychological and behavioral transitions between role domains (Ashforth et al. 2000; Dumas and Sanchez-Burks 2015). It also increases role permeability, which entails "the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviorally involved in another role" (Ashforth et al. 2000:474).

Greater role integration and permeability, however, do not translate into *less* inter-role conflict; in fact, these dynamics might have the opposite effect. While the literature on boundary management strategies reflects on individuals' own *personal* decisions to integrate or segment (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks 2015; Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton 2006; Kossek, Noe, and DeMarr 1999), choices about the extent and timing of role integration have been constrained during the

pandemic. In this extraordinary context, Allen and colleagues' (2014:117) claims about role integration are particularly apt: "The study of individuals in extremely integrated or segmented work and family situations may help us better understand work-family boundary dynamics." For many individuals, work-home integration is the current norm. Taken together, we apply these ideas to advance the *amplified integration hypothesis*, which predicts that aggregate levels of work-life conflict increased during the pandemic. Moreover, these ideas underscore the potential influence of working at home, the hours worked, and control over the timing of work.

While integration and permeability purportedly ease transitions between roles, thereby relaxing boundaries and facilitating border crossing (Clark 2000; Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006), this could have implications for role performance. Role theory posits that individuals should keep roles separate as "the optimal means for successfully enacting multiple roles" (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks 2015:809). This view evolves from role theory's tenet that dedicated temporal and spatial perimeters around work are necessary for minimizing conflict; in other words, segmentation is most advantageous for restricting role interference (Ashforth et al. 2000; Kahn et al. 1964).<sup>1</sup> But the boundary management strategy of segmentation is complicated for individuals whose work arrangements exemplify extreme permeability—thereby raising the risk of distractions in nonwork spheres (Hill et al. 1998; Rau and Hyland 2002). From a "role responsibility management" perspective, the individual who frequently works at home must manage the demands of different roles and enact strategies to allocate sufficient time, energy, and attention to adequately perform divergent role tasks (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks 2015).

We see the narrative about amplified role integration as being particularly relevant for individuals with children at home. For parents, holding multiple roles during the pandemic may

---

<sup>1</sup> As Clark (2000) observes, however: "Though integration has intuitive appeal as the most 'balanced' approach to work and home lives, in actuality there is no one desirable state of integration or segmentation" (p. 755).



have heightened competing challenges and pressures (Dizik 2020; Thomason and Williams 2020). This likely emerged as schools and daycares closed, and the care and education of children shifted to the home sphere (Johnstone 2020). Moreover, the extent of family-related role demands likely varies by the ages of children—with younger children being more dependent and requiring greater care and attention, while older children being less dependent and more autonomous (Allen and Finkelstein 2014; Bedeian, Burke, and Moffett 1988; Erickson, Martinengo, and Hill 2010). Based on these ideas, we predict that the amplified integration hypothesis is more applicable to parents. We posit that increased work-life conflict during the pandemic has been exacerbated among those with children at home—especially younger ones.

*Decreased levels of work-life conflict.* While few observers have suggested the possibility that work-life conflict might have decreased in the population, there are sound reasons for suspecting this possibility. The *restricted life spheres* hypothesis is based on the idea that, due to social distancing and shelter-in-place orders, the “life” side of the work-life equation became severely restricted by April of 2020. The seminal works of Kahn and his colleagues (1964) and Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) provide a guiding rationale for this scenario. Kahn and colleagues (1964:19) defined inter-role conflict as the “simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other.” This definition underscores the specific requirement for pressures stemming from both work and nonwork sources to generate work-life conflict. Likewise, Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) classic piece on inter-role conflict urged researchers to examine the simultaneous pressures that arise from different roles to produce work-life conflict. They articulate a compelling illustration:

“Imagine an employee who puts in long and stressful hours in his or her job. In an objective sense, the person's work activities may interfere with his or her participation in family activities. However, *if there is no strong pressure to participate in family*

*activities*, the person is not likely to experience conflict between work and family roles” (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985:82; emphasis added).

Thirty-five years later, the universally implemented virus mitigation strategies represent an extraordinary opportunity to test this idea. One could argue that no other societal shock—at least in recent memory—has produced such sweeping restrictions on the scope of individuals’ personal lives. With the closing of parks, restaurants, gyms, movie theatres, and other sites of social engagement, and the severe restrictions on in-person gatherings with friends and family members outside the household, the parameters of “personal life” abruptly narrowed and most interactive exchanges migrated online or via phone calls. It is plausible that this translated into a simultaneous reduction of the risks that one’s work role could compete with the time, energy, and attention of one’s personal life. This far-reaching social experiment has therefore broadly restricted the capacity for nonwork activities. Taken together, these ideas provide the rationale for the *restricted life spheres hypothesis*, which predicts that aggregate levels of work-life conflict should have decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *Children and Countervailing Forces in Parents’ Lives*

The restricted life spheres hypothesis focuses on the “personal life” side of the work-life equation—but the family sphere is central for the kinds of demands that predict work-life conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Among those with children at home—especially during the pandemic when schools and daycares were closed—the family-related elements in the life side of the work-life conflict ledger altered significantly for many parents. It is plausible that despite the restrictions placed on the personal life, amplified role integration should be more pronounced for individuals who have children at home because of greater role permeability

associated with childcare and housework. Moreover, the veracity of this prediction might further depend on the ages of children, with younger children requiring more care and attention, including the new demands from schools shutting down, and education oversight and content-creation being thrust upon parents as additional family-role responsibilities.

The narrative that brings children and care-related needs into the picture elevates the consideration of the potentially different dynamics for employed women and men. We therefore evaluate the gendered impact of the presence and ages of children in the household on changes in work-life conflict during the pandemic. The main rationale for gendered considerations is anchored in the idea that traditional orientations to family care as a primary sphere for employed women still remain strong (Dernberger and Pepin 2020; Pedulla and Thébaud 2015). By contrast, paid work is a central realm culturally for men—and their dedication to the “good provider” role could be enacted in that sphere (Christiansen and Palkovitz 2001; Coltrane 1996; Moen and Roehling 2005). In many respects, the ideal worker norm has evolved from these traditional views such that preferences (of employers or organizations) is a man who prioritizes work over all else—and the presence of a spouse who was primarily responsible for the care of family work supported these arrangements (Acker 1990; Hays 1996; Kanter 1977; Williams 2000). This traditionally gendered nature of work and family roles therefore set parameters around the ways that the activities and expectations of one sphere intersect with—or permeate—the other (Gerson 1993). As Offer and Schneider (2011:814) have described it: “Normative expectations require mothers in contemporary society to fulfill multiple roles as both wage earners and primary caregivers for their family, which presents them with contradictory ideological pressures.”

From a traditional perspective that emphasizes the family devotion schema (Blair-Loy 2003), we might expect employed women to restrict role permeability because traditional gender

norms have socialized women to prioritize family over work (Dernberger and Pepin 2020). In that scenario, the pressures associated with the family devotion schema prevail over those linked to the work devotion schema and ideal worker. The family devotion schema is closely related to Hays' (1996) concept of "intensive mothering," which describes women's primary dedication to the family sphere and caregiving responsibilities. Mothers who embody this kind of devotion might set less permeable boundaries between work and family engagements, even when performing paid or unpaid work at home. For working mothers, work and family role enactments might therefore remain more segmented than they do for fathers.

An alternative view underscores the fact that mothers have increased their involvement in the paid labor force, including higher status jobs with more stress, and stronger potency of the work devotion schema (Blair-Loy 2003). Raised standards, in terms of productivity, work commitment, and weekly hours are not uncommon for women, especially those in high-status professions (Dinovitzer and Hagan 2013; Kay and Hagan 1998), nor is it uncommon to anticipate that women face work-related penalties for subscribing to family-related obligations, or reducing their workload to tend to family-related obligations. In financial terms, these consequences have been referred to as the "motherhood wage penalty" (Budig and England 2001; Padavic and Reskin 2002). To avoid such disadvantages in the work sphere, many women may have little choice but to integrate roles and allow greater role permeability in order to complete unfinished work tasks, or to get ahead in one's job (Offer and Schneider 2011; Sayer 2007). The willingness and successful capacity to combine competing role expectations may therefore be advantageous to women's workplace success and rewards.

As exemplified by Simon's (1995) research, men and women have traditionally tended to experience the separation and integration of work and family differently. While women may

view work and family roles as independent, and therefore try to separate the two completely, the expectation that women must fully attend to both roles is pervasive and generalized. Women may find it more challenging to compartmentalize domain-based activities. The opposite might be true for men, who perceive work-life conflict as delimited and specific—that is, often situational, rather than all consuming. It may therefore be easier for men to separate work and family tasks when at home because they feel less obligated to attend to competing role activities. Their work may be elevated and protected within households due to the conventional breadwinner ideal, and given they earn more on average than female partners. Taken together, these ideas contribute to the following hypothesis: The amplified integration hypothesis should be stronger among women compared to men—particularly when there are younger children in the household because of the greater care and attention they require relative to older children.

While one's personal life has been restricted during the pandemic, the *family* side of the work-life equation became more burdensome—particularly for parents who had to attend to new demands of organizing educational content for children, and for covering daily care that pre-schools or daycares had prior to the pandemic. Given these ideas, we predict that the restricted life spheres hypothesis will not be as pronounced for individuals with children at home; instead, the amplified integration view is likely to be more pertinent. Therefore, during the pandemic, any observed increase in work-life conflict has likely been strengthened for individuals with children at home (while any decrease has likely been weakened). Indeed, elevated work-life conflict during the pandemic may occur because the care and attention children—especially younger children—needed dramatically increased; for parents whose work occurred inside the home, the needs of children and workplaces overlapped completely in time and space. Yet, just as parents' life spheres have been restricted during the pandemic, so too have children's life spheres.

Children’s extracurricular activities and the requirements of transporting them to school, sports-related activities, and entertainment venues shrunk, thereby offsetting the conflicts that parents otherwise might have felt from work interfering with needs to attend or arrange these activities (Milkie and Peltola 1999). In this way, the restricted life spheres dynamic also evolves within the experiences of parents as they navigated children’s demands before and during the pandemic.

### *Summary of Hypotheses*

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly altered daily life. In this context, the ways that work interfered with life outside of it most certainly changed as well—but it is not clear how. To reiterate, our focal question is: How did work-life conflict change during the height of the lockdown phase of the pandemic? The restricted life spheres hypothesis suggests that this important stressor may have been reduced under severe lockdown conditions (the “less life to interfere with” view). But we also ask: Did the direction of change in work-life conflict differ by presence of children at home? The amplified role integration hypothesis predicts that work conflicted more with life outside of it. Among those without children at home, we expect that the restricted life spheres view to be dominant. However, among those with children at home—especially younger children—we expect countervailing forces related to amplified role integration that offset the effects of the restricted life spheres perspective. Amplified role integration predicts that parents with younger children living at home should experience increased work-life conflict (or a weaker decrease). Yet, because of restricted life spheres, they too have fewer obligations to attend to in their children’s lives (i.e., limited extracurricular activities). And, ultimately, given the narratives around inequalities among working mothers, we expect stronger countervailing forces among mothers’ experiences.

## METHODS

### *Samples*

To test these ideas, we analyze data from a nationally representative sample of Canadian workers as part of the *Canadian Quality of Work and Economic Life Study (C-QWELS)*. The first online survey was fielded from September 19<sup>th</sup> to September 24<sup>th</sup> of 2019 (N = 2,524). We then followed up with all of these same study participants during the period of April 17<sup>th</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2020 and then again from June 17<sup>th</sup> to June 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2020. All study participants are members of the Angus Reid Forum (ARF), a built and managed panel of Canadians that have agreed to participate in research. Panel participants are recruited through a variety of online and offline channels, extensively profiled, and measured to ensure accurate representation of the diversity across Canada's adult population (<http://angusreid.org>).<sup>2</sup>

Sample selection for the present study started with creating a balanced sample matrix of the Canadian population. A randomized sample of ARF members was then selected in September of 2019 to match this matrix to ensure a broadly representative sample, for which the response rate was 42 percent, with a sample size of 2,524.<sup>3</sup> Of these study participants, 1,869 (74 percent) were successfully retained for the April re-contact, and 1,843 (73 percent) were successfully retained for the June re-contact. Analytic methods described below address sample attrition and selection based on employment in subsequent waves, and also adjust analyses for repeated observations of the same individuals. We weighted all findings for gender, age,

---

<sup>2</sup> The ARF recruits via a widespread invitation approach and a double opt-in screening procedure across a variety of channels. This ensures a demographic balance that captures the diversity across sub-segments of the population. Panels are maintained through advanced sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. Relying on a combination of sampling regions based upon configurations of electoral districts and past voting trends, the ARF reflects the general population by continually verifying and recruiting so that the socio-demographic characteristics of each sampling region match actual sub-populations according to census and electoral data.

<sup>3</sup> We removed 29 cases who reported "gender fluid" because of insufficient cell size for gender-based comparisons.

education, and region according to the most recent Census data for September 2019 to ensure broad representation of working Canadians. Appendix Table A reports the descriptive statistics.

### *Measures*

*Work-life conflict* was measured at each wave using three questions that have appeared in the *National Study of the Changing Workforce* to measure work-life conflict in the past month (O'Connor and Cech 2018; Voydanoff 2004; Yucel 2019): “How often did your job keep you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?” “How often did you not have enough time or energy for the important people in your life because of your job?” “How often did your work keep you from doing as good a job at home as you could?” Response choices are coded: (1) “never,” (2) “rarely,” (3) “sometimes,” (4) “often,” and (5) “very often.” We averaged the responses to create the work-life conflict index ( $\alpha = .90$ ).<sup>4</sup>

*Age of youngest child living at home* was measured at each wave and compares those without any children living at home to individuals whose youngest child is younger than age 13 or between the ages of 13 and 18.

*Time-stable controls* include social statuses that are typically stable over a short time period. We use dummy-codes to assess *gender* (men = 0, women = 1) and *visible minority status* (not a visible minority = 0; visible minority = 1).<sup>5</sup> We also adjust for *age* of study participants (in years). For *education*, we compare those with a university undergraduate degree or higher to

---

<sup>4</sup> Workers who were unemployed in April or June were coded as missing for work-life conflict. In ancillary analyses, we adjusted model estimates for loss of data due to becoming unemployed by including a covariate which indicated experiencing unemployment over the course of the study, but results were not different than those presented here, indicating no substantial biases in analyses due to missing work-life conflict among the unemployed.

<sup>5</sup> The ARF profile data includes panelists' responses to this question: “Would you say you are a member of a visible minority here in Canada (in terms of your ethnicity/race)? Yes No.” Visible minority status is self-categorized. This measurement approach is a common means of assessing minority race and ethnicity in Canada.



those with less than a university degree. We adjust for *occupation*, comparing professionals (the reference category) with those in higher administration, clerical, sales, service, and production occupations. Another measure captures whether individuals are *salaried* versus paid hourly or some other way. Finally, in the June survey only, we asked for a retrospective account of the frequency that individuals have *worked from home during the pandemic*: (0) “none of the time,” (1) “a little or some of the time,” (2) “most or all of the time,” and (3) “even before the onset of COVID-19, I usually worked mainly from home.” In the analyses, we included a response category that indicated the participant was not in the June wave which, as will be described further in the next section, also helps to adjust the estimated model for attrition.

*Time-varying controls* take into account statuses that have the potential to fluctuate during the pandemic. We measure *marital status* at each wave by contrasting married with single/never married, previously married, and living with a significant other but not married. For *household income*, we compare individuals in the \$50,000 - \$99,999 income bracket (the modal category), to individuals in each of the following: under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000-\$199,999, and \$200,000 or more.<sup>6</sup> We measure *financial strain* with three items. The first two ask: “How often did you have trouble paying the bills” and “How often did you not have enough money to buy food, clothes, or other things your household needed?” Response categories are coded (1) “never” (2) “rarely,” (3) “sometimes,” (4) “often,” and (5) “very often.” The third asks: “How do your finances usually work out by the end of the month?” Response choices are coded (1) “a lot of money left over,” (2) “a little money left over,” (3) “just enough to make ends meet,” (4) “barely enough to get by,” and (5) “not enough to make ends meet.” We averaged the items to create a financial strain index ( $\alpha = .85$ ). We measure

---

<sup>6</sup> Analyses also include a category for “don’t know” or “prefer not to say.”

*schedule control* with the following: “How much control do you have in scheduling your work hours?” Response choices are coded: (0) “none/very little,” (1) “some,” (2) “a lot/complete.” For *work hours*, we contrast those who work 40 to 49 hours per week (the reference group) with those who work fewer than 30 hours, 30 to 39 hours, and 50 or more hours per week.

### *Analytic Plan*

We employ mixed models in our focal analyses. The mixed models apportion variance in work-life conflict into time-varying variation within the individual and time-stable variation between individuals, thereby taking repeated observations of the same individuals over time into account. The basic form of the mixed model is as follows:

$$Y_{ti} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}April_{ti} + \gamma_{20}June_{ti} + \gamma_{30}Under\ 13_{ti} + \gamma_{40}13\ to\ 18_{ti} + \sum_q \gamma_{0q} \sum_q \gamma_{0q} Z_{qi} + U_{0j} + R_{ti}$$

The mixed model treats observations of work-life conflict at each wave ( $t$ ) as nested within individuals ( $i$ ). Consequently, in this equation,  $Y_{it}$  is the work-life conflict measure for study participant  $i$  at time  $t$ , for  $i=1 \dots, n$  and  $t =$  September, April, or June survey wave. The mixed model allows the intercept  $\gamma_{00}$  to vary across individuals due to time-stable characteristics, and the random error term  $U_{0j}$  then takes residual variation due to unobserved time-stable characteristics into account. The coefficient  $\gamma_{0q}$  represents the associations between work-life conflict and time-stable factors. The random error terms  $R_{ij}$  accounts for unobserved influences on work-life conflict due to time-varying factors. The variables *April* and *June* indicate whether the time-varying measures correspond to the April or June survey (with September as reference), with the result that  $\gamma_{10}$  indicates the average change in work-life conflict between September and April, while  $\gamma_{20}$  indicates the average change in work-life conflict between September and June.

Similarly, the variables *Under 13* and *13 to 18* indicate whether, at each wave, a respondent's youngest child is under age 13 or between age 13 or 18 (with individuals not living with children as reference). Consequently,  $\gamma_{30}$  indicates the difference in work-life conflict across waves between individuals with a younger child and those without children, while  $\gamma_{40}$  indicates the difference in work-life conflict across waves between individuals with a teenager and those without children. An interaction between the indicators of time and the youngest child indicators then shows whether changes in work-life conflict between waves differs by parenting statuses.<sup>7</sup>

Mixed models incorporate all information available from each observation into model estimates, regardless of the number of waves in which a respondent provides information (Yang and Land 2010), thereby providing model estimates that are robust to sample attrition. Model estimation does assume that attrition is “missing at random,” meaning that missingness is not attributable to values on the missing data and can be explained by additional factors included as covariates (Enders 2010). Our inclusion of a broad set of covariates should aid the model in meeting this assumption, and even when data are not missing at random, estimates with this assumption often provide superior estimates as opposed to models relying on listwise deletion (Allison 2003). The variable to measure the frequency of working from home during the pandemic was asked only in June. For those respondents who had dropped out by June, we included a response category “unknown” that signifies individuals who were no longer in the study. By including this indicator (“no longer participating in the June wave”), we are adjusting

---

<sup>7</sup> Although it is common in mixed modeling to allow random effects for slopes of measures of time, which create “growth curve models,” the primary motivation for these additional model parameters is in estimating between-individual variation in changes over time, as well as accounting for time-stable variation in changes over time using time-stable covariates. As the primary focus of the current research is not on variation in rates of change due to between-person factors, the inclusion of these random effects would add additional model complexity without addressing the focal research questions. In the interests of model parsimony, then, we do not model the coefficients for time as random effects.

for attrition over the course of the study (Yang and Land 2010). All mixed models are estimated in Stata 16.1 using full-information maximum likelihood estimation.

## RESULTS

In model 1 of Table 1, we test the bivariate association between the survey wave indicator (“April” or “June”) and work-life conflict, thereby indicating the unadjusted change in work-life conflict between September and the subsequent waves. These coefficients are statistically significant and negative, and the coefficients are also of similar magnitude, showing that average levels of work-life conflict decreased to a similar degree from September to April ( $b = -.333, p < .001$ ) and from September to June ( $b = -.317, p < .001$ ). In model 2, we add the age of youngest child living at home and all other study variables. Net of these variables, the decrease in average levels of work-life conflict holds for September to April ( $b = -.177, p < .001$ ) and September to June ( $b = -.174, p < .001$ ). Moreover, the presence of a younger child at home is associated with elevated levels of work-life conflict ( $b = .234, p < .001$ ); however, those with a teenager as their youngest child living at home do not differ from the childless in average levels of work-life conflict.

### **[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]**

In model 3, we test whether the observed change in average levels of work-life conflict from September to April or September to June varied depending on the presence and age of youngest child at home. The coefficient for the interaction term with youngest child under age 13 is positive and statistically significant for September to April ( $b = .242, p < .01$ ) and June ( $b = .208, p < .01$ ) samples. The positive interactions indicate that the decrease in work-life conflict over both time periods is weaker for people who have young children at home compared to those

without any children at home. By contrast, the coefficient for the interaction term with youngest child between the ages of 13 and 18 is positive and significant for September to April ( $b = .176$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but that pattern does not hold into June ( $b = .070$ ,  $p > .05$ ). These interactions indicate that, for individuals with teenagers, in April there was a weaker decrease in work-family conflict as compared to individuals without children, but by June individuals with teenagers experienced a similar decrease in work-family conflict as compared to people not living with children.

Table 2 reports the predicted marginal effects from model 3 of Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrates these predicted values. Among those who have no children at home, average levels of work-life conflict decreased from September to April ( $b = -.237$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and June ( $b = -.213$ ,  $p < .001$ ). By contrast, we observe almost no change in work-life conflict among those with a younger child (6 – 12 years of age) living at home from September to April ( $b = .005$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and June ( $b = -.005$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Similarly, among those whose youngest child at home is a teenager, we find little change from September to April ( $b = -.061$ ,  $p > .05$ ), but by June of 2020 there is a significant decrease in work-life conflict ( $b = -.143$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**[INSERT TABLE 2 AND FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]**

In a set of supplemental analyses, we tested for gender differences in the observed two-way interaction between survey wave (“April” or “June”) and the age of youngest child living at home. Our tests of three-way interaction effects that include gender indicate that these differences are not statistically significant in September to April for those with a child under age 13 or a teenager; these interactions are also not significant in the comparisons between

September and June. Therefore, the two-way patterns that we document above in Table 1 and Figure 1 do not differ significantly between women and men.<sup>8</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The focal question of the present study asks: Did work-life conflict *increase* or *decrease* during the COVID-19 pandemic? We identify three main take-aways from our findings. First and foremost, in analyses of a nationally representative sample of workers, we found that average levels of work-life conflict decreased among workers without children living at home. This pattern is similar in the seven-month study period (September-to-April) and the nine-month period (September-to-June), and is consistent with the restricted life spheres view.

Second, individuals with younger children living at home—that is, the youngest child being younger than age thirteen—did not experience the same decrease in work-life conflict as we observed for their counterparts with no children at home. However, we *did not* find evidence of a significant *increase* in work-life conflict. This counters the narrative that work-life conflict increased among parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other differences emerged when we examined the effects of the age of youngest child. In April, those whose youngest child at home was a teenager reported little decrease in work-life conflict; by June, however, the decrease in work-life conflict became more evident and similar to that observed among the childless.

Overall, the patterns observed for those with young children at home aligns with the predictions of the amplified role integration thesis. Although all parents presumably had restricted opportunities in the public sphere (like everyone else), this may have been offset by the

---

<sup>8</sup> Some readers might wonder about other possible contingencies across education, occupation, and work hours. We tested each of these as three-way terms in supplemental analyses (not shown but available upon request). None of these tests found statistically significant patterns. The two-way results therefore generalize across these conditions.

countervailing forces created by having younger children at home during the lockdown. The most important of these forces were the unique demands related to children's education and daily care. Ultimately, these factors likely reduced these parents' opportunities for decreased levels of work-life conflict that were demonstrated among workers without any children living at home. By contrast, among parents whose youngest child was a teenager, by June it is possible that teenagers were able to manage their own schoolwork without much parental oversight. In many districts, final exams were reduced or cancelled, and grades were not able to be lower than pre-pandemic marks, and thus the lessening pressures on teens meant parents also had fewer conflicts from their work into parenting. Moreover, by June, teenagers may have been able to see friends and be away from home at least some of the time. These dynamics might account for why we observed comparable decreases in levels of WLC among those with teens and those with no children living at home.

Collectively, these insights about potential countervailing forces in parents' lives shed light on the conceptual definition of inter-role conflict offered by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) decades ago. They claimed that individuals without pressures to participate in the family role would experience less work-life conflict. The present study provides a novel test of this proposition, as our findings establish how pressures from the "life" side of the work-life conflict equation are important for producing inter-role conflict. While most aspects of social life became restricted with the lockdown of the pandemic—thus reducing work-life conflict at the aggregate level—the "family" side of work-life conflict ledger became more prominent, especially for parents with young children; this offset the decrease in work-life conflict. Though Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) were solely focused on work-*family* conflict, the nuances captured in the present study underscore the importance of expanding the conceptual terrain of how the work role

competes with the time, energy, and attention available for *life* more generally outside of the work sphere. As our findings demonstrate, the COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique opportunity to capture the important nuances about countervailing forces in people's lives—particularly the personal versus family elements of the work-life conflict equation.

A third key take-away of our study involves the lack of gender differences in the interaction between survey wave and the age of young child living at home. We hypothesized that amplified role integration dynamics driving increased work-life conflict would be more evident among working mothers given that their roles already tend to pull them toward high expectations in the home and around intensive mothering. Overall, we found no evidence of gender-based contingencies—suggesting little support for predictions about the divergent experiences of women and men with children living at home. The reasons for the lack of significant gender differences is unclear. It might be that gender differences in changes in work-life conflict and its link to children at home depends on other factors like the division of housework and childcare, or on other aspects of workplace arrangements like flexibility and attitudes about prioritization of work over family. These possibilities should be examined in additional research, especially qualitative interviews that probe the experiences of trade-offs between work and family during the pandemic and its link to inter-role tension and strains.

Before concluding, we wish to revisit a theme noted in the introduction: A common media account asserts that work-life conflict has *increased* during the pandemic. An April 23<sup>rd</sup> *Bloomberg* piece declared that “whatever boundaries remained between work and life have almost entirely disappeared.” It suggested that people are working longer hours and experiencing less control over working time because of the disintegration of role boundaries. Ultimately, the implication is that employers have extracted more work from their employees during this period



of social confinement. At the same time, the dramatic and unprecedented changes in children’s lives during the pandemic have likely made employed parents’ work feel intrusive into their relationships with children and home life. Yet, our assessment does not support this claim. Thus, whether or not individuals worked mainly from home during the pandemic or were considered essential employees who needed to leave the home to go to work each day, the needs of younger children increased—and this, on its own, likely contributes to elevated work-life conflict.

For many parents during the pandemic, having children in their workspaces—and in need of extra care and education that institutions could no longer provide—may have been a stark shift. Parents attempting to get their job done without an office or place outside the home to conduct their work, was a new reality. Work and family roles were forced into the same space—that is, as Allen and colleagues (2014) characterized it, “extreme integration”—with a good portion of parents’ partners simultaneously trying to meet work demands if they were employed. Moreover, the interference of work into home life became more consequential, as home became the place for educating children, and ignoring or neglecting children’s needs on these fronts arguably meant potentially impeding their development. Without much guidance to supplement the often informal and minimal educational content coming from teachers, parents could feel great conflicts in choosing a work task over their child. Doing the work required of them for pay came with regular reminders that the expanded parent role was being neglected. These new and unprecedented demands occurred regularly and viscerally with few barriers when children were awake, even in homes with ample space and even when partners sometimes took charge. Parents might have felt like they were being neglectful with every ignored question about schoolwork, every request for a snack, and every time a parent had to put a young child in front of TV or

video as a “babysitter.” Collectively, these dynamics offset the overall decrease in aggregate levels of work-life conflict that we observed in the working population.

Before concluding, we wish to acknowledge several study limitations. First, we expect if we were able to more carefully measure the experiences of some categories of workers whose jobs became very stressful—for example, health care workers—we might also see work interfered with their lives too, but in ways that differ from the operationalization of work-life conflict here. Essential workers’ jobs became more fraught and dangerous, and it likely took extra energy and concentration to separate themselves from contaminating family members with the virus. Given that ours is a national survey of workers across all different types of sectors or occupations, we were not able to sufficiently evaluate these kinds of occupation-specific nuances. However, we recognize the potentially unique work-life experiences of these workers and the supports they did or did not receive to prevent work-related demands from spilling over into their home lives.

Another possible limitation relates to our suggestions about restricted life spheres. We hypothesized that decreased levels of work-life conflict might be due to restricted life spheres outside of work during the lockdown months—and that freedom from domestic responsibilities associated with having children at home reinforced that reduction. However, we recognize that other potential explanations are plausible. For example, it is possible that aggregate levels of employer expectations for work capacity or productivity decreased during the first few months of the pandemic in 2020. This view implies that managers and organizations acknowledged the unprecedented strain of the pandemic and eased expectations. This suggests an empathic understanding that life had shifted abruptly, and all members of society were trying to adjust to

the rapid changes. Thus, lowered work-role expectations—above and beyond the realities of restricted life outside of work—might also explain why levels of work-life conflict decreased.

To conclude, we demonstrate how Canadian workers' work-life conflict changed during the initial shock of lockdown during the 2020 pandemic. As we suggested at the beginning of this paper, many scholars have already demonstrated how work-life conflict can be detrimental for health and well-being. Therefore, the fact that work-life conflict *decreased* for many individuals—during such a short period of time—likely had implications for mental and physical health. One direction for future research is to test if the decreased work-life conflict for some workers offset other pandemic-related stressors that harmed health; this implies another set of countervailing mechanisms that involve health. Yet, we discovered a critical bifurcation that highlights the potential for additional forms of emotional inequality: Parents did not experience the same decrease in work-life conflict because of the new requirements associated with work-family role integration brought on by the pandemic. At the same time, social distancing requirements constricted outside activities that children might have otherwise been engaged in—sports, events, gatherings, and so on—thereby suggesting countervailing daily demands for parents during the pandemic. Collectively, our observations speak to the challenges for parents and the potential institutional supports to educate and care for children; at the same time, our observations underscore the importance of recognizing that the status of parent during the pandemic carries enormous weight of responsibilities beyond the job.

## REFERENCES

- Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 4(2):139-158.
- Allen, Tammy, D., and Angela Martin. 2017. "The Work-Family Interface: A Retrospective Look at 20 Years of Research in JOHP." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 22(3):259-272.
- Allen, Tammy, D., and Lisa M. Finkelstein. 2014. "Work-Family Conflict Among Members of Full-Time Couples: An Examination of Family Life Stage, Gender, and Age." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 19(3):376-384.
- Allen, Tammy, D., David E. L. Herst, Carly S. Bruck, and Martha Sutton. 2000. "Consequences Associated with Work-to-Family Conflict: A Review and Agenda for Future Research." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 5(2):278-308.
- Allen, Tammy, D., Eunae Cho, and Laurenz L. Meier. 2014. "Work-Family Boundary Dynamics." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 1:99-121.
- Ashforth, Blake, E., Glen E. Kreiner, and Mel Fugate. 2000. "All in a Day's Work: Boundaries and Micro Role Transitions." *The Academy of Management Review* 25(3):472-491.
- Bedeian, Arthur, G., Beverly G. Burke, and Richard G. Moffett. 1988. "Outcomes of Work-Family Conflict Among Married Male and Female Professionals." *Journal of Management* 14(3):475-491.
- Bellavia, Gina M. and Michael R. Frone. 2005. "Work-Family Conflict." Pp. 113–148 in *Handbook of Work Stress*, edited by J. Barling, E. K. Kelloway, and M. R. Frone. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. *Competing Devotions: Career and Family Among Women Financial Executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Budig, Michelle, J., and Paula England. 2001. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review* 66(2):204-225.
- Christiansen, Shawn, L., and Rob Palkovitz. 2001. "Why the 'Good Provider' Role Still Matters: Providing as a Form of Paternal Involvement." *Journal of Family Issues* 22(1):84-106.
- Clark, Sue C. 2000. "Work/family Border Theory: A New Theory of Work/family Balance." *Human Relations* 53(6):747-770.
- Coltrane, Scott. 1996. *Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework, and Gender Equity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books.
- Davis, Michelle, F., and Jeff Green. 2020. "Three Hours Longer, the Pandemic Workday has Obliterated Work-Life Balance" *Bloomberg*, April 23. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-23/working-from-home-in-covid-era-means-three-more-hours-on-the-job>
- Dernberger, Brittany N. and Joanna R. Pepin. 2020. "Gender Flexibility, but Not Equality: Young Adults' Division of Labor Preferences." *Sociological Science* 7:36-56.
- Dinovitzer, Ronit, and John Hagan. 2013. "Hierarchical Structure and Gender Dissimilarity in American Legal Labor Markets." *Social Forces* 92(3):929-955.

- Dizik, Alina. 2020. "How to Work from Home with your Kids during Coronavirus." *BBC*, April 4. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200401-how-to-work-from-home-with-your-kids-during-coronavirus>
- Dumas, Tracy, L., and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks. 2015. "The Professional, the Personal, and the Ideal Worker: Pressures and Objectives Shaping the Boundary Between Life Domains." *The Academy of Management Annals* 9(1):803-843.
- Erickson, Jenet, J., Giuseppe Martinengo, and E. Jeffrey Hill. 2010. "Putting Work and Family Experiences in Context: Differences by Family Life Stage." *Human Relations* 63(7):955-979.
- Gardiner, Joseph, C., Zhehui Luo, and Lee Anne Roman. 2009. "Fixed Effects, Random Effects and GEE: What are the Differences?" *Statistics in Medicine* 28:221-239.
- Ghisletta, Paolo, and Dario Spini. 2004. "An Introduction to Generalized Estimating Equations = and an Application to Assess Selectivity Effects in a Longitudinal Study on Very Old Individuals." *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics* 29(4):421-437.
- Gerson, Kathleen. 1993. *No Man's Land: Men's Changing Commitments to Family and Work*. New York: Basic Books.
- Government of Canada. 2020. "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Outbreak Update." Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html?topic=tilelink>
- Greenhaus, Jeffrey, H., and Nicholas J. Beutell. 1985. "Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles." *The Academy of Management Review* 10(1):76-88.
- Grimm, Kevin, J., Nilam Ram, and Ryne Estabrook. 2017. *Growth Modeling: Structural Equation and Multilevel Modeling Approaches*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Hardin, James, W., and Joseph M. Hilbe. 2013. *Generalized Estimating Equations*. London: Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Hays, Sharon. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hedeker, Donald, and Robert D. Gibbons. 2006. *Longitudinal Data Analysis*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Hill, E. Jeffrey, Brent C. Miller, Sara P. Weiner, and Joe Colihan. 1998. "Influences of the Virtual Office on Aspects of Work and Work/Life Balance." *Personnel Psychology* 51(3):667-683.
- Hubbard, Alan, E., Jennifer Ahern, Nancy L. Fleischer, Mark Van der Laan, Sheri A. Lippman, Nicholas Jewell, Tim Bruckner, and William A. Satariano. 2010. "To GEE or Not to GEE: Comparing Population Average and Mixed Models for Estimating the Associations Between Neighborhood Risk Factors and Health." *Epidemiology* 21(4):467-474.
- Johnstone, Hillary. 2020. "COVID-19 School Closures Throw Child Care, Work Placements into Doubt." *CBC News*, March 13. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-parents-students-react-school-closures-1.5496245>
- Kahn, Robert, L., Donald M. Wolfe, Robert P. Quinn, and J. Diedrick Snoek. 1964. *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley.
- Kanter. Rosabeth, M. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

- Kay, Fiona, M., and John Hagan. 1998. "Raising the Bar: The Gender Stratification of Law-Firm Capital." *American Sociological Review* 63(5):728-743.
- Kelliher, Clare, Julia Richardson, and Galina Boiarintseva. 2019. "All of Work? All of Life? Reconceptualizing Work-Life Balance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *Human Resource Management Journal* 29:97-112.
- Kelly, Erin. L., Phyllis Moen, Michael Oakes, Wen Fan, Cassandra Okechukwu, Kelly D. Davis, Leslie B. Hammer, Ellen E. Kossek, Rosalind B. King, Ginger C. Hanson, Frank Mierzwa, and Lynne M. Casper. 2014. "Changing Work and Work-Family Conflict: Evidence from the Work, Family, and Health Network." *American Sociological Review* 79(3):485-516.
- Kossek, Ellen, E. 2016. "Managing Work-Life Boundaries in the Digital Age." *Organizational Dynamics* 45(3):258-270.
- Kossek, Ellen, E., and Susan J. Lambert. 2004. *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kossek, Ellen, E., and Kyung-Hee Lee. 2017. "Work-Family Conflict and Work-Life Conflict." *Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior, Social Issues*. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.52
- Kossek, Ellen, E., Brenda A. Lautsch, and Susan C. Eaton. 2006. "Telecommuting, Control, and Boundary Management: Correlates of Policy Use and Practice, Job Control, and Work Family Effectiveness." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 68:347-367.
- Kossek, Ellen, E., Raymond A. Noe, and Beverly J. DeMarr. 1999. "Work-Family Role Synthesis: Individual and Organizational Determinants." *The International Journal of Conflict Management* 10(2):102-129.
- Landivar, Liana, C., Leah Ruppner, William J. Scarborough, and Caitlyn Collins. 2020. Early Signs Indicate That COVID-19 is Exacerbating Gender Inequality in the Labor Force. *Socius* 6:1-3.
- Lewis, Helen. 2020. "The Coronavirus is a Disaster for Feminism." *The Atlantic*, March 19. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302/>
- McCarthy, Ellen, Caitlin Gibson, Helenda Andrews-Dyer, and Amy Joyce. 2020. "A Working Mom's Quarantine Life." *The Washington Post*, May 6. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/05/06/coronavirus-pandemic-working-moms-quarantine-life/?arc404=true>
- Milkie, Melissa A. and Pia Peltola. 1999. "Playing all the Roles: Gender and the Work-Family Balancing Act." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61:476-90.
- McNeish, Daniel, Laura M. Stapleton, and Rebecca D. Silverman. 2017. "On the Unnecessary Ubiquity of Hierarchical Linear Modeling." *Psychological Methods* 22(1):114-140.
- Moen, Phyllis and Patricia V. Roehling. 2005. *The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Nippert-Eng, Christina, E. 1996. *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- O'Connor, Lindsey T., and Erin A. Cech. 2018. "Not Just a Mother's Problem: The Consequences of Perceived Workplace Flexibility Bias for All Workers." *Sociological Perspectives* 61(5):808-829.
- Olson-Buchanan, Julie, B., and Wendy R. Boswell. 2006. "Blurring Boundaries: Correlates of Integration and Segmentation between Work and Nonwork." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 68:432-445.
- Offer, Shira, and Barbara Schneider. 2011. "Revisiting the Gender Gap in Time-Use Patterns: Multitasking and Well-Being among Mothers and Fathers in Dual-Earner Families." *American Sociological Review* 76(6):809-833.
- Padavic, Irene, and Barbara Reskin. 2002. *Women and Men at Work*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Pedulla, David, S., and Sarah Thébaud. 2015. "Can We Finish the Revolution? Gender, Work-Family Ideals, and Institutional Constraint." *American Sociological Review* 80(1):116-39.
- Rau, Barbara, L., and Maryanne M. Hyland. 2002. "Role Conflict and Flexible Work Arrangements: The Effects on Applicant Attraction." *Personnel Psychology* 55(1):111-136.
- Rudolph, Cort, W., Blake Allan, Malissa Clark, Guido Hertel, Andreas Hirschi, Florian Kunze, Kristen Shockley, Mindy Shoss, Sabine Sonnentag, and Hannes Zacher. 2020. "Pandemics: Implications for Research and Practice in Industrial and Organizational Psychology." *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*.
- Sayer, Liana. 2007. "Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Long Employee Hours and Multitasking." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 17:403-435.
- Schieman, Scott, Melissa A. Milkie, and Paul Glavin. 2009. "When Work Interferes with Life: Work-Nonwork Interference and the Influence of Work-Related Demands and Resources." *American Sociological Review* 74(6):966-88.
- Simon, Robin, W. 1995. "Gender, Multiple Roles, Role Meaning, and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 36(2):182-194.
- Subramanian, S. V., and James O'Malley. 2010. "Modeling Neighborhood Effects: The Futility of Comparing Mixed and Marginal Approaches." *Epidemiology* 21(4):475-481.
- Thomason, Bobbi, and Heather Williams. 2020. "What will Work-Life Balance Look like After the Pandemic?" *Harvard Business Review*, April 16. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2020/04/what-will-work-life-balance-look-like-after-the-pandemic>
- Voydanoff, Patricia. 2004. "The Effects of Work Demands and Resources on Work-to-Family Conflict and Facilitation." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(2):398-412.
- Williams, Joan C. 2000. *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do about It*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yucel, Deniz. 2019. "Job Autonomy and Schedule Flexibility as Moderators of the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Work-Related Outcomes." *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 14(5):1-18.
- Yucel, Deniz, and Wen Fan. 2019. "Work-Family Conflict and Well-Being among German Couples: A Longitudinal and Dyadic Approach." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 60(3):377-395.

TABLE 1. Work-Life Conflict Regressed on Survey Wave, Age of Youngest Child Living at Home, and Control Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Survey Wave (REF = September)			
April	-.333***	-.177***	-.237***
June	-.317***	-.174***	-.213***
Ages of Youngest Child (REF = No Children)			
Under 13		.234***	.115
13 to 18		.064	.002
Survey Wave $\times$ Ages of Children...			
April $\times$ Under 13			.242**
April $\times$ 13 to 17			.176**
June $\times$ Under 13			.208**
June $\times$ 13 to 18			.070
Women		.066	.066
Visible Minority		.065	.063
Age		-.008***	-.009***
Married		.058	.059
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		.111**	.112**
Income (REF = \$50,000 to \$99,999)			
Under \$25,000		-.108	-.109
\$25,000 to \$49,999		-.114	-.114
\$100,000 to \$149,999		-.009	-.009
\$150,000-\$200,000		.033	.032
Over \$200,000		.003	.004
Financial Strain		.280***	.280***
Professional		.245***	.246***
Salaried		.120**	.121**
Schedule Control (REF = None)			
Some		-.061	-.063
A lot/Complete		-.137***	-.138***
Work Hours (REF = 40 to 49 Hours)			
Under 30 Hours		-.488***	-.482***
30 to 39 Hours		-.229***	-.226***
50 or more Hours		.380***	.382***
Work from Home During Pandemic (REF = Never)			
Little/Some of the Time		.173*	.171*
Most/All the Time		.031	.029
Already Worked Mainly from Home		-.020	-.021

Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001. Regression coefficients shown in table; standard errors not shown for the sake of space.



TABLE 2. Predicted Marginal Effects for Age of Youngest Child and Work-Life Conflict by Survey Wave

	April	June
Age of Youngest Child		
No Children	-.237***	-.213***
Under 13 Years of Age	.005	-.005
13 to 18 Years of Age	-.062	-.143*

Note: \*p <.05, \*\*p <.01, \*\*\*p <.001; All models include the full set of control variables.

APPENDIX TABLE A. Weighted Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

<i>Time Varying Variables</i>	September	April	June
Work-Life Conflict, mean (SD)	2.9 (1.1)	2.5 (1.1)	2.5 (1.1)
Age of Youngest Child, %			
No Children	67.8	71.5	69.5
Under 13	12.3	12.1	12.8
13 to 18	19.7	16.4	17.7
Married, %	58.1	60.0	60.9
Income, %			
Under \$25,000	6.3	5.7	5.8
\$25,000 to \$49,999	14.7	14.2	13.5
\$50,000 to \$99,999	30.1	30.0	30.9
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22.1	22.8	23.2
\$150,000-\$200,000	10.3	11.1	11.3
Over \$200,000	6.9	6.7	6.4
Financial Strain, mean (SD)	2.3 (1.0)	1.9 (.9)	1.9 (.9)
Professional, %	42.2	44.7	44.9
Salaried, %	46.7	48.6	48.6
Schedule Control, %			
None	35.5	32.1	32.3
Some	27.0	27.2	28.7
A lot/Complete	37.5	40.8	38.9
Work Hours, %			
Under 30 Hours	18.3	26.6	21.44
30 to 39 Hours	33.1	33.8	34.7
40 to 49 Hours	35.0	29.9	32.4
50 or more Hours	13.6	9.7	11.4
<i>Time Stable Variables</i>			
Women, %	48.6		
Visible Minority, %	12.9		
Age, mean (SD)	41.9 (13.7)		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher, %	46.7		
Work from Home, % <sup>a</sup>			
Never	35.3		
Little/Some of the Time	17.3		
Most/All the Time	39.9		
Already Worked Mainly from Home	7.3		

<sup>a</sup> As noted above, the measure of the frequency of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic was asked in the June survey.

FIGURE 1. Age of Youngest Child at Home and work-life conflict by Survey Wave

