

Gender Differences in Work-Family Conflict

Fact or Fable?

A Comparative Analysis of the Gender Perspective and Gender Ideology Theory

Abstract This study uses data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) to examine gender differences in perceived work-family conflict. The following research question is used: *How is the relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict different for men and women in the Netherlands?* The study adds to existing literature by making a comparison between the gender perspective and the gender ideology theory in their ability to explain gender differences in perceived work-family conflict. The gender perspective theory states that culturally seen women have the main responsibility over the family domain, while men have the main responsibility over the work domain and that neglecting these responsibilities leads to work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Gutek et al, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 1988). The gender ideology states that men and women experience work-family conflict when they do not act according to their gender ideology. Women fulfill their identity by doing housework; men by participating in paid work (Minnotte et al, 2010; Greenstein, 1996). From the analyses, we can conclude that high levels of work-family conflict are rare. Moreover, gender differences in work-family conflict are minimal.

Key words Work-Family Conflict, Family Demands, Work Demands, Gender

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Index	Page
Introduction	3
Theory and Hypotheses	7
Time-Based Theory	7
Gender Differences	9
Gender Perspective Theory	9
Gender Ideology Theory	10
Methods	16
Data	16
Measures	17
Method of Analysis	20
Results	21
Descriptive Statistics	21
Regression Analyses	24
Conclusion and Discussion	28
References	31

1. Introduction

Traditionally, women take care of the household while men are active in the work domain (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Demands from the work domain are mainly working hours (Milkie & Peltola, 1999), while the family demands consist of taking care of children and household task (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004). The traditional male and female roles have changed over the last decades. The responsibilities and demands of men and women have become more similar and therefore the lives of men and women are now more alike. Today often both partners are involved in paid work. A downside to this is that because both partners spend more time in paid work there is less time left to do the household work. As a result, combining demands from both the household and workplace becomes a challenge (Keene & Quadagno, 2004).

Combining the different demands is especially difficult for women (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Even though the roles of men and women have become more similar, the demands made on them still differ. Besides their paid work, women are more responsible for the household than men, therefore putting more pressure on women (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). In her research, Hochschild (1989) has called the double task of women ‘the second shift’, pointing to the extra job that women have to do at home after their paid work.

In life, people usually want and need to meet the demands made on them by the family and workplace. Not being able to complete the tasks of both domains can lead to a decrease of a person’s wellbeing and happiness (Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Negative consequences are emotional exhaustion, stress and poor job performance (Alam et al, 2009). Furthermore, emotional exhaustion is the first stage of the burnout syndrome (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Policies to make the combination of the work and family life easier are too limited (Keene & Quadagno, 2004) and therefore families as well as the work domain are under pressure. This affects the productivity of work organizations and quality of the family life (Voydanoff, 2005). The moment that the demands made by both the family domain and the work domain are incompatible, people experience work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work-family conflict was first defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985 p77) as ‘a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect’. Time spent working (or with the family) cannot be spent with the family (working) (Voydanoff, 2005). A person is thus experiencing work-family conflict if the participation in one domain makes it more difficult to participate in the

other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 p77). Work-family conflict becomes visible in two ways. First, there is the problem that a person cannot be physically present at home or at work when needed because of the demands of the other domain. Second, people might not be able to focus mentally on a role even when being physically present because of demands from the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The current study explores the relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict. For a long time, studies only looked at women when researching work-family conflict, leaving men aside. More recently it has become clear that the problem is also relevant for men. Moreover, research has shown that work-family conflict differs for men and women (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). This research focuses specifically on the influence of gender on the relationship between work and family demands and work-family conflict. The following research question will be answered: *How is the relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict different for men and women in the Netherlands?*

Three sub questions are used to answer the research question. The first part of the research looks at the general relationship between work and family demands and work-family conflict, answering the question: *What is the influence of family and work demands on perceived work-family conflict?* In the second part our attention goes to gender differences in work-family conflict. First, we explore if there are any differences in the levels of work-family conflict of men and women, using the question: *Are there gender differences in levels of perceived work-family conflict?* This question is interesting because results from former research are not straightforward. The expectation that women are generally under more pressure than men because of their double role as housewife and provider of income is often not confirmed (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Voydanoff, 1988; Hosking & Western, 2008). Some research even shows that men experience higher levels of work-family conflict than women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Voydanoff, 1988; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Hosking & Western, 2008). After exploring this, our attention goes to the mechanisms behind work-family conflict, exploring how work-family conflict is different for men and women. Some research showed that women are more negatively affected by work demands because their traditional emphasize on the family (Gutek et al, 1991). However, the findings are not clear. Other research shows that women are not more negatively affected by household tasks than men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Research about the effect of children on work-family conflict for men and women show mixed results. Milkie and Peltola (1999) found in their research that the presence of

young children negatively affects the work-family conflict of fulltime working mothers. Voydanoff (1988) also found this effect for men (Voydanoff, 1988). Marks et al (2001) found that having children does not affect the women's work-family conflict. Unexpectedly, for men having children leads to less work-family conflict (Marks et al, 2001). In order to create more clarity the current research answers the following sub question: *Are there gender differences in the way that work and family demands lead to perceived work-family conflict?*

Societal Relevance

As explained above, the struggle of combining demands from the work and family domain is relevant for many families today. Many people find it difficult to balance the demands of both domains because of limited time. The pressure on families is generally high (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). As explained above, this can lead to decreasing well-being and quality of the work and family life (Alam et al, 2009; Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In order to prevent stress in families, it is important to find out what the main causes of work-family conflict are. With this, policies can be invented to prevent these issues or make the problems caused by incompatibility of work and family demands easier. This will increase stability and happiness in families and job performance at work and is thus good for the society and economy as a whole.

Furthermore, because of the aging of the Dutch society the Dutch government hopes to increase the number of working hours of the working population (Portegijs et al, 2008). In this light, it is interesting to see the effect of more working hours on the perceived work-family conflict.

Scientific Relevance

The current research adds to existing literature, because it uses two main theories about gender differences in work-family conflict and explores which of these is the most accurate theory. The first theory is the gender perspective theory. In short, this theory states that men and women have different responsibilities that are culturally determined (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Family and work responsibilities of men and women are much more similar than before, but gender differences are still visible (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Women still have the main responsibility over the household and men over the work domain (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Gutek et al, 1991; Hochschild, 1989, Voydanoff, 1988). According to the gender perspective theory, neglecting one's

responsibilities leads to work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

The second theory used in this research is the gender ideology theory. The main assumption here is that people have a gender ideology and they behave according to this in order to fulfill their gender identity (Minnotte et al, 2010; Greenstein, 1996). The theory states that women receive their female identity from participating in the household and men receive their male identity from participating in the work domain (Greenstein, 1996). The two theories are explained more thoroughly in the next section.

Another addition of the current research to existing literature is the context in which it takes place. Researching gender differences in work-family conflict in the Netherlands is interesting because of the emphasize on part-time work for women in this country. The increased labor participation of women in the Netherlands over the last decades is for the biggest part in part-time jobs. The amount of part-time working people, mainly women, is also much higher in the Netherlands than in other European countries (Portegijs et al, 2008). Working part-time might be a good alternative for fulltime work because working less hours can lead to a decrease or change in work-family conflict.

The current study starts with the theory and findings of earlier research. The hypotheses, which are derived from the theories, are discussed here. After this, the data and methods of the research are discussed, followed by the results, conclusion and discussion.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

1. Time-Based Theory

In this part, the general relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict is discussed. The research uses a time-based approach to explain the influence of work and family demands on the perceived work-family conflict. The time-based theory assumes that time is a fixed resource (Voydanoff, 2005; Hosking & Western, 2008; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Both the family and the work domain require time. Time-based demands include the time spent in paid work, but also the time that is necessary to properly run a family (Voydanoff, 2005). An important assumption of the time-based theory is that time spent in the work domain cannot be spent with the family. Also, time spent with the family cannot be spent working (Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Family and work demands are therefore often seen as competing with each other (Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The work domain demands that people are present at a certain time, but also the family domain requires that people are present to fulfill tasks on a particular hour. An example of this is preparing meals that need to be ready at a specific time (Hochschild, 1989). Because of the competitiveness of the demands and the problem of fixed time, many demands might not be met (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The total demands can be too high to fulfill them all in the 24 hours that one day has (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). However, people with a paid job and a family have a commitment to this. They want, but also need to fulfill the demands made by both domains. If this is, because of time limitations, not possible this can result in people experiencing stress and unhappiness (Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Not being able to meet the demands from the work and family domains thus leads to work-family conflict (Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The level of work-family conflict as well as the main cause of it differs between people. The number of demands from the work and the family are positively related to the levels of work-family conflict that people are experiencing (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

Work Demands

One indicator of a person's work-family conflict are someone's work demands. If a person cannot meet his or her work demands or work demands result in not meeting family demands than the perceived work-family conflict increases. The most important work demand is the number of hours people have to work (Voydanoff, 2005). Long working hours affect the extent to which a spouse can be present for family activities. Many authors recognize the

negative influence of long working hours on work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1988; Alam et al, 2009; Karimi, 2009; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Hosking & Western, 2008).

Results of earlier research show a clear picture. Generally, longer working hours led to more work-family conflict (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Hosking & Western, 2008; Alam et al, 2009). Hosking and Western (2008) however also found that when women or men unexpectedly needed to make longer working hours for that day, their work-family conflict was not affected (Hosking & Western, 2008). Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that working fulltime leads to more conflict compared to part-time work, but only for women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In general, research shows that higher work demands have a negative influence on work-family conflict. This leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Greater work demands lead to more perceived work-family conflict.

Family Demands

The second domain related to work-family conflict is the family domain. Two types of demands are important: first of all, household tasks are an important contribution to work-family conflict (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Household tasks have to be done regularly and often take much time. Tasks like preparing meals are even more demanding, because these are tied to a specific time in the day (Hochschild, 1989). Besides household tasks, taking care of children is a demanding family demand that affects people's work-family conflict (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Especially more and younger children at home results in more perceived work-family conflict, because this increases the demands on the caretaker (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In general it is expected that more family demands lead to more perceived conflict (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Voydanoff, 1988).

Results about this expectation are mixed. Keene and Quadagno (2004) show that from all family demands only the children living at home have a significant influence on the perceived work-family conflict (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Milkie and Peltola (1999), on the other hand, show that for both men and women doing more housework negatively affects their work-family conflict. Voydanoff (1988) found that for both men and women the time spent at the family domain is not at all related to work-family conflict. The expectation that greater family demands lead to more perceived conflict is thus supported by some research, but not all. The time-based theory leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Greater family demands lead to more perceived work-family conflict.

2. Gender Differences

The current research takes into account gender when looking at the influence of work and family demands on the perceived work-family conflict. As noted above, the research compares two theories that both attempt to explain gender differences in work-family conflict. In this section, the gender perspective theory and gender ideology theory are explained.

Gender Perspective Theory

The first theory that can be used to explain gender differences in work-family conflict is the gender perspective theory. According to this theory, gender is able to influence the behavior of people in the work and family domain, because of the different responsibilities that men and women have in these domains. The responsibilities that men and women have in the work and family domain are culturally determined. Traditionally, for women the most responsibilities and demands can be found in the family domain. Cooking, cleaning, shopping, preparing meals and more tasks of this kind are her responsibility. Besides this, taking care of children is mainly a female responsibility. On the other hand, most male responsibilities and demands are found in the work domain. His role as the provider of income for the family is dominant (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Gutek et al, 1991; Hochschild, 1989, Voydanoff, 1988).

It is important to notice that in recent decades there has been an equalization of gender expectations resulting in more similar demands for men and women (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Men spend a little more time at the family domain than before, but especially the demands that women experience from the work domain have grown massively over the last decades. Because of these changes, women are now involved in both the work and family domain, while the main domain for men is still the work domain. The total pressure has thus grown much for women, but not so for men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The difference in responsibilities for men and women influences their experience of work-family conflict (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). According to the gender perspective theory, people experience work-family conflict if they do not fulfill their responsibilities (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Women need to meet the demands from both the work and family domain. However, since culturally seen their main domain is still the family, not being able to meet all family demands leads to the most guilt and anxiety for women (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). On the other hand, men who are highly involved in the family domain at the expense of their paid work can feel like they neglect their work responsibilities and therefore experience work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991).

Gender Ideology Theory

The gender ideology theory is the second theory which can be used to explain gender differences in perceived work-family conflict. Greenstein (1996; p. 586) first defined gender ideology as ‘how a person identifies herself or himself with regard to marital and family roles that are traditionally linked to gender’. A person’s gender ideology is able to determine which behaviors fit into the male and the female role. Being male or female than leads to a different set of responsibilities and tasks. Marital roles provide an opportunity for people to fulfill their identities. The identification with a certain gender role is related to the division of labor in the home (Greenstein, 1996). The division of household labor is still relatively traditional. The gender ideology of women thus states that taking care of household tasks and children is the most important responsibility for them, while the gender ideology of men states that providing income for the family is most important (Minnotte et al, 2010; Greenstein, 1996).

The gender ideology is able to determine how men and women experience the work-family conflict (Minnotte et al, 2010). Activities that fit in the gender ideology of men and women will not result in more work-family conflict. For example, taking care of children and the household will not lead to more work-family conflict for women, because this behavior comes naturally to them and confirms their identity (Minnotte et al, 2010). However, not participating in activities that fulfill one’s gender ideology or participating in activities that challenge one’s gender ideology violates one’s beliefs about proper behavior (Greenstein, 1996). This in turn will lead to higher levels of perceived work-family conflict (Minnotte et al, 2010). In other words, men who are involved in paid work are being normal and will not experience increased levels of work-family conflict (Minnotte et al, 2010). However, women who are involved in paid work are being unnatural and going against their gender ideology and will therefore experience higher levels of work-family conflict (Minnotte et al, 2010). Men and women who do not participate in line with their gender ideology experience higher levels of work-family conflict, because their behavior differs from what they see as the optimal situation (Minnotte et al, 2010).

Below, we show how the two theories lead to some extend to different hypotheses about the effect of work and family demands on the perceived work-family conflict of men and women.

Total Demands on Women and Men

The gender perspective theory states that cultural norms demand that women have to take care of housework and child responsibilities besides their paid work, while men are mainly involved in paid work (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Hochschild, 1989; Hosking & Western, 2008). Compared to men, women generally do more housework and make greater sacrifices to make sure that work and family runs well. The explanation from the gender perspective for this is that women feel more responsibilities for the household and child-caring tasks because this is their traditional domain (Shelton, 1992; Hochschild, 1989). It is expected that women experience higher levels of work-family conflict because the total demands of family and work are higher for women than for men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Hochschild, 1989; Hosking & Western, 2008).

The expectations from the gender ideology theory point in the same direction. This theory states that women want to meet their family demands because this gives them their female identity (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). For women, paid work is only acceptable if they also participate in child caring and housework (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Working women thus experience a higher pressure than working men. The difference with the gender perspective is that women are not involved in housework because it is their responsibility, but simply because they want to do this. In this sense, women will not be negatively affected by the family demands, because these tasks come natural to them (Minnotte, 2010). However, participating in both domains leads to more pressure and therefore women experience higher levels of work-family conflict than men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

Findings from earlier research show a clear picture, but not in the expected direction. Much research shows that men experience more work-family conflict than women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Voydanoff, 1988; Hosking & Western, 2008). It also seems that women do not make more sacrifices at work to fulfill family responsibilities (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The findings thus reject the idea that women are under more pressure than men. However, since existing theory goes against this idea, the following hypothesis will be tested. Unfortunately, analyses cannot distinguish between the different theoretic approaches, since the expectations from both theories point in the same direction.

Hypothesis 3: Women experience more work-family conflict than men.

Work Demands

The gender perspective expects that spending time at the other sex's domain will increase levels of perceived conflict, because in that case cultural expectations are not met. Men perceive more work-family conflict when they spend more time in the family domain, because they then have a higher chance of not meeting their work responsibilities (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The female situation is more complicated. Even though it has become more accepted for women to work, they still have to meet their family responsibilities. However, when working more hours the chance grows that this is not the case. Women should then perceive more work-family conflict when they spend more hours in paid work. Working men are fulfilling their role as the provider and therefore experience less work-family conflict than working women who do not or only partially meet their family responsibilities when they work (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Gutek et al, 1991).

Again, the gender ideology theory leads to the same expectations, but for different reasons. The traditional gender ideology states that working does not agree with the ideology of women (Minnotte et al, 2010). It is seen as unnatural; only men should be involved in paid work. Women are not able to fulfill their female identity as mother and housekeeper when they work. Participation in paid work therefore results in a higher work-family conflict for women than for men (Minnotte et al, 2010).

Research of Gutek et al (1991) confirm the expectations described above. However, much other research contradicts with it. A clear finding is that the work-family conflict of men is negatively affected by their working hours (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Voydanoff, 1988; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Hosking & Western, 2008). This contradicts with the expectations from the gender perspective, which state that men meet their cultural expectations as a provider of the family when they work and with the expectation from the gender ideology that men feel like they are fulfilling their identity when they work. In past findings, the relationship between working hours and work-family conflict is not so clear for women. Milkie and Peltola (1999) found no relationship between working hours and work-family conflict for women. Marks et al (2001) found that the females' working hours reduced her work-family conflict. However, working in the weekend increased her feelings of work-family conflict (Marks et al, 2001). Voydanoff (1988) on the other hand found that working hours are positively related to work-family conflict for women. However, in this research weekend work is not related to more work-family conflict for women (Voydanoff, 1988). Keene and Quadagno (2004) found that working hours increased work-family conflict for both men and women. This relationship was greater for women than for men.

The findings on this subject are not straightforward. Because the contradictory results cannot be explained by existing theory, this research will test a hypothesis based on the theory described above.

Hypothesis 4: Work demands have a more negative effect on the perceived work-family conflict for women than for men.

Household Tasks

As part of the family demands, household tasks have an influence on people's perceived work-family conflict. As stated above, the gender perspective theory states that the family domain is the responsibility of women and not so much of men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Gutek et al, 1991; Hochschild, 1989, Voydanoff, 1988). Because of this, household tasks sooner lead to work-family conflict for women than for men.

However, not only the hours spent on household tasks but also the kind of household tasks a person does has an effect on one's work-family conflict (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Hochschild, 1989). Previous research pointed out that household tasks are still divided according to gender (Ferree, 1991). Typical female tasks are cooking, shopping and cleaning; men engage more in repair work (Hochschild, 1989). The different tasks have a different effect on work-family conflict because of their flexibility (Hochschild, 1989). Female tasks like cooking and cleaning need to be done at a certain time, while repair work can often wait and be planned at the best time. Because of the lesser flexibility in the female tasks, women experience more stress in their household tasks. Moreover, women, in contradiction to men, often do several tasks at the same time. For example, making a shopping list while cleaning the kitchen (Hochschild, 1989). This increases the pressure on women and therefore the level of her work-family conflict. Another reason why household work is more conflicting to women than for men is that in general besides housework tasks, dealing with children is also the responsibility of women. The housework of women is thus also more often interrupted by child-responsibilities (Hochschild, 1989). Finally, typical female tasks are the least 'fun' tasks to do. The tasks are dirtier and sometimes seem unending, therefore giving a higher feeling of overload and conflict (Hochschild, 1989). Because of the lesser flexibility and higher chance of interruption of the female household tasks it is expected that housework has a more negative effect on work-family conflict for women than for men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

The gender ideology contradicts with the gender perspective on this point. The gender ideology states that the household tasks come natural for women and gives them their female

identity. Housework does not lead to more pressure, but has a moderating effect on women's work-family conflict (Minnotte et al, 2010). The opposite is true for men. Housework time does not fulfill their male identity and therefore has a more negative effect on their work-family conflict.

Much research disagrees with the gender perspective. Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that housework did not affect women more negatively than men. Marks et al (2001) found that the housework time of the woman did not influence her work-family conflict (Marks et al, 2001). Voydanoff (1988) found no relationship between time spent at household tasks and work-family conflict for men. Keene and Quadagno (2004) found no relation for both women and men.

The current research uses two opposite hypotheses, drawn from the gender perspective and gender ideology theory.

Hypothesis 5a: Housework has a more negative effect on women's work-family conflict than it has on men's.

Hypothesis 5b: Housework has a more positive effect on women's work family conflict than it has on men's.

Children

Besides housework, children are an important family demand. The arguments made by the gender perspective and the gender ideology theory are the same for the effect of having children as they were on the effect of household tasks on work-family conflict. The gender perspective expects that the presence of children negatively affects the work-family of conflict of women, but not men, because women have a greater responsibility for taking care of their children which leads to more pressure on women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

Again, the gender ideology theory contradicts with the gender perspective. The gender ideology states that taking care of children fits in the gender ideology of women and therefore does not lead to more work-family conflict for them. On the other hand, taking care of children will lead to more work-family conflict for men (Minnotte et al, 2010).

Results about the relationship between children and work-family conflict show a mixed picture. Most research shows that having children leads to more conflict for women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Voydanoff, 1988). However, research from Marks et al (2001) did not confirm this. Moreover, it seems that spending more time with his family has a

moderating effect on the man's work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1988; Marks et al, 2001). This research tests the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 6a: Having Children has a more negative effect on women's work-family conflict than it has on men's.

Hypothesis 6b: Having children has a more positive effect on women's work-family conflict than it has on men's.

3. Methods

1. Data

This research uses data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). The ISSP is a continuing cross-national program on social science topics (www.issp.org). The program started in 1984 with just four members – Australia, Germany, Great Britain and the United States – but has now grown to 47 member countries all over the world (www.gesis.org).

The 2002 ISSP data, Family and Changing Gender Roles 3 is, after two studies from 1988 and 1994, the latest dataset that focuses on gender and family relations. From the 34 countries that are present in this dataset, this research only takes the Netherlands into account.

In the Dutch dataset, respondents were randomly selected through the selection of clusters of addresses (ISSP, 2004). The addresses were contacted one after another. In each address a respondent was selected. Unfortunately, the ISSP report gives no further information on which people in a household are selected and why. Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire; 1249 respondents completed the ISSP-questionnaire. The overall response rate was 34 percent (ISSP, 2004).

For the current research, a specific target group is selected from the Dutch participants. The target group consists of married and cohabiting people who are involved in paid work and live in the Netherlands. This group is selected because the research explores combining work and family. Therefore, people who do not have a paid job are not part of it. Housewives are not taken into account because we want to research the effect of labor participation. The selection of this specific group of respondents means that the research is not representative for the entire Dutch society, but only for married and cohabiting people who have a paid job.

From the 1249 Dutch people in the dataset, a target group of 417 respondents was selected. After taking out the cases that have a missing value on one of the used variables, a group of 311 respondents remains. Because of the 25 percent decrease of the target group after removing the missing cases, we decided to go over to data imputation. The variables causing the lost of respondents were income, housework time and work-family conflict. Mainly the variable income led to much missing values. Here, there were only 346 valid cases. Reporting income is a sensitive matter and therefore respondents might have been reluctant in doing this. The second variable with missing values is housework time. This variable had 402 valid cases. Thirdly, the variable that describes the respondent's work-family conflict had 398 valid cases. In order to decrease the number of missing values, mean value

substitution was used. All missing values on the variables described above were replaced with the mean of that variable. After the mean value substitution, the target group existed again of 417 respondents.

The dataset is representative according to gender, working situation and education. The target group contains 244 men and 173 women. The working population in the Netherlands in 2002 consisted of 33% more men than women (statline.cbs.nl). The ISSP dataset contains slightly more women; however, the numbers are more or less the same as the composition of the Dutch working population. The working life of the respondents in the dataset also agrees with the Dutch society. In the Netherlands in 2002 the mean number of working hours per week for women was 24,5 and 37,1 for men (www.cbs.nl). In our data set women work generally 23.02 hours per week, a little less than in the Netherlands in general and men work with 39.95 hours a bit more than in the Netherlands in general. This means that the gap between men and women is larger in the dataset than in the Dutch population. However, these differences are not large enough to affect the credibility of the dataset. The educational level of respondents also agrees with the Dutch society (statline.cbs.nl).

2. Measures

Dependent Variable

In the ISSP questionnaire, the respondents were asked to respond on different issues regarding work-family conflict. The first statement measured if respondents could not meet their family demands because of high work demands; the second statement measured whether respondents in general had difficulty meeting family demands; the third statement measured if respondents were not able to meet work demands because of high family demands; and the last statement measured if respondents in general had difficulty in meeting their work demands. There were four possible answers on these statements, ranging from ‘never’ to ‘several times a week’.

We constructed an overall measurement of work-family conflict by taking these statements together in one variable. This new variable measures the total amount of work-family conflict that respondents experience. Because the original variables consist of four possible answers, the combined variable is an artificial variable that ranges from four to sixteen, where higher scores indicate higher perceived work-family conflict compared to lower scores that indicate low work-family conflict.

Independent Variables

The independent variable work demands is measured by the number of working hours of the respondent per week. The respondents were asked about their average working hours per week, including overtime (ISSP, 2004). The original variable was not changed.

The second cluster of independent variables in this research consists of the family demands. Family demands are measured in housework time and the presence of children of the respondent. The housework time of the respondent is measured in hours per week. Respondents were asked to give their average from a normal working week (ISSP, 2004). Besides replacing the missing values, the original variable was not changed.

The presence of children in a family is measured as number of children of the respondent. In the dataset, the number of children is measured in two different variables. The first variable takes into account children until the age 5 or 6 and the second variable counts the number of children per family between 6 or 7 and 18 years old. By combining these two variables the total number of children under 18 per family is captured in one variable.

At last, gender is taken into account. The variable in the dataset that presented the sex of the respondents was changed into a dummy variable where man is 0 and woman is 1.

Control Variables

Based on results from previous research, we selected the following control variables: age, education and family income.

We control for the age of the respondent, because this can have an influence on a person's ability to deal with high demands from family and work. Younger people might be better in dealing with this than older people. The perceived work-family conflict might therefore be higher for other people despite the actual level of their work and family demands. Age is coded as a ratio variable.

Educational level of the respondent is taken into account because of its significance in earlier research. The effect of education is complex, but nevertheless important. Education can measure the ability of respondents to manage their work and family demands. People with a higher education might therefore experience less work-family conflict because they have more skills in managing different demands. Education is measured as a categorical variable, with the categories 'no formal qualification', 'lowest formal qualification', 'above lowest qualification', 'higher secondary completed', 'above higher secondary level, but below full university degree' and 'university degree completed'. For this research, the variable education is recoded into three dummy variables. The first variable 'low education' exists of the

respondents with ‘no formal qualification’ and the ‘lowest formal qualification’. The second dummy variable ‘middle education’ exists of the respondents who are educated ‘above the lowest qualification’ and ‘higher secondary completed’. The third and last dummy variable ‘high education’ exists of the respondents from the two highest educational levels. These are respondents who answered ‘above higher secondary level, but below full university degree’ and ‘university degree completed’.

Family income is taken into account because of the possibilities that people have to lower their work-family conflict. People with a higher income are able to hire help in the household which lowers family demands (Brines, 1994). Respondents were asked to give their family income in euro’s per year before social premiums and taxes are conducted (ISSP, 2004). As explained above, this the missing values of this variable were replaced by the mean of this variable.

Due to limitation of the dataset, this research was not able to take into account the race or ethnic group of the respondents.

Interaction Variables

Interaction variables were added to measure the combined effect of working hours and housework time on work-family conflict and to measure more precisely the effect of gender on work-family conflict. The first interaction variable measures the effect of housework time and working hours on work-family conflict together. The variable measures the combined pressure of participating in both housework and paid work.

To be able to measure gender differences, four interaction variables were created. The variable gender is a dummy variable where 0 is men and 1 is women. So, all interaction variables measure the effect of women. The first follows the first interaction variable described above. In this variable, gender is added. The new variable shows whether the combination of housework time and working hours on work-family conflict is different for men and women.

After this, three other interaction variables were created that take into account the different work and family demands. The first takes into account gender and working hours. This variable measures if and how the effect of working hours on work-family conflict is different for men and women.

The next interaction variable takes into account gender and housework time. This variable measures if the effect of housework time on work-family conflict is different for men and women.

The last interaction variable measures the effect of having children. This variable measures if the effect of children on work-family conflict is different for men and women.

3. Method of Analysis

We begin the analysis by giving some descriptive statistics about the used variables. Correlations and independent t-tests are performed and reported when necessary. After this, the hypotheses are explored. The method of analysis for this research is the multiple regression analysis. We start with the general hypotheses on work-family conflict. In the first model we added besides the independent and control variables the first interaction variable. This variable measured the combined effect of working hours and household time.

After this, we turn to the hypotheses about gender differences. In order to see clearly the different effect that work and family demands have on work-family conflict for men and women, interaction variables are used. In the second model, the three way interaction variable was added. This variable measures if the combined effect of working hours and household time is different for men and women. In the third, fourth and fifth model, the last three interaction variables were added to explore gender differences in the effect of working hours, housework time and children on work-family conflict.

4. Results

1. Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable

Work-family conflict. A description of this variable, visible in table one (p. 23), shows that the respondents in the target group do not experience very high levels of work-family conflict. There is only one respondent that scores the highest score on this variable and 63 respondents that score the lowest score. The mean score on the variable is 6.75, with a relatively low standard deviation of 2.10. Most respondents score 6 ($N = 74$) on the work-family conflict variable and 95,9% of the respondents score 10 or lower on this variable which ranges from 4 to 16. This shows that generally the respondents experience relatively low levels of work-family conflict. Moreover, no gender differences were found in the independent sample t-test.

Independent Variables

Working hours. As table one shows, the minimum number of working hours of the respondents was two hours per week and the maximum number of working hours was 80 hours per week. The mean number of working hours of the respondents was 32.93 hours per week. The standard deviation of the variable is 12.92, which shows that the scores are widespread.

Interesting is the difference in working hours between men and women. The independent sample t-test shows that there is a significant difference in the number of working hours per week between men and women ($t = 17.01$; $p < .001$). Women work on average 23.02 hours per week, while men work 39.95 hours per week. It seems that men work almost double the amount of hours compared to women.

Housework time. On average, the respondents spend 9.21 hours per week on household tasks. The standard deviation is 8.33, which shows that the scores are widespread. Again, the difference between men and women is significant ($t = -9.98$; $p < .001$). Men spend on average 5.84 hours per week on household tasks, while women spend 13.96 hours per week doing this. So women spend on average fewer hours in paid work, but spend more time on household tasks. For men, the mean working hours per week is much higher, while they also spend a lot less time on household tasks.

A correlation between working hours and housework time for both men and women shows a significant negative result ($r = -.420$; $p < .001$). This means that the hours worked weekly by the respondent leads to less participation in the household. The correlation between working hours and housework time for men was positive, but not significant. For women the results were significant. Working hours correlated negatively with housework time ($r = -.280$; $p <.001$).

Children. The number of children in the target group varies from zero to six children. The mean number of children is 1.11 children per respondent, with a standard deviation of 1.14. Most people have no children ($N = 177$), followed by people who have two children ($N = 114$). This is followed by people with only one child ($N = 77$) and people with three children ($N = 41$). Having more than three children is relatively rare. Six respondents have four children, one respondent has five children and one respondent has six children.

Gender. As stated above, the target group contains 244 men and 173 women. This is respectively 58.5 and 41.4 percent.

Control Variables

Age. In this dataset the age of the respondents varied from 16 to 70, whit an average of 43.93 year. The standard deviation for this variable is 8.9. For men the average age is 44.6 and for women 42.8 year.

Education. From the three categories low, middle and high educated, most respondents in the target group were placed in the middle group ($N = 190$), followed by 148 respondents who belonged to the highest educated group. The smallest group consists of 79 respondents are low educated. There are no significant gender differences in the educational level of respondents.

Family income. The family income of the respondents of this target group varies from 13000 euro to 272500 euro a year, whit a mean of 54383.67 euro a year. The standard deviation of this variable is 28908.15.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. deviation</i>	<i>Range</i>
Work-Family Conflict	417	6.75	2.10	4 – 16
Hours worked weekly	417	32.93	12.92	2 - 80
	Male	244	39.95	9.56
	Female	173	23.02	10.31
Housework time	417	9.21	8.33	1 - 80
	Male	244	5.84	4.57
	Female	173	13.96	9.98
Children	417	1.11	1.14	0 - 6
Gender	417	.4149		0 - 1
Age	417	43.93	8.92	16 -70
Education low	417	.1894		0 - 1
Education middle	417	.4556		0 - 1
Education high	417	.3549		0 - 1
Family income	417	54383.67	28908.15	13000 - 272500

2. Regression Analyses

General Hypotheses

We first consider the hypotheses about the general relationship between working hours, family demands and work-family conflict in one regression model. As visible in table two (p. 27), only the variable working hours has a significant influence on work-family conflict. The model has relatively little explanatory power. The model has a R^2 of .066, which means that only 6.6 percent of the variance is explained by the independent variables.

The first hypothesis treated in this research is about the general effect of work demands. Expected is that more work demands lead to higher perceived work-family conflict. The regression model indeed shows that working hours have a significant influence on work-family conflict ($B = 0.041$; $p = .008$). The more hours a person works, the more work-family conflict he or she experiences. As stated above, the variable working hours is the only significant variable in the model. The variables that measure the negative effect of family demands as explained in hypotheses two, having children ($B = -.049$; $p = .603$) and spending time at household work ($B = .005$; $p = .858$), do not have a significant influence on work-family conflict. The interaction variable that measures the combined effect of working hours and housework time on work-family conflict is also not significant ($B = .000$; $p = .806$). So, there is no effect of working hours combined with housework time on work-family conflict. Hypothesis one, which states that more working hours lead to more work-family conflict, is confirmed. On the other hand, hypothesis two, which states that family demands have a negative effect on work-family conflict, is rejected.

Gender Differences

In the second part of the research interaction variables are used to measure the different effect that work and family demands have on the work-family conflict of women and men. Results of these analyses are also visible in table two (p. 27). The third hypothesis states that women experience more work-family conflict than men. A first exploration with the independent t-test showed that there are differences in the levels of work-family conflict between men and women, but that these are not significant. In the regression analysis gender is also not a significant predictor of work-family conflict ($B = .214$; $p = .468$). Also, the three-way interaction with working hours, housework time and gender did not lead to significant results ($B = .002$; $p = .125$). The effect that working hours and housework time together have on work-family conflict is thus not different for men and women. The R^2 of this model is .071,

explaining 7.1 percent of the variance. We can conclude from this that women do not experience more work-family conflict than men. Hypothesis three needs to be rejected.

The fourth hypothesis is about work demands. It is expected that work demands have a more negative effect on the perceived work-family conflict of women than on men's perceived work-family conflict. Unfortunately, the model was not able to confirm this. The interaction variable that measured the gendered effect of working hours is not significant ($B = .031$; $p = .074$). Therefore we can conclude that the effect of working hours is not different for men and women and hypothesis four is refuted. The variable working hours is the only significant variable in the model ($B = .030$; $p = .034$). This shows again that in general higher working hours have a negative effect on the perceived work-family conflict. With a R^2 of 0.07, the model can only explain 7 percent of the variance. This model a little bit more than the general model, but not much.

Hypothesis five consists of two parts. The first part is derived from the gender perspective and states that housework has a more negative effect on women's work-family conflict than it does on men's. The second part, from the gender ideology theory, states the opposite. Here, housework has a more positive effect on women's work-family conflict than it does on men's. Just like the former interaction variable, the interaction variable that measures the gendered effect of housework time is not significant ($B = .004$; $p = .905$). This means that the effect of housework time on work-family conflict is not different for men and women. Both hypotheses 5a and 5b need to be rejected. Again, the only variable significant in this model is working hours ($B = .043$; $p < .000$). As explained above, working more hours leads to more perceived work-family conflict. The model has a R^2 of .066, explaining only 6.6 percent of the variance.

The last hypotheses of this research are about the effect of having children on the perceived work-family conflict. Hypothesis six consists of two parts representing the gender perspective and the gender ideology theory. The first states that having children has a more negative effect on women's perceived work-family conflict than it does on men's. The second theory contradicts with this by stating that having children has a more positive effect on women's perceived work-family conflict than it does on men's. The interaction variable that measured the different effect of children on men's and women's perceived work-family conflict is significant only when $p < .05$ ($B = -.441$; $p = .016$). This indicates that having children results in differences in the levels of work-family conflict of men and women. Since the effect is negative it seems that having more children leads to less perceived work-family conflict for women. Hypothesis 6b is confirmed, confirming the gender ideology theory. This

means that hypothesis 6a, which is drawn from the gender perspective, is refuted. Besides the interaction variable, the variables that are significant are working hours ($B = .038$; $p < .000$) and having a high education ($B = .482$; $p = .041$). The model has a R^2 of .079 and is therefore the best fitting model, with only 7.9 percent explained variance.

Table 2. Regression Analyses.

Variable	Model one	Model two	Model three	Model four	Model five
Working hours	.041 (p < .008)	.035 (p = .002)	.030 (p = .034)	.043 (p < .000)	.038 (p < .000)
Housework time	.005 (p = .858)	-.010 (p = .599)	.014 (p = .327)	.008 (p = .794)	.008 (p = .558)
Children	-.049 (p = .603)	-.019 (p = .869)	-.019 (p = .844)	=.047 (p = .617)	.133 (p = .264)
Gender	.214 (p = .468)	-.195 (p = .624)	-.738 (p = .317)	.201 (p = .592)	.638 (p = .056)
Age	-.016 (p = .201)	-.016 (p = .198)	-.015 (p = .212)	-.015 (p = .208)	-.017 (p = .172)
Education low	.172 (p = .539)	.170 (p = .542)	.191 (p = .494)	.176 (p = .528)	.190 (p = .493).
Education high	.431 (p = .070)	.413 (p = .081)	386 (p = .105)	.438 (p = .064)	.482 (p = .041)
Family income	.000 (p = .865)	.000 (p = .822)	.000 (p = .899)	.000 (p = .894)	.000 (p = .841)
Working hours	.000 (p = .806)				
x housework time					
Working hours		.002 (p = .125)			
x housework time x gender					
Gender x working hours			.031 (p = .155)		
Gender x housework time				.004 (p = .905)	
Gender x children					-.441 (p = .016)
Intercept	5.746 (p < .000)	6.091 (p < .000)	6.143 (p < .000)	5.661 (p < .000)	5.696 (p < .000)
R^2	.097	.071	.070	.066	.079

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, gender differences in perceived work-family conflict are examined in the Dutch context, using the research question: *How is the relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict different for men and women in the Netherlands?* Following Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict is defined as the pressures that result from incompatibility of work and family demands.

Three sub questions are used to answer the research question. The first part of the research looked at the general relationship between work and family demands and work-family conflict, answering the sub question: *What is the influence of family and work demands on perceived work-family conflict?* First, it is important to notice that experiencing high levels of work-family conflict is rare. Very few respondents in the dataset suffered from it. This can partly be explained by a socially desirable response in the questionnaires, when people pretend that they can sufficiently deal with the different pressures and demands. A second possibility is that work-family conflict is simply not a big problem amongst the Dutch working population. This contrasts with existing theory and results from former research.

The time-based theory was used to explain the general influence of work and family demands on work-family conflict. The theory predicted that work and family demands have a negative effect on work-family conflict for both men and women. The research consistently confirms the negative effect of working hours. This is in line with results from former research that shows that working more hours in paid work leads to more work-family conflict (Keene and Quadagno, 2004; Milkie and Peltola, 1999; Hosking and Western, 2008; Alam et al, 2009). None of the family demands had a significant influence on the perceived work-family conflict. This is in line with some former research about the effect of housework (Voydanoff, 1988; Keene & Quadagno, 2004), but contradicts with Keene and Quadagno (2004) on the effect of children. The time-based theory is thus only partially supported the current research.

In the second part of the research, gender differences in perceived work-family conflict are examined. Two sub questions are used here: *Are there gender differences in levels of perceived work-family conflict?* and *Are there gender differences in the way that work and family demands lead to perceived work-family conflict?* When exploring these gender differences, two contradictory theories were used. The gender perspective theory states that gender causes different roles and responsibilities for men and women that are culturally determined. Traditionally, women have the main responsibility over the family domain, while

men have the main responsibility over the work domain (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Gutek et al, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Voydanoff, 1988). However, gender differences have decreased and today women also have responsibilities in the work domain (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Keene & Quadagno, 2004). The theory states that neglecting responsibilities leads to work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

The gender ideology theory states that men and women have different gender ideologies and therefore behave differently. The theory states that men want to be active in the work domain and women want to take care of household and the children, because this gives them their male and female identities (Minnotte et al, 2010; Greenstein, 1996). According to this theory, work-family is caused by not participating (enough) in one's domain (Minnotte et al, 2010).

The results of the current research do not show much gender differences in the levels of perceived work-family conflict of men and women. This contradicts with both the gender perspective and the gender ideology theory. Other research often showed that men experience more work-family conflict than women (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Marks et al, 2001; Voydanoff, 1988; Hosking & Western, 2008).

Besides the lack of gender differences in the levels of work-family conflict, the current research also doesn't find much gender differences in the way that work and family demands lead to work-family conflict. Only the effect of having children is different for men and women. Having children has a positive effect on the work-family conflict of women, but not for men. It seems that it is important for a woman to meet her gender identity by taking care of her children. This contradicts with findings from Keene and Quadagno (2004), who found that having children has a negative influence on the work-family conflict of both men and women. No gender differences were found in the effect of working hours and housework time on work-family conflict. Also, the combined effect of working hours and housework time on work-family conflict, examined in a three-way interaction, does not differ for men and women.

Summarizing, most expectations from both the gender perspective and the gender ideology theory are refuted, making both theories inaccurate in predicting gender differences in work-family conflict. None of the hypotheses derived from the gender perspective are confirmed and the gender ideology was only correct in predicting the effect of having children on the work-family conflict of women. But here we have to note that the variable that measured the gendered effect of having is only significant when a p-value of .05 is used.

An explanation for the lack of gender differences is that men and women are much more similar in their behavior and goals than is expected in existing literature. Also, the lack of gender differences can be explained by the policies in the Netherlands. However, foreign countries where research has shown the existence of gender differences also have policies to make the combination of work and family demands easier. A unique feature of the context of this research is that in the Netherlands many women work in part-time jobs (Portegijs et al, 2008). Part-time work is a good solution for the work-family conflict that arises if people cannot meet the demands from both the family and work domain. Working part-time can thus be seen as a coping strategy (Hosking and Western, 2008). Women who work part-time can combine work and family demands better and therefore will experience less work-family conflict. This could also explain why there are very few respondents in the dataset that suffer from work-family conflict. In order to confirm the expectation that part-time work is used as a coping strategy this research could be repeated in other countries.

Other research might also be better in dealing with the limitations of the current research. An important limitation is the small target group ($N = 417$). Fortunately, we were able to increase the sample size through mean value imputation. A disadvantage of this method is that it decreases the variance in the dataset, therefore making the data less accurate. However, for the goal of this research mean substitution will suffice. Unfortunately, even after data imputation, the sample remains relatively small.

A second limitation was found in the operationalization of some of the used variables. It was sometimes not possible operationalize variables in the most optimal way. For example, work demands could not be operationalized in any other way than working hours, while other factors like flexibility in planning one's working hours can be important too.

Despite these shortcomings, we were able to answer the research question: '*How is the relationship between work and family demands and perceived work-family conflict different for men and women in the Netherlands?*' . In short, contrary to the expectations, not much gender differences were found in both the levels and mechanisms that cause work-family conflict. The relationship between work and family demands and work-family conflict is only different for men and women when it comes to taking care of children. Having children has a positive effect on the work-family conflict of women, but not on men's. For both men and women, the research consistently found a negative effect of working hours on work-family conflict.

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Consulted on April 25, 2011

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Consulted: March 21, 2011

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Consulted: March 21, 2011