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# Experiencing work-family conflict and enrichment in contemporary families

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Dedicated to my father, Frank Van den Eynde

*11-08-2017  
Beste Annelies,  
ga ervoor!!  
Het ga je goed.*

*Papa  
xxx*



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## Summary

In adults' lives, work and family form the two main life domains. Changing societal trends – such as the increase in dual-earner families, divorce rate, and workload levels – form the impetus for scientific research to investigate the dynamics of combining work and family life. Applying Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, the current PhD's goal is to investigate how contemporary families experience work-family balance. This theoretical reasoning involves person-environment interactions. Within this framework, work-family balance can be understood as the shared and interacting function of people, contexts, and systems in a particular zeitgeist.

Two parts cover the research objective: Part 1 focusses on the difference in experiencing work-family balance according to family composition (marital and relationship status) and Part 2 includes children as important family actors by investigating the relationship between work-family balance and children's behavior. In both parts, differentiation is made between the negative and positive interaction of work and family, scientifically referred to as work-family conflict and enrichment. Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Interpreted and empirically confirmed as a distinct concept, work-family enrichment is defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73).

This structure leads to the formulation of four research questions: (1) “Do married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents experience work-family conflict differently?”, (2) “Do married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents experience work-family enrichment differently?”, (3) “Does parents' experience of work-family conflict negatively affect children's behavior, via parental well-being and parenting performances?”, and (4) “Does parents' experience of work-family enrichment positively affect children's behavior, via parental well-being and parenting performances?”

The first part, concerning family composition, is based on the DiF (Flanders) and LSAC (Australia) databases. Logistic and linear regression analysis was performed to formulate an answer to the research questions. The results revealed that the presence of a supportive partner

in a household makes the difference in the ability to meet role demands and benefit from enrichment factors. However, a parent's gender gives a more nuanced view of the results. For work-family conflict, fathers with a partner (either married, cohabiting, or repartnered) stood out the most. Being able to rely on a partner for household, parental, and financial aspects appears to buffer the conflicting work and family demands in comparison to single fathers. For work-family enrichment, surprisingly, single mothers experience more enrichment compared to partnered mothers. They seem to benefit more from having a stronger social network and an increase in enrichment sources from the work context due to the necessity of working more. Theoretically speaking, the work and family contexts surrounding parents interact negatively (conflict) and positively (enrichment) according to the parent's gender and family composition.

The second part describes an investigation of the relationship between work-family balance and children's behavior via structural equation modelling on a subsample of the Pairfam (Germany) and LSAC (Australia) datasets. The results revealed that experiencing conflicting and enriching work and family roles affects children's behavior in negative and positive ways, respectively. However, this relationship does not function directly but operates through the parental home environment, as it is fully mediated via the parent's well-being and parenting performances. As such, through interacting systems, the experience of negative (conflict) and positive (enrichment) interactions between work and family spheres can spill over to other family members, such as the involved child.

Based on these study results, the future outlook suggests an exploration through valuable comparative, multilevel, and longitudinal research. The subjects should be inspired by contemporary contexts and issues. Policy and practice recommendations are also important in developing the best interventions concerning work-family balance. Taking these research findings into account, a policy and practice framework is proposed that: includes factors representing families' contemporary living situations; starts a continuous process of reflecting and improving current initiatives that are beneficial for parents and children; and helps design a policy and practice that specifically target work-family enrichment – next to or in combination with work-family conflict interventions.

## Samenvatting

In het leven van een volwassene vormen werk en gezin de twee belangrijkste levensdomeinen. Veranderende maatschappelijke trends – zoals de toename van tweeverdiener-gezinnen, echtscheidingen, en werkdruk – vormen de aanzet voor nieuw wetenschappelijk onderzoek om de dynamieken van werk-gezinsbalans te bestuderen. Gebruikmakend van de ecologische systeemtheorie van Bronfenbrenner (1986), is het doel van dit PhD om te onderzoeken hoe hedendaagse gezinnen de balans tussen werk en gezin ervaren. Deze theoretische redenering omvat interacties tussen personen en omgevingen. Werk-gezinsbalans kan binnen dit kader begrepen worden in termen van de gedeelde en op elkaar inwerkende functie van mensen, contexten, en systemen in een bepaalde tijdsgeest.

De onderzoeksdoelstelling bestaat uit twee delen: Deel 1 richt zich op het verschil in het ervaren van werk-gezinsbalans volgens gezinssamenstelling (huwelijk en relatiestatus) en Deel 2 includeert kinderen als belangrijke gezinsactoren door de relatie tussen werk-gezinsbalans en het gedrag van het kind te onderzoeken. In beide delen wordt het onderscheid gemaakt tussen de negatieve en positieve interactie van werk en gezin, wetenschappelijk benoemd als werk-gezinsconflict en -verrijking. Werk-gezinsconflict wordt gedefinieerd als “een vorm van interrolconflict waarin de roldruk vanuit het werk- en gezinsdomein in een bepaald opzicht onderling onverenigbaar is” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Geïnterpreteerd en empirisch bevestigd als een apart concept, wordt werk-gezinsverrijking gedefinieerd als “de mate waarin ervaringen in de ene rol de kwaliteit van leven in de andere rol verbeteren” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73).

Deze structuur leidt tot het formuleren van vier onderzoeksvragen: (1) “Is er een verschil tussen gehuwde/samenwonende en gescheiden (na huwelijk of samenwonend) ouders in het ervaren van werk-gezinsconflict?”, (2) “Is er een verschil tussen gehuwde/samenwonende en gescheiden (na huwelijk of samenwonend) ouders in het ervaren van werk-gezinsverrijking?”, (3) “Heeft de ervaring van ouders met werk-gezinsconflict een negatieve uitwerking op het gedrag van kinderen, via ouderlijk welzijn en opvoeding?”, en (4) “Heeft de ervaring van ouders met werk-gezinsverrijking een positieve uitwerking op het gedrag van kinderen, via ouderlijk welzijn en opvoeding?”

Het eerste deel, over de gezinssamenstelling, maakt gebruik van de databases DiF (Vlaanderen) en LSAC (Australië). Om een antwoord te formuleren op de onderzoeksvragen wordt een logistische en lineaire regressieanalyse uitgevoerd. De resultaten laten zien dat de aanwezigheid van een ondersteunende partner in het huishouden het verschil maakt in het vermogen om aan de roleisen te voldoen en te profiteren van de verrijgingsfactoren. Wanneer rekening wordt gehouden met het geslacht van de ouder, toont het onderzoek echter een meer genuanceerd beeld. Voor werk-gezinsconflict vielen de vaders met een partner (gehuwd, samenwonend, of herpartnerd) het meest op. Het kunnen steunen op een partner voor huishoudelijke, ouderlijke, en financiële aspecten blijkt de conflicterende werk- en gezinseisen te bufferen in vergelijking met alleenstaande vaders. Voor werk-gezinsverrijking ervaren alleenstaande moeders verrassenderwijs meer verrijking in vergelijking met moeders met een partner. Zij lijken te profiteren van een sterker sociaal netwerk en een toename aan verrijgingsbronnen uit de werkcontext door de noodzaak om meer te gaan werken. Theoretisch gezien interacteren de werk- en gezinscontext rond de ouder negatief (conflict) en positief (verrijking) op elkaar in, afhankelijk van het geslacht en de gezinssamenstelling van de ouder.

Het tweede deel onderzoekt de relatie tussen werk-gezinsbalans en het gedrag van het kind door middel van structurele vergelijkingsmodellen op een steekproef van de Pairfam (Duitsland) en LSAC (Australië) datasets. Uit de resultaten blijkt dat het ervaren van conflicterende en verrijkende werk- en gezinsrollen het gedrag van het kind op een respectievelijk negatieve en positieve manier beïnvloedt. Deze relatie loopt echter niet rechtstreeks, maar werkt via de ouderlijke thuisomgeving. Hierbij is er sprake van volledige mediatie via het welzijn en de opvoeding van de ouder. Als zodanig kan de ervaring van een negatieve (conflict) en positieve (verrijkende) interactie tussen werk en gezin door middel van op elkaar inwerkende systemen overslaan op andere gezinsleden, zoals het betrokken kind.

Op basis van deze studieresultaten wordt een verdere wetenschappelijke verkenning door middel van vergelijkend, multilevel, en longitudinaal onderzoek voorgesteld. De onderwerpen moeten geïnspireerd zijn op hedendaagse contexten en vraagstukken. Ook beleids- en praktijkaanbevelingen zijn belangrijk om de beste interventies met betrekking tot werk-gezinsbalans te ontwikkelen. Gebaseerd op deze onderzoeksresultaten wordt een beleids- en praktijkkader voorgesteld dat: factoren includeert die representatief zijn voor de hedendaagse leefsituatie van gezinnen; een continu proces start van reflectie en verbetering van huidige

initiatieven die gunstig zijn voor zowel de ouders als het kind; en helpt bij het ontwerpen van een beleid en praktijk dat zich specifiek richt op werk-gezinsverrijking – naast of in combinatie met conflictinterventies.

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# Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

# Chapter 1 Introduction

From early in history, individuals' everyday lives have been dominated by earning money and child-rearing. Work and family are still the two central life spheres that give humans a purpose and a sense of fulfillment. One gets the impression that they are distinct aspects of life, but they are rather strongly intertwined (Kelly, 2011).

Throughout the years, scientific research has recognized an increasing level of difficulties in combining work and family (Kelly, 2011), with around one third of parents experiencing these difficulties (Kelly, 2011; Strazdins, O'Brien, Lucas, & Rodgers, 2013). A couple of societal changes have been identified that affect this level, such as an increase in the number of women participating in the labor market, more dual-earner couples, and increased working hours for singles (Chapple & Richardson, 2009; del Carmen Huerta et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000; Van der Lippe, 2007). The international reports of the OECD (2011, 2017) enable us to compare the countries of interest in this research (Belgium, Germany, and Australia) to other OECD countries. This comparison shows that Belgium was situated among the top countries of the OECD in 2016 in a positive sense. Among Belgian employees, only 4% reported working 50 hours or more per week, and they generally have above the average amount of leisure time. Moreover, these numbers are very similar to those from 2005. Germany scored above the OECD average on the work-life balance indicators in 2016 and these figures showed an improvement over those from 2011. For Australian employees, work-life balance is lower than the OECD average, but has improved compared to the past decade.

These current societal trends may reflect of personal life-changing events in the work and family domains, which undeniably have an impact on the work-family balance. In this PhD, the focus is on the family life – more specifically on how contemporary families experience work-family balance in the social context in which they operate. This focus is two-fold: (1) how different is the experience of work-family balance according to various family compositions and (2) is the experience of work-family balance as a parent related to children's behavior? These central research questions should be placed in the perspective of the involved family members and surrounding settings as connected and interacting systems.

Within this double focus, the contribution of this PhD is relevant for three reasons. First, contemporary families are characterized by increasingly diverse family compositions – being divorced or remarried, single parenthood, and newly composed families are not exceptional these days. Acknowledgment of this diversity in work-family balance research is still lacking. Second, children are an integral part of these contemporary family systems. By including children in the research as interacting family members, a more comprehensive perspective is applied in investigating work-family balance. Lastly, work-family balance is a concept with a negative connotation in the sense that it is often referred to as a conflict between the work and family roles. This research makes an important contribution by shedding light on the possible positive interaction of engaging in work and family life, referred to as work-family enrichment.

## 1.1 Conceptualization

It is clear that work and family life are not separate aspects in one's life. The moment one walks out the door of their office does not represent an instant switch from being an employee to being a parent. It also works the other way around – dropping children off at school and arriving at work does not mean that one is not a parent anymore. Personal and professional lives are intertwined; a single individual performs various roles in life that go together with certain expected behaviors (Kelly, 2011). Roles are dynamic, as they can change over time – for example, from being a student to being an employee. Also, within one role, expected behaviors can change according to the person themselves, their environment, and the broader society. It is not surprising that roles are dynamic, as the interpretation of a role depends upon underlying factors such as a person's physical and mental state, parenting history, the direct and wider environment, socio-economic status, and children's characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Social Role Theory is still relevant in work-family balance research. The completion of employee and parental roles is guided by certain social beliefs. In particular, the gender of an employee or parent shapes this interpretation and expected behaviors in these roles (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2012).

Performing multiple roles can lead to a struggle to combine the demands and expectations that come with various roles, representing a confrontation between conflicting

expectations of multiple roles an individual performs (Kahn et al., 1964). This inter-role conflict forms the origin of the work-family conflict concept. Within disciplines such as organizational psychology, sociology, and management (Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2013), the struggle to combine work and family has been acknowledged and described for a long time. This PhD research is situated within family sociology and therefore uses a sociological framework. The seminal work of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) formulates a clear definition and theoretical background of our core concept. Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).

On the contrary, performing multiple roles can also lead to enrichment and beneficial outcomes, representing a spillover of positive experiences from one role to the other. For example, Nomaguchi and Milkie (2003) found that combining the roles of partner and parent has positive associations with social integration and psychological functioning. Acknowledging this positive interaction challenges the assumption that individuals suffer from a conflict between both roles. Previous literature mainly focused on the conflict approach, but since Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) publication on the alliance of work and family life, scientific interest has arisen in this possible positive interaction. More recent studies have addressed this concept with different terms, such as positive spillover, facilitation, and enhancement, but work-family enrichment is the most common term. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), work-family enrichment can be defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (p. 73).

Moreover, the conflict and enrichment approach should be considered distinct concepts instead of two extremes on one continuum; Grzywacz and Marks (2000) considered them orthogonal rather than isomorphic constructs. Consequently, this makes the work-family experience a lot more dynamic than first thought because individuals could experience conflict and enrichment at the same time. For example, long working hours can prevent a parent from actively participating in family life, but at the same time provides more financial resources used for family activities. Empirical research provides extra evidence that the direction and strength of the relationship between certain characteristics and conflict or enrichment can differ. Voydanoff (2004) illustrated these differential dynamics and revealed that work and community



demands have stronger relations with conflict, whereas work and community resources have positive associations with enrichment.

## 1.2 Theory

After the conceptualization of work-family conflict and enrichment, we now turn to the theoretical mechanisms behind these concepts that help to understand these phenomena. The aim of this dissertation involves complex person-environment interactions. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, the work-family experience can be understood by disentangling the shared and interacting function of people, contexts, and systems in a particular zeitgeist.

Figure 1.1 illustrates Bronfenbrenner's theory, composed of four ecological systems situated in a particular dimension of time. These systems are nested structures that are connected and interrelated to each other. In development psychology and family sociology, the child is usually positioned at the center. The first system is the *microsystem* involving the child and their direct living environment of family, school, and peers. These highly involved relationships do not interact in a simple manner, but are reciprocal between the child and their intermediate environment. The second system, the *mesosystem*, includes the interaction of the microsystem members with each other, for example, communication between the child's parents and teacher. Thus, it can be stated that the mesosystem consists of a system of microsystems. Next, the *exosystem* encompasses the broader social structures that affect the child in a more indirect way via the microsystem. This includes, for example, the neighborhood, parents' social network, and mass media. The parents' workplace can also be situated within the exosystem. Finally, cultural and societal elements (e.g., ethnicity, wealth, socioeconomic status) form the last system, the *macrosystem*.

Applying this theory to a person's work-family experience requires taking this broader system around work and family factors into account (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). The work and family environment includes certain roles, activities, and relationships. Depending on the individual at the center of the model (child or parent), the work and family context affect the functioning of that individual in a direct or indirect way. From the perspective of the ecological

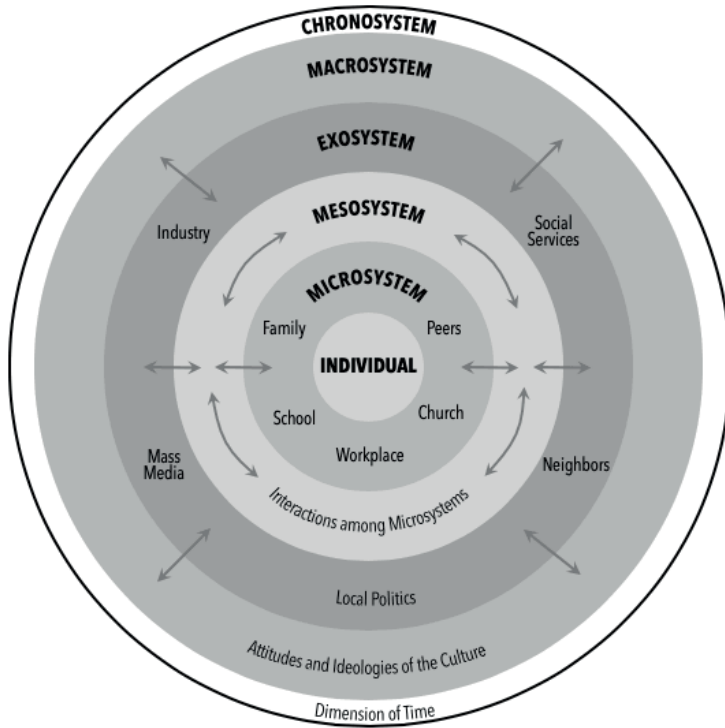


Figure 1.1. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory.

systems theory, this means that the mesosystem is formed by the interaction between the work and family microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Voydanoff, 2005).

The negative or positive interaction between work and family, or what has been named work-family conflict and enrichment, deals with the balance between demands and resources (Hobfoll, 1989). According to the conflict perspective, a person is confronted with a certain level of demands and responsibilities related to work and family roles. At the same time, the individual is confronted with limited resources, such as time and energy, to fulfill these. Work-family enrichment derives from the resources that come from these roles, which people strive to obtain, retain, and protect. One can build upon gained resources, generating more, and a spillover of resources can balance the demands.

### 1.3 Factors influencing the work-family interface

Several factors impact what one's work and family life looks like, and, therefore the interaction between these two important spheres of life. The factors of influence can be categorized in three types: work-related, family-related, and demographic/individual characteristics. Researchers have pointed out that working hours, work autonomy, job insecurity, job satisfaction, social support at work, family-friendly organizational policy and culture, job stress, and work engagement are important work-related characteristics associated with work-family balance (Byron, 2005; Dunn & O'Brien, 2013; McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010; Rastogi & Chaudhary, 2018; ten Brummelhuis & van der Lippe, 2010; Zhang, Xu, Jin, & Ford, 2018). In the family domain, the number and age of children in the household affect the parents' work-family balance. Family support, partner support, and satisfaction in this domain are also relevant to this issue, together with family role overload, family involvement, and parenting (Byron, 2005; Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016; Dinh et al., 2017; Kovalenko & Mortelmans, 2015; McNall et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). Demographic and individual characteristics that are often referred to as associated factors are income, age, educational level, and gender. However, the gender differences in work-family balance are still subject to discussion.

With fathers' increased involvement in parenting responsibilities and dual-earner families being the norm (Humberd, Ladge, & Harrington, 2015; Jacobs & Green, 1998; Sayer, 2016), gender roles seem to be less rigid and strictly defined nowadays. However, the classic gender role division is still present, with the image of the breadwinning male going to work and the caring woman running the household and taking care of the children (Cinamon & Rich, 2010). The term *second shift*, described by Hochschild and Machung (2012), emphasizes the disproportional weight of the demands on men and women. The second shift refers to women's "second shift" of household and childcare work after a "working shift" during the day. They are confronted with a double burden of contributing to the financial family situation by working, while their household responsibilities are still equally present as before. This is in contrast to the single shifts of men, who allegedly only have a working shift. According to the gender role perspective (Eagly et al., 2000), being a man or woman structures social and cultural norms as well as time and energy allocation. It is suggested that women are equally committed to fulfilling their demands at home, work, and as partners, which makes their roles more intertwined and

prone to interruption compared to men. With this reasoning in mind, previous sociological research generally points to women as more vulnerable to conflicts between work and family.

The enrichment approach more heavily emphasizes access to and use of resources, which can be experienced differently by men and women (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007), with the assumption that women report more enrichment than men. Although this gender role perspective is generally recognized and accepted to explain the unequal weight assigned to work and family roles by gender, research concerning work-family balance has not found consistent results. Thus, for both work-family conflict and enrichment, no clear trend has been found according to gender (Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; McNall et al., 2010). Multiple meta-analyses by, e.g., Byron (2005) and Lapierre et al. (2018) have summarized empirical results and concluded that often few or no differences are found between men and women in their experiences of work-family balance. More research is needed to disentangle this issue, as an underlying complex interplay of situational aspects is present that leads to a more differential picture than is assumed today. This gender dimension will be included in the analyses throughout the studies in this work.

## 1.4 Country contexts

Besides these known work-related, family-related, and demographic/individual characteristics, the broader context (e.g., society, country) shapes work and family life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Therefore, the various country contexts of Belgium, Germany, and Australia are important to take into account when interpreting the results of this research. In this paragraph, we present the relevant statistics and policy measures for these three countries. This reveals both the similarities and the differences between the countries.

For Belgium, we focus on the Flanders region. Belgium is divided into Flanders and Wallonia, with Brussels as its capital. Flanders is positioned at the center of Europe and contains around 6,500,000 Dutch speaking inhabitants. The employment rate in Flanders was 76% in 2019, and the unemployment rate was 3.3%. Belgians earn 3,489 euros per month on average (when working full-time), with women earning 6.0% less than men. Moreover, around one of three people in Flanders experience difficulties in the combination of work and family life due to demanding jobs and long working hours. Working hours per week in Belgium were 37.1 on

average in 2018, increasing slightly every year. Also, 15.4% of Flemings decrease their working hours when taking care of young children in the household. Birth rate is increasing in Belgium, with 117,800 babies born in 2018. The average age of mothers at childbirth in Flanders is 30.6 years old, and they have 1.59 children on average (Eurostat, 2019; Statbel, 2019). Among (family) sociologists, Belgium is known for a high divorce rate compared to other European countries. In 2018, 45,059 couples married, an increase of 1.7% compared to 2017. The duration of marriage is 15 years on average before the decision to divorce. After a substantial increase in the number of divorces, stabilization has occurred in recent years; 23,135 divorces were counted in 2018, which is a small increase of 0.3% compared to 2017 (Statbel, 2019). Despite this high number, Belgium has been a pioneer in acknowledging that becoming ex-partners does not mean becoming ex-parents. Since the legal introduction and application of shared parental responsibility after divorce in 1995 (Senaeve, 1995) and the preference for joint physical custody in 2006 (Martens, 2007; Vanbockrijck, 2009), the importance of maintaining parental roles and having a good relationship with children after divorce is a priority (Bastaits & Mortelmans, 2014). Concerning the Belgian systems of maternity, paternity, and parental leave, a big difference in the length of the maternity and paternity leave exists – mothers have 15 weeks and fathers 10 working days. Parental leave is independent of the parent's gender and is four months per parent. This leave is flexible in use, as a parent can take this full-time, part-time, or one day per week (Koslowski, Blum, Dobrotic, Moss, & Macht, 2019).

Germany has around 83,000,000 inhabitants. The employment and unemployment rates of Germany are similar to those of Flanders: 75.9% and 3.0%, respectively, in 2019. The monthly gross earning in Germany is 3,932 euros. The gender wage gap was 21% in 2018; i.e., women earned 21% less than men. Full-time working Germans work 41 hours per week on average, and this number has remained stable since 1991. The arrival of children in a family leads to decreased working hours by the parents, especially for women, who choose more often to work part-time. Initiatives to help balance work and family are, for example, flexible working hours (38.8% had flexible working hours in 2017) and working from home (11.9% in 2018). In terms of German family life, 787,523 babies were born in 2018, and mothers were 31.3 years old on average at the birth of their first child. The fertility rate was 1.57 children per woman in 2018. Also in Germany, an increasing trend in divorces has been observed, with one out of three marriages ending in divorce; 416,600 couples married and 148,066 divorces were counted in

2018. Also, a decline of 5% in the number of divorces has been recorded in the last three years (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). Germany's leave initiatives are different than Belgium's, as maternity leave lasts 14 weeks – six weeks can be taken before the birth and eight weeks are obligatory after the birth. Paternity leave is not a statutory entitlement in Germany, although fathers can use some of their parental leave. Each parent can make use of three years of parental leave, maximum, and can choose or combine two types of parental leave – the replacement of their former income or the replacement of the loss in income when reducing their working hours to take care of children (Koslowski et al., 2019).

The last country of interest, Australia, has around 25,000,000 inhabitants. In Australia, 66.1% of the working-age population participate in the labor market and 5.3% are unemployed. In 2018, income, expressed as the average weekly total cash earnings, was \$1288.70 for all employees, but women in Australia earned an average of \$472.1 less than did men. Among all Australian employees, 60.2% worked full-time and 39.8% part-time; however, fewer women (54.6%) than men (75.1%) worked full time. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 309,142 children were born, with a mean age of 31.3 years for the mothers and, in 2017, an average of 1.74 children per mother. In 2018, 119,188 couples were married and 49,404 filed for divorce, after a median duration of 12.3 years of marriage. The number of marriages increased by 5.5% compared to 2017, while the number of divorces remained stable (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The Australian parental leave system provided for both maternity and paternity, and employees are entitled to unpaid and paid parental leave. The rules for unpaid parental leave vary depending on whether the leave is continuous or flexible and whether one or both parents take a leave. For paid parental leave, an employee parent can one continuous period of leave and additional days of flexible leave. Under the established rules for parental leave pay, employees are entitled to a set period of leave, 12 weeks that should be taken continuously within the first year after the birth of a child, and 30 days of flexible leave, which must be taken within two years of a child's birth (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2020).

## 1.5 Data

The positive interaction between work and family (work-family enrichment) is a rather new concept that is not represented in most large international datasets. Therefore, we had to rely

on available datasets that contained the relevant variables, and we used specialized survey data from Belgium, Germany, and Australia to answer our research questions. A person's work and family life is shaped within a particular context that is influenced by differences in culture, policy, school systems, geographical conditions, etc. There is no doubt that both family and work life are experienced differently in each of these countries. Consequently, we took a careful approach to making generalizations and only drew interpretations within national borders.

In Chapter 2, we analyzed data from the Divorce in Flanders (DiF) survey (Mortelmans et al., 2011). The purpose of the survey was to collect information about married and formerly married partners. Because the latter group was a focus of interest, divorced individuals are overrepresented in the sample (1,744 married, 4,606 divorced). Using information from the Belgian National Register, respondents were randomly selected based on three criteria: (1) being married between 1971 and 2008, (2) being married once for couples who were still together, and (3) being divorced once for couples who were formerly married. The uniqueness of this dataset lies in the multi-actor approach to gathering information about married and divorced families. Current and previous partners were the primary respondents. Secondary respondents were the common children of both partners, the partners' parents, and new partners of divorced primary respondents. The study also applied a multi-method design. Current and previous partners and children in residence in their households were questioned through computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPIs). The partners' parents and non-residential children could fill out a mail or web survey. New partners of formerly married partners received a paper and pencil questionnaire as the first response option and a mail survey as the second response option.

In Chapter 4, we used data from the German Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (Pairfam) study. The goal of this ongoing large-scale study is to collect information about families, with emphasis on intergenerational relations, partnership, parenting, and child development. The main respondent were randomly selected from all German individuals living in private households who fell into three birth cohorts, 1971-1973, 1981-1983, and 1991-1993. This led to the inclusion of 12,000 German individuals in this study. Pairfam is a multi-actor database that includes information from multiple respondents linked by family ties. In addition to the main respondent, children, partners, and parents were also interviewed. Unlike the DiF study, this dataset applies a multi-cohort approach whereby the main respondent as central actor is interviewed every two years. During this research, nine waves of responses from

this dataset were available. In the first wave (2008-2009), the main respondents and their partners were interviewed. Beginning with Wave 2, responses from the parents of the main respondents and their children between the ages of 8 and 15 were also included. Data were collected through panel interviews (Huinink et al., 2011).

The data used in Chapters 3 and 5 were from the ongoing Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). This study includes information about the development and well-being of 10,000 children and their families, and participants were randomly selected from all states in Australia. This database also provides information from multiple actors: the children, parents living in the same household, parents living elsewhere (e.g., in case of divorced parents), caregivers, and teachers. Given our focus of interest, data from a longitudinal study were most appropriate for deriving answers to the formulated study questions. At the time of our analysis, seven waves were available. The first wave was conducted in 2003-2004 and data collection is repeated biannually. Additionally, the data structure is built upon a focus on the children with two cohorts, 5000 children aged 0 to 1 year and 5000 children aged 4 to 5 years in the first wave. The combination of this structure and the longitudinal design means that the children of the first cohort were 12 years old and those of the second cohort 16 years old in wave 7. The types of data collection instruments used varied according to the information collected and type of actor, and included face-to-face interviews, CAPIs, and time-use diaries (Gray & Sanson, 2005).

## 1.6 Method

Work-family conflict and enrichment are subjective constructs, and this subjectivity is often a limitation in related scientific research. The work-family relationship refers to personal experience and involves a personal judgment of whether the balance between work and family life is satisfying; one person's conception of a satisfying personal and professional life can be very different from another's (Kelly, 2011). This subjectivity must be considered in the creation or selection of a suitable and valid measurement instrument.

A multitude of measurement instruments have been created to capture the subjectivity of work-family balance. Respondents are usually asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements about their work-family balance using a Likert scale. Some scales take into account



sub-dimensions of work-family balance by, for example, formulating items designed to assess different dimensions of work-family conflict and enrichment.

For this research, we analyzed data from valid and reliable questionnaires used in the three included databases. The second chapter on the DiF data included discussion of The Work-Family Conflict Scale developed by Breyer and Bluemke (2016), which captures the experienced level of conflict between work and family with two items relating to work interfering with family (WIF) and two items relating to family interfering with work (FIW). The Pairfam dataset discussed in Chapter 4 includes eight items, four relating to work interfering with family (WIF) and four items relating to family interfering with work (FIW). The scale was developed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) for the Pairfam study. For Chapters 3 and 5, we used the Work-Family Gains scale developed by Marshall and Barnett (1993), which was included in the LSAC study. This instrument assesses positive interactions between work and parenting (three items) and between work and themselves (three items).

## 1.7 Research questions

We broke the central research question, how contemporary families experience work-family balance, into two parts. First, we examined the difference in experiences of work-family conflict and enrichment according to family composition (Chapters 2 and 3). Second, we investigated the consequence of a parent experiencing conflict and enrichment on the behavior of the involved child (Chapters 4 and 5). In these sections, we acknowledge the typical simultaneous specificity and broadness of this subject. For example, research might specifically focus on one type of conflict/enrichment, one sub-population, or one type of antecedents and consequences, but the broader context of the culture, policy, country, etc. must not be forgotten.

### 1.7.1 Part 1: Family composition

In the first part of this dissertation, we investigated the differences in the experience of work-family conflict (Chapter 2) and enrichment (Chapter 3) by family composition. We particularly focused on the difference between married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents, as this factor had not previously been investigated. Previous research mostly distinguished between married/coupled and single persons, and includes relationship status as a control variable.

Even though divorce rates have recently begun to stabilize in Western countries, many couples still decide to end their marriages, which directly changes their family structure and affects family and work life: one family dissolves into two separated households, with each ex-partner responsible for running their household. Based on the custody agreement, the children's time is formally divided between two separate households, and separated parents have certain periods during which they live with and without the children. The children's care is then primarily the responsibility of the parent with whom the children reside for any particular period. The classic model entailed the children residing predominantly with the mother, but arrangements have shifted toward shared residence between the two parents (Cancian, Meyer, Brown, & Cook, 2014; Sodermans, Vanassche, & Matthijs, 2011). Once divorced/separated, most parents meet new partners, although some might be single for some time. In Belgium, around 70% of divorced people find new partners within 5 to 10 years (Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2013). In Australia, it is about 43% within 5 years (Skew, Evans, & Gray, 2009). De Graaf and Kalmijn (2003) described three factors that explain repartnering rates. The first factor is the desire for a new relationship in terms of child wish, economical, emotional, and social well-being. The second factor is the individual's attractiveness as a partner for others in the repartnering market. For example, children from a previous relationship make an individual less attractive to new partners. The last factor is the opportunity to meet a new partner, which is likely lower for divorced/separated persons than for never-married persons because there are fewer older singles in the repartnering.

Questions about how contemporary families of diverse compositions experience the interaction between work and family life lead to the categories of married/cohabiting parents and divorced/separated parents, with the latter group divided into single and repartnered parents. Based on previous studies, we expected that the demands and resources affect the work-family balance of different family compositions differently. For example, a study by ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010) found that single employees, employees with partners, and employees with partners and children showed different levels of employee-helping behavior and performance depending on the company's work-life balance support policy. As such, two sub-research questions were formulated: 1) Do married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents experience work-family conflict differently? and 2) Do married/cohabiting and

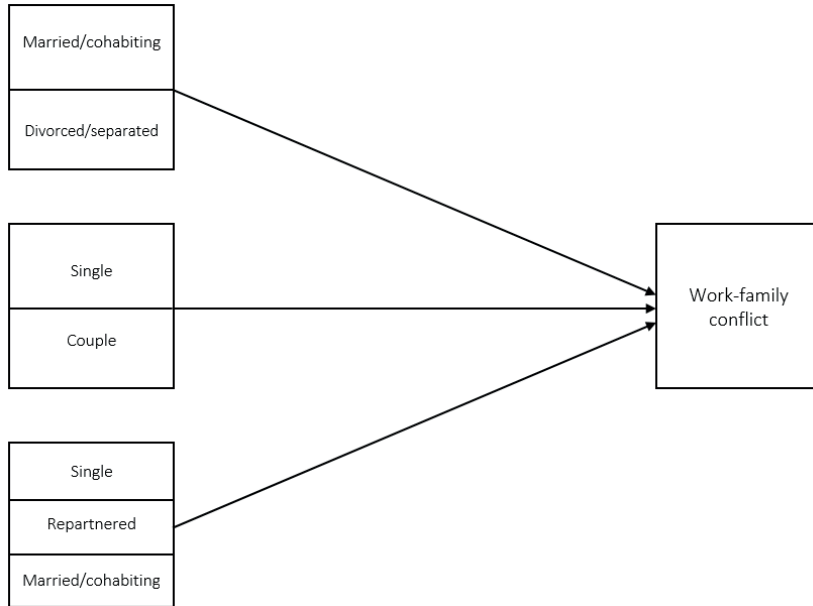


Figure 1.2. Conceptual model used in Chapter 2.

divorced/separated parents experience work-family enrichment differently? Figure 1.2 and 1.3 illustrate the conceptual models that underlie the respective chapters.

We determined that linear regression analysis was the most appropriate strategy for analyzing the data associated with both sub-research questions. In this way, we predicted the linear relationship between the type of family composition and work-family conflict or enrichment. However, due to the right-skewed distribution of the dependent variable work-family conflict in the DiF study, we had to use logistic regression analysis for the first sub-research question. This method's use of binary dependent variables required the recoding of work-family conflict from a seven-point rating scale into two categories, "no conflict" and "conflict." This model estimated the probability of experiencing conflict versus no conflict and results were expressed as odds ratios.

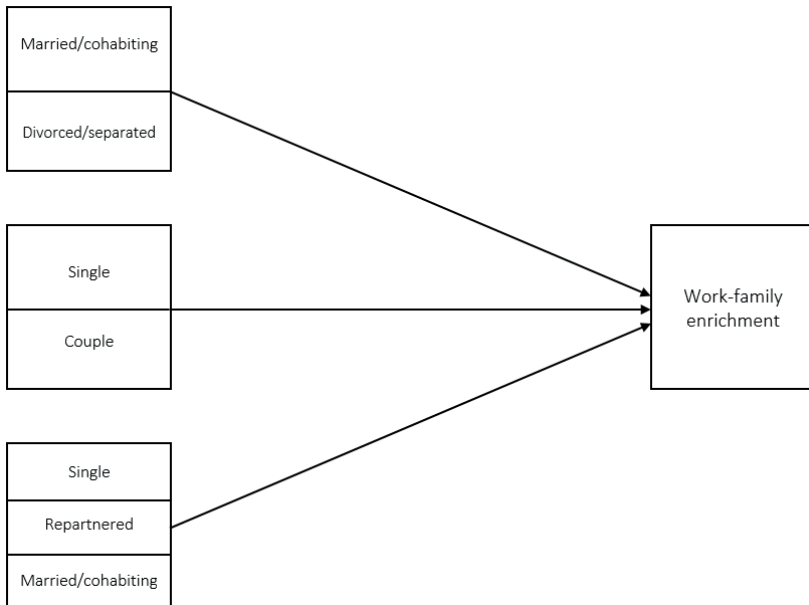


Figure 1.3. Conceptual model used in Chapter 3.

### 1.7.2 Part 2: Children’s behavior

Protecting children and providing them the best environmental situation is a priority globally. Children’s functioning and development depend on the influence of what scientists call the nature and nurture. The former refers to genetic and biological factors, and the latter includes aspects related to a person’s environment, experiences, and surroundings. It is important to acknowledge the impact of both nature and nurture on the development of the child, as explained in the socio-ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986).

Interactions between and within the nature and nurture influences are difficult to grasp. This research contributes insights into the nurture aspect of children’s behavior by examining the relation between work-family conflict (Chapter 4) and enrichment (Chapter 5) and children’s behavior. Intertwined and interconnected environments affect the interaction of parents’ work-family balance and children’s behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Theoretical insights and previous empirical research positions parental characteristics as mediators in this equation. To clarify this

linking mechanism, we added mediating variables for the parental well-being and parenting performances.

Viewed from the conflict perspective, difficulty reconciling work and family affects parents' functioning, which in turn shapes children's developmental sphere. For example, a parent who is feeling burned out and depressed might be a less competent parent, affecting the home environment where the child grows up. Thus, the third sub-research question is whether parents' experience of work-family conflict negatively affected their children's behavior, with parental well-being and parenting performances as mediating factors. We also investigated whether work-family enrichment positively affected children's behavior, again with parental well-being and parenting performances as mediators. Previous studies indicated a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and both personal and family functioning (Dunn & O'Brien, 2013; McNall et al., 2010). Children also benefit from enrichment experiences because they grow up in stimulating and healthier home environments. Conceptual models corresponding to the two sub-research questions are shown in Figure 1.4 and 1.5.

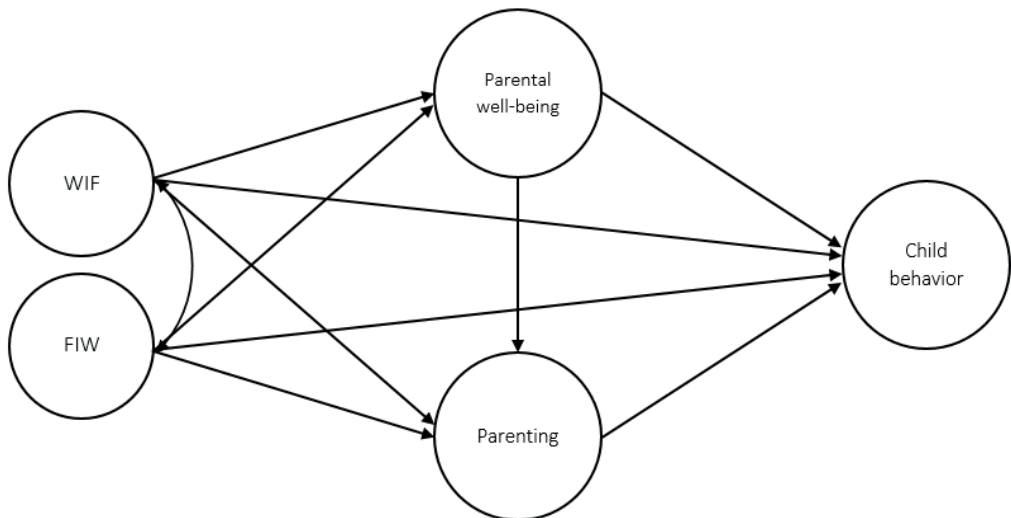


Figure 1.4. Conceptual model used in Chapter 4.

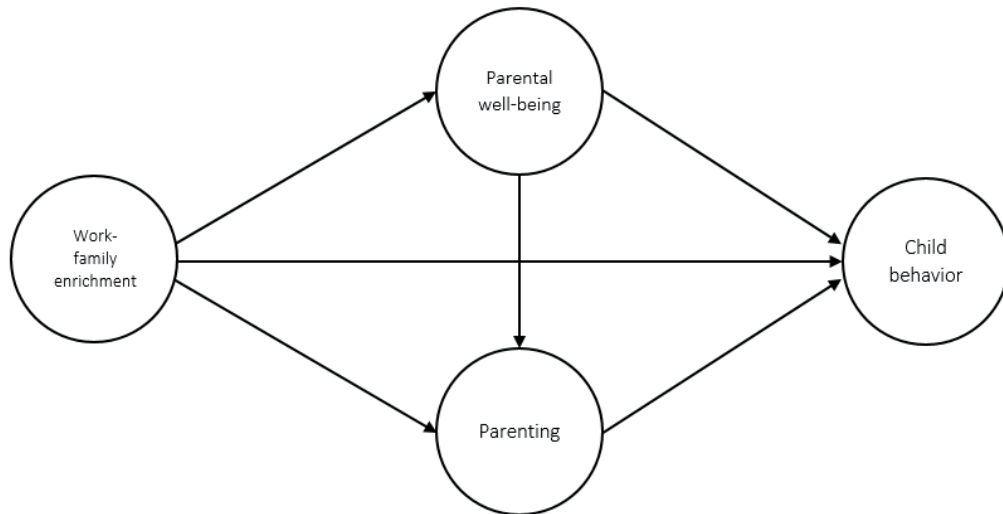


Figure 1.5. Conceptual model used in Chapter 5.

We used structural equation modelling (SEM) with higher-order factors (parental well-being, parenting, child’s behavior) as analytical strategy. SEM is commonly used in social sciences for multivariate data analysis of latent variables in combination with manifest variables. The pathway model consists of two parts, called the measurement and the structural models. The measurement model uses confirmatory factor analysis and estimates the relationship between the underlying latent variables and the set of observed variables. The relationships between the latent variables themselves – in this case, the higher-order variables parental well-being, parenting, and child’s behavior – were estimated in the structural model.

The last chapter, Chapter 6, provides a general discussion of and conclusion from the analyses. An overview of the main findings from each chapter (see Table 1.1) and the work’s contribution to the research on work-family balance is followed by policy and practice recommendations and suggestions for future research. Appendix 7.1. gives an overview of the contribution of the co-authors for each chapter.

Table 1.1

*Overview of the Chapters*

	Work-family conflict	Work-family enrichment
Family composition	Chapter 2: The experience of work-family conflict among divorced parents in Flanders.	Chapter 3: Experiencing work-family enrichment as a separated parent in Australia.
Children's behavior	Chapter 4: The consequences of work-family conflict in families on the behavior of the child.	Chapter 5: The consequences of work-family enrichment in families on the behavior of children.

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# Part 1

FAMILY COMPOSITION



# Chapter 2

THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK-  
FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG  
DIVORCED PARENTS  
IN FLANDERS





# Chapter 2 The experience of work-family conflict among divorced parents in Flanders

## 2.1 Introduction

The decision of parents to divorce inevitably has implications for both their work and family lives, involving a complex shift in the balance between work and family. The term *work-family conflict* refers to the difficulty of fulfilling both work and family roles when incompatible demands between the two roles are present. Various studies have investigated the impact of specific work and family characteristics as predictors of work-family conflict (for a review, see Byron, 2005). Although scholars have addressed the differentiating impact of such antecedents according to marital status (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Duxbury, Higgins, & Lee, 1994; McManus, Korabik, Rosin, & Kelloway, 2002; Nomaguchi, 2012), little is known about the specificities and determinants of the experience of imbalance between work and family life in divorced families.

Some studies have explored the differences in the experience of work-family conflict, albeit primarily by comparing single parents to married or partnered couples (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Byron, 2005; Duxbury et al., 1994; McManus et al., 2002; Nomaguchi, 2012). This comparison is meaningful, as divorced parents are often single for a period after the divorce (Dimitri Mortelmans & Defever, 2018). One recurrent finding in these studies is that single-parent families experience greater difficulty in balancing work and family life as compared to partnered families (Byron, 2005; Nomaguchi, 2012). In addition to coping with the competing demands of work and family, single-parent families generally have fewer available resources than two-parent families do. Their financial situation tends to be less favorable and, by definition, they are not able to rely on a partner in the household to meet the family demands (Avison, Ali, & Walters, 2007; Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). This finding has not always been confirmed, however, as other studies have reported only small, if any differences between singles and couples, whether married or partnered (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Byron, 2005; Duxbury et al., 1994; McManus et al., 2002). These studies nevertheless highlight the importance of underlying contextual aspects that matter according to the marital status of the parent, including job characteristics (e.g., access to flexible work arrangements) and socioeconomic status.

Previous research has further demonstrated the existence of strong gender differences, which lead to variation in the impact of work-family conflict within single-parent families according to the gender of the single parent (Nomaguchi, 2012).

Despite the valuable contributions of the aforementioned studies, we argue that they are based on a limited view of postdivorce life courses. First, the category of single-parent families should not be equated with the category of divorced parents as a whole. Even though many divorced parents are also single parents (at least for a time), they are not fully represented by the category of single parents, which does not include divorced parents who have repartnered. As indicated in previous studies, the life course of a parent does not end with single parenthood. In fact, repartnering rates are increasing (Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2017). Even though some divorced parents will remain single for a considerable period, most divorcees eventually find new partners within a period of 5 to 10 years. In particular, divorced women are currently repartnering sooner than has been the case for earlier cohorts (Bernardi, Mortelmans, & Larenza, 2018). Second, previous studies have disregarded the diversity in the lives of single parents. The type of residence arrangements for children currently has a major impact on the lives of single parents. The recent increase in joint physical custody is playing a particularly important role in determining the weight of family demands. Nevertheless, scholars have thus far failed to take proper account of this when looking at work-family conflict. Most studies assume classic residential arrangements, in which the child lives nearly fulltime with the mother (who is assumed to be single), occasionally visiting the father. This assumption is no longer tenable, as residential arrangements are becoming increasingly diversified, with joint physical custody emerging as the most notable option (Nielsen, 2018). Single parenthood can be lived as either full-time single parenthood or part-time single parenthood. This distinction has far-reaching consequences for the labor-market careers of both divorced mothers and divorced fathers (Letablier & Wall, 2018).

This study was performed in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. Although this region has partial autonomy in some policy domains, family law falls within the domain of Belgian federal policy. The context of Flanders is important to this study for several reasons. First, Belgium is characterized by a high divorce rate relative to other European countries. Despite a recent trend in which crude divorce rates have leveled off on a par with those in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, both marriages (Dimitri Mortelmans, 2013) and cohabitation arrangements (Van den Berg & Mortelmans, 2018) continue to dissolve in large numbers. In this

respect, it is important to note that shared physical custody is the primary living condition that judges are expected to consider when parents terminate their relationships. This results in a high prevalence of shared physical custody in the country (Swennen & Mortelmans, 2015). A second reason that the Flemish context is important to this study is that, in recent years, Belgian labor market policies have focused on two domains: (a) increasing labor-force participation after the age of 55 (this issue is not relevant to this study), and (b) improving work–life balance. With respect to divorce and work–life balance, Belgium’s elaborate time-leave schedules offer a powerful means of fighting the negative economic outcomes of relationship dissolution (Merla, Mortelmans, & Fuselier, 2018; Dimitri Mortelmans & Frans, 2017). The high labor-market participation of mothers—especially younger women—proves that the combination of single parenting and full-time employment is feasible, albeit difficult (Dimitri Mortelmans & Defever, 2018). In addition, generous child allowances and an elaborate child care infrastructure—which almost classifies Belgium as having a social democratic welfare regime—ease the negative consequences for women and might even create a favorable context for combining work and family life (Dimitri Mortelmans, Snoeckx, & Raeymaeckers, 2009).

This study is intended to provide new insight on work-family conflict in divorced families. It proceeds from a critical examination of previous studies and their focus on single-parent families. This study contributes to the work–family literature by examining (a) whether married parents differ from divorced parents in their experiences of work-family conflict, taking into account the current diversity and postdivorce relationship status existing within the universe of divorced parents, and (b) whether divorced fathers differ from divorced mothers in their experiences of work-family conflict. Drawing on quantitative data collected in 2008 in Flanders, Belgium, this study also considers detailed information about a wide range of work and family characteristics of both married parents ( $n = 769$ ) and divorced parents ( $n = 1,424$ ).

## 2.2 Literature overview

### 2.2.1 Theoretical perspective

According to the literature, the theoretical origins of work-family conflict can be traced to the long-standing realm of role conflict theory and, more specifically, interrole conflict theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The overarching role conflict theory assumes a collision is present

between conflicting expectations that are linked to multiple roles within a given individual (Kahn et al., 1964). Interrole conflict theory refers to a specific type of role conflict, describing the confrontation of conflicting expectations regarding multiple roles within a given individual. As a result of interrole conflict, individuals might struggle to meet the demands of the various roles that they have taken on (Kahn et al., 1964). In another integrative perspective, researchers have reflected on the mechanism of having multiple identities. Identities are embedded within interpretative social processes, and their formation is affected by both self and society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Given that both work and family life are often regarded as playing a central role in an individual's identity, it has been argued that the impact of certain positive or negative experiences depends on the value that the individual ascribes to a specific identity (Thoits, 1991).

When the expectations related to work and family roles within a given individual clash, work-family conflict can occur. Work-family conflict has been formally defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Although work-family conflict can be conceptualized as a general term, most recent scientific research emphasizes the distinction between two directions of conflict: work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW) (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). The former type of conflict occurs when work interferes with family responsibilities, as when a mother is late picking up her children after school due to attending a meeting at work. The latter form of conflict occurs when family interferes with work-related activities, as when a mother cancels a meeting at work to be able to pick up her children from school (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000). In general, women experience more difficulty combining work and family life than men do (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005) and WIF conflicts are reported more often than FIW conflicts are (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Eby et al., 2005; Frone et al., 1992; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). In addition, several researchers have pointed out that several determinants have a unique impact on WIF and FIW. For example, work characteristics have been found to be more strongly related to WIF, with family characteristics being more strongly related to FIW (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007).

The domains of work and family are undeniably interrelated. Their intersection requires a fit between an individual's ability to meet environmental demands and the available environmental resources needed to satisfy the individual's needs. A misfit occurs when demands

and needs exceed the individual's abilities and accessible resources. Applying this mechanism of demands and resources to the domains of work and family, it can be stated that the level of balance (or imbalance) between the two spheres depends on the availability of sufficient family resources to meet the demands of work and the adequacy of work resources to meet the demands of the family. As such, the level of work-family conflict is affected by demands (e.g., time-based and strain-based work and family demands) and available resources (e.g., organizational support and psychological rewards in the domains of work and family) within and between the two domains (Voydanoff, 2005).

### 2.2.2 Work-family conflict of divorced parents

Several previous studies have examined the impact of various antecedents on the fit between work and family (Kovalenko & Mortelmans, 2015; for a review, see Byron, 2005). To the best of our knowledge, however, no studies have investigated whether and how divorced parents differ from married parents with regard to this issue. Although studies on work-family conflict typically do address marital status, it is usually treated as a control variable (Minnotte, 2012). Moreover, the marital status variable only distinguishes between married and single people, without disentangling whether the state of being single is due to divorce or separation, widowhood, or choice. In general, such studies suggest that the heterogeneous category of single parents report higher levels of work-family conflict than do married or partnered parents. This methodological approach ignores the crucial question of how people with different family constellations differ in terms of work-family conflict. Few studies have acknowledged that single parents struggle more to obtain a proper balance between work and family than married parents do (Byron, 2005; Nomaguchi, 2012). In terms of demands and resources, it has been suggested that single parents experience greater challenges in meeting the demands of work and family, in addition to having access to fewer resources. For example, they tend to have lower household income, higher levels of job pressure, and obviously no support from a partner (McManus et al., 2002; Minnotte, 2012; Nomaguchi, 2012). The existing body of scientific findings and insights about single parents are not fully applicable to the focus of this study: divorced parents. As already argued, the specific diversity within the category of divorced persons has been overlooked with regard to the impact

of life course characteristics related to divorce (e.g., repartnering and the residential arrangements of the children) on the fit between work and family.

### 2.2.3 Gender differences

In addition to the diversity in the lives of divorced parents, the differentiating effect of gender affects the level of work-family conflict, thus making the case even more complex. One of the most common general perceptions is that women have more difficulty balancing work and family life than men do. Both older and more recent studies have attributed this to greater demands that women experience from both domains (Duxbury et al., 1994; Eby et al., 2005). According to the predominant sociocultural argument, the classic gender division remains intact, with men seen as the main breadwinners and women as bearing primary responsibility for the household and the children (Moen & Yu, 2000), even though women are increasingly participating in the labor market and contributing to the financial situations of their families (Chapple & Richardson, 2009; del Carmen Huerta et al., 2011; Dimitri Mortelmans, Matthijs, Alofs, & Segaert, 2016). As such, women are more vulnerable to experiencing conflict between work and family, as they retain their caregiving roles at home, regardless of their participation on the labor market (Bianchi, 2000). Such belief in gender differences has nevertheless been criticized by recent empirical and meta-analytical studies that refute this generally accepted assumption, reporting small, if any differences between genders (Shockley, Shen, DeNunzio, Arvan, & Knudsen, 2017; Verma, 2013). Although the underlying process and mechanism behind the gendered nature of work-family conflict remains unclear, scholars have emphasized the subjective nature of work-family conflict, as well as the existence and evolution of cultures and societies with regard to gender equality.

As reported by Minnotte (2012) and by Nomaguchi (2012), the interaction between gender and marital status substantially shapes the experience of work-family conflict. It has been suggested that single mothers are the most vulnerable group with regard to this issue, as they struggle more to balance their work and family life than is the case for single fathers, married mothers, or married fathers. Although Nomaguchi (2012) examined the nuances regarding this complex interaction effect, the focus is limited to FIW as an outcome to predict. Work and family characteristics are perceived as either hindering or promoting the balance between work and

family, depending on the combination of the individual's gender and marital status. More specifically, Nomaguchi observed that, when their partners do not share the household responsibilities, single mothers report more FIW than other parents do; that married fathers experience more FIW relative to other parents when they perceive their work culture as less family-friendly; and that single fathers experience more FIW compared to the other parents when their children are older.

#### 2.2.4 Hypotheses

Based on the scientific findings just discussed, this study constitutes an in-depth examination of work-family conflict among divorced parents, taking into account their postdivorce relationship status. We begin by comparing divorced parents to married parents, investigating the impact of the two family constellations on the experience of work-family conflict. According to the existing literature, single parents experience greater difficulty balancing their work and family life, as they have fewer available resources and face greater demands than married parents do (McManus et al., 2002; Minnotte, 2012; Nomaguchi, 2012). Applied to divorced parents, this argument suggests that, whereas two-parent families can earn dual incomes and share responsibility for household tasks and child care, divorced families have a substantially different situation, involving the formation of two separate households, with each parent bearing complete responsibility for a household. Because the two former partners live separately, they bear separate responsibility for meeting the demands of their households, as well as those relating to children staying in the household according to the applicable residence arrangement. Although a divorce involves a separation of the partners from each other in both physical and emotional terms, the two households do not function completely separately from each other, given the persistent connection to the former household and partner, particularly with regard to the practical and pedagogical arrangements of the children involved (Emery, 2011). The employment status and financial situations of both mothers and fathers are also subject to change when parents decide to separate. The employment situations of fathers tend not to change very much after a divorce. Most fathers work full-time during the marriage and continue to do so after divorce. Mothers are likely to undergo more employment transitions. Although dual-earner families are becoming the norm, married mothers are less likely to work full-time than they are to work part-time. Following

divorce, mothers might feel the need to work more to maintain their households, as it is more difficult to attain a healthy financial situation with only a part-time job (de Regt, Mortelmans, & Marynissen, 2013; Jansen, Mortelmans, & Snoeckx, 2009). Additional difficulties are often associated with caring for their own households and children while working more (Van der Lippe, 2001; Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002). In light of these findings, our first hypothesis is that *divorced parents experience more WIF (Hypothesis 1a) and more FIW (Hypothesis 1b) than married parents do.*

A second research question concerns the impact of the presence or absence of a partner on levels of work-family conflict, regardless of the marital status of being either divorced or married. To investigate this issue, we compare single divorced parents to couples with children, with the latter category including both married and repartnered divorced individuals. The presence of a partner is likely to ensure a more favorable financial situation and the possibility of sharing household and child-related responsibilities. Because they must manage these responsibilities on their own, single parents are likely to have less favorable housing, social support, and job opportunities (Ciabattari, 2007; Kalil & Ryan, 2010). Previous studies have indicated that having an employed and supportive partner reduces the level of work-family conflict, especially for women (Nomaguchi, 2012; Winslow, 2005). As such, the second hypothesis states that *single parents experience more WIF (Hypothesis 2a) and more FIW (Hypothesis 2b), as compared to coupled parents (either married or repartnered).*

Third, understanding of the levels of work-family conflict experienced by divorced parents can be enhanced by considering the combined effects of marital status and relationship status. Comparison of married, repartnered, and single divorced parents makes it possible to identify the most important influence on the experience of work-family conflict: the status of being divorced or whether someone has a (new) partner. Aside from organizing and contributing to their household tasks and financial situations, married parents do not face any particular burden in this regard. For divorced parents who are repartnered, the situation is more complex. The presence of a new partner once again makes it possible to share household tasks and restore the family's socioeconomic situation. Finding a new partner clearly reshapes the work and family life of a divorced parent. In contrast to married parents, however, these parents face the burden associated with the persistent connection to their former households and former partners. Divorced single parents are confronted with a double burden. The first burden relates to the need



to arrange a household independently and the availability of fewer financial resources due to the absence of a partner. Divorced parents must also manage the persistent connection with the previous households of their former marriages, which constitutes the second burden (Amato, 2000; Nomaguchi, 2012; Voydanoff, 2005). The third hypothesis therefore states that *single divorced parents experience the most WIF (Hypothesis 3a) and FIW (Hypothesis 3b), followed by repartnered divorced parents, and married parents.*

Fourth, it is important to address gender differences within the category of divorcees. Taking these differences into account provides nuance to the perspective on work-family conflict among divorced parents by focusing on typical divorce-related characteristics that might be different for divorced fathers than they are for divorced mothers. As noted earlier, although employment status is likely to change following divorce, these changes are different for divorced fathers and divorced mothers. Residential arrangements for children also differ according to the gender of the divorced parent. The parent with whom a child resides for any given period bears primary responsibility for caring for that child. The classic model, in which the children predominantly reside with the mother, has given way to a generally recognized model of shared residence between the two parents (Cancian et al., 2014; Sodermans et al., 2011). Consideration of the combined effects of the status of being divorced and gender suggests differences in the work-family conflict experienced by divorced fathers and divorced mothers. More specifically, it suggests that divorced mothers are likely to be more vulnerable to such conflict, given the higher demands that they face from work (increasing working hours) and family (main residence of the child), relative to those faced by divorced fathers (Voydanoff, 2005). Taking these observations together, Hypothesis 4 states that *the number of working hours (as a typical work characteristic) has a greater negative impact on WIF for divorced mothers than it does for divorced fathers (Hypothesis 4a) and that the negative impact of a greater proportion of time that the child resides in the parent's home (as a typical family characteristic) on FIW for that parent is more pronounced for divorced mothers than it is for divorced fathers (Hypothesis 4b).*

## 2.3 Method

### 2.3.1 Data

The database used for this study was developed as part of the Divorce in Flanders study (D. Mortelmans et al., 2011). Flanders is the northern Dutch speaking region of Belgium. This large-scale study includes information about married and formerly married partners. A representative sample was selected from the Belgian National Register. Following approval by the privacy committee, respondents were contacted at their addresses, as listed in the Belgian National Register. Several criteria were applied in this sample selection: the marriage had to have taken place after 1971, it had to have been the first for both partners and, in the case of a divorce, both partners had to have been divorced only once. Given the purpose of this survey, an overrepresentation of divorced couples in the sample was requested (one third married, two thirds divorced). The respondents were questioned in face-to-face interviews in their current households using computer-assisted personal interviewing. Data collection occurred between October 2009 and December 2010, and the final database contained information on 1,744 married and 4,606 formerly married partners.

This study is based on information from a subsample of the Divorce in Flanders database, which includes employed married and divorced parents. The subsample includes respondents with at least one child between the ages of 0 and 18 years, with the additional restriction of not having a child living on his or her own. This final subsample contains data from 2,193 respondents (1,045 men, 1,148 women), with 769 married and 1,424 divorced parents. Of all divorced parents, 671 were divorced fathers and 753 were divorced mothers, 616 were single (or in a Living Apart Together relationship - LAT), and 771 were repartnered. The repartnered respondents included divorced parents who were cohabiting or remarried to new partners. After 37 cases were excluded because of missing values for the exact relationship status after divorce, there were 2,156 cases with which to test Hypotheses 2 and 3. The information about the residential arrangements of the children in divorced families is based on one child selected from each family (the target child). All target children were the biological or adoptive children of both former partners.

### 2.3.2 Measures

*WIF and FIW.* The Work-family Conflict Scale (Breyer & Bluemke, 2016) was originally developed for administration in the 2002 International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Although the scale was fully documented in 2016, it was available for use in the Divorce in Flanders database. The scale assesses an individual's personal experienced level of conflict between work and family. Respondents rate two items relating to WIF and two items relating to FIW on a 7-point rating scale with the categorical labels 1 (never), 2 (less than once a month), 3 (once a month), 4 (several times per month but not weekly), 5 (once a week), 6 (several times per week but not daily), and 7 (daily). The two questions related to WIF are "I have come home from work too tired to do the chores which need to be done," and "It has been difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spent on my job." The two questions related to FIW are "I have arrived at work too tired to function well because of the household work I had done," and "I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities." The mean score of each pair of items indicates the level of WIF and FIW experienced, with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 7. Descriptive statistics for the original items of WIF and FIW are presented in Appendix 7.2, along with the mean scores of both scales. Due to the right-skewed distribution of both WIF and FIW, with many people never or almost never experiencing conflict, both were rescaled as dichotomous variables reflecting whether the respondent never or almost never (Categories 1 & 2) or sometimes or often (Categories 3–7) experienced this conflict. In the remainder of this study, the first category was designated as "no conflict" and the second as "conflict." Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 2.1. With regard to WIF, these figures indicate that, across all comparisons, all respondents were more likely to experience conflict than they were to not experience it. The chi-square test revealed that the comparison of married parents to divorced parents was not significant for WIF,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.43, p = .064$ . With regard to the second comparison, which corresponds to Hypothesis 2a, coupled parents reported experiencing less WIF (49.2%) than single parents did (54.5%),  $\chi^2(1) = 5.11, p = .024$ . When comparing single, repartnered, and married parents, the chi-square test again revealed no significant differences according to WIF,  $\chi^2(2) = 5.62, p = .060$ . Within the group of divorced parents, divorced mothers experienced more WIF (55.9%) than divorced fathers did (48.4%),  $\chi^2(1) = 7.95, p = .005$ . An opposite trend emerged for FIW. Across all comparisons, all respondents were more likely to report experiencing no FIW than they were to report experiencing FIW.

Married parents reported experiencing less FIW (8.8%) than did divorced parents (12.1%),  $\chi^2(1) = 5.37, p = .021$ . When comparing single with coupled parents, the percentage of single parents experiencing FIW (15.3%) was higher than that for coupled parents (8.9%),  $\chi^2(1) = 15.63, p < .00$ . In the third comparison, which corresponds to Hypothesis 3b, single parents reported experiencing the most FIW (15.3%), followed by repartnered parents (8.9%) and married couples (8.8%),  $\chi^2(2) = 18.63, p < .00$ . For divorced parents, the percentage of divorced mothers experiencing FIW (14.7%) was higher than the percentage of divorced fathers experiencing such conflict (9.1%),  $\chi^2(1) = 10.67, p = .001$ .

*Gender.* Of all respondents, 52.3% were female, with women accounting for 52.9% of all divorced respondents. Women were used as reference category in the analyses.

*Respondent's age.* The average age of the respondents in the current subsample was 40.99 years ( $SD = 5.61$ ).

*Educational level.* Respondents were asked to indicate their highest completed level of education. Their responses were divided into three categories: primary or lower education, secondary education, and higher education. Of all respondents, 13.4% had completed primary education, 41.9% had completed secondary education, and 44.7% had completed higher education (reference category).

*Number of children in the household.* The number of children in the household was calculated according to the household grid. The total number of children in the respondent's household was defined as the sum of the number of biological and adopted children and stepchildren. For separated families with new partners, the number of children in the household included the respondent's own children from the previous marriage, as well as the new partner's children and any biological and adopted children that the respondent had with this new partner. As indicated in Table 2.1, the respondents in this subsample had an average of 1.83 children in the household ( $SD = 1.09$ ).

*Age of the youngest child in the household.* The age of the youngest child in the household was determined by extracting the youngest child from the household grid. As presented in Table 2.1, the average age of the youngest child in the household was 9.44 years ( $SD = 5.39$ ). It is important to note the high number of missing values regarding this variable. This is due to fathers whose selected target child from the previous marriage was not assigned to their

current households (given that fathers are still less likely to gain custody), such that there was no (youngest) child in the household.

*Parental divorce.* Respondents were asked whether they had experienced a divorce of their parents. The response format included three categories: “Yes, they are legally divorced,” “Yes, they are separated,” and “No.” In this study, the first two categories were combined, with the result that 14.3% of the respondents had experienced the divorce or separation of their parents, whereas 85.7% had not (reference category).

*Working hours per week.* The number of working hours per week was defined as the amount of time (expressed in hours) that respondents reported spending per week on all jobs combined, including secondary professions. Overtime and hours of preparation for work were included as well, although time spent commuting to and from work was not included. The average number of working hours per week was 42.02 ( $SD = 14.43$ ).

*Household income.* Household income was measured as the total net income of the respondent’s household in the past month. Total net household income includes the net income of all members of the household, including any residential children. In addition to wages, household income included any benefits, child allowances, and income from capital and immovable property goods. Alimony was not taken into account. This variable was originally divided into 23 categories, starting at less than €250 and ranging up to €10,000 or more for monthly household income. For the analysis, the midpoint of each category was used, and the variable was treated as continuous, ranging from €125 to €10,499.995. As presented in Table 2.1, the average household income in this subsample was €3,328.67 ( $SD = 1535.53$ ).

*Time since separation.* The years that the respondents in this subsample had started living separately from their former partners ranged from 1979 to 2009. Time since separation was recoded into a dichotomous variable: 0 to 2 years since separation and 3 or more years (reference category). This distinction is in accordance with the results of studies by Halford and Sweeper (2013) and Amato (2010), which indicate that the greatest overall psychological and social improvement in the adjustment to this new situation occurs during the first two years after the divorce. Logically, this variable is included only as a control variable in the analysis of divorced parents. Of all divorced parents in the subsample, 6.5% had lived in separated households for two or fewer years, and 93.5% had lived in separate households for three years or more.

Table 2.1  
Descriptive Statistics for all Subsamples and Variables

	WIF		FIW		n
	No/almost no conflict	Sometimes/often conflict	No/almost no conflict	Sometimes/often conflict	
	n	%	n	%	%
Comparison 1					
Married	398	51.8	371	48.2	68
Divorced	678	47.6	746	52.4	172
Comparison 2					
Single	280	45.5	336	54.5	94
Couple	783	50.8	757	49.2	137
Comparison 3					
Single	280	45.5	336	54.5	94
Repartnered	385	49.9	386	50.1	69
Married	398	51.8	371	48.2	68
Comparison 4					
Divorced father	346	51.6	325	48.4	61
Divorced mother	332	44.1	421	55.9	111
					14.7
					8.8
					12.1
					15.3
					8.9
					15.3
					8.9
					8.8
					9.1
					14.7
					47.7
					52.3
					13.4
					41.9
					44.7
					14.3
					85.7
					6.5
					93.5
Gender					
Men					1045
Women					1148
Respondent's age					2193
Educational level					40.99(5.61)
Primary education					294
Secondary education					916
Higher education					979
Number of children					1.83(1.09)
Age of the youngest child					9.44(5.39)
Parental divorce					1930
Yes					313
No					1870
Working hours per week					42.02(14.43)
Household income					3328.67(1535.53)
Time since separation <sup>a</sup>					2009
0-2 years					
3 years or more					
Presence of the child <sup>a</sup>					56.44(34.21)
Present					1340
Absent					

Note. Descriptive statistics of the control variables are based on the largest subsample of married and divorced parents. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work.

<sup>a</sup>Variable only applicable on the divorced parents.

*Presence of the target child in the household.* The presence of the child in the respondent's household refers only to the selected target child of the divorced parents. This variable is continuous, expressed as the percentage of time that the child was living with the respondent, based on two sources of information. First, respondents indicated answered "yes" or "no" to the following two statements: (a) He or she is never with me, and (b) he or she is permanently with me. These responses correspond to situations in which the child was living with the respondent for 0% and 100% of the time, respectively. Second, each respondent completed a monthly custody calendar indicating when the child was present in the home during the day and night for a period of 4 weeks. This number was divided by 56 (i.e., the sum of 28 day sections and 28 night sections in 4 weeks) and multiplied by 100 to obtain the percentage. The combination of these two pieces of information yielded the percentage of time that the child was present in the respondent's household. We were also able to discern up to four changes in residence arrangements since the divorce. We therefore selected the most recent residence arrangement. Based on this information, the children were present in the respondents' households for an average of 56.44% ( $SD = 34.21$ ) of the time.

### 2.3.3 Analytical strategy

The data were analyzed separately to test the four hypotheses, using logistic regression. The first three analyses (Hypotheses 1–3) included educational level, respondent's age, number of children in the household, age of the youngest child, and experience of parental divorce as control variables. Working hours per week and household income were added into the analysis sequentially to investigate the actual effects of these potentially mediating variables on the relationship between marital or relationship status and the two types of work-family conflict. Given the size of the model analyses and the relatively modest impact of these two variables on the comparisons, the results of these sequential model structures are presented in Appendix 7.3 (Tables 7.2-7.5). Acknowledging the gendered nature of this phenomenon, we also split the first three analyses for both genders, in accordance with analytical strategy applied in the study by van der Heijden, Poortman, and Van der Lippe (2016). The fourth analysis, which corresponds to Hypotheses 4a and 4b, compares genders within the group of divorced parents. Specifically with regard to WIF, gender and working hours are included in the first model, with the interaction

added to the second model. We applied the same procedure to the FIW models including the presence of the child. Educational level, respondent's age, number of children in the household, age of the youngest child, and experience of parental divorce are included as control variables. For this hypothesis as well, household income was added into the analysis sequentially as a separate potentially mediating variable (see Appendix 7.4). For all analyses, missing values were excluded using listwise deletion. Due to missing values, the first analysis was performed on 1,754 cases (742 men and 1,012 women). The second and third analyses were performed on 1,729 cases (739 men and 990 women), and the fourth was performed on 991 cases (363 men and 628 women).

## 2.4 Results

We start by presenting the final results of the logistic regression analyses of the first three hypotheses, broken down by gender (Table 2.2). To test Hypotheses 1a and 1b (concerning the impact of divorce on the work-family conflict), we compare married and divorced parents with regard to whether they did or did not report experiencing WIF and FIW (Table 2.2). The results revealed no difference between the married and divorced fathers in the likelihood of experiencing WIF and FIW, and controlling for background characteristics. With regard to the mothers, divorced mothers were significantly more likely than married mothers were to experience both WIF and FIW sometimes or often.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b (see Table 2.2) compare the living conditions of families with regard to their likelihood of experiencing WIF and FIW by distinguishing between parents who were single and those who were coupled. The analysis revealed no significant difference for WIF between fathers who were living alone and those who were residing with a partner, although they did indicate that single mothers were significantly more likely to encounter WIF than were mothers who were living with a partner. With regard to FIW, however, the results revealed an opposite gender effect: Single fathers were significantly more likely than coupled fathers were to encounter this type of conflict. No significant difference was found between single and coupled mothers with regard to FIW, although this effect did approach significance ( $p = .053$ ).

History of divorce is taken into account by contrasting divorced parents who were single, divorced parents who were repartnered, and married parents with regard to WIF (Hypothesis 3a)



Table 2.2  
 Logistic Regression Analysis of WIF and FIW Splitted for Gender of Comparison 1, 2, and 3

	H1a WIF		H1b FIW		H2a WIF		H2b FIW		H3a WIF		H3a WIF		H3b FIW		H3b FIW	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Intercept	0.37	0.52	0.11	0.10*	0.44	0.31	0.05*	0.06**	0.42	0.30	0.38	0.38	0.04*	0.06**	0.02*	0.10*
Comparison 1																
Married	1.13	0.66**	0.78	0.56*												
Divorced																
Comparison 2																
Single					0.86	1.83**	4.33**	1.65								
Couple																
Comparison 3																
Single									0.82	2.06**	0.91	1.63*	3.71**	2.09*	5.74**	1.35
Repartnered									0.91	1.26	1.10	0.79	0.65	1.55	1.55	0.64
Married									0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.05	1.02	1.05	1.02
Respondent's age																
Educational level									1.10	0.94	1.10	0.94	0.72	0.90	0.72	0.90
Primary	1.11	0.85	0.55	0.92	1.08	0.97	0.66	0.96	0.76	1.20	0.76	1.20	0.53	0.98	0.53	0.98
Secondary	0.76	1.12	0.43*	1.00	0.75	1.22	0.50*	1.02								
Higher																
Number of children	0.84	1.02	0.89	1.00	0.85	1.05	0.90	1.05	0.85	1.03	0.85	1.03	0.90	1.01	0.90	1.01
Age youngest child	1.00	0.98	0.93*	0.91**	1.00	0.99	0.89**	0.92**	1.00	0.98	1.00	0.98	0.88**	0.92**	0.88**	0.92**
Parental divorce																
Yes	0.90	0.88	1.92	0.93	0.90	0.90	1.86	0.97	0.90	0.88	0.90	0.88	1.86	0.91	1.86	0.91
No																
Working hours	1.04**	1.03	1.01	1.01	1.04**	1.03**	1.01	1.01	1.04**	1.03**	1.04**	1.03**	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
Household income	1.00	1.00	1.00*	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
$\chi^2$ (df)	52.84*	38.53**	18.25*	24.37**	52.58**	43.85*	33.09**	18.77*	52.89*	45.86**	52.89*	45.86**	34.44**	21.80*	34.44**	21.80*
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke	0.092	0.050	0.058	0.043	0.092	0.058	0.103	0.035	0.092	0.060	0.092	0.060	0.108	0.040	0.108	0.040

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.  
 \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

and FIW (Hypothesis 3b). The results of two separate equations are presented in Table 2.2: one taking married parents as the reference category and the other taking repartnered parents as the reference category. This allows comparisons among all three groups. In this case as well, the results indicated nuances in the effect of divorce history when investigating the genders separately. For WIF, neither equation revealed evidence of significant differences among the various categories of fathers. In addition, we found that single mothers were significantly more likely to experience WIF than repartnered and married mothers were. It is also interesting to note the lack of significant differences between married and repartnered mothers. For FIW, however, the results indicated that single fathers were significantly more likely to encounter this conflict than were either married fathers or repartnered fathers. For mothers, the results revealed only that single mothers are significantly more likely to experience FIW, as compared to married mothers, with no significant difference in the same likelihood between single and repartnered mothers, or between repartnered and married mothers. These results suggest that a complex mechanism of gender and marital or partner status is at play in the experience of work-family conflict.

Finally, Hypotheses 4a and 4b concern the gender-based difference in the likelihood of experiencing WIF and FIW within the group of divorced parents. In Model 1 for both WIF and FIW, the results suggest that divorced mothers were significantly more likely to experience WIF than divorced fathers were (Table 2.3). The models included the same control variables. In the first model for WIF, the main effect of working hours was significant, meaning that every additional hour that divorced parents work per week increased the likelihood of encountering WIF (as opposed to not encountering it) by a factor of 1.03. The results also revealed that the presence of the child in the household was significant, with a factor of 1.01. In addition, the results from Model 2, which includes the interaction between gender and working hours for WIF, revealed no significant effect. The significant gender effect in Model 1 disappeared in Model 2 for WIF, although the main effect of working hours (and the presence of the child) persisted. The results from Model 2 for FIW, which includes the main and interaction effects between gender and the presence of the child in the household, revealed no significant effect on the likelihood of experiencing FIW. The significant main effect of gender in Model 1 persisted in Model 2 for FIW.

Table 2.3

*Logistic Regression Analysis of WIF and FIW of Comparison 4*

	H4a WIF		H4b FIW	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Intercept	0.31	0.36	0.05**	0.07*
Comparison 4				
Divorced father	0.63*	0.40	0.44**	0.18**
Divorced mother				
Working hours	1.03**	1.02**	1.01	1.01
Presence of the child	1.01*	1.01*	1.00	1.00
Divorced father*working hours		1.01		
Divorced father*presence child				1.02
Respondent's age	1.00	1.00	1.06*	1.06*
Educational level				
Primary	0.87	0.87	0.59	0.60
Secondary	1.06	1.04	0.77	0.79
Higher				
Number of children	0.94	0.95	1.11	1.09
Age youngest child	1.00	1.00	0.90**	0.89**
Parental divorce				
Yes	1.09	1.09	1.26	1.24
No				
Time since separation				
0-2 years	0.87	0.87	1.15	1.08
3 years or more				
Household income	1.00	1.00	1.00**	1.00**
$\chi^2$ (df)	43.01** (11)	43.92** (12)	42.58** (11)	45.94** (12)
$R^2$ of Nagelkerke	0.057	0.058	0.080	0.086

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## 2.5 Discussion

Both work and family are central spheres of life, and balancing them involves a complex interaction between demands and resources. Previous research has demonstrated that single and married couples differ in this respect, with single parents being particularly vulnerable. Despite these findings, the number of studies focusing on the experience of work-family conflict among single and divorced parents relative to that of married parents has remained limited. Moreover, studies that do address this topic often include previously divorced parents in categories of currently single or currently married parents, without taking the impact of a divorce

into account. A specific focus on divorced parents is imperative, given the high rate of divorce in contemporary society. This study is one of the first to investigate whether and how divorced parents differ with regard to work-family conflict. This study also addresses the necessity of making comparisons both between and within genders, thereby acknowledging the complex cultural and social mechanism underlying this possible gender difference. According to a persistent, strong belief, women are in a more vulnerable position when combining work- and family-related demands relative to men, who tend to be more focused on the work-related demands.

First, with regard to the difference between married and divorced parents, we predicted that divorced parents would report experiencing more WIF (Hypothesis 1a) and more FIW (Hypothesis 1b) than married parents would. This expectation was based on the negative impact of divorce on the interrelated burdens of the household, children, and work, as well as on the availability of resources for meeting these demands. Partly in correspondence with our expectations, the results revealed that divorced mothers were significantly more likely to experience WIF and FIW than married mothers were, but this difference was not found for fathers. This suggests that the experience of work-family conflict is affected by the distinction between these two family constellations only for mothers. The combination of being divorced and being a mother apparently creates a specific context that leads to more conflict between work and family. Divorced mothers have fewer resources available, thereby leading to financial downturn, and they face higher pressure to work more hours to overcome such financial downturns and organize their separated households, which are still connected with those of their former marriages (de Regt et al., 2013; Emery, 2011; Jansen et al., 2009). An interesting side note with regard to both genders is the argument that the amount of time that has elapsed since separation could affect the level of work-family conflict in terms of adjustment (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). In general, the reasoning is that, as time passes following a divorce, the individuals involved become better able to adjust to the situation and obtain a new or different balance between work and family life. Despite wide variations in individual adjustment, previous studies have reported that the first 2 years after a divorce tend to be the most chaotic (Amato, 2010; Halford & Sweeper, 2013). In this study, however, we found no significant effect on the likelihood of divorced parents to experience WIF and FIW when controlling for the number of

years since separation (Hypothesis 4). More data and research on the work-family balance of recently separated parents is needed to enhance understanding of these dynamics.

Second, the expectation that single parents would experience more WIF (Hypothesis 2a) and more FIW (Hypothesis 2b) than partnered parents (including parents still in the original marriage and divorced but repartnered parents) could not be fully confirmed. We argued that the presence of a partner in the household would affect the parent in terms of financial resources and the ease of managing household and child-related responsibilities. The results for WIF revealed that single mothers were significantly more likely to experience WIF than were mothers with a partner (original or new). The opposite gender difference was found for FIW, with single fathers being significantly more likely to experience FIW than fathers with a partner (original or new). In a series of meta-analyses, Byron (2005) reported that single parents tend to have more WIF and FIW than married parents do. Our results identified opposite effects for WIF and FIW for both genders. For WIF, having a partner apparently has a greater impact on mothers, whereas having a greater impact of fathers in terms of FIW. This is in line with the reasoning that mothers have a greater sense of responsibility for family-related demands than do fathers, whose sense of responsibility is more focused on work-related demands (Bakker & Karsten, 2013; van der Heijden et al., 2016; Voydanoff, 2002).

Third, given that the literature does not offer much insight into how the experience of divorce might affect work-family balance, we found it necessary to consider the diversity within the group of currently partnered parents. To this end, we distinguished repartnered parents from married parents, analyzed them as separate groups, and compared them to single divorced parents with regard to their experiences of WIF (Hypothesis 3a) and FIW (Hypothesis 3b). The findings indicate that single mothers are more likely to encounter WIF than repartnered or married mothers are. The same result was found for FIW, but especially for fathers. With regard to this type of conflict for mothers, only single and married mothers differed significantly in their likelihood of experiencing FIW. The finding that currently repartnered parents did not differ significantly from married parents further suggests that the presence of a partner in the household does somehow shield the parent from being confronted with interfering work and family demands. Furthermore, the results revealed an additional specific gender sensitivity, in which having a partner has a greater impact in terms of reducing the inference of work with family for mothers, and in reducing the interference of family with work for fathers. Of specific

relevance to fathers, the boundary management of men changes after divorce, due to the absence of the female buffer for family demands. In many cases, divorced fathers suddenly need to learn and take on household chores that their former wives previously performed when they were still together, thereby changing and adding to the demands that they face at home (Kruyfhoft, Mortelmans, & Torfs, 2010). This finding is also in line with the review of Coles (2015), who reported a clear tendency of men to perform more household and childcare responsibilities when there is no female partner in the home. The differences between divorced single fathers and divorced single mothers in our results signal a need for further research to understand how this asymmetrical permeability between the work and family roles emerges in the life of divorced parents. It is also interesting to note that, across all comparisons, WIF was strongly affected by working hours, with FIW being strongly affected by the age of the youngest child.

Finally, with regard to diversity within the category of divorced parents, we expected that working hours would have a greater negative impact on WIF for divorced mothers than it would for divorced fathers (Hypothesis 4a) and that the presence of the child in the home would have a greater negative impact on FIW for divorced mothers than it would for divorced fathers (Hypothesis 4b). Although these expectations were not confirmed, the results did provide insight with regard to main effects. With regard to the main effect of gender on the disadvantage of women, divorced women were more likely to experience WIF and FIW than divorced men were. After including the interaction between gender and working hours for WIF, however, the significant gender effect reduced to borderline significance ( $p = .08$ ). In correspondence to findings from previous studies, gender clearly emerged as an important influencing factor, with women being more likely to experience WIF and FIW than men were. According to our results, there are no differences between divorced fathers and divorced mothers with regard to the effect of working hours and presence of the child in the household. It could therefore be argued that typical consequences of divorce (e.g., mothers being more likely to gain primary physical custody and to increase their working hours and working frequency) play no crucial role in explaining this difference. The gender-based differences identified in this study must therefore be explained through global argumentation. *The Second Shift* by Hochschild and Machung (2012) comes to mind in this regard: All working women experience a double burden to some extent,

due to the combination of paid employment and the responsibilities associated with the household and children.

Among divorced parents, the main effect of the hours spent working had a significant impact on WIF. This result is consistent with findings from previous research that work characteristics (e.g., working hours) are more strongly related to WIF than they are to FIW (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). The literature reflects a consensus that time invested in work reduces the time available for participating in the family. In other words, this is a time-based conflict, given the number of hours that must be spent at work, which could thus not be spent on the family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Tenbrunsel, Brett, Maoz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995; Voydanoff, 2005). More surprising findings within the group of divorced parents included the nonsignificance of the main effect of the presence of the child in the household on FIW and the significance of this effect on WIF. This finding was opposite to our expectations based on the literature, which reasons that the presence of the child in an individual's household could be interpreted as a demanding family characteristic. It could therefore be expected to influence the likelihood of experiencing FIW, but to have less or no effect on WIF. One possible explanation for our surprising finding could be that divorced parents who have children in their custody for more time have more work days on which they might come home after work too tired to take care of their households or to report not having enough time after work. This corresponds to the two components of FIW measured in the DiF survey.

Although this study provides new insight, it is subject to several important limitations. First, the data from the Divorce in Flanders database are cross-sectional. Our variables of interest were thus measured at one particular moment, which makes it impossible to determine causal relationships or to observe dynamic change over time. Second, although the Divorce in Flanders database is the first of its kind in Belgium, it was necessarily limited to the Dutch-speaking part of the country. We strongly recommend additional data collection and studies on the daily life of divorcees, including in other countries. This would make it possible to consider national contexts that might shape the balance between work and family life. Additionally, the data were collected almost 10 years ago, although they are still considered representative, as no major changes have been observed in legal, economic, cultural, or demographic aspects in Flanders and Belgium since that time. Third, we were not able to add more important work characteristics in the analyses, as they were not available in the data set. Previous research has demonstrated that other aspects

(e.g., flexible working hours, the degree of autonomy in the job, and a supportive work culture) have an important influence on work-family balance (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). This should be addressed in future research as sufficient data become available. Finally, this study focuses on conflict between work and family, suggesting that the competing demands of work and family inevitably lead to problems. As various scholars have noted, however, work and family can also enrich each other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Although this was not the focus of this study, it could offer an alternative point of view for future research concerning the specific antecedents and characteristics of divorced parents and their management of work and family demands.

In conclusion, this study makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by offering new insight into the nature of work-family conflict in different family constellations. It is one of the first to direct an explicit focus on the experience of work-family conflicts by divorced parents. Contrary to our expectations, the results suggest a complex interplay of marital status, relationship status, gender, and both types of work-family conflict. For mothers, both marital status and relationship status after divorce have an impact on work–family conflict. For fathers, it is the actual presence of a partner in the household that plays a greater role in determining their interference of family-related activities with work. Having a female partner seems to offer an important buffer for meeting family demands for men, which change profoundly after a divorce. Despite the fact that single fathers constitute a small share of the population (Livingston, 2013), the results of this study emphasize the importance of adequate support for single fathers after a divorce (e.g., family-friendly work environments and work arrangements that should be equally accessible to single fathers as they are to mothers). We therefore suggest that research should pay more attention to the category of single fathers, as they experience more interference of family with work-related activities than is the case for married, divorced, and repartnered fathers. This study also reveals that a form of social stratification remains with regard to work-family balance: Gender and single parenthood still strongly determine how conflicts between work and families demands can be managed. Although Belgium has a relatively generous policy for leave schedules (e.g., maternity/paternity leave and parental leave) that clearly contributes to the ability to obtain a balanced work and family life (Merla et al., 2018; Dimitri Mortelmans & Frans, 2017), their availability and the ability to use them is focused primarily on women, and they are not adapted to the marital or relationship status of the parent involved. Nevertheless,



flexible work arrangements are known to improve the work outcomes of single parents significantly, as found by ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010). We concur with their emphasis on the importance of appropriate work–life policies according to the employee’s household structure, especially for single individuals (including single parents). This study therefore stresses the importance of considering the interaction between marital status, relationship status, and gender at the level of policy matters for future scientific research. It also highlights the need for additional research to study the dynamics behind this phenomenon in more detail.

## 2.6 References

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# Chapter 3

EXPERIENCING WORK-FAMILY  
ENRICHMENT AS A SEPARATED  
PARENT IN AUSTRALIA





# Chapter 3 Experiencing work-family enrichment as a separated parent in Australia

## 3.1 Introduction

In an adult's life, a substantial amount of time and energy is spent on performing the employee and parental roles, which can be experienced as a challenge to balancing work and family life. For separated parents, the balance between both central life spheres can become even more complex. This interaction is often addressed as a conflictual situation, and previous research has identified a complex interplay of marital status, post-divorce relationship status, and gender in the experience of work-family conflict (Van den Eynde, Vercruyssen, & Mortelmans, 2019). However, more recent research has acknowledged a positive interaction between work and family, which can be scientifically defined as work-family enrichment (Gatrell et al., 2013). The term work-family enrichment refers to "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role" (Greenhouse & Powell, 2006, p. 73). Several studies have pointed out that enrichment is associated with more work and family satisfaction, less turnover, and improved mental and physical health (for a review, see McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010; Zhang, Xu, Jin, & Ford, 2018).

Previous research concerning work-family balance acknowledged the possible influence of family composition, but it was usually included as a control variable and only distinguished between married or partnered couples and singles, which ignores the dynamics and nuances in these differences (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016; Hunter, Perry, Carlson, & Smith, 2010; Rastogi & Chaudhary, 2018; van Steenbergen, Kluwer, & Karney, 2014). One meta-analysis bundled the antecedents of work-family enrichment and included marital status as a resource-providing family characteristic. The authors found that married (or cohabiting) individuals reported more of the specific enrichment direction from family to work than did those who were not married (Lapierre et al., 2018). The argument is theoretically driven and states that a person's family composition might influence the availability and access to certain enriching resources (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Lapierre et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). However, a clear view on the nuances within these differences and the mechanism behind them is still missing.

The category of divorced/separated parents forms an interesting group when looking at work-family enrichment, as both work and family life can be shaken up by the decision to end a relationship. In terms of the availability and access to resources in particular, they might experience challenges that are unique from those of other parents. It has been argued that divorced/separated parents should not be equated with single parents, although this is often done (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Nomaguchi, 2012; Van den Eynde et al., 2019). For example, repartnering, which can be interpreted as the restoration of some family resources (such as financial resources, parental support, and sharing household responsibilities), is an important factor to consider, as the relationship status after separation or divorce is not automatically single parenthood (Voydanoff, 2002).

This research was conducted with Australian data. The Australian work and family context is characterized by an increase in more diverse and non-standard work settings, but also higher levels of overall job quality and average real earnings compared with the OECD participating countries (Campbell, Macdonald, & Charlesworth, 2019; Charlesworth & Malone, 2017; Mares, 2016; OECD, 2016). Although there is raised attention to work-family balance at the level of Australian social policy and culture, an inequality has been noted (Watson, 2016). Australian's initiatives that enhance a healthy balance between work and family commitments (such as family-friendly work culture, workfare benefits, and parental leave) are not always flexible in use or easily accessible for all Australian societal groups (Spies-Butcher, 2014; Wilson, Spies-Butcher, Stebbing, & St John, 2013). For example, research has pointed out a gender inequality, as these arrangements mostly target mothers (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Todd & Binns, 2013). In the current study, attention can be drawn to the access to and use of enrichment resources depending on family composition. These circumstances with social expectations, structures, and policies define the work and family life of the Australian population and their ability to manage the interaction between both (Bass, Butler, Grzywacz, & Linney, 2009; Ford et al., 2007). Regarding contemporary Australian family life, the finding that work-family enrichment and adequate parenting behaviours have a supportive relationship contributes to understanding the reciprocal link between the work and family environments (Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016). Moreover, in international reports of the OECD (2017) the work-life balance of Australian employees scored below the OECD average in a negative sense.

The aim of the current study is to provide new insights on work-family enrichment in separated families in Australia. First, this study contributes to the work-family scientific literature by examining whether married or cohabiting parents differ from divorced, separated, or split-cohabitation parents in their experience of work-family enrichment. Second, the study investigates whether just having a partner is important, by making the distinction between singles after a break-up and couples. Finally, the study takes into account the existing diversity in post-separated relationship status by differentiating between single and repartnered parents. With these three research areas, we fill the scientific gap with empirical evidence and strengthen the theoretical explanation behind this phenomenon. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that this topic is gendered, so answers to the research questions will be formulated separately for men and women. This study considers detailed information about a wide range of family and work characteristics of married/cohabiting parents ( $n = 3993$ ) and divorced/separated parents ( $n = 1455$ ) by drawing on the quantitative data of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), collected between 2004 and 2016 in Australia.

## 3.2 Literature overview

### 3.2.1 Theoretical perspective

With work-family enrichment defined as an improvement in quality of life by role experiences (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), the theoretical origin of work-family enrichment is built upon the functional role theory (Biddle, 1986), derived from the early works of Linton (1936). The underlying mechanism of work-family enrichment is based on the principle that participating in multiple roles can be positive and rewarding (Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992; Marks, 1977; Thoits, 1983).

The specific theoretical perspective of work-family enrichment was provided by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), who stated that the quality of life in one domain (work or family) improves when there is a bidirectional transfer of resources gained from the domain of origin to the receiving domain – either work to family or family to work. Available resources can be of different types, namely skills (e.g., coping skills), psychological and physical resources (e.g., optimism), social capital (e.g., networking), flexibility (e.g., flexible work arrangements), and material resources (e.g., money). These resources can enrich the work and family domains as

assets that can be used for problem solving or coping. According to the same theoretical perspective, two ways or paths exist whereby a resource can influence the enrichment process. These are the instrumental or direct path (direct transfer of a resource) and the affective or indirect path (via positive emotions and feelings).

Thus, enrichment occurs when a person uses certain resources from one domain to enhance quality of life in the other domain. Hereby, marital and relationship status can be interpreted as a personal characteristic that enhances the provision of resources (Lapierre et al., 2018). For example, in contrast to parents without a partner, married or cohabiting individuals can use their partner's professional network to benefit their own work career (ten Brummelhuis & van der Lippe, 2010).

### 3.2.2 Hypotheses

No studies, to the best of our knowledge, have specifically investigated whether and how divorced/separated and married/cohabiting parents differ in their experience of work-family enrichment. Thus, the question remains whether individuals in these family constellations differ in terms of work-family enrichment.

First, we will compare married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents. Based on the theoretical mechanism of available resources provided from the work and family domains, it can be stated that divorced and separated parents suffer a more complex situation, which makes the access to available resources more difficult, and they are confronted with more complex demands than married or cohabiting parents are. Compared with married and cohabiting dual-earner families, divorced/separated parents become separately responsible for meeting the demands of their own household and care for their children according to the applied children's residence arrangement. Unique to divorced/separated families is the social complexity of the persistent connection between the two former partners, although they now function separately from each other both physically and emotionally. For example, the practical and pedagogical arrangements regarding the children require a certain degree of communication and appointments between both ex-partners (Emery, 2011). In light of these arguments, our first hypothesis is that *divorced/separated parents experience less work-family enrichment than married/cohabiting parents do* (Hypothesis 1).

Second, a comparison is made between single after break-up and coupled parents (married and/or repartnered). This enables investigation of the impact of relationship status on the level of work-family enrichment, regardless of being married/cohabiting or divorced/separated. The argumentation can be made that the presence of a partner in the household can maintain or restore the resources that come with having a partner. For example, one can rely on the partner's social network; a healthy financial situation can be obtained when both partners are working; and support in fulfilling household, childcare, and work-related demands can be found. Previous research has found a positive link between work-family enrichment and relationship satisfaction of both partners, with perceived partner support and positive behaviour playing a crucial mediating role (Liu, Ngo, & Cheung, 2016; van Steenbergen et al., 2014). As such, the second hypothesis states that *single parents experience less work-family enrichment than do coupled parents* (either married or repartnered) (Hypothesis 2).

Third, to disentangle the differences in work-family enrichment in depth, a distinction is made between married/cohabiting, repartnered, and single separated parents. More specifically, we ask whether being separated or not having a partner is most important in influencing the experience of work-family enrichment. Based on previous arguments and the theoretical perspective, we can hypothesise that being single after a break-up is the least favourable situation for experiencing work-family enrichment, due to being confronted with a twofold underlying social complexity. Their family context is characterised by having no partner to rely on, having their own household, and at the same time maintaining a connection with their former household. For repartnered parents, one aspect of this twofold complexity is removed by having a new partner to rely on. Married/cohabiting parents are able to use the full resources provided by having a steady partner in the original family. Taking these arguments together, Hypothesis 3 states that *single separated parents experience the least work-family enrichment, followed by repartnered parents and married/cohabiting parents*.

### 3.2.3 Gender differences

In addition to these still unclear nuances in the differences on the level of family composition, gender-related dynamics underlying the balancing act between work and family make this issue even more complex. With gender often included as a moderator in relation to different

antecedents and consequences, men and women are said to experience their work and family roles differently (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Lapierre et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). According to gender role theory, being a man or a woman entails different expected social roles. Men are expected to be the main breadwinners of the family, and women are expected to take primary responsibility for the household and children (Craig & Mullan, 2009; Eagly et al., 2000; Gali Cinamon & Rich, 2010). Despite the more recent gender role shift, with women increasingly participating in the labour market and contributing to the financial situation of their families, the family role is still interpreted as being more salient to women and the work role more salient to men (Craig, Brown, & Jun, 2020; del Carmen Huerta et al., 2011; Dimitri Mortelmans et al., 2016). Craig et al. (2020) identified the reflection of parental gender roles in the Australian context of policy, arrangements, and social norms. The researchers described Australia as a liberal, market-oriented welfare state and highly familialistic, but this interacted with gendered parental workloads.

Applied to the work-family enrichment subject, a person's gender can influence their level of enrichment through the access to and use of resources (Wayne et al., 2007). For example, flexible work arrangements are more accepted and used by women than by men (McNall et al., 2010). As such, the experience of work-family enrichment is often expected to have stronger effects on women than on men. However, research reports very inconsistent results, with often weak or no differences, which calls the moderating position of gender into question (Lapierre et al., 2018). Methodological issues could be the reason for this (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Furthermore, both genders experience changing family events such as family dissolutions differently, as confirmed by existing sociological literature (Craig et al., 2020; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Lapierre et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). For example, in terms of employment and the financial consequences of divorce, divorced persons are found to have fewer economic resources in comparison with their married counterparts. This finding is especially true for women. Men, who mostly work full time during a marriage, continue to do so when a divorce occurs. Consequently, they do not suffer as much from this possible financial downturn. Women, who work less on a full-time basis during marriage, often have to increase their working hours when they divorce to maintain a healthy financial situation (Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins, & Bittman, 2007; de Regt et al., 2013). Australian demographic research has also investigated the likelihood of men and women repartnering after a family dissolution.

Men were found to have a higher likelihood of repartnering, and repartnering more quickly, than were women. This trend was also found in European and Canadian research (Hughes, 2000; Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2013; Wu & Schimmele, 2005).

### 3.3 Method

#### 3.3.1 Data

The current study used the LSAC, which is a large-scale, longitudinal, and multi-actor database in collaboration with the Australian Department of Social Services, the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It includes information on the development and well-being of 10 000 children and their families. A representative sample of parents was selected from different families of all areas in Australia. The first parent was selected as the parent who knew the study child the best, most commonly the mother. The second partner, if present, was another adult who had a parental relationship with the study child or was the partner of the first parent, most commonly the father. The LSAC currently consists of seven waves, with the first wave collected in 2003 and from then on repeated bi-annually. Every wave consists of two cohorts: in the first wave (2003-2004), the first cohort includes around 5000 children aged zero to one, and the second cohort includes 5000 children aged four to five. In the last available wave, the first cohort is between 12 and 13 years old, and the second cohort between 16 and 17.

A subsample was selected to perform the current research. As the measurement of work-family enrichment is adopted in each wave, we could have performed a longitudinal (fixed or random effects) regression. However, this choice would have been hampered by the dynamic nature of families. As we aimed to compare different family types in this study, we decided to use only the latest available wave (wave 7). We considered family dynamics, as we used the panel data to reconstruct family decomposition and recomposition. Wave 7 had a response rate of 78.3% for Cohort B and 73.9% for Cohort K, resulting in 3381 and 3089 interviews, respectively. Non-response and family forms excluded from our models decreased our analytical sample. The final analytical subsample consisted of 5448 respondents, 73.2% (3993) of whom were married or cohabiting and 1455 of whom were divorced or had separated from a cohabiting relationship. Of the separated/divorced parents, 492 were single (9.0%) and 963 repartnered (17.8%); 3309

were mothers (60.7%), and 2139 were fathers (39.3%). The data from both cohorts were used, accounting for the children's age differences by controlling for them in the analysis.

### 3.3.2 Measures

*Work-family enrichment.* The measurement of work-family enrichment is derived from Marshall and Barnett (1993) Work-family Gains Scale. The scale assesses the positive interaction between employment and parenting (e.g., "How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements? The fact that I work makes me a better parent") and themselves (e.g., "Having both work and family responsibilities: Makes me a more well-rounded person"), with three items for each subscale. The respondents answer the questions on a five-point rating scale with the categorical labels from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An individual's eventual score is calculated by taking the mean score of the six items. The scale has a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of 0.87.

*Partnership composition.* We used three comparisons in this study to test our hypotheses. The first comparison was between married or cohabiting couples and divorced, separated, or split-cohabitation couples. To determine the parents' relationship status, we started from their marital status in wave 1 and used the longitudinal information in the panel to determine their relationship status in wave 7. The broken relationships were identified based on the factual situation of whether the partner lived in the same household and if respondents considered the other parent to be their partner. For the second comparison, we used the household composition as the basis of comparison: single parents were compared with parents living together with a partner (whether the original parent of the child or a new partner after the break-up). The final comparison was between single parents and intact original households and the newly constellated families. Here, we combined the previous two groups to make a three-way comparison.

Table 3.1 presents the descriptive statistics for WFE according to the different comparisons and the control variables, separately for mothers and fathers. Regarding the first comparison, married/cohabiting mothers reported a mean WFE of 3.88 and divorced/separated mothers a mean of 3.85. Similar numbers were found for the fathers, with a mean of 3.90 for married/cohabiting fathers and a mean of 3.83 for divorced/separated fathers. Second, mothers who remained single after break-up ( $M = 3.91$ ) experienced more WFE than did partnered



mothers ( $M = 3.86$ ). Single ( $M = 3.88$ ) and partnered fathers ( $M = 3.89$ ) reported almost the same level of WFE. Finally, for the third comparison, single mothers were again found to report the highest level of WFE ( $M = 3.91$ ), followed by still married or cohabiting mothers ( $M = 3.88$ ) and repartnered mothers ( $M = 3.82$ ). For fathers, still married or cohabiting fathers reporting the most WFE ( $M = 3.90$ ), followed by those who were single after break-up ( $M = 3.88$ ) and repartnered ( $M = 3.82$ ).

*Educational level.* Educational level is a combination of information about the years of education. This leads to three categories, namely primary education, secondary education, and higher education. Of the mothers, 6.55% had completed primary education, 7.85% had completed secondary education, and 85.94% had completed higher education. Of the fathers, 7.11% had completed primary education, 6.92% had completed secondary education, and 85.98% had completed higher education.

*Age of the parent.* The average age of the mothers in the sample was 45.64 years, and that of the fathers was 45.86 years. Because we used data from Cohorts B and K, children's ages are limited to 12/13 and 16/17, which implies that parents are older. A consequence is that most families have a complete fertility history at that age, which also explains why the families under study are, on average, larger.

*Number of children in the household.* The number of children present in the household is derived from a question asking how many siblings the child has in the household. This variable includes all types of siblings, such as full biological, step, half, adopted, and foster siblings. A plus-one operation is done to include the selected child as well. The average number of children in the household for mothers was 2.42 and for fathers was 2.54.

*Age of youngest child in the household.* Respondents were asked to indicate the age of the youngest child in the household. The average age of the youngest child in the mothers' household was 11.96 years and in the fathers' household was 11.56 years.

*Indigenous.* The indigenous status of the respondent was determined by the question, "Is the family member of Aboriginal origin, Torres Strait Islander origin, or both?" The answer was registered as *No*; *Yes, Aboriginal*; *Yes, Torres Strait Islander*; or *Yes, both*. For analyses, these were recategorized as yes or no. Of the mothers and fathers, 1.36% and 0.94%, respectively, were of indigenous origin.

*Born in Australia.* The respondents' country of birth was recorded in the questionnaire and resulted in two categories for the analysis, namely yes for born in Australia or no. Of the mothers and fathers in the sample, 80.48% and 78.92%, respectively, were born in Australia.

*State.* The respondents' state of residence was categorized as one of the six states of Australia (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania), and two additional main areas: Northern territory and Australia Central Territory. For both mothers and fathers, the majority of the respondents lived in New South Wales (29.25%<sub>M</sub>; 31.00%<sub>F</sub>), Victoria (21.97%<sub>M</sub>; 23.47%<sub>F</sub>), and Queensland (23.87%<sub>M</sub>; 20.94%<sub>F</sub>).

*Household income.* The household income of the respondents was calculated as the sum of the usual weekly income of parent 1, parent 2, and other adults in the household, and was the imputed version. As a continuous variable, the average household income was 2830.96 for the mothers and 3139.35 for the fathers. We used the imputed version of the income variable, as this is considered to be statistically superior to the original one (Mullan, Daraganova, & Baker, 2015).

*Working hours.* The number of working hours per week was defined as the amount of hours the respondent usually spends working each week at all jobs. If this was less than one hour, the response was transformed to zero. To test for non-linearity, working hours squared was included as a covariate. On average, the female respondents worked 31.86 hours per week. The average was 45.30 hours per week for the fathers.

*Level of job security.* Respondents answered on a four-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (*very insecure*) to 4 (*very secure*), how secure they felt in their present job. The average level of job security in the subsample of the mothers was 3.22. The fathers' average was 1.89.

*Freedom to decide how to work.* Respondents indicated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I have a lot of freedom to decide how I do my own work." On a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), the average was 3.61 for mothers and 3.86 for fathers.

Table 3.1

*Descriptive Statistics for all Comparisons and Variables (N = 5448)*

	Mothers (N = 3309, 60.7%)		Fathers (N = 2139, 39.3%)	
	<i>Mean WFE</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean WFE</i>	<i>N</i>
Comparison 1				
Married/cohabiting	3.88	2198	3.90	1795
Divorced/separated	3.85	1111	3.83	344
Comparison 2				
Single after break-up	3.91	443	3.88	49
Partnered	3.86	2866	3.89	2090
Comparison 3				
Single after break-up	3.91	443	3.88	49
Repartnered after break-up	3.82	668	3.82	295
Still married or cohabiting	3.88	2198	3.90	1795
	<i>Mean - %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean - %</i>	<i>N</i>
Educational level				
Primary education	6.55%	216	7.11%	151
Secondary education	7.85%	248	6.92%	147
Higher education	85.94%	2836	85.98%	1827
Age of the parent	45.64	3308	45.86	2139
Number of children	2.42	3309	2.54	2139
Age of the youngest child	11.96	3309	11.56	2139
Indigenous (Yes)	1.36%	45	0.94%	20
Born in Australia (Yes)	80.48%	2663	78.92%	1688
State				
New South Wales	29.25%	968	31.00%	663
Victoria	21.97%	727	23.47%	502
Queensland	23.87%	790	20.94%	448
Southern Australia	7.10%	235	6.50%	139
Western Australia	10.49%	347	11.27%	241
Tasmania	3.17%	105	2.66%	57
Northern territory	1.24%	41	1.12%	24
Australia Capital Territory	2.90%	96	3.04%	65
Household income	2830.96	2952	3139.35	1943
Working hours	31.86	3276	45.30	2093
Level of job security	3.22	3307	1.89	2104
Freedom to decide how to work	3.61	3309	3.86	2137

### 3.3.3 Analytical strategy

The data were analysed using linear regression analysis to test the three hypotheses. Due to the gendered nature of this issue, the analyses were performed separately for mothers and fathers. Educational level, age of the parent, number of children in the household, age of the youngest child in the household, indigenous status, born in Australia, state of residence, household income, working hours per week (+ the squared term), level of job security, and freedom to decide how to work were included as control variables, because previous research often counted these as important factors influencing the work-family balance (Lapierre et al., 2018). The original dataset was made up separately according to cohort but was adjusted by creating one subset of data for the current study. Due to the age differences of the selected children in Cohorts B and K, this variable was also included as a control variable.

## 3.4 Results

Table 3.2 presents the results of the linear regression analysis of the three hypotheses. The analysis was broken down by gender, which enabled us to gain more insights into the differences within one gender category. However, the results of the fathers should be interpreted with caution, due to the lower number of fathers in the subsample. The goodness of fit of the model, measured with  $R^2$ , shows different results according to fathers and mothers. Across the three comparisons, the proportion of total variance explained by the model for mothers is between 0.103 and 0.104. For fathers, this is between 0.074 and 0.084.

First, when looking at the analysis of hypothesis 1, which investigated the differences between married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents, the results indicate that there is no difference in WFE between both categories of family composition when controlling for background characteristics. Moreover, with this analysis done separately for both genders, no significant differences were found between either married/cohabiting and divorced/separated mothers or married/cohabiting and divorced/separated fathers.

Hypothesis 2 compared the partnership status by distinguishing between single parents after a break-up and those who have a partner (married/cohabiting and repartnered parents) and their level of WFE. The analysis showed different results depending on gender. Our attention

Table 3.2  
Regression Analysis of WIFE Split by Gender

	Comparison 1 (Ref= Married/cohabiting)		Comparison 2 (Ref= Partnered)		Comparison 3 (Ref= Still married or cohabiting)	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Intercept	2.60 ***	3.33 ***	2.54 ***	3.28 ***	2.55 ***	3.32 ***
Comparison 1 (Ref= Married/cohabiting)						
Divorced/separated	0.02	-0.04				
Comparison 2 (Ref = Partnered)						
Single after break-up			0.09 **	0.17		
Comparison 3 (Ref= Still married or cohabiting)						
Single after break-up					0.09 *	0.15
Repartnered after break-up					-0.00	-0.06
-----						
Cohort (Ref= Cohort B – age child = 12/13)						
Cohort K (age child = 16/17)	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05
Educational level (Ref=Higher education)						
Primary education	-0.03	-0.06	-0.03	-0.06	-0.03	-0.05
Secondary education	-0.13	-0.03	-0.13 ***	-0.02	-0.12 ***	-0.02
Age of the parent	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00
Number of children	-0.04 **	0.00	-0.04 ***	0.01	-0.04 *	-0.00
Age of the youngest child	-0.01 **	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Indigenous (Yes)	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
Born in Australia (Yes)	-0.01	-0.08 *	-0.01	-0.08 *	-0.01	-0.08 *
State (Ref = New South Wales)						
Victoria	0.009	-0.06	0.01	-0.07	0.01	-0.07
Queensland	-0.05	-0.08 *	-0.04	-0.08 *	-0.04	-0.08 *
Southern Australia	-0.00	-0.05	-0.00	-0.04	-0.00	-0.05
Western Australia	-0.03	-0.07	-0.03	-0.07	-0.03	-0.07
Tasmania	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06
Northern territory	0.00	0.09	-0.00	0.09	-0.00	0.10
Australia Cap Terr	0.03	-0.16 *	0.02	-0.15 *	0.02	-0.14 *
Household income	0.07 ***	0.05 *	0.09 ***	0.05 *	0.09 ***	0.06 *
Working hours	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00
Working hours (squared)	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
Level of job security	0.06 ***	-0.05 **	0.06 ***	-0.06 ***	0.06 ***	-0.06 ***
Freedom to decide how to work	0.16 ***	0.14 ***	0.16 ***	0.14 ***	0.16 ***	0.14 ***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.103	0.084	0.104	0.074	0.104	0.075

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

was focused especially on the mothers, as the results revealed that single mothers reported significantly higher levels of WFE compared with partnered mothers. No difference was found between fathers.

Third, a comparison was made between single parents, people who repartnered after break-up, and married/cohabiting parents (Hypothesis 3). This enabled us to consider the history of separation and the present relationship status simultaneously. The results showed that the strength of the difference between the three groups differed according to gender. Mothers who were single after a break-up experienced significantly more WFE than women who were still married or cohabiting. The comparison between repartnered and married/cohabiting mothers appeared to be non-significant. Additional analysis (not presented) revealed that the comparison between single and repartnered mothers was not significant, although this effect did approach the statistical significance level of  $p \leq .05$ , with  $p = .055$ . All three comparisons for fathers concerning hypothesis 3 were again non-significant. Given the lower number of fathers included in the analysis, no emphasis will be placed on these findings. However, the current results show bigger coefficients for the fathers compared with the mothers. Additional analysis (not presented) of the interaction effect of family composition and gender show no statistical significance, which most likely indicates no difference between fathers and mothers.

Regarding the control variables, different patterns were found for fathers and mothers. For mothers, the educational level (except for the first comparison) and number of children appeared to be significantly related to the level of WFE. Furthermore, the age of the youngest child impacted the relationship with WFE significantly for mothers, but only for the first comparison. For fathers, whether they were born in Australia and their state of residence mattered. Some control variables also affected the regression for both genders, namely the household income, level of job insecurity, and the freedom to decide how to work. Our attention is drawn to the opposite effects of job security in the regression of both genders. Also the mean difference ( $M_{mothers} = 3.22$ ,  $M_{fathers} = 1.89$ ) in Table 3.1 is surprising. A possible explanation can be found in worrying more about not meeting the traditional gender role expectation of the male being the main breadwinner of the household and thus being more sensitive to the consequences of losing their job (Cheng & Chan, 2008). However, the opposite effects for mothers and fathers is more difficult to align with this possible explanation. Previous research found that job security is positively related to work-family enrichment (Bandeira, Chambel, & Carvalho, 2021) and

emphasizes the importance of including interaction factors with gender (e.g., gender ideology) due to the unclear and inconsistent results on the gender effect on job insecurity (Gaunt & Benjamin, 2007). As such, we believe that underlying characteristic differences (e.g., occupational level) between both genders in the sample are triggering this finding.

### 3.5 Discussion

In an adult's life, work and family form the central life spheres and evidently do not function separately from each other. The recent work-family enrichment concept acknowledges the positive interaction of participating in both roles. However, research investigating this experience in contemporary families remains limited and unclear. This study is the first to inquire into this issue in depth by comparing married/cohabiting with divorced/separated parents, with the reasoning that this family characteristic possibly affects the availability of, and access to, a person's resources. This group of interest offers unique insights and is important because family dissolution and alternative family formations are very common nowadays (M. Chen & Yip, 2018; Skew et al., 2009). In addition, the current study addresses the underlying gendered nature of this balancing act by focussing on the within-group differences. The lower number of male respondents in the subsample necessitates cautious interpretation for this group. We argue that it is not a difference in gender itself but rather the cultural and social role expectations that are rooted in our societies (Eagly et al., 2000; Gali Cinamon & Rich, 2010; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999).

First, the difference in work-family enrichment between married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents was investigated. We expected that divorced or separated parents would experience less work-family enrichment than married or cohabiting parents would because of the confrontation with more complex demands of work and family life and more difficult access to available resources. However, based on the analysis results, we have to reject this hypothesis. It appears that the fact of being married/cohabiting or divorced/separated has no association with the experienced level of work-family enrichment.

Second, we hypothesised that single parents after a break-up would report lower levels of work-family enrichment than would parents who have a partner (married/cohabiting and repartnered). This prediction was based on the resources that comes with having a partner

(assuming that the partner is supportive). The results revealed, contrary to this prediction, that single mothers experience more work-family enrichment than do mothers with a partner. This difference was not found for fathers. It was unexpected that single mothers would experience more work-family enrichment compared with partnered mothers. Somehow, single mothers have access to enrichment enhancers and/or can use their resources beneficially, which leads to an improved quality of life in these roles. A possible reason could be the strong social network of single parents. Previous research has indicated that single employees have a greater social network and rely more strongly on it as compensation for not having the resources that come with having a helpful partner (ten Brummelhuis & van der Lippe, 2010). Zhang et al. (2018) found the same result, although they did not distinguish between genders. They found in particular that the moderation effect of marital status on the relationship between work-family enrichment and work engagement was stronger for single than for married employees. This is possibly due to the higher level of family demands of married workers, which prevents them from being more positively engaged in work as a consequence of work-family enrichment. Furthermore, another sociological reason could be that single women engage in full-time work more. This is often necessary to ensure a healthy financial situation (de Regt et al., 2013; Jansen et al., 2009). By working full time and building a career, single mothers can obtain more access to and use the resources that come with working more in contrast with part-time working mothers. Because of this increase in resources, they can take the enrichment factors from work into family life. As a critical reflection on our respondents' characteristics, it is noteworthy to keep in mind that mothers are likely to increase their working hours when their children grow older (Baxter, 2013). Without a doubt, this tendency of single mothers requires further investigation.

Lastly, we analysed parents who repartnered and married/cohabiting parents as separate groups, and we compared them with single parents after a break-up. The findings indicate that single mothers experience significantly higher levels of work-family enrichment compared with married mothers and their repartnered counterparts (marginal non-significant difference). For fathers, no significant differences were found. These results confirm the previous reasoning that the absence of a partner in the mother's household can be compensated by relying on her stronger social network and making use of resources that come with the need to work more.



Along with the contributions of the current study, it is important to note some limitations, which indicate some suggestions for future research. First, we treated the data as cross-sectional, and the measurements are self-reported, which prevents us from making causal generalised interpretations. As a next step, future researchers should look at the dynamics over time with regard to changing family dynamics and work-family enrichment. Second, we were not able to derive information about the work-family balance of the parent who does not live in the household (e.g., the ex-partner), as this was not included in the questionnaire. Especially with the focus on divorced/separated parents, having this information about the former partner could be interesting. Third, two directions of influence between work and family are distinguished theoretically and empirically, namely work enriching family and family enriching work. However, the operationalisation in this dataset does not make this distinction. Future researchers should examine in more detail how different both directions of work-family enrichment are (Lapierre et al., 2018). Lastly, we used data of Australian families, and although their society is considered a Western country, we believe that this context is different from Europe and America; therefore, no generalisations across Western countries can be made. Cross-country comparisons are necessary to gain more insights into this issue on a global level.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature about work-family balance by offering new insights into the work-family enrichment process according to family constellation. The current study is one of the first to focus directly on this subject. Unexpectedly, the results revealed that it is not the family composition that matters, but rather whether a person has a supportive partner. In addition, it is suggested that gender plays a role, although no interpretations can be made for the fathers. Single mothers seem to benefit more from having a stronger social network and the incoming work-related resources to improve the quality of life in both roles. As McNall et al. (2010) suggested, one must not only reduce work-family conflict, as is often introduced in policy contexts, but also develop strategies to enhance work-family enrichment while incorporating knowledge about the type of, and access to, resources typically associated with gender and household structure. Because different groups (e.g., singles, parents, couples) have different resources and needs, a plea for egalitarian and adaptive arrangements at the policy level is necessary to promote enrichment according to the target group (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017). For example, flexible work arrangements and telecommunication possibilities were most beneficial for single employees in terms of helping

behaviour towards co-workers, whereas couples without children showed more helping behaviour and improved their work performance when they had access to supervisor support, and better work outcomes were associated with family-friendly organisational cultures for parents with a partner, as ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010) found. Thus, acknowledging the positive influence on quality of life when participating in family and work roles, the current study stresses the importance of taking into account the interaction between family status and gender when considering work-family enrichment for future scientific research and policy alignments.

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# Part 2

CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR





# Chapter 4

THE CONSEQUENCES OF  
WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT IN  
FAMILIES ON THE BEHAVIOR  
OF THE CHILD



# Chapter 4 The consequences of work-family conflict in families on the behavior of the child

## 4.1 Introduction

Given that work and family are the two central spheres of life for adults, belonging to a family could be expected to come into conflict with participation in the labor market. Work-family conflict can be defined as a difficulty associated with fulfilling the roles of work and family in light of incompatible demands between the two roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This concern is not an exceptional phenomenon experienced by only a few individuals, and studies have indicated a significant increase in its prevalence in recent decades (OECD, 2011; Winslow, 2005). Although several studies have confirmed the negative impact of such conflict on aspects including mental health, physical health, and direct relationships on adults (for a review, see Allen et al. 2000; Amstad et al. 2011), few studies have addressed the effect of work-life conflict on the children involved.

The current study is one of the few to examine the effect of work-family conflict on the behavior of children, while accounting for the mediating effects of parental well-being and parenting. The study of these aspects is important, given that work life, family life, and the functioning of the child are three inextricably connected aspects that are decisive in determining our everyday life. Especially with regard to the functioning of the child, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that individuals interact with their environments, which shape their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Scientific insights into the possible conflictual interaction between a parent's work and family lives, which could consequently affect the child involved emphasize the need for child and parental care at the levels of policy, institutions, and practice.

Previous studies on the consequences of work-family conflict have focused largely on the adults involved. A few studies have connected characteristics of work and family characteristics to the development of children. According to these authors, this effect is not direct, but operates through a linking mechanism, in which the main effect is mediated by parental characteristics (Bauer, Hearst, Escoto, Berge, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2012; Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi, Krug, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz,

& Westrupp, 2018). Such general findings have been strengthened by more recent longitudinal research on the long-term consequences of that difficulties in combining work and family can have on all family members (Cho & Tay, 2016; Dittrich et al., 2018; Huang, Wang, & Warrener, 2010; Vahedi et al., 2018).

First, existing evidence suggests that the experience of work-family conflict has a negative impact on parental well-being and parenting performance. Difficulty combining work and family has been associated with decreased levels of mental health (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Dinh et al., 2017; Fiksenbaum, 2014; Sharma, Dhar, & Tyagi, 2016; Yang, 2015), less satisfaction with life (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Cho & Tay, 2016), greater irritability and less warmth in interactions with children (Bauer et al., 2012; Cooklin et al., 2015; Dinh et al., 2017; Strazdins et al., 2006), and less satisfaction with performance in the parental role (Aycan & Eskin, 2005).

Second, child behavior is affected by the well-being and parenting performance of parents. Scientific literature provides clear evidence that a child's behavior is influenced by many aspects (e.g., biological foundation, direct relationships, housing environment) at a variety of levels (e.g., psychological, social, physical development). The immediate environment that is created and shared by the parents is of considerable importance to the development of the child. In this regard, previous studies have indicated that parents with mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, and distress), lower overall well-being, and less warmth and sensitivity in parenting attitudes have a negative influence on the behavior of the child (Dinh et al., 2017; Dittrich et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2010; Keyser, Ahn, & Unick, 2017; Ong et al., 2018; Strazdins et al., 2013).

The aim of the current study is to provide new insight into the influence of work-family conflict on the behavior of children. We demonstrate that this effect is mediated by parental well-being and parenting performance. A clear overview of these mediating pathways is crucial to understanding the complex, long-term processes that guide parent-child interactions in contemporary families. Furthermore, we distinguish between two types of conflict that can be experienced and examine possible differences in their relationships with mediators and outcomes. This study examines quantitative data from the Pairfam dataset, which were collected in Germany between 2015 and 2018, and which include detailed information about demographic aspects, intimate relationships, family dynamics, characteristics of work and family, and child development.

## 4.2 Literature overview

### 4.2.1 Theoretical background

In investigations of the consequences of work-family conflict on the behavior of children, scholars have argued that this relationship does not operate directly (Bauer et al., 2012; Strazdins et al., 2006; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi et al., 2018). The conceptual model tested in the current study is illustrated in path diagram presented in Figure 4.1, which depicts work-family conflict as affecting the child's behavior through parental well-being and parenting.

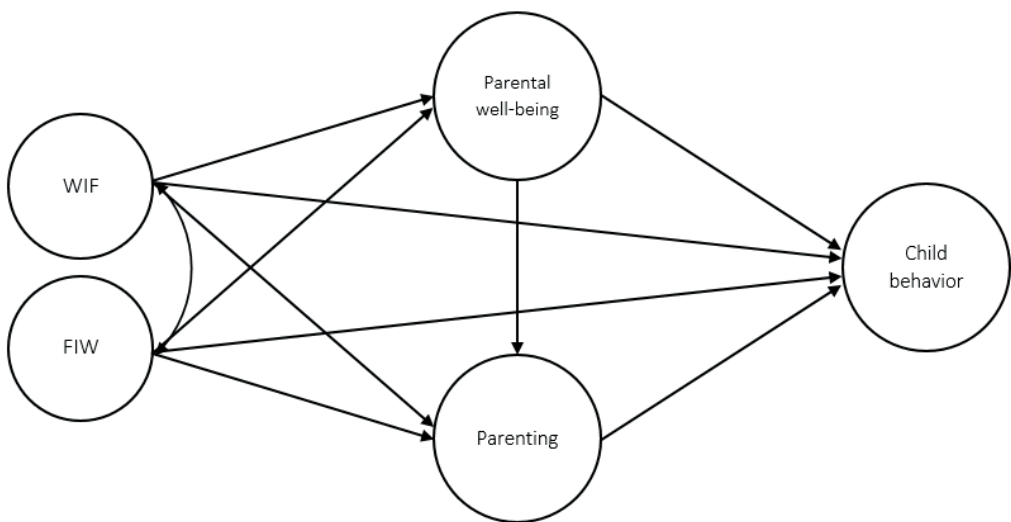


Figure 4.1. Path diagram of the conceptual model.

Work-family conflict can occur when an individual is confronted with a clash between the expectations relating to the roles of work and family. A definition of work-family conflict has been provided by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77): “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.” Within this general conceptualization, scholars investigating the work-family relationship have drawn a distinction between two directions of conflict (Frone et al., 1992; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). First, work-interfering-with-family (WIF) involves a spillover from work responsibilities to the family, as when a mother is late picking up her children after school due to attending a meeting at work. Second, family-interfering-with-work (FIW) occurs when family responsibilities

interfere with work-related activities, as when a mother cancels a meeting at work to be able to pick up her children from school. In general, people report more WIF than FIW (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Eby et al., 2005; Frone et al., 1992; Gutek et al., 1991), and several researchers have observed that, although they are strongly positively related, their unique determinants and consequences render them distinct types of conflict. For example, evidence suggests that work characteristics (e.g., working hours, work support) are more strongly related to WIF, with family characteristics (e.g., number of children, family involvement) being more strongly associated with FIW (Amstad et al., 2011; Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). More specifically, with regard to the possible outcomes of experiencing work-family conflict, the meta-study by Amstad et al. (2011) reports consistent results indicating that both directions of conflict are more strongly related to within-domain consequences than they are to cross-domain consequences, as characteristics of the work or family domain are more salient to the direction of conflict to which they apply. Given that the mediators in the current research are personal (parental well-being and child behavior) and family characteristics (parenting behavior), we expect stronger relationships between FIW and the mediators, especially for parenting behavior.

In turn, parental well-being and parenting are regarded as factors that affect the behavior of children. An individual's well-being can be defined as a subjective evaluation of general psychological, social, cognitive, and physical health, which can be associated with various outcomes, both negative (e.g., internalizing and externalizing problems) and positive (e.g., life satisfaction and self-esteem) (Bastaitis, Ponnet, & Mortelmans, 2014; Diener & Diener, 2009). As such, a person's subjective well-being is not reflected by any single dimension. This is acknowledged in the Pairfam database, which includes several valid scales addressing this issue (Thönnissen, Wilhelm, Alt, Greischel, & Walper, 2019). The current study focuses on the psychological well-being of a parent. Various studies have supported the interrelationship between well-being and parenting, with findings indicating a stronger effect from well-being on parenting (Conger et al., 2002; Jackson, Brooks-Gunn, Huang, & Glassman, 2000; McCarty & McMahon, 2003). According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), parenting behaviors are a key element of the parenting style applied. They define a parenting style as "a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993,

p. 488). They further distinguish two central parental behaviors: support (i.e., affection and responsiveness) and control (i.e. supervision) (Baumrind, 1991).

In theoretical terms, the pathways toward the behavior of a child can be explained by socio-ecological theories, which are rooted in developmental psychology. The essence of these theories is the dynamic interaction and interrelationship between the child and the environment. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1986), understanding a child's development requires taking into account the ecological system surrounding the child. At the center is the child's own biological and psychological predisposition, which is surrounded by four interrelated systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem is composed of the direct social environment (e.g., family, peers, and school). The mesosystem consists of the interactions between the direct interpersonal relationships of the microsystem. The exosystem comprises the broader social environment, which affects the child by determining the conditions and settings in which the child interacts (e.g., politics, media, and social services). The macrosystem consists of the attitudes, ideologies, and values of the culture. This theoretical perspective clarifies the transfer of shared influential contexts and social capital between parents and children through the well-being and parenting skills of the parent (Coleman, 1988). The socio-ecological system in which the parent participates (e.g., work and family) is strongly related to the parent's own functioning. Evidence suggests that this system interacts with the child's system, and that it can affect the child's development. Acknowledging the role stress associated with work-family conflict and the bi-directional interactions between the child and the family environment, a child's behavior is regarded as being indirectly influenced by the parents' experiences of work-family conflict, through the mediation of parental well-being and parenting.

#### 4.2.2 Empirical evidence

One important question concerns the existence of a connection between work-family conflict and the behavior of the child. Understanding the development and behavior of children requires considering the direct (and broader) contexts within which they are embedded. It has been stated that the work and family contexts of the parents contribute to the environment they share with their children. This environment influences the mental and physical health of a child through

family interactions (Crouter & Bumpus, 2001; Roeters, Van der Lippe, & Kluwer, 2010). For example, if both parents are employed and experience stress in balancing the demands of work and home, this might create a less healthy family food environment, which they share with their children. Such an environment could be characterized by less frequent family meals, lower consumption of fruits and vegetables, and more frequent fast-food intake, ultimately resulting in less healthy conditions for the child (Bauer et al., 2012). In addition, with regard to the mental development of children, empirical evidence has acknowledged the interrelationship between children and their parents. According to the results of a study by Strazdins et al. (2006), parents with nonstandard work schedules report more difficulties with family functioning, more depressive symptoms, and more ineffective parenting, all of which are associated with emotional and behavioral difficulties in children. In another study, Strazdins et al. (2013) specifically investigate risks to the mental health of young children (in terms of emotional and behavioral problems) whose parents experience conflict between the roles of work and family. Based on these results and the stated theoretical framework, our proposed model links the work-family conflict experienced by parents to the behavior of their children. In light of the findings discussed above, we hypothesize that *higher levels of work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) experienced by a parent are negatively related to the behavior of the child (H1).*

Second, the effect of work-family conflict on the behavior of the child is likely to be mediated by the well-being of the parents. Researchers have consistently reported that the experience of work-family conflict has a negative impact on an individual's well-being. Within the broad concept of well-being, several different and related dimensions have been addressed as consequences of work-family conflict. Elevated stress levels, lower psychological health and well-being, less satisfaction with life, subjective well-being, and poorer mental health (Amstad et al., 2011; Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Cho & Tay, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016; Yang, 2015) are associated with work-family conflict. These results thus suggest that conflict between the roles of work and family affect an individual's personal balance and resources, which can cause stress and ultimately decrease well-being. From a psycho-social perspective, studies have examined the association between the functioning of parents and children within the shared home context. Huang et al. (2010) report that stressful home situations in which the mother has experienced domestic violence can have a long-term impact on the external behavioral problems of the child, through the mediator of maternal mental health. Similarly, in a study focusing more specifically on the



effect of maternal depression, Keyser et al. (2017) report more behavioral problems in infants whose mothers were depressed. Dittrich et al. (2018) report similar results, but emphasize the long-term effects of maternal depression on the child's quality of life. In their study, a maternal history of depression decreased the child's quality of life, with maternal stress and sensitivity acting as mediators. Building upon these empirical and theoretical arguments, we hypothesize that *parental well-being mediates the relationship between work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) and the behavior of the child* (H2).

Third, work-family conflict is assumed to be indirectly linked to a child's behavior through parenting performance. Children raised in families struggling to balance work and family obligations may feel spillover effects from elevated stress levels and the limited time and energy that their parents have for demonstrating good and appropriate parenting techniques. Although a vast volume of literature has investigated the negative consequences of work-family conflict, fewer studies have focused specifically on the effects of such conflict on parenting. In a study by Cooklin et al. (2015), parents experiencing work-family conflict responded with significantly less warmth and affection, in addition to being more irritable in their interactions with their children. In terms of subjective satisfaction with parental role performance, it has been suggested that parents who experience conflict between their work and family roles are less satisfied with their performance in the parental role (Aycan & Eskin, 2005). The experience of such conflict could thus be expected to undermine their parenting capacity, consequently affecting the functioning and behavior of the child through the shared home environment. Previous studies have focused especially on malfunctioning families, reporting that parenting practices have direct and long-term effects on the behavior of children (Huang et al., 2010; Keyser et al., 2017). The importance of good parenting to the general development of a child has also been highlighted by its effect on various child-related outcomes, including socio-emotional behavior, physical health, and psychological well-being. These results have been found across different cultures and age groups (Dittrich et al., 2018; Ong et al., 2018; Roman et al., 2015). Taking these findings into account, we hypothesize that *parenting mediates the relationship between work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) and the behavior of the child* (H3).

## 4.3 Method

### 4.3.1 Data

To test our hypotheses, we analyzed data from the Pairfam (Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics) study. This large-scale, longitudinal, multi-actor study is sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG), and the database includes information on partnerships and family dynamics in Germany. Nine waves are currently available, with the first wave having been collected in 2008 and 2009. Subsequent waves have been added biannually. Each wave includes around 12,000 individuals (“anchor respondents”) from three birth cohorts: 1971-73, 1981-83, and 1991-93. The anchor respondents are randomly selected from all individuals living in private households in Germany. The anchor respondent’s partner is also asked to participate in the study and, beginning with the second wave, the parents and a child/children of the anchor respondent have been included as well. Participating children are between the ages of 8 and 15 years (children 15 years of age and older become anchor respondents in their own rights).

For the current study, we selected a subsample of the dataset. This subsample contains data from 969 children included in the dataset of children ( $n_{\text{boys}} = 496$ ,  $n_{\text{girls}} = 473$ ), along with 384 fathers and 585 mothers. Given our interest in the effects of factors on the behavior of the child – while accounting for the possible presence of reversed causality – information on work-family conflict, and both mediating variables were obtained from Wave 8, with data concerning the child’s behavior taken from Wave 9. This allows us to rule out the possibility that the investigated child’s behavior was affecting the parent’s work-family conflict.

### 4.3.2 Analytical strategy

To test our model, we applied a framework of structural equation modeling (SEM) (Bollen, 1989; Hatcher & O’Rourke, 2013). More specifically, we use a family of models within the SEM framework that allow for a higher-order factor structure. Two alternatives have been suggested in the literature: higher-order factor models and the bifactor model (Mulaik & Quartetti, 1997). Given that the bifactor model assumes orthogonal associations between factors (an assumption that is too strict for our conceptual model), we opted to use a second-order hierarchical SEM model (F. F. Chen, West, & Sousa, 2006). In this model, we start by including first (lower) order

factors that together constitute a second (higher) order factor. In a preparatory phase, all first-order factors were tested according to exploratory factor analysis before being entered into the SEM model<sup>1</sup>, which was estimated in two steps. In the first step – the *measurement model* – we omitted all directional paths and focused on the first-order and second-order measurement of all latent concepts. We then estimated the *structural model*, which we used to test our hypotheses. The measurement model had a good fit (RMSEA = 0.0455; CFI = 0.86). It was not necessary to add any error covariances between first-order items to obtain an acceptable fit. The structural model also fit the data well (RMSEA = 0.049; CFI = 0.84).

The composition of all lower-order factors is discussed in the subsection Measures. We calculated the composite reliability of all lower-order and higher-order factors (comparable to Cronbach's alpha within the framework of exploratory factor analysis) (Hatcher & O'Rourke, 2013). Of the higher-order factors, only *Parenting* (composite reliability = 0.27) failed to achieve the lower threshold of 0.70. The other two higher-order factors had high and significant factor loadings, with composite reliability values of 0.76 (*Parental well-being*) and 0.75 (*Child behavior*). The fact that the higher-order *Parenting* factor failed to reach the 0.70 threshold can be explained in part by the fact that it is composed of only two lower-order factors. For this reason, and because the model fit the data very well, we decided to retain this factor in the final model.

In line with the proposed conceptual model and associated hypotheses, the mediating effects are tested in the structural model in three steps. First, we test only the direct effect of both types of work-family conflict on the behavior of the child. Second, we add the direct effect between the two mediators. Third, we test parental well-being and parenting as mediators in the full model.

#### 4.3.3 Measures

*WIF and FIW.* The Pairfam Work-Family Conflict scale was developed specifically for the Pairfam study, based on the instrument developed by Carlson et al. (2000). This scale assesses an individual's subjective evaluation of the conflict that they experience between work and family in both directions. Individuals rate four items relating to WIF (comp. reliability = 0.78) and four items relating to FIW (comp. reliability = 0.72) along a five-point scale ranging from "Not at all"

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<sup>1</sup> Output not shown, but available from the first author on request.

to “*Absolutely*.” The respondents’ ratings indicated the extent to which specific statements applied to them. The following is an example of an item measuring WIF: “My work prevents me from doing things with my friends, partner, and family more than I’d like.” The following is an example of an item measuring FIW: “Because I am often under stress in my private life, I have problems concentrating on my work.” A higher-order “*Work-family conflict*” factor comprising these two factors is not included in this model, as the two types of work-family conflict are theoretically regarded as two separated concepts. The correlation between the two factors was 0.45.

*Parental well-being.* The higher-order *Parental well-being* factor consists of four subscales proposed by the Pairfam dataset: *Self-esteem*, *Depressiveness (reversed)*, *Overload (reversed)*, and *Activity*. *Self-esteem* was originally measured according to a short version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (2015), which consists of three items. After the exploratory factor analysis, we could retain only two items with five response categories ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Absolutely*). The following is an example item: “All in all, I am pleased with myself.” The measurement model yielded high and significant factor loadings, and the composite reliability of this subscale was 0.90. The measurement for *Depressiveness* was derived from the State-Trait-Depression scales (Spaderna, Schmukle, & Krohne, 2002), and it originally consisted of 10 items. The items for this factor (*Depressive symptoms*) were recoded into a positively worded factor. The exploratory factor analyses pointed to a scale consisting of six items to be included in the SEM model and achieved a composite reliability of 0.85. Respondents answered all items on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from “*Almost never*” to “*Almost always*.” The following is an example of a question concerning depressive symptoms: “My mood is melancholy.” The *Overload* subscale is a reversed factor based on the Perceived Stress Questionnaire (Levenstein et al., 1993). A short, three-item version was developed, with respondents being asked to use a five-point Likert scale ranging from “*Not at all*” to “*Absolutely*” to indicate their feelings (e.g., “overburdened”) in the past four weeks. In the model, the composite reliability of the scale reached 0.89. The *Activity* subscale was originally part of the German sensitivity (*Befindlichkeit*) scales (Abele-Brehm & Brehm, 1986). This three-item scale had the same five-point response format as the overload scale, and all three of these items were included in the measurement model with a composite reliability of 0.84. The scale investigates the respondent’s level of activity by asking about their feelings (e.g., “full of energy”) during the past four weeks.

*Parenting.* The higher-order *Parenting* factor consists of two lower-order scales: *Negative communication (reversed)* and *Monitoring*. The *Negative communication* subscale measures the parent's degree of negative behavior toward the child (Schwarz, Walper, Göttsche, & Jurasic, 1997). Respondents used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Very often" to indicate how often they had exhibited particular behaviors (e.g., "yell[ing] at the child because he/she did something wrong"). We reverse-coded the negative items to obtain all positive responses for this factor. The confirmatory factor analysis yielded factor loadings greater than .40 for all items and a composite reliability of 0.74. The *Monitoring* subscale measures the extent to which respondents were informed about the child's activities and social contacts, based on the Expanded German Version of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Reichle & Franiek, 2005). The scale consists of three items, with response options ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very often*). Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of particular behaviors (e.g., "When your child goes out, you ask what he/she did and experienced"). The composite reliability of this factor in the measurement model was 0.76.

*Child's behavior.* The behavior of the child in question was measured according to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997; Woerner et al., 2002). The questionnaire was presented to parents concerning the behavior of their children, as well as to children about their own behavior. The current study is based on the information provided by the child. This questionnaire was originally composed of five subscales indicating the child's overall well-being and behavior. Based on the results of factor and reliability analyses, however, only four could be retained in the measurement model: *Prosocial behavior*, *Emotional symptoms (reversed)*, *Conduct problems (reversed)*, and *Hyperactivity (reversed)*. All subscales have the same response format, ranging from 1 (*Not true*) to 3 (*Certainly true*). The *Prosocial behavior* subscale consists of four items (e.g., "I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings"; comp. reliability = 0.68). The *Emotional symptoms* subscale is assessed according to such questions as "I have many fears, I am easily scared," is reversed and consists of five items (comp. reliability = 0.68). The *Conduct problems* and *Hyperactivity* subscales consist of three items each and are reverse-coded into positive items for analysis and interpretation. The following is an example of a question from the *Conduct problems* subscale: "I take things that are not mine (from home, school or elsewhere)." The following is an example from the *Hyperactivity* subscale: "I am easily distracted; I find it difficult to concentrate." The composite reliability of the Conduct

problems subscale was relatively low (0.41), while the reliability of the *Hyperactivity* subscale was high (0.77).

*Control variables.* Previous studies have identified a number of demographic, work, and family-related characteristics that are associated with the consequences of experiencing work-family conflict. The most relevant and significant control variables were selected for this study: age of the youngest child ( $M = 8.01$ ,  $SD = 3.43$ ), number of children in the household (one child,  $n = 101$ ; two or more,  $n = 868$ ), household income ( $M = 3870.75$ ,  $SD = 1551.00$ ), parent's gender (384 fathers, 585 mothers), and whether the parents were divorced (902 not divorced, 67 divorced).

## 4.4 Results

### 4.4.1 Descriptive results

We started by calculating summed scores for the final factors tested in the structural model. For both WIF and FIW, the summed scores range between 4 (*no conflict*) to 20 (*a lot of conflict*). Overall, the subjects in our sample scored higher on WIF ( $M = 8.90$ ,  $SD = 3.50$ ) than they did on FIW ( $M = 6.54$ ,  $SD = 2.56$ ). The average score for parental well-being was relatively high ( $M = 46.19$ ,  $SD = 6.81$ ), with a minimum of 13 (*very low well-being*) and a maximum of 64 (*very high well-being*). The average summed score for parenting behavior was very high ( $M = 23.46$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ), with a minimum of 6 (*highly negative parenting*) and a maximum of 30 (*highly positive parenting*). Similarly, the results revealed a high average summed score for child behavior ( $M = 22.95$ ,  $SD = 3.99$ ), ranging from 15 (*very negative child behavior*) to 45 (*very positive child behavior*).

### 4.4.2 Measurement model: Higher-order factors

The standardized factor loadings in the measurement model for each higher-order factor are presented in Table 4.1, along with the standard errors and two-tailed  $p$ -values. Within each higher-order factor, all factor loadings are significant and greater than .40, with the exception of the lower-order factor *Negative communication (reversed)* and *Prosocial behavior*. As stated previously, the good fit of the measurement model and theoretical importance of these lower-order factors prompted us to retain both in the structural model.

Table 4.1

*Measurement Model - Higher Order Factor Loadings*

Higher order factor	Lower order factor	$\beta$	SE	p-value
Parental well-being	Self-esteem	.625	0.030	.000
	Depressiveness (reversed)	.766	0.028	.000
	Overload (reversed)	.553	0.032	.000
	Activity	.587	0.031	.000
Parenting	Negative communication (reversed)	.241	0.049	.000
	Monitoring	.769	0.101	.000
Child behavior	Prosocial behavior	.282	0.044	.000
	Emotional symptoms (reversed)	.537	0.041	.000
	Conduct problems (reversed)	.721	0.061	.000
	Hyperactivity (reversed)	.997	0.050	.000

N = 969

## 4.4.3 Structural model

The structural model tests the hypothesized paths between WIF, FIW, and the higher-order factors. The standardized factor loadings, standard errors, and two-tailed p-values of each path are presented in Table 4.2. Contrary to our expectations (H1), the behavior of the child was not directly affected by a parent's experience of either WIF or FIW. Instead, our results suggest that the influence of work-family conflict is mediated by the other higher-order factors. In line with our second hypothesis (H2), both WIF and FIW were significant predictors of parental well-being. Parents who experienced more conflict due to work-interfering-with-family (WIF:  $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and due to family-interfering-with-work (FIW:  $\beta = -.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ) scored significantly lower on the *Well-being* factor. In turn, higher levels of parental well-being were associated with more positive behavior on the part of the child ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The relationship between work-family conflict and the behavior of the child is thus mediated by parental well-being, thereby confirming our second hypothesis.

With regard to parenting, the analysis indicates that parents experiencing FIW are significantly less likely to exhibit positive parenting behavior ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). With regard to WIF, the results did not provide evidence of a direct effect on parenting, although higher levels of parental well-being (which is negatively affected by WIF) were associated with better parenting

styles ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ )<sup>2</sup>. These results thus suggest that WIF affects parenting indirectly. In turn, parenting has a significant positive effect on a child’s behavior ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ). Taking into account the indirect effect of WIF on parenting, the results provide partial support for our third hypothesis (H3), which predicts that parenting mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and the behavior of the child.

Table 4.2

*Structural Model - Directional Paths*

From factor	To factor	$\beta$	SE	p-value
WIF	Child behavior	.055	0.044	.210
FIW	Child behavior	.054	0.049	.277
WIF	Parental well-being	-.328	0.040	.000
FIW	Parental well-being	-.377	0.040	.000
Parental well-being	Child behavior	.147	0.055	.001
WIF	Parenting	.007	0.060	.242
FIW	Parenting	-.126	0.064	.048
Parenting	Child behavior	.157	0.057	.001
Parental well-being	Parenting	.301	0.077	.000

N = 969

To perform an accurate test of the mediating effects of parenting and parental well-being, we fitted the structural model in three steps. First, we considered only the direct effects of WIF and FIW on the child’s behavior (along with the control variables), taking into account the direction, strength, and significance of these direct effects, along with the model fit. We then added the direct effect from parental well-being to parenting. In addition to strengthening the direct effects of WIF and FIW – which became more strongly negative and more significant – this reduced the RMSEA from 0.0534 to 0.0488 and increased the CFI from 0.81 to 0.84. The significance of this enhancement was tested and confirmed with a chi<sup>2</sup> test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 480, \Delta df = 1$ ). In the third and final model, we added the mediated effects of FIW and WIF on the child’s behavior, through parental well-being and parenting. In light of this mediation, the direct effects

<sup>2</sup> A robustness check was performed to control for reversed causality (i.e., whether it had been parenting style that affected well-being. Comparison of uni-directional models revealed that the effect of parenting style was weaker than that of well-being. In contrast, a reciprocal (non-recursive) model indicated that the effect of well-being strongly overpowered that of parenting. As such, we consider only the effect of well-being in the model. Output is available on request.



of FIW and FIW became insignificant and were fully explained through parenting and parental well-being (see Table 4.2). In this case as well, a chi<sup>2</sup> test indicated a significant improvement in the model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 42.22$ ,  $\Delta df = 6$ ). We can therefore conclude that the mediation effects are indeed crucial to understanding the antecedents of children’s behavior.

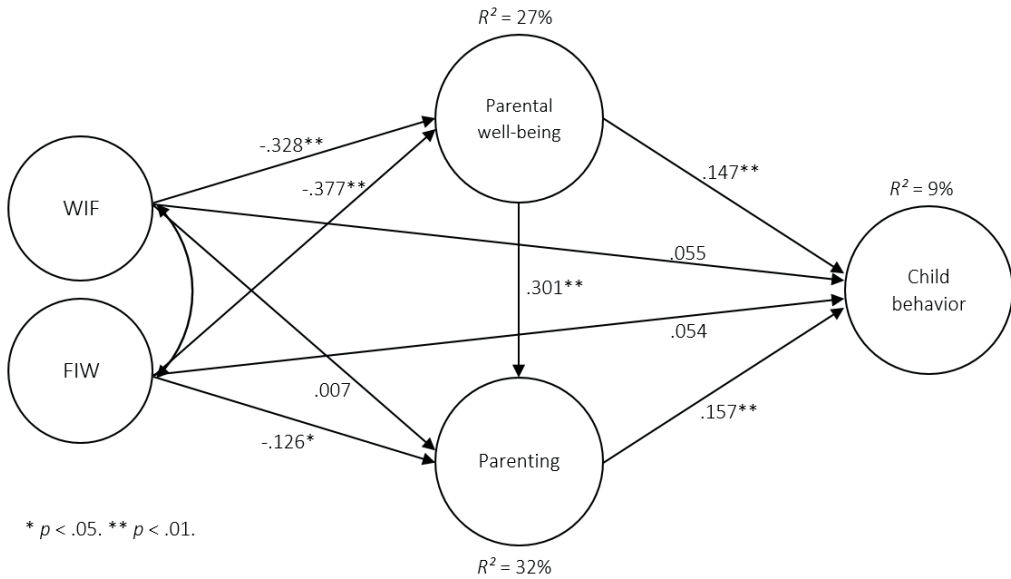


Figure 4.2. Structural model – Directional paths.

In the interest of legibility, we describe only the significant effects of the control variables. First, work-family conflict was experienced more by fathers (WIF:  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .001$  / FIW:  $\beta = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than by mothers, as well as by parents with younger children<sup>3</sup> (WIF:  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p < .05$  and FIW:  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Fathers also reported more negative parenting styles ( $\beta = -0.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and higher levels of well-being ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than mothers did. Finally, higher household income was significantly related to higher levels of parental well-being ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>3</sup> We tested the models for two separate age groups – with the youngest child being either younger than eight years of age or eight years of age or older – which simultaneously served as a robustness check for sample size. We found no major differences in loadings, effects, or correlations between the reduced model and the full model, thus confirming that the age of the youngest child was a sufficient control and that our results are robust for a smaller sample size. Output is available on request.

The results displayed in Table 4.2 are visually depicted in the complete path model presented in Figure 4.2. According to our analysis, WIF and FIW explain 27% of the variance in parental well-being, with 32% of the variance in parenting being explained by FIW, WIF, and parental well-being. In turn, the two lower-order and two higher-order factors together explain approximately 9% of child behavior.

## 4.5 Discussion

Balancing work and family life poses a challenge for many parents, as the responsibilities associated with each of these roles demand a substantial amount of time and effort. Previous studies have demonstrated that, in addition to affecting the well-being and functioning of the parent, the experience of work-family conflict can have negative spillover effects for all family members. The current study investigates the effect of parental experiences of work-family conflict on the behavior of a child. Previous research and theoretical insights have suggested that this relationship does not run directly, but that the shared and influential environment surrounding the family members should be taken into account. The present study is the first to introduce parental well-being and parenting as mediators in this pathway.

First, our results do not confirm our expectation that higher levels of work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) experienced by a parent have a negative effect on a child's behavior (H1). This apparent absence of such a direct relationship suggests that mediating variables play a crucial role. Moreover, the insignificance of this direct effect in the full model indicates that any differences are fully mediated by parental well-being and parenting. These mediators thus explain the entire relationship between WIF/FIW and the behavior of the child.

Second, we predicted that parental well-being would mediate the relationship between work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) and the child's behavior (H2). This expectation was based on the well-documented long-term, direct negative impact of work-family conflict on the mental health and well-being of the parent, which in turn have a negative effect on the functioning of their children (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Cho & Tay, 2016; Cooklin et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017). This expectation was further supported by the theoretical mechanism underlying these relationships with regard to the immediate environment that is created and shared by the parents. Consistent with our expectations, the results revealed that higher levels of both WIF and FIW have a negative

impact on parental well-being and that higher levels of parental well-being are associated with better behavioral statements. It would be plausible to expect that conflict between the roles of work and family might abate the possibility and capability of parents to cope with such incompatible demands. In turn, this is likely to strain parental well-being and, ultimately, the functioning of children through the effects of their shared physical and relational home environment. Results from a recent study by Dinh et al. (2017) provide evidence to support this effect, emphasizing the longitudinal and intergenerational scope of this issue. According to that study, parental well-being and parent-child interaction mediate this pathway. In addition, the initial or chronic experience of work-family conflict is associated with an increase in mental health problems for children, and reductions in work-family conflict lead to reductions in mental health problems in children.

Third, our results do not provide full confirmation for the hypothesis that good parenting mediates the relationship between work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) and the behavior of the child (H3). With this hypothesis, we argued that both the interference of work with family and the interference of family with work would have a negative effect on parenting performance by engendering a sense of pressure on available time and energy, thereby elevating stress levels (Cooklin et al., 2015; Strazdins et al., 2006). We further predicted the existence of a positive relationship between parenting performance – which contributes to the composition of the family environment and interactions – and the behavior of the child (Dinh et al., 2017; Keyser et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2018). The results provide confirmation for all of the predicted paths, with the exception of the relationship between WIF and parenting. As such, the spillover effects of work responsibilities to the family are apparently unrelated to parenting styles. One possible reason for this finding could be related to the differentiated associations of WIF and FIW. For example, WIF is more strongly related to work than it is to family characteristics, while FIW is more strongly related to family outcomes (e.g., parenting) than it is to work characteristics (Amstad et al., 2011; Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). The outcomes/consequences relating to work (e.g., work performance) or family characteristics (e.g., couple relationship) were most strongly affected by the source of conflict. Applied to the current study, this means that impaired parenting performance is a direct and dominant reaction to the domain in question (i.e., the family), and it is therefore more strongly related to FIW than it is to WIF. Furthermore, the positive association between parental well-being and parenting indicates

the existence of an indirect path from WIF (which has a negative impact on parental well-being) to parenting style. Although this could be an alternative explanation for the absence of a direct effect, further investigation is needed.

Although this study provides new insights, it is subject to several important limitations. First, we were not able to provide long-term insight into this phenomenon. This is because several variables of interest were included only in later waves, while others were not included in every wave. In addition, although we do take into account the possibility of reciprocal associations between our variables, this issue still remains unclear. Recent studies provide evidence primarily for reciprocal associations, although there is also support for the unidirectional scenario (e.g., between work-family conflict and the mental health of the child). This indicates the existence of a complex interplay between all variables, as well as the need for appropriate interventions in policy and practice (Vahedi et al., 2018; Westrupp et al., 2016). Another limitation of the current study has to do with our use of self-reports from parents about their well-being and parenting, along with self-reports from children about their own behavior. This may have introduced a certain level of social-desirability bias. Finally, in this study on conflicts between work and family, we explicitly distinguish between the two directions of work-family conflict. This assumes that the competing demands of work and family inevitably lead to problems. As various scholars have noted, however, work and family can also enhance each other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Although this was not the focus of the current study, it could offer an alternative point of view for future research concerning the specific positive or negative implications of the enriching potential of work and family roles.

In conclusion, this study makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by offering new insights into the link between parental experiences of work-family conflict and the behavior of their children. It is one of the first studies to investigate this pathway. Strengths of the study include its acknowledgement of the mediating role played by parental well-being and parenting, and the distinction between the specific consequences of WIF and FIW. Our findings provide evidence that experiencing conflicting work and family roles has a negative impact on parental well-being and parenting performance. In addition, parents with a healthy level of general well-being and adequate parenting have a positive influence on the behavior of their children. Our results nevertheless provide no evidence that the specific spillover effects of work responsibilities to the family (WIF) are related to parenting. As the two most important spheres

of life – work and family – are likely to come into conflict with each other, the impact of such conflict on the well-being and functioning of mothers and fathers should not be neglected. The impact of this powerful interface in shaping the social environment has critical intergenerational implications for the long-term functioning and development of children. Additional research is needed in order to disentangle these equations and provide insight into the vulnerability of children in imbalanced parental work-family environments. Such knowledge could be used to inform adequate policy and practice arrangements that could reduce potential conflicts between the roles of work and family. Elements of such policies and arrangements could include flexible working hours, job security, family-friendly working environments, and access to family-leave schemes (e.g., maternity/paternity leave and parental leave).

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# Chapter 5

THE CONSEQUENCES OF  
WORK-FAMILY ENRICHMENT IN  
FAMILIES ON THE BEHAVIOUR  
OF CHILDREN



# Chapter 5 The consequences of work-family enrichment in families on the behaviour of children

## 5.1 Introduction

Besides the dominant academic perspective of work and family as competing and conflictual life spheres, researchers have increasingly made a plea to study the positive side of combining these two life spheres. With the seminal work of Greenhaus and Powell (2006), the concept of work-family enrichment was introduced. The concept of enrichment between family life and work starts from the assumption that these central life spheres are not exclusively in conflict with each other but, importantly, could also interact with each other in a positive way. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), the concept is “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role”. Both conceptually and empirically, work-family enrichment is not to be considered as the opposite of work-family conflict. These are distinct concepts, as studies have shown that measures of work-family conflict and work-family enrichment correlate (negatively) in a moderate way (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Lapierre et al., 2018; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Voydanoff, 2004). As a consequence, experiencing work-life conflict can go hand in hand with considering the balance between those spheres as an enriching experience in one’s life.

The current study investigates the association of work-family enrichment experienced by parents with the behaviour of children and includes parental well-being and parenting behaviour as mediators. Previous research about the consequences of work-family enrichment mainly used self-reports of adults. Positive effects were found on job performance, work engagement, family satisfaction, stress levels, etc. (for a review, see McNall et al. 2010; Zhang et al. 2018). Research also pointed out that the balance between a person’s work and family can affect other family members (Vahedi et al., 2018; van Steenbergen et al., 2014). Only a few studies have addressed the effect of work-life balance on children in a family. Work-family conflict exhibits negative effects on child outcomes, while work-family enrichment shows a positive relationship with children’s functioning (Dinh et al., 2017; Vahedi et al., 2018; Van den Eynde, Claessens, & Mortelmans, 2020; Vieira, Matias, Ferreira, Lopez, & Matos, 2016). Studies

have emphasized the inclusion of parental characteristics as mediators because the influence on children's functioning operates through their home environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Dinh et al., 2017; Vahedi et al., 2018; Van den Eynde et al., 2020; Vieira et al., 2016). The current inquiry is important because protecting the development of children is paramount in all societies. Gathered insights should be taken into account when thinking about forming work and family life through policy or institutions and in practices.

There is no direct relationship between the experience of work-family enrichment as a parent and the behaviour of a child when we take the interaction of family members within their contexts into account. First, literature confirms positive outcomes of work-family enrichment on parents' overall well-being, physical and mental health, and parenting- and family-role performance (Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016). Next, children's behaviour is affected by the functioning of parents. Research shows clear evidence that parents who offer a healthy home environment, are satisfied with life, and perform adequate parenting are positively related to the development of a child (Dinh et al., 2017; Dittrich et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2010; Keyser et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2018; Strazdins et al., 2013).

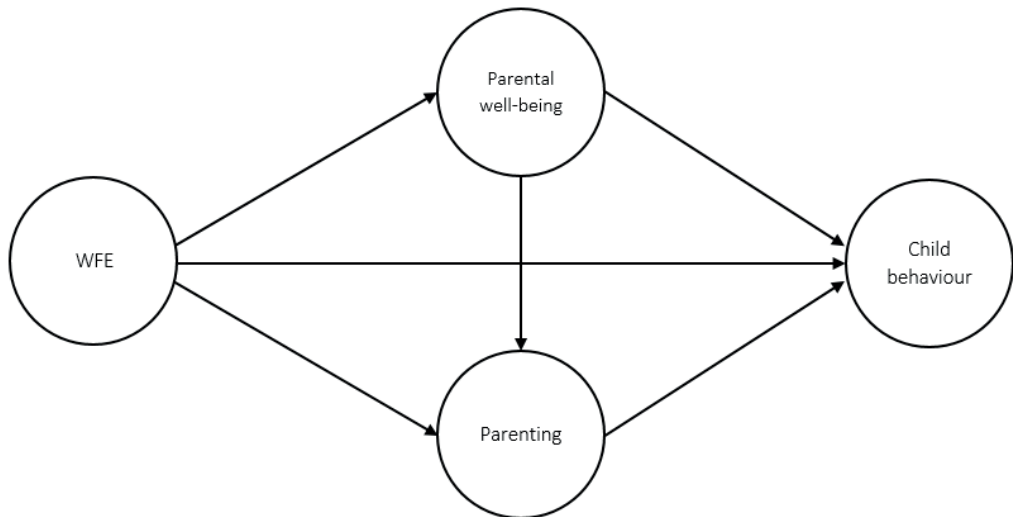
The aim of the current research is to obtain more insights into the consequences of work-family enrichment on the behaviour of children. A first contribution of the current study is that it is one of a few to examine this effect in work-life balance research. The more recent work-family enrichment concept especially, along with its consequences, is still a largely uncharted domain; however, it is undisputed that this concept involves a complex mechanism, as different actors with different roles interact with each other. With this statement, the second contribution consists in the inclusion of both parental well-being and parenting performance as mediators. As a direct relationship between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour is not independent from parents' own lived experiences, using a mediation perspective enables more elaborate insight into the mechanisms at hand.

## 5.2 Literature overview

### 5.2.1 Theoretical perspective

The conceptual model for this study is presented in Figure 5.1. As shown in previous studies, the consequences of experiencing work-family enrichment as a parent on the behavioural outcomes

of a child operate through the parental environment—more specifically, parental well-being and parenting practices (Vahedi et al., 2018). Both the well-being and parenting performance of the parent are referred to as important influencing factors.



*Figure 5.1.* Conceptual model of the association between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour.

First, work-family enrichment is positioned in the model as an exogenous concept. This concept can be defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell 2006, p. 73). This perspective builds upon functional role theory (Biddle, 1986), which originated in the early works of Linton (1936). This theory considers roles as a set of shared, normative expectations that come with social positions that people take. The multiple roles that people bear can interact with each other and lead to either role conflict (Dierckx, Mortelmans, & Motmans, 2019) or a positive spillover from one role to the other. Role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974) considers several positive outcomes: (1) role privileges (e.g., rights), (2) buffering of status security, (3) resources from status enhancement and role performance, and (4) personality enrichment. The focus on work-family enrichment is an answer on the dominant emphasis on work–life conflict in the literature. Building upon the same role theory, work-family enrichment stresses the positive spillover between work and family rather than looking at (and measuring) negative conflict dimensions (Lapierre et al., 2018).

The quality of life in one domain goes through the resources gained from the domain of origin to the reception (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hobfoll, 2002). A resource is an asset that can be used for problem solving or coping. Different types of resources are distinguished, namely skills (e.g., coping skills), psychological and physical resources (e.g., optimism), social capital (e.g., networking), flexibility (e.g., flexible work arrangements), and material resources (e.g., money) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Two ways or paths exist by which a resource can influence the enrichment process that leads to an increased quality of life. The first is the instrumental or direct path and refers to the process by which “a resource can be transferred directly from Role A to Role B, thereby enhancing performance in Role B”. The second process operates through positive emotions and feelings, meaning that “a resource generated in Role A can promote positive affect within Role A, which, in turn, produces high performance and positive affect in Role B”; this process is referred to as the affective path (a transfer of affect or emotion from one role to another) (Greenhaus & Powell 2006, p. 80).

The well-being of the parent and parenting behaviour are the mediators in the model that affect the child’s behaviour. The well-being of a person is a subjective evaluation of their overall psychological, social, and physical health which is associated with negative (e.g., internalizing and externalizing problems) and positive outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction and self-esteem) (Bastaitis et al., 2014; Diener & Diener, 2009; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Parenting behaviours are key elements of a certain parenting style performed by a parent. A parenting style creates a certain emotional climate in which an interplay of attitudes and behaviours of the parent comes to interact with the child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Four different parenting styles are distinguished according to the relation of two central parenting behaviours, namely support (i.e., affection and responsiveness) and control (i.e., supervision)(Baumrind, 1991). These mediators are expected to be interrelated, but research indicates that the relationship from parents’ well-being to parenting performance is stronger than the other way around (Conger et al., 2002; Jackson et al., 2000; McCarty & McMahon, 2003; Van den Eynde et al., 2020).

Socioecological theories offer a theoretical framework in which the relationship between work-family enrichment, the mediators, and children’s behaviour can be understood. These theories regard children not as merely static human beings on their own but rather as interactive persons who are connected to their environments. According to the long-standing ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986), a child’s development process must be



understood by taking into account the ecological system that surrounds the child. At the centre are the child and their biological and psychological predisposition (personality), which is surrounded first by the ecological system (namely the microsystem). This includes the direct social environment that interacts with the child, including family, friends, and school peers. Next, the mesosystem involves the interactions and relationships between these microsystem participators. The third system, the exosystem, is the broader social environment in which the child does not participate directly but which has a certain impact on their development; this includes, for example, politics, media, and social services. This system determines the conditions and settings in which the child engages. Lastly, the child grows up in a certain cultural context, also known as the macrosystem, with certain attitudes, ideologies, values, and norms. The conceptual model of this study involves different ecological systems. The work and family sphere in which the parent participates are shaped by their own direct and broader ecological systems. These affect the actions and functioning of the parent, which in turn impact the system of the child. As an example, when a parent gets a promotion and feels appreciated at work, this can have an indirect effect on the child as a consequence of the adult, being in a decent financial situation, having more satisfaction in life and giving more appropriate care.

### 5.2.2 Empirical evidence

The connection between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour can only be understood when one incorporates the shared family environment. The balance between work and family life and the possible positive synergies that flow from it influence the direct (and broader) settings in which parents function. These settings are consequently shared with their children, which affects their behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Dinh et al., 2017; Vahedi et al., 2018; Van den Eynde et al., 2020; Vieira et al., 2016). First, the relation between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour is assumed to be indirectly linked to the well-being of parents. Studies and meta-analyses have explored the relation between this multifaceted concept and the positive spillover. Individuals have consistently been found to report higher levels of general well-being as an outcome of work-family enrichment, as well as related outcomes, such as mental health, life satisfaction, and stress-coping strategies (Carlson et al., 2011; Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, & Whitten, 2014; Lim, Song, & Choi, 2012; Luk, Winkel, &

Shaffer, 2008; McNall et al., 2010; Williams, Franche, Ibrahim, Mustard, & Layton, 2006; Zhang et al., 2018). According to the empirical findings and the theoretical perspective, these findings can be rationalized by resources generated through enrichment of the work and family domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). As mentioned earlier, resources can constitute different types of benefits gained from the work and family domain and can facilitate the ability to cope with stress, which in turn enhances individuals' well-being (Hobfoll, 2002). In the next step, the link to the behaviour of the child can be made. The functioning and development of children is vulnerable and strongly associated with the shared parental environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In this sense, it is crucial to take into account the well-being of parents. If parents feel good and competent, this feeling can positively spill over to children's behavioural functioning as an outcome. Studies report a positive association with and long-term impact on the behaviour of children. However, these inquiries are mainly focused on malfunctioning home environments, such as those with domestic violence or a history of parental depression (Dittrich et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2010; Keyser et al., 2017). Acknowledging these empirical and theoretical arguments, we predict that *parental well-being mediates the relationship between work-family enrichment and the behaviour of the child* (H1).

Second, parenting performance is likely to mediate the relation between work-family enrichment and a child's behaviour. When parents experience positive interactions between work and family life, positive spillover to the ability to demonstrate appropriate parenting behaviours can occur, which defines the home environment in which the child is raised. Work-family balance research has categorized parenting as a family-related characteristic that is inextricably linked to performing the role of a parent. Generally, it appears that the experience of work-family enrichment has positive relations with parent-child interactions, family role performance, and family satisfaction through the increased availability of resources, positive affect, and feelings of commitment (Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016; Vieira et al., 2016). Cooklin et al. (2016) reported enhanced effective parenting techniques in terms of more warm affective parenting and buffers against hostile parenting when interacting children among both mothers and fathers. Another study by Cooklin et al. (2015) investigated the same associations, but for mothers. Their findings suggest a clear positive association between work-family enrichment and warm and consistent parenting. Next, children may be affected by the parenting practices of parents as a behavioural expression of how parents rear their children. Furthermore, psycho-

sociological literature has indicated a positive association between parenting and various child outcomes, such as physical health, mental health, and socio-emotional behaviour (Dittrich et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2010; Keyser et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2018; Roman et al., 2015). It is universally confirmed that children from a young age up to adolescence are very susceptible to the performed parenting style of parents. However, researchers have mainly inquired into the adverse and unfavourable impact of inappropriate parenting behaviours, but the same mechanism of adequate parenting goes together with suited behavioural outcomes. Thus, based on this argumentation, we can hypothesize that *parenting mediates the relationship between work-family enrichment and the behaviour of the child* (H2).

Concerning both mediation paths, we additionally expect full mediation to be present. Conversely, this means that we have no evidence of a significant direct relationship between the level of a parent's work-family enrichment and a child's behaviour, but we do have evidence that this relationship works indirectly via parental characteristics, such as, in this case, parental well-being and parenting practices (Dinh et al., 2017; Vahedi et al., 2018; Vieira et al., 2016). This relationship is in line with the work-family conflict research of Van den Eynde et al. (2020), who differentiated between two directions of conflict and explicitly investigated these mediation paths. Moreover, for the conflict approach, it was found that this relationship could be fully explained by the parent's well-being and parenting. Therefore, the hypothesis reads: *both parental well-being and parenting fully mediate the relationship between work-family enrichment and the behaviour of the child* (H3).

## 5.3 Method

### 5.3.1 Data

We used data of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) to answer our three hypotheses. This large-scale database was established in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Department of Social Services. The research subject of the database is focused on a broad range of information about the development and well-being of 10,000 children. Moreover, this is a longitudinal database consisting of seven waves to date. The respondents started in 2003 in the first wave and were reinterviewed biannually from then on. Every wave included two cohorts that were

differentiated in the age of the child. This means that, in the first wave (2003–2004), the children of the first B-cohort (5107) were aged zero to one, and the children of the second K-cohort (4983) were four to five years old. In the seventh and last wave, the children of the first B-cohort were 12 to 13 years, and those of the second K-cohort were between 16 and 17. The multi-actor design refers in this study to the questioning of the parents (resident and non-resident), the child, teachers, and caregivers.

A subsample was selected to perform the current research. As the Family Enrichment Scale is adopted in each wave, we could have performed a longitudinal (fixed or random) regression. However, this choice would have been hampered by the dynamic nature of families and would have made a multi-parent analysis more difficult due to intra-wave attrition. As we aim to look at the relationship between Work-family Enrichment (WFE) and a child's behaviour, we decided to use only the latest available wave (wave 7) in this study. Longitudinal information was taken into account as we used the panel data to reconstruct family decomposition (divorce and separation) and recomposition (repartnering) observed in earlier waves into a variable determining whether or not the parent currently has a partner. Wave 7 had a response rate of 78.3% for cohort B and 73.9% for cohort K resulting in 3381 and 3089 interviews, respectively. As our independent variable, the WEF scale, is crucial to the study, non-response on the scale further decreased our analytical sample to 2936 (B-cohort) and 2704 (K-cohort) respondents (5640 in total). A final reduction in the data were the datalines where we did not have information on the child's behaviour or where the parental variables were missing for both parents. The final analytical sample consisted of 4163 respondents. There were slightly more mothers (2406, 57.8%) than fathers (1757, 42.2%). Most parents (91%) were partnered (whether or not after a break-up with the biological parent of the child). On average, included families had 2.49 children with a mean age of the youngest child of 8.4 years ( $SD = 2.4$ ) for those in the B cohort and 12.0 years ( $SD = 2.9$ ) for the sample members in the K cohort. The data from both cohorts were used, accounting for the age differences by controlling for it in the analyses. Both partner 1 and partner 2 were used in the analysis irrespective of their coresidential status. When only one parent had answered the WFE scale, they were adopted as an analytical unit. When both parents had answered the scale, the analytical unit was chosen at random and only one of these parents was used in the analysis.

Even though the LSAC aims to be representative for the cohorts under study, we need to underline that the study is not representative for the whole population of Australian (working) parents with children. Because we use data from cohort B and K, children's ages are limited to 12/13 and 16/17, which implies that parents are older. A consequence is that most families have a complete fertility history at that age, which also explains why the families under study are, on average, larger. In addition, we also need to point to the panel attrition of LSAC as we make use of the seventh wave of this study.

### 5.3.2 Analytical strategy

To test our model, we applied a framework of structural equation modelling (SEM) (Bollen, 1989; Hatcher & O'Rourke, 2013). More specifically, we used a family of models within the SEM framework that allowed for a higher-order factor structure. Of the models suggested in the literature (Mulaik & Quartetti, 1997), we opted for a second-order hierarchical SEM model because it does not assume an orthogonal associations between factors, as we do not. Given that the bifactor model assumes orthogonal associations between factors (an assumption that is too strict for our conceptual model), we opted to use a second-order hierarchical SEM model (F. F. Chen et al., 2006). In this model, we start by including first-order (lower) factors that together constitute a second-order (higher) factor. In a preparatory phase, all first-order factors were tested according to exploratory factor analysis before being entered into the SEM model<sup>4</sup>, which was estimated in two steps. In the first step—the *measurement model*—we omitted all directional paths and focused on the first-order and second-order measurement of all latent concepts. We then estimated the *structural model*, which we used to test our hypotheses. The measurement model had a good fit (RMSEA = 0.049; CFI = 0.882). It was not necessary to add any error covariances between the first-order items to obtain an acceptable fit. The structural model also fit the data well (RMSEA = 0.049; CFI = 0.882).

The composition of all the lower-order factors is discussed in the Measures subsection. We calculated the composite reliability of all the lower-order and higher-order factors (comparable to Cronbach's alpha within the framework of exploratory factor analysis) (Hatcher & O'Rourke, 2013). Of the higher-order factors, only *parenting* (composite reliability = 0.34) failed

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<sup>4</sup> Output not shown but available from the first author on request.

to achieve the lower threshold of 0.70. The other two higher-order factors had high and significant factor loadings, with composite reliability values of 0.73 (*parental well-being*) and 0.70 (*child behaviour*). The fact that the higher-order parenting factor failed to reach the 0.70 threshold can be explained in part by the fact that it is composed of only two lower-order factors. For this reason and because the model fit the data very well, we decided to retain this factor in the final model.

In line with the proposed conceptual model and associated hypotheses, the mediating paths were tested in the structural model in three steps. First, only the direct path of work-family enrichment on the behaviour of the child was tested. Second, we added the direct path from parental well-being and parenting. Third, parental well-being and parenting were tested as mediators in the full model.

### 5.3.3 Measures

*Work-family enrichment.* The questioning on the level of work-family enrichment was based on the Work-Family Gains scale of Marshall and Barnett (1993). Respondents answered six items on a five-point rating scale with answers ranging from “*Strongly disagree*” to “*Strongly agree*”. The scale measured with three items the gains between work and parenting (e.g., “How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements? My working has a positive effect on my child(ren); Working helps me to better appreciate the time that I spend with my child(ren); The fact that I work makes me a better parent”) and with three more items the gains between work and the respondents (e.g., “Having both work and family responsibilities: Makes me a more well-rounded person; Gives my life more variety; Makes me feel competent”). The composite reliability of the original scale was 0.86. Validation studies of the scale are reviewed by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) illustrating the empirical difference between the classic work-life conflict scales and the work-family enrichment measurement. A similar study with relation to the antecedents of the scale can be found in Lapierre et al. (2018). In our study an exploratory factor analysis revealed a uniform factor with a minimum factor loading of .55. The Cronbach ‘s alpha elevated to 0.85 (0.86 standardized) which is similar to the original study of Marshall and Barnett (1993).

*Parental well-being.* The higher-order *parental well-being* factor consists of four subscales: *depression*, *difficulty in present life (reversed)*, *coping*, and *feeling rushed*. The

exploratory factor analyses pointed to a depression scale consisting of six items to be included in the SEM model and achieved a composite reliability of 0.84. Respondents answered all the items on a four-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from “*All the time*” to “*None of the time*”. The following is an example of a question concerning depressive symptoms: “In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel worthless?” The subscales *difficulty at life present*, *coping*, and *feeling rushed* are all single-item measurements. The subscale *difficulty at life present* was reverse-coded to become a positively interpreted subscale. Respondents answered the question “How difficult do you feel your life is at present?” on a five-point rating scale, with responses ranging from “*Very many problems or a lot of stress*” to “*No problems or stress*”. The coping level was indicated by using a five-point response format, with a range of “*Not at all*” to “*Extremely well*”. Lastly, the respondents indicated how often they felt rushed or pressed, from 1 (“*Always*”) to 5 (“*Never*”).

*Parenting.* The higher-order *parenting* factor consists of three lower-order scales: *parenting warmth*, *inductive reasoning*, and *hostile parenting (reversed)*. The *parenting warmth* subscale measured the level of parenting warmth shown towards a child in the last six months. Respondents used a five-point response scale to answer six items, with ratings ranging from “*Never/Almost never*” to “*Always/Almost always*”. An example of an item is “In the last six months, how often did you have warm and close time together with this child?” The confirmatory factor analysis yielded factor loadings greater than .40 for all items and a composite reliability of 0.91. The *inductive reasoning* subscale consists of five items (e.g., “In the last six months, how often did you give this child reasons why rules should be obeyed?”), with response options ranging from 1 (“*Never/Almost never*”) to 5 (“*Always/Almost always*”). The composite reliability of this factor in the measurement model was 0.93. The *hostile parenting* subscale measured how often a parent showed angry parenting behaviour towards a child (e.g., “How often are you angry when you punish this child?”). This scale consists of six items and was reverse-coded to obtain all positive responses for the factor; a five-point rating scale with response options ranging from “*Never/Almost never*” to “*All the time*” was used. The confirmatory factor analysis yielded factor loadings greater than .40 for all the items and a composite reliability of 0.74.

*Child's behaviour.* The behaviour of the child in question was measured according to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997; Woerner et al., 2002). The questionnaire was presented to parents with respect to the behaviour of their children as well as

to children about their own behaviour. The current study is based on the information provided by the parents. This questionnaire was originally composed of five subscales that indicated the child's overall well-being, functioning, and behaviour. Based on the results of factor and reliability analyses, however, we could retain only two subscales in the measurement model, namely *prosocial behaviour* and *emotional problems (reversed)*. Respondents indicated how much their child showed a certain behaviour in the past six months or during the school year, and all subscales had the same response format, with options ranging from 1 ("Not true") to 3 ("Certainly true"). The *prosocial behaviour* subscale consists of four items (e.g., "Considerate of other people's feelings", comp. reliability = 0.70). All five items of the subscale *emotional problems* were retained in the model, with a composite reliability of 0.72. The scale was reverse-coded, and an example item is "Often unhappy, depressed, or tearful".

*Control variables.* Based on previous research, we identified a number of demographic and work- or family-related characteristics that were associated with our main constructs and the paths of the proposed model. Parent gender (2406 mothers, 1757 fathers), relationship status (3800 in a couple, 363 single), household income (logged) ( $M = 7.38$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ), age of the youngest child ( $M = 10.09$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ), and number of children in the household ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) were selected as relevant control variables.

## 5.4 Results

### 5.4.1 Descriptive results

We started by calculating summed scores for the final factors tested in the structural model. For Work-Family Enrichment (WFE), the summed scores ranged between 6 (*no conflict*) and 30 (*a lot of conflict*). The subjects in our sample scored a mean of 23.0 (out of 30) with a standard deviation of 3.7. The average score for parental well-being was relatively high ( $M = 27.3$ ,  $SD = 3.1$ ), with a minimum score of 6 (*very low well-being*) and a maximum score of 30 (*very high well-being*). The average summed score for parenting behaviour was high ( $M = 59.5$ ,  $SD = 7.9$ ), with a minimum score of 23 (*highly negative parenting*) and a maximum score of 75 (*highly positive parenting*). Similarly, the results revealed a high average summed score for child behaviour ( $M = 24.0$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ), with scores ranging from 11 (*very negative child behaviour*) to 27 (*very positive child behaviour*).



### 5.4.2 Measurement model: Higher-order factors

The standardized factor loadings in the measurement model for each higher-order factor are presented in Table 5.1, along with the standard errors and two-tailed *p*-values. Within each higher-order variable, all factor loadings were greater than .40 and were highly significant, meaning that the lower-order factors had a significant and strong association with the higher-order variables. The lower-order factors of *prosocial behaviour* and *emotional problems* are exceptions, though, as these factors did not reach the .40 criterion. As stated previously, the good fit of the measurement model and theoretical importance of these lower-order factors prompted us to retain both in the structural model.

Table 5.1

*Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Measurement Model - Higher Order Factor Loadings of Constructs (see also Figure 5.1)*

Higher order factor	Lower order factor	$\beta$	SE	<i>p</i> -value
Parental well-being	Depression	0.686	0.013	0.000
	Difficulty at life present (reversed)	0.698	0.012	0.000
	Coping	0.736	0.012	0.000
	Feeling rushed	0.402	0.016	0.000
Parenting	Warmth parenting	1.000	0.024	0.000
	Inductive reasoning	0.409	0.017	0.000
	Hostile parenting (reversed)	0.501	0.019	0.000
Child behaviour	Prosocial behaviour	0.005	0.005	0.271
	Emotional problems (reversed)	0.008	0.007	0.266

*N* = 4163

### 5.4.3 Structural model

The structural model tests the hypothesized paths between WFE and the higher-order factors. The standardized factor loadings, standard errors, and two-tailed *p*-values of each path are presented in Table 5.2. The results displayed in Table 5.2 are visually depicted in the complete path model presented in Figure 5.2. First, it is important to notice that the behaviour of children was not directly affected by parents' experience of WFE ( $\beta = .028, p = .751$ ). Instead, the results

suggest that the associations of work-family enrichment were mediated by the other higher-order factors. In line with our first hypothesis (H1), WFE was a significant predictor of parental well-being. Parents who experienced more work-family enrichment ( $\beta = .264, p < .000$ ) scored significantly higher on the well-being factor. In turn, higher levels of parental well-being were associated with more positive behaviour on the part of children ( $\beta = .546, p = .032$ ). The relationship between work-family enrichment and children’s behaviour was thus mediated by parental well-being, thereby confirming our first hypothesis.

Table 5.2

Structural Model - Directional Paths

From factor	To factor	$\beta$	SE	p-value
WFE	Child behaviour	0.028	0.087	0.751
WFE	Parental well-being	0.264	0.018	0.000
WFE	Parenting	0.072	0.017	0.000
Parental well-being	Child behaviour	0.546	0.255	0.032
Parenting	Child behaviour	0.415	0.199	0.037
Parental well-being	Parenting	0.166	0.019	0.000

N = 4163

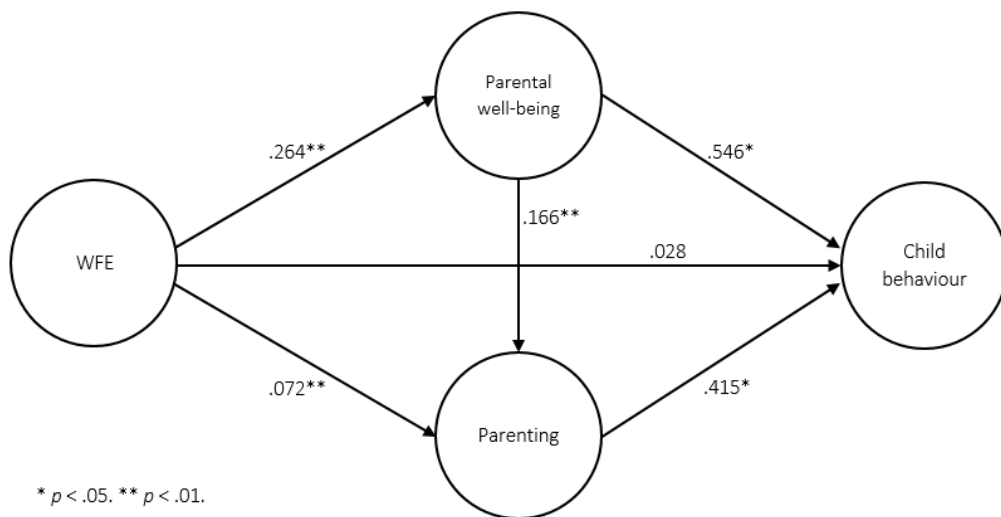


Figure 5.2. Structural model-Directional paths.

Regarding parenting, the analysis indicates that parents with a higher WFE are significantly more likely to exhibit positive parenting behaviour ( $\beta = .072, p < .000$ ). In turn, parenting behaviour has a significant positive association with children's behaviour ( $\beta = .415, p = .037$ ). Taking into account the indirect path of WFE on parenting, the results provide support for our second hypothesis (H2), which predicted that parenting mediates the relationship between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour.

To accurately test the mediating paths of parenting and parental well-being, we fitted the structural model in three steps. First, we considered only the direct path of WFE on children's behaviour (along with the control variables), which was highly significant ( $\beta = .0169, p = .000$ ). In the second model, we added the direct path from parental well-being and parenting to children's behaviour. This addition maintained the significant direct path from the first step ( $\beta = .067, p = .01$ ). The effect decreased and significance dropped substantially. The model fit marginally increased as the RMSEA slightly decreased from 0.0499 to 0.0497 and the CFI increased from 0.8781 to 0.8790. We tested the significance of this enhancement and confirmed it with a  $\chi^2$ -test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 563.77, \Delta df = 2$ ). In the third and final model, we added the mediated path of WFE on children's behaviour through parental well-being and parenting (H3). In light of this mediation, the direct path of WFE became insignificant and was now fully explained through parenting and parental well-being (see *infra*, Table 5.2). As a  $\chi^2$  test again indicated a significant improvement for the model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 247.60, \Delta df = 2$ ), we can conclude that the mediation paths are indeed crucial to understanding the antecedents of children's behaviour.

In the interest of legibility, we describe only the significant associations with the control variables. First, work-family enrichment was affected by household income ( $\beta = .036, p = .033$ ). Having a partner in life ( $\beta = .131, p < .000$ ) and having fewer children ( $\beta = -.053, p = .007$ ) went together with higher levels of parental well-being. For parenting, we found that the age of the youngest child ( $\beta = -.122, p < .000$ ), the number of children ( $\beta = -.183, p < .000$ ), and the gender of the parent ( $\beta = -.288, p < .000$ ) were significantly related to parenting. Finally, children's behaviour was negatively related to the age of the youngest child in the household ( $\beta = -.604, p = .028$ ).

## 5.5 Discussion

The quality of life in the work and family domain due to enrichment can positively spill over to other involved family members. The current inquiry investigated the relationship between parents' experience of work-family enrichment and children's behavioural outcomes. All family members share and interact in a reciprocal environment. Thus, it is theoretically and empirically acknowledged that this relationship can only be understood when one incorporates parental characteristics. Therefore, we included both parental well-being and parenting performance as mediators in the model.

The first hypothesis predicted the mediating role of parental well-being on the relationship between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour. The results confirm that children's behaviour is related to the parents' experience of work-family enrichment through the parental well-being. Thus, children show more positive interpretable behaviour as parental well-being increases by experiencing a positive interface between work and family.

Second, the results also revealed that parenting performance functions as a mediator on the relationship between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour. With this finding, the second hypothesis is confirmed as well. Parents show more appropriate parenting performance when they experience enrichment between their work and family. Subsequently, this relation positively affects the behaviour of an involved child (Cooklin et al., 2016; Dinh et al., 2017).

These results form a confirmation for the underlying mechanism of the different surrounding environments that interact with each other. As the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposes, these interacting environments that surround children affect their development. Applied to the subject of the current study, the interface of work and family can be associated with a spillover of related resources that can enrich an individual's role and functioning as a parent. This spillover is beneficial to the behavioural outcomes of a child who grows up in a shared home environment created with a parent as a result of positive exchanges between work and family environments.

Thus, the mediating role of parental characteristics in the home environment plays a significant role in the relationship between a parent's experience of work-family enrichment and the behavioural outcomes of a child. Moreover, the intervening variables of parental well-being

and parenting performance fully mediate the relationship between work-family enrichment and children's behaviour, confirming our third hypothesis. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the level of parents' well-being has a significant positive relationship with parenting performance, confirming the findings of previous inquiries (Conger et al., 2002; Jackson et al., 2000; McCarty & McMahon, 2003; Van den Eynde et al., 2020).

After critically reflecting on the current study to give suggestions for future research, we must acknowledge a number of limitations. First, although we had the objective of investigating a network of relationships by using SEM analysis and attempted to account for reversed causality by including measurement of children's behaviour in the last wave as a lagged variable in our model, we cannot make any statements about changes over time. In practical terms, we had to work with scales and items that were only adopted in certain waves. In theoretical terms, reciprocity is assumed, but empirical (longitudinal) research should further investigate potential reversed causation mechanisms between children's behaviour and parental characteristics. A second limitation in the current study is that the measurements of interest were subjective in nature by self-reporting (work-family enrichment, well-being, and parenting) or an interpretation of another person's functioning (child's behaviour). Third, notwithstanding that the focus on enrichment of work and family is a value added to the existing literature on work-family balance, the LSAC database did not offer more in-depth insights into different possible ways of experiencing two directions of enrichment—namely, work that enriches the family domain (WEF) and family that enriches the work domain (FEW). The enrichment concept is complementary to the concept of work-family conflict and is also theoretically distinguished (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). A last limitation is the uniform way we treated families in this study (e.g., see: Mortelmans et al. 2016). Due to the limited sample size, we could not distinguish multiple family forms in order to discover how the mechanisms shown in this study could differ across family forms.

In conclusion, this study added to the literature by focusing on the consequences on children's behaviour of parents experiencing possible enrichment between work and family life, and it confirmed parents' well-being and parenting as crucial mediators. Adults and parents spend a remarkable amount of time at work and at home. The positive interaction between these life spheres and the associated spillover of resources can lead to beneficial consequences for one's role as a parent. Through intergenerational transfer, children's functioning and development are at stake in complex yet powerful interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986),

which in this case means that positive work-family spillover can transfer to an involved child. In the context of policy and practices, this perspective should not be forgotten in order to highlight this in its elaboration besides measures to deal with work-family conflict. Nonetheless, it is clear that a complex system is at work here which should be further disentangled in future research.

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# Chapter 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION

## Chapter 6 General discussion

It is no surprise that work-family balance is a regular topic of conversation in our current society. It affects both the professional work context and the personal home environment, which largely determines our way of living (Kelly, 2011). The increase in dual-earner families, workload levels, divorce rates, and differing family compositions are changing societal norms, increasing scientific interest in work-family balance (Chapple & Richardson, 2009; del Carmen Huerta et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; Van der Lippe, 2007). However, previous research has not investigated how work-family balance is experienced from a family perspective in this societal context.

The present work is situated in the sociology of the family and generally aimed to investigate how contemporary families deal with the combination of work and family life. With this aim, the diversity of family compositions in today's society is taken into account (Part 1). Parents and children are the actors that function within a certain family composition. For parents, children are an integral part of their present family life, so we investigated whether the effects on parents of work-family interaction spilled over onto children (Part 2). With this twofold goal, the contemporary and comprehensive approach contributes to the scientific literature by recognizing the possible enrichment element between work and family life – in addition to the usual focus on work-family conflict.

### 6.1 Discussion of the main findings

The two parts in this PhD dissertation each consist of two chapters: one focused on the experience of work-family conflict and one on work-family enrichment. In this section, we formulate answers to the four sub-research questions, based on the findings of the papers. Together, these provide an answer to the overall research question of how contemporary families experience work-family balance.

### 6.1.1 Part 1: Family composition

*Chapter 2 – Research question 1: Do married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents experience work-family conflict differently?*

The dissolution of a marriage involves a change in the balance between work and family. Previous studies mainly compared married and coupled persons with single parents (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Byron, 2005; Duxbury et al., 1994; McManus et al., 2002; Nomaguchi, 2012). However, these categories do not take into account the diversity of single parents. Given the scientific gap in consideration of the diverse circumstances of single parents, the aim of the first research question was to investigate the differences in experience of work-family conflict for married and divorced parents, accounting for gender and relationship status after divorce. Starting from the theoretical perspective of the fit between demands and resources (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Voydanoff, 2005), we hypothesized that (1) divorced parents experience more WIF and FIW than married parents do, that (2) single parents experience more WIF and FIW compared to coupled parents (either married or repartnered), and that (3) single divorced parents experience the most WIF and FIW, followed by repartnered divorced parents and married parents. The possible difference between mothers and fathers was also taken into account through separate logistic regression analyses for each gender. Additionally, a fourth bipartite hypothesis was formulated regarding the diversity within the category of divorced parents. We expected that (4a) the number of working hours would have a greater negative impact on WIF for divorced mothers than it would for divorced fathers and that (4b) the presence of children would have a greater negative impact on FIW for divorced mothers than it would for divorced fathers.

The results of the logistic regression analysis on a representative subsample of the DiF data containing information on 769 married and 1424 divorced parents, showed a complex interplay among work-family conflict and the variables involved: marital status, relationship status, and gender. Divorced and single mothers experienced more work-family conflict compared to married and repartnered mothers. Thus, both marital status and relationship status affected the experience of work-family conflict among mothers. For fathers, the results showed significant differences in FIW between single and coupled (either repartnered or married) fathers. It appeared the presence of a partner to rely on (e.g., practical, financial, emotional support) only affects the confrontation with conflicting interference from the family to the work domain (FIW).

These results demonstrate the importance of not generalizing across genders. Overall, we concluded that it is necessary to consider the diversity of currently partnered and single parents. In combination with gender, relationship status determines how conflicts between work and family demands can be managed. Additionally, the results of the within-group analysis of divorced parents did not confirm the hypotheses.

*Chapter 3 – Research question 2: Do married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents experience work-family enrichment differently?*

Due to the recent acknowledgement of the positive interaction between work and family, our focus shifted to the experience work-family enrichment. This leads to the comparison of married/cohabiting and divorced/separated parents in terms of work-family enrichment, again considering their gender and relationship status after separation. Also in work-family enrichment research, limited research has included family compositions as the variable of interest. When included, it was as a control variable and distinguished between only married or couples individuals and singles (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016; Hunter et al., 2010; Rastogi & Chaudhary, 2018; van Steenbergen et al., 2014). Moreover, because work-family enrichment is a very recently recognized phenomenon (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and little empirical research is available, our hypotheses are based on the theoretical argument that a person's family composition may influence the availability of and access to certain enriching resources. Consequently, it was hypothesized that (1) divorced parents experience less work-family enrichment than married parents do, (2) single parents experience less work-family enrichment than coupled parents (either married or repartnered) do, and (3) single separated parents experience the least amount of work-family enrichment, followed by repartnered parents and married/cohabiting parents. Again, the analyses were conducted separately for mothers and fathers due to the gendered nature of this issue.

For the analysis, we opted to perform a linear regression analysis of the data of 3992 married/cohabiting and 1456 divorced/separated parents from the LSAC. Compared with the results presented in Chapter 2, a different pattern of complexity was found. The results revealed that single mothers experienced work-family enrichment after a break-up more than partnered mothers did. This was a striking finding that was different from our expectation. No differences were found for fathers, keeping in mind the lower number of male respondents in the subsample.

In conclusion, it appears that single mothers somehow have access to certain resources that positively affect their work-family balance. A possible resource to consider is the strong social networks they have built by being single to compensate for having fewer of the resources that come with having a supportive partner. Another resource could be an increase in available work-related resources, as they work on a full-time basis more often (e.g., financially). Future research should further disentangle the interaction between family status and gender. This can reveal important differences that shape equal policy opportunities.

### 6.1.2 Part 2: Children's behavior

*Chapter 4 – Research question 3: Does parents' experience of work-family conflict negatively affect children's behavior, via parental well-being and parenting performances?*

Starting from Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, one would expect that through interrelated systems, parents' work and family systems indirectly or directly affect the children's development. This leads to the reasoning that the parent's experience of work-family conflict can spill over onto the children, in which case it is no longer an individual matter. First, it was hypothesized that (1) higher levels of work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) are negatively related to children's behavior. Based on the role stress associated with work-family conflict and the bi-directional interactions between the parent and child, it is believed that this relationship is not entirely direct (Bauer et al., 2012; Strazdins et al., 2006; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi et al., 2018). Therefore, parents' well-being and parenting performance are included as mediators, leading us to hypothesize that (2) parental well-being and (3) parenting mediate the relationship between work-family conflict (both WIF and FIW) and children's behavior.

A second-order hierarchical structural equation model was applied on a subsample of the Pairfam of 969 children and parents. The results showed that both directions of work-family conflict (WIF and FIW) have a negative association with children's behavior. However, this relationship does not run directly but rather operates through the parental mediators. As such, this association is fully mediated through the parent's well-being and parenting performance. Only the relationship between WIF and parenting appeared not to be significant but can be explained by the reasoning that WIF is more strongly related to work than it is to family characteristics (Amstad et al., 2011; Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). Thus,

experiencing conflict between the parent's work role and family role has a negative association with the parent's functioning, which affects the environment in which the children grow up. These findings emphasize the importance of including these types of mediators to obtain more insights into the spillover of work-family consequences onto other family members – in this case, the children.

*Chapter 5 – Research question 4: Does parents' experience of work-family enrichment positively affect children's behavior, via parental well-being and parenting performances?*

Based on the findings in Chapter 4 and the upcoming recognition of a positive work-family interaction, this study investigated the association between work-family enrichment and children's behavior by understanding this relationship through the mediating role of the parents' functioning. This study, which empirical research supports, applied the theoretical statement that children must be regarded as interactive persons who are connected to the ecological system surrounding them (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Dinh et al., 2017; Vahedi et al., 2018; Van den Eynde et al., 2020; Vieira et al., 2016). This led to the formulation of two hypotheses: (1) parental well-being and (2) parenting mediate the relationship between work-family enrichment and the child's behavior.

Estimating a second-order hierarchical structural equation model on an LSAC subsample of 4163 parents allowed us to answer our last research question. The results of this analysis (without the distinction between WEF and FEW) again showed no support for a direct association. Instead, full mediation through parents' functioning factors was found. The parents' experience of work-family enrichment has a positive relationship with the parents' well-being and parenting performances. Next, these elevated levels of well-being and appropriate parenting positively affect the behavior of the involved children in the household. Overall, it can be concluded that through intergenerational transfer in complex yet powerful interacting systems, the experience of a positive (enrichment) interaction between the work and family spheres can spill over onto other members in the family, such as the involved children. The resources gained from the work or family domain can strengthen the parent's problem-solving and coping skills, which is beneficial for a healthy home environment for the child.



## 6.2 Overall conclusion

In this part, a general conclusion is formulated based on the answers to the research questions. The problem statement was the impetus to actualize the issue when focusing on how families experience work-family balance. This PhD research makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by offering new contemporary insights into the experience of work-family balance from the family perspective.

Starting from the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), we disentangled the interacting work and family systems of parents and children. The study of Grzywacz and Marks (2000) applied this socio-ecological perspective in explaining the complexity of the work-family interaction. This approach suggests that the work-family interaction should be understood by taking into account not only individual, environmental, and time factors, but also how these factors collectively affect this issue. In this framework, our results supported the reasoning that a complex interaction between family actors and the environments that they directly or indirectly share is at work. The family composition and the inclusion of the child as an important family member determine how and in what way the work-family combination is experienced.

When one positions the parent at the center of the systems model, it is the presence or the absence of a partner that makes the difference in how the parent can meet the role demands and can benefit from the enrichment factors. However, this difference is nuanced according to the parent's gender. For work-family conflict, our attention is drawn to fathers with supportive partners (either married, cohabiting, or repartnered), which seems to buffer the conflicting work and family demands. For work-family enrichment, surprisingly, single mothers experience more work-family enrichment compared with partnered mothers. Single mothers seem to benefit more from having stronger social networks and increased work-related resources due to the need to work more. From a theoretical point of view, the work and family contexts in the microsystem around the parent interact negatively (conflict) and positively (enrichment) at the level of the mesosystem according to the parent's gender and family composition. The recent review of Molina (2020) adds insights into the relationship between work-family conflict and the family structure, but it focuses on an economic perspective in terms of the differences between single-earner and dual-earner couples. The study's findings showed different implications of various family situations on work-family conflict with an emphasis on unmarried men who

increase their work efforts when they become parents (compared with unmarried men), as well as the negative association of work-family conflict with men's fertility aspirations. Just as this review concludes, more scientific insights into the experience, associations, antecedents, and consequences of the work-family interface among non-traditional families of all kinds are still missing, but they will be deemed valuable in the dynamic contemporary social context.

When a child is placed at the center of the model, the link with the parents' work-family balance is understood via the parenting context surrounding the child. Experiencing conflicting and enriching work and family roles affects the parenting well-being and parenting performance in a negative and positive way, respectively. Next, parents with healthy well-being and appropriate parenting toward children have a positive relationship with the children's behavior. Theoretically speaking, the reciprocal interaction makes up the work-family balance at the level of the mesosystem. This surrounds the parents in a direct way but can indirectly spill over via the microsystem to the children's functioning. Various studies during the past decade have linked parents' work-family interaction (both conflict and enrichment) to several aspects of the children's development and functioning via the parental environment, all emphasizing this issue's intergenerational impact (Bauer et al., 2012; Cooklin et al., 2015, 2016; Strazdins et al., 2006; Strazdins et al., 2012; Strazdins et al., 2013; Vahedi et al., 2018; Vieira et al., 2016). One of the most recent works in the literature is the Australian research of Leach, Dinh, Cooklin, Nicholson, and Strazdins (2021). They found that parents' experience of work-family conflict is negatively associated with children's mental health. Moreover, their results indicated accumulation over time. They also indicated that the family environment factors of parent psychological distress, marital satisfaction, and parenting irritability mediate this association.

As described in the introduction, the conflict and enrichment approaches are considered distinct concepts, meaning that persons can experience conflict and enrichment between the work role and family role at the same time. This reasoning is based on theory, but empirical research supports it (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Lapierre et al., 2018; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Voydanoff, 2004). Although it was not the aim of the current PhD research study, the results also suggest orthogonal conceptualization. The comparison of single mothers is reminiscent of this: single mothers experience the most work-family conflict and enrichment compared with partnered mothers.

### 6.3 Future outlook

In light of the research findings, the impetus for future research that goes beyond the scope of this PhD study can be given. The presented research chapters have already made suggestions related to the specific research questions, but some overall recommendations regarding the general PhD topic can be formulated.

As mentioned in the introduction, three datasets were used. Although focusing on both the conflict approach and the enrichment approach is a strength, this resulted in little choice of regarding the available datasets included in these scales. The relatively new enrichment concept in particular has been scarcely questioned. Even though we intended to give a substantive answer to the research question, we stayed sensitive to the existing country differences within the chapters by situating the specific context. Consequently, we were not able to conduct comparative and multilevel research. Molina (2020) also recognized this limitation by reviewing work-family conflict research from the past decade. In light of this, researchers who conduct future research should (1) have access to databases that include both the conflict and the enrichment concept, and (2) conduct comparative and multilevel research that compares countries in a uniform way. Existing comparative research regarding work-family balance is valuable, but it is often limited to a specific group of respondents or to relevant measures and country-level indicators (Araci, 2020; Beham, Drobnič, Präg, Baierl, & Lewis, 2020; Jeffrey Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004; Molina, 2020; Taiji & Mills, 2020). For example, Jeffrey Hill et al. (2004) investigated a cross-cultural model of the work-family interface in 48 countries, but all respondents worked for IBM.

A limitation of research in the human sciences is the inability to make clear causal statements. Our research questions and analytical models have led to the choice of treating our data in a cross-sectional manner, although the Pairfam and LSAC provide longitudinal data. As a result, statements could be made only about relationships and associations. The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986) raises the awareness of the reciprocal interactions in the equations and models. It is not inconceivable that having children with behavioral problems negatively affects the parental functioning and impacts how the parent experiences the role demands and benefits in the work and family domains. Vahedi et al. (2018) focused in their research on the shape and direction of associations between maternal work-family conflict and

enrichment, inter-parental conflict, and children's internalizing and externalizing problems. Their findings indicated that bidirectional associations are present. Thus, the recommendation for future research is to further disentangle the involved associations by using longitudinal data (Molina, 2020). This would allow for a thorough and valuable investigation of changes over time at the level of work-family balance, with specific attention going to changes in family composition and to children's development.

A critical reflection on the measurements can also lead to advice for future research. Two major points of attention emerge from the current PhD research. First, work-family conflict and enrichment, parental well-being, parenting performances, children's behavior, and a few included control variables are considered subjective experiences. As such, it is not possible to have an objective measure of these variables and research in general is dependent on how respondents fill in a scale. In this way, self-report bias can occur, but it is difficult to avoid. As in this PhD research study, future research should place critical focus on the available scales and on specific scale features in terms of validity and reliability. Second, children's behavior measurement as highlighted in the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997; Woerner et al., 2002) is conducted through the parents. A child self-report version is available but targets children from 11 to 17 years old and consequently would have reduced the subsamples too much in this study. Nevertheless, in the context of the findings, we would recommend paying more attention to the children's own perspectives regarding this matter.

The boundaries between work and family life changed radically when the coronavirus struck the entire world unexpectedly at the beginning of 2020. Family-friendly work arrangements, like working from home, are often mentioned in scientific research concerning policy and governmental initiatives designed to enhance a healthy work-family balance (Fiksenbaum, 2014; Stier, Lewin-Epstein, & Braun, 2012). To counteract the virus, these initiatives were suddenly compulsory or at least strongly recommended to reduce the amount of social contact. During this mandatory period of remote working spanning several months, one also had to keep running the household and taking care of the children at the same time (schools were also completely or partially closed in the affected countries). Consequently, the parental and work role – and often the partner role as well – have become mixed up (Verweij, Helmerhorst, & Keizer, 2021). Although we were not able to incorporate specific research concerning the coronavirus in the current PhD research study, it is important to inquire about the short- and long-term effects

on the work-family balance in the future. As a starting point, the recent study by Verweij et al. (2021) indeed found that work-family conflict levels increased during the coronavirus pandemic, especially among highly educated mothers. However, their results indicated that these elevated levels of work-family conflict did not affect their parenting. Investigating the possible advantages and disadvantages of different degrees and forms of working remotely, as well as perceived supportive work cultures can also steer policy decisions (ten Brummelhuis & van der Lippe, 2010).

## 6.4 Policy and practice recommendations

The negative consequences of work-family conflict and the positive consequences of work-family enrichment for the parent and other family members (Allen et al., 2000; Amstad et al., 2011; McNall et al., 2010; Vahedi et al., 2018; van Steenbergen et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018) emphasize the importance of adequate policy and practice regulations. In this final section, policy and practice recommendations are formulated based on the findings of this work. The goals of these recommendations is to spark the best decisions and interventions at the policy and practice levels for achieving work-family balance.

Although it is acknowledged that work-family balance can be experienced differently, the policy and practice around it struggles to adapt to people's specific needs and resources. The literature explains this issue as the difficulty of making policy initiatives easily and equally accessible to different target groups. For example, leave schedules and flexible work arrangements tend to be targeted and used more commonly among women versus men (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018; Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017). The focus on women is an expression of the existing gender inequality in labor participation and family involvement. However, our research findings, taking into account mothers' and fathers' relationship statuses (having a partner or being single), shed light on the more complex and nuanced experience of work-family balance. The research of ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010) explored how successful supportive work-family balance initiatives (flexible work arrangements, supervisor support, family responsive culture) were in terms of helping-behavior and performance of single employees, employees with partners, and employees with partners and children. The results reinforce the relevance of considering relationship status when promoting work-family

initiatives, as the findings showed that the compared household structures took advantage of certain initiatives differently. Taken these findings into account, we propose a policy and practice framework that goes beyond gender inequality and also includes factors that represent the contemporary living situations of families. On the basis of our results, marital status does not correctly reflect the needs and resources of mothers and fathers but can be considered when one is focusing on relationship status. The study of Pocock and Charlesworth (2017) added to the discussion a life course perspective: the dynamic nature of family and work over a lifespan demands multiple-level work-family interventions. Needs and resources change according to certain work and family events in life, such as an increase in later births, more dual-earner families, higher divorce rates, and more single parents. They suggest three levels of critical interventions: (1) macrosocial and economic institutions (e.g., health care, elder care, childcare, education), (2) the regulation of the work domain (e.g., contract, payment, working time, leave), and (3) the workplace domain (e.g., work culture, supervision and management characteristics). Staying sensitive to the persistent gender inequality across countries is crucial at all intervention levels (Moen, 2011; Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017). However, this life course approach should first be implemented in future research before valuable recommendations for policy and practice are made (Molina, 2020). Additionally, although the study of Pocock and Charlesworth (2017) focused mainly on the Australian case, the changing context around individuals, families, and societies is recognized at the global level. The success and nature of policy and practice interventions depend on the specific national contexts to which they are applied (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018).

Designing work-family policy and practice interventions is a complex matter. On one hand, societal interest supports and stimulates workforce and employment participation. On the other hand, protecting family environments for children's physical, mental, and social development is a global priority. Both are closely intertwined and strongly interact (Strazdins et al., 2012). The findings that parents' work-family balance experience is related to children's behavioral outcomes via the parents' well-being and parenting should lead to the approach of identifying work-family arrangements that promote a healthy family environment. Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of applying a child-centered perspective when designing and redesigning policy and practice arrangements. Multiple studies confirmed the positive association between work-family initiatives – such as parental leave, a family-friendly work

culture, flexible work arrangements, and job security – and children’s well-being (Galtry & Callister, 2005; Huebener, Kuehnle, & Spiess, 2017; Li et al., 2014; Strazdins et al., 2012). Without prejudice towards the existing policies and practices, the recommendation is to continue to improve and invest in initiatives focusing on achieving a healthy work-family balance, which has beneficial effects on both parents’ and children’s functioning (Leach et al., 2021; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; Thévenon & Luci, 2012). Looking at this thoroughly within the actual national context is also crucial here.

Moreover, thinking about work-family balance is almost exclusively based on the assumption that this results in conflict between the two roles. Based on this reasoning, interventions are designed to reduce the level of work-family conflict. However, with the recently acquired theoretical and empirical insights regarding the possible positive interaction between the two roles, it can be an incentive to design policy and practice interventions, linked to research findings, that increase work-family enrichment (McNall et al., 2010). Based on theoretical insights, interventions targeting work-family conflict should be aimed at reducing or more easily reconciling the conflicting demands of work and family. The goal of work-family enrichment interventions is based on strengthening or increasing the resources. The previous study of Grzywacz and Marks (2000) suggested that certain interventions are more appropriate for either reducing work-family conflict or increasing work-family enrichment. Creating a supportive work environment, promoting qualitative family relations, and reducing job pressure appear to be more beneficial for reducing work-family conflict. Interventions that focus on increasing work control and decision-making (e.g., flexible work arrangements and job sharing) may enhance the work-family enrichment experience. Accordingly, we recommend being attentive to developing a policy and practice that specifically target positive work-family interaction – next to or in combination with work-family conflict interventions.

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# Chapter 7

APPENDICES

## Chapter 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Overview of co-authors contribution

#### **Chapter 2: The experience of work-family conflict among divorced parents in Flanders**

Conceptualization: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Methodology: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Analysis: Van den Eynde, A.

Writing – original draft: Van den Eynde, A. & Vercruyssen, A.

Writing – review & editing: Van den Eynde, A.

Supervision: Mortelmans, M.

#### **Chapter 3: Experiencing work-family enrichment as a separated parent in Australia**

Conceptualization: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Methodology: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Analysis: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Writing – original draft: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Writing – review & editing: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Supervision: Mortelmans, M.

#### **Chapter 4: The consequences of work-family conflict in families on the behavior of the child**

Conceptualization: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Methodology: Van den Eynde, A., Claessens, E., & Mortelmans, D.

Analysis: Claessens, E., & Mortelmans, D.

Writing – original draft: Van den Eynde, A., Claessens, E., & Mortelmans, D.

Writing – review & editing: Van den Eynde, A.

Supervision: Mortelmans, M.

## **Chapter 5: The consequences of work-family enrichment in families on the behaviour of children**

Conceptualization: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Methodology: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Analysis: Mortelmans, D.

Writing – original draft: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Writing – review & editing: Van den Eynde, A. & Mortelmans, D.

Supervision: Mortelmans, M.

## 7.2 Descriptive statistics of the original WIF and FIW scale (Chapter 2)

Table 7.1

*Descriptive Statistics of the Original Items and Mean Score of WIF and FIW*

	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
WIF item 1		42.5	15.6	10.9	15.0	7.4	7.2	1.3
WIF item 2		46.9	13.5	9.0	14.8	6.7	7.2	2
FIW item 1		79.4	12.0	4.3	2.0	1.4	0.6	0.3
FIW item 2		80.3	11.8	3.3	2.7	1.0	0.7	0.2
WIF	2.53(1.59)							
FIW	1.36(0.82)							

*Note.* WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work.



### 7.3 Model construction of Hypotheses 1 to 3 (Chapter 2)

Table 7.2  
Model Construction with Logistic Regression Analysis of H1a (WIF) and H1b (FIW)

	H1a						H1b					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Intercept	Exp(B)	2.34	Exp(B)	0.49	Exp(B)	0.58	Exp(B)	0.12	Exp(B)	0.13	Exp(B)	0.11
Comparison 1												
Married		0.64**		1.15		0.68**		0.65		0.65		0.78
Divorced												0.56*
Respondent's age		0.98		0.98		1.00		1.01		1.01		1.03
Educational level												
Primary		0.84		0.97		0.80		0.63		0.63		0.55
Secondary		0.67*		0.70*		1.09		0.55*		0.55*		0.43*
Higher												1.00
Number of children		0.87		0.87		1.04		0.96		0.96		0.89
Age youngest child		1.01		1.01		0.99		0.96		0.96		0.93*
Parental divorce												0.91**
Yes		0.83		0.87		0.92		1.76		1.76		1.92
No												0.93
Working hours												
Household income												
$\chi^2$ (df)		13.51 (7)		52.41** (8)		43.64** (8)		9.82 (7)		9.82 (8)		18.25* (9)
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke		0.022		0.084		0.051		0.029		0.029		0.058
		0.017		0.084		0.051		0.031		0.031		0.036
		14.43* (7)		52.41** (8)		43.64** (8)		19.07** (7)		21.90** (8)		24.37** (9)
		0.022		0.084		0.051		0.029		0.029		0.058

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 7.3

Model Construction with Logistic Regression Analysis of H2a (WIF) and H2b (FIW)

	H2a						H2b					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Intercept	Exp(B) 4.08*	Exp(B) 1.83	Exp(B) 0.59	Exp(B) 0.44	Exp(B) 0.44	Exp(B) 0.31	Exp(B) 0.05*	Exp(B) 0.10**	Exp(B) 0.05*	Exp(B) 0.06**	Exp(B) 0.05*	Exp(B) 0.06**
Comparison 2												
Single	0.87	1.62**	0.85	1.55**	0.86	1.83**	4.26**	1.62*	4.26**	1.60*	4.33**	1.65
Couple												
Respondent's age	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.99	1.02	1.03	1.02	1.03	1.04	1.02
Educational level												
Primary	0.83	0.74	0.95	0.84	1.08	0.97	0.65	0.85	0.65	0.90	0.66	0.96
Secondary	0.67*	0.99	0.69*	1.11	0.75	1.22	0.60	1.02	0.60	1.05	0.50*	1.02
Higher												
Number of children	0.86	1.09	0.86	1.09	0.85	1.05	1.03	1.00	1.03	1.01	0.90	1.05
Age youngest child	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.00	1.00	0.99	0.92*	0.92**	0.92*	0.92**	0.89**	0.92**
Parental divorce												
Yes	0.83	0.93	0.87	0.94	0.90	0.90	1.74	1.08	1.74	1.04	1.86	0.97
No												
Working hours												
Household income			1.04**	1.03**	1.04**	1.03**	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.01	1.01	1.01
$\chi^2$ (df)	13.51 (7)	15.42* (7)	52.09** (8)	47.06** (8)	52.58** (9)	43.85** (9)	26.77** (7)	16.33* (7)	26.77** (8)	19.60* (8)	33.09** (9)	18.77* (9)
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke	0.022	0.019	0.084	0.057	0.092	0.058	0.078	0.028	0.078	0.033	0.103	0.035

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 7.4

Model Construction with Logistic Regression Analysis of H3a (WIF) and H3b (FIW) with Married Parents as Reference Category

	H3a						H3b					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Intercept	Exp(B) 4.05*	Exp(B) 1.67	Exp(B) 0.56	Exp(B) 0.42	Exp(B) 0.42	Exp(B) 0.30	Exp(B) 0.05**	Exp(B) 0.10**	Exp(B) 0.04*	Exp(B) 0.06**	Exp(B) 0.04*	Exp(B) 0.06**
Comparison 3												
Single	0.87	1.86**	0.81	1.72**	0.82	2.06**	3.93**	1.89**	3.92**	1.86*	3.71**	2.09*
Repartnered	0.98	1.31	0.90	1.23	0.91	1.26	0.81	1.35	0.81	1.33	0.65	1.55
Married												
Respondent's age	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.05	1.02
Educational level												
Primary	0.84	0.70	0.97	0.81	1.10	0.94	0.67	0.81	0.68	0.86	0.72	0.90
Secondary	0.67*	0.97	0.70*	1.09	0.76	1.20	0.62	0.99	0.62	1.02	0.53	0.98
Higher												
Number of children	0.86	1.07	0.87	1.08	0.85	1.03	1.04	0.98	1.04	0.99	0.90	1.01
Age youngest child	1.01	1.00	1.01	0.99	1.00	0.98	0.92*	0.92**	0.92*	0.92**	0.88**	0.92**
Parental divorce												
Yes	0.83	0.90	0.87	0.91	0.90	0.88	1.75	1.05	1.75	1.01	1.86	0.91
No												
Working hours			1.04**	1.03**	1.04**	1.03**			1.00	1.01	1.01	1.01
Household income												
$\chi^2$ (df)	13.53 (8)	18.53* (8)	52.50** (9)	48.84** (9)	52.89** (10)	45.86** (10)	27.14** (8)	17.93* (8)	27.15** (9)	21.03* (9)	34.44** (10)	21.80* (10)
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke	0.022	0.022	0.085	0.059	0.092	0.060	0.079	0.030	0.079	0.036	0.108	0.040

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 7.5

Model Construction with Logistic Regression Analysis of H3a (WIF) and H3b (FIW) with Repartnered Parents as Reference Category

	H3a						H3b					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Intercept	Exp(B) 3.97*	Exp(B) 2.18	Exp(B) 0.51	Exp(B) 0.52	Exp(B) 0.38	Exp(B) 0.38	Exp(B) 0.04*	Exp(B) 0.13*	Exp(B) 0.04*	Exp(B) 0.07**	Exp(B) 0.02*	Exp(B) 0.10*
Comparison 3												
Single	0.88	1.42*	0.90	1.40*	0.91	1.63*	4.85**	1.41	4.86**	1.40	5.74**	1.35
Repartnered												
Married	1.02	0.77	1.11	0.81	1.10	0.79	1.24	0.74	1.24	0.75	1.55	0.64
Respondent's age	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.05	1.02
Educational level												
Primary	0.84	0.70	0.97	0.81	1.10	0.94	0.67	0.81	0.68	0.86	0.72	0.90
Secondary	0.67*	0.97	0.70*	1.09	0.76	1.20	0.62	0.99	0.62	1.02	0.53	0.98
Higher												
Number of children	0.86	1.07	0.87	1.08	0.85	1.03	1.04	0.98	1.04	0.99	0.90	1.01
Age youngest child	1.01	1.00	1.01	0.99	1.00	0.98	0.92*	0.92**	0.92*	0.92**	0.88**	0.92**
Parental divorce												
Yes	0.83	0.90	0.87	0.91	0.90	0.88	1.75	1.05	1.75	1.01	1.86	0.91
No												
Working hours			1.04**	1.03**	1.04**	1.03**			1.00	1.01	1.01	1.01
Household income					1.00	1.00				1.00	1.00	1.00
$\chi^2$ (df)	13.53 (8)	18.53* (8)	52.50** (9)	48.84** (9)	52.89** (10)	45.86** (10)	27.14** (8)	17.93* (8)	27.15** (9)	21.03* (9)	34.44** (10)	21.80* (10)
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke	0.022	0.022	0.085	0.059	0.092	0.060	0.079	0.030	0.079	0.036	0.108	0.040

Note. WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## 7.4 Model construction of Hypothesis 4 (Chapter 2)

Table 7.6

Model Construction with Logistic Regression Analysis of H4a (WIF) and H4b (FIW)

	Model 1		H4a Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		H4b Model 2	
	Exp(B)		Exp(B)		Exp(B)		Exp(B)		Exp(B)	
Intercept	0.42		0.31		0.36		0.02**		0.05**	
Comparison 4										
Divorced father	0.63**		0.63*		0.40		0.46**		0.44**	
Divorced mother										
Working hours	1.03**		1.03**		1.02**		1.01		1.01	
Presence of the child	1.01*		1.01*		1.01*		1.00		1.00	
Divorced father*working hours					1.01					
Divorced father*presence child							1.06*		1.06*	
Respondent's age	0.99		1.00		1.00					
Educational level										
Primary	0.86		0.87		0.87		0.70		0.59	
Secondary	1.02		1.06		1.04		0.96		0.77	
Higher										
Number of children	0.95		0.94		0.95		1.11		1.11	
Age youngest child	1.01		1.00		1.00		0.92**		0.90**	
Parental divorce										
Yes	1.07		1.09		1.09		1.25		1.26	
No										
Time since separation										
0-2 years	0.81		0.87		0.87		1.32		1.15	
3 years or more										
Household income										
<math>\chi^2 (df)</math>	47.25** (10)		43.01** (11)		43.92** (12)		29.54** (10)		42.58** (11)	
R <sup>2</sup> of Nagelkerke	0.058		0.057		0.058		0.052		0.080	

Note: WIF = work interfering with family; FIW = family interfering with work; M = men; W = women.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



