A Touch of Class: Work and Family Balance in Professional and Working Class Hispanics

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This article examines work-family conflict (a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect) among Hispanics at different levels of Socioeconomic Status (SES). Results did not support the hypothesis that Hispanics with a lower SES experience a higher level of WFC due to limited resources. However, because Hispanics are stereotypically considered loyal and family-oriented, these values may become weakened by upwardly-mobile career goals. Second, the maintenance of some level of Hispanic (or any ethnic) identity can improve the individual's ability to create family and work role separation.

The focus of the present study was to increase understanding of the challenges many individuals face in trying to achieve and maintain a balance between their work lives and their family lives. The most common type of household in American society today is the dual-earner home. As a result more individuals than ever are being confronted with the difficulties inherent of trying to be a good worker, as well as a good family member. This challenge may be especially salient for working-class individuals who may face more obstacles than their middle-class counterparts in embracing these challenges due to more limited resources.

The literature review completed for this study found that the increase in the number of individuals working outside the home has caused people to move between two realms on a daily basis, the home realm and the work realm, which are in many ways like two different countries or cultures. While both genders are affected by the

challenge of balancing work and family, women report higher levels of difficulty and related stress (Higgins & Duxbury, 1992). The differences in class (professional versus working class) have yet to be examined. While women still do the majority of the housekeeping and emotional work at home, even if they are employed full-time outside the home, Hispanic women report higher levels of satisfaction than do Anglo-American women because they do not experience as much pressure to be "superwomen". There are a number of consequences associated with the challenge of maintaining work and family balance: problems at work spill over to home, and problems at home spill over to the workplace. At home, these problems are associated with decreased marital satisfaction, lower overall assessments of family relationships, and increased tension in the home for all involved. In the workplace, these problems can cause reduced performance, greater absenteeism, higher rates of turnover, and lack of job satisfaction and job commitment. Those individuals who are satisfied with their jobs are generally more committed to them, but job satisfaction has been found to be linked to satisfaction with one's life (Rice, Frone & McFarlin 1992). The challenge is therefore quite significant. Individuals who are trying to fulfill more roles than they are comfortably able to do, end up experiencing burnout in both their home and work environments; negatively affecting themselves and all with whom they are involved.

Literature Review

The United States Census Bureau defines persons of Hispanic origin as those who live in the United States and indicate their origin as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central, or South American. Of particular note is that persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Along these same lines, 'Latino' is defined as an individual living in the United States originating from or having heritage relating to Latin America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). While much debate exists as to how inclusive/exclusive these terms might be, for the purposes of the current study, the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' will be used interchangeably. Hispanics are the largest and one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States. Currently, there are approximately 33 million Hispanics, comprising approximately 12% of the U.S. population. It is projected that Hispanics will comprise a group of over 50 million by 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to Census projections, Hispanics will comprise at least 25% of the total United States population by 2050. This group has accounted for 40% of the population growth in the United States in the past decade, growing at 60%, ten times the rate of non-Hispanics (Blancero & Blancero, 2001.) The U.S. Latino population has grown faster than predicted since 1990 and is now approximately the same size as the African-American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Clearly, Hispanics are a growing component of the workforce that corporations need to consider, especially if it can be demonstrated that they differ from other groups in the workforce.

Despite the explosive growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, there has been little research done on this group. The rise in the number of Hispanics poses great opportunity for researchers and practitioners and has important implications for organizations, especially considering the lack of scholarly work in this area. Moreover,

Hispanic business professionals have been largely under-investigated by business researchers. In the present study, business professionals were operationalized as those white-collar workers with a minimum of an undergraduate college degree.

The emergence of Hispanic business professionals has had effects on numerous levels. In addition to gaining strength as a larger portion of the workforce, Hispanics are becoming a more powerful consumer group. Increasing numbers of Hispanics are also beginning to make significant in-roads in their corporate presence. Learning more about this group and their perceptions about business practices, and more specifically their ability to cope with the strain created by multiple roles (work and family), is important not only to Corporate America, but to Hispanics themselves.

Work-Family Conflict

The literature on Work-Family Conflict (WFC) is well reflected in the work of Greenhaus & Beutell (1985). Their study examined the sources of conflict, between the work role and the family role. Their model predicted that family/work pressures are brought about by time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. The model hypothesized that role pressures (and hence WFC) are intensified when the work and family roles are central to the person's self-concept and when there are strong negative sanctions for non-compliance with role demands. The research findings were generally consistent with the notion of time-based conflict, meaning there is conflict when pressures of time are not compatible with the demands of their other role domain. The authors' findings on strain-based conflict show that strain, conflict, or the absence of support contribute to WFC.

Going further, researchers see that the interaction between work-nonwork conflict and the perceived quality of life are negatively related to overall quality of life (Rice, Frone & McFarlin 1992). These researchers concluded that the relationship between work-nonwork conflict and the perceived quality of life are not strengthened or weakened by membership in a sociodemographic subgroup. However, the specific impact of a more collectivist, traditionally family oriented group (such as Hispanics) was not evaluated. In an earlier study, Frone & Rice (1987) examined the effect of job and family involvement. Their study looked at whether family involvement moderates the relationship between job involvement and WFC. Two areas of family involvement and two areas of WFC were reviewed for evidence of inter-role conflict. The results showed that job-spouse conflict was positively related to job-involvement among people high in spouse involvement, but was unrelated to job-involvement among people low in spouse involvement. Contrary to the authors' predictions, parental involvement did not moderate the relationship between job involvement and job-parent conflict. Rather, job involvement was positively related to job-parent conflict regardless of the level of parental involvement. They concluded that most people are likely to be motivated to evaluate themselves favorably as parents, or demands as parents are more difficult to ignore or escape than other roles. Professional couples are often busier and constrained by time; this could advance WFC regardless of the resources available to them.

Similarly, it would seem that 'blue collar' or working class individuals may also

have time constraints that impact each of their roles. Future research is necessary in order to ascertain the differences between 'professional' and 'working-class' individuals and their unique pressures and strains. Research on professional women, reveals that women report more work-interfering-with-family (WIF) conflict than family-interfering-with-work (FIW) conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kinnumen & Mauno, 1998). A study by Noor (2004) found that in terms of each conflict's impact on well-being in professional women, FIW conflict is more significant than WIF conflict. The advent of dual-career families brings forth the idea that perhaps these issues are becoming more apparent in working class populations as well. However, the extent to which work and family overlap has not been evaluated in this population.

In terms of evaluating exclusively ethnic samples, Luk & Shaffer (2005) found significant support for interactions involving domain-specific support resources. They found that Chinese respondents reporting greater levels of family-friendly policies had higher levels of WIF conflict across all levels of work time commitment. Family-friendly policies seem to operate as a stressor to Chinese employees, who view their relationship with their organization as harmonious. Because of this relationship, employees may respond to the family-friendly policies by working harder, which is in contrast with Western research. However, as Chinese culture places high value on family and the good of the group (collectivist), the Hispanic culture may also find that there is significant overlap and difficulty in balancing both work and home roles.

Perlow (1995) identified barriers at work that prevent current work-family policies (e.g. flex-place, flex-time, job sharing) from being effective. After identifying three barriers, the author addresses the assumptions about work which underlie those barriers. The first barrier is that one has to be present at work to succeed. The second barrier is having significant "face time", meaning being at work for extended periods of time. The final barrier is that work is always expected to be one's top priority. The underlying assumption is that one's presence at work is directly related to one's contribution.

Similarly, other researchers have found that job flexibility was related to reduced work-family conflict with a model that is transportable rather than gender or culturally specific (Hill, Yang, Hawkins & Ferris, 2004). The study, which included results from 48 countries, gave the authors reason to believe that international companies should invest in job flexibility policies to benefit employees and businesses operating in diverse cultures. The impact of specific policies or the specific needs of each population were not explicitly evaluated in the study.

Further, Lobel (1986) examined the values many people hold concerning behavior-based conflict in regard to work life and family life balance, and how WFC occurs with these values in place. The author proposed that inconsistent expectations about correct behavior regarding work and family roles do not necessarily prevent people from satisfying those expectations or hinder their ability to do both roles. Specific conditions arise, or are in place, which enable values to conflict with work and family roles. The author also discussed strategies for organizations and individuals to manage WFC, such as changing one's own personal values to be more in line with the organization's or vice versa. This is important to individuals who hold family values in high regard and who also view their jobs in high regard. There is also evidence that a supportive work-family culture, which refers to an organization's supportiveness or

responsiveness towards employees' family-related needs, is related both directly and indirectly to the well-being of employees (Mauno, Kinnunen & Pyykko, 2005). Their research finds this is accomplished through reduced work-family conflict. However, the view that individuals should 'change their opinions' seems rather short-sighted. In terms of determining the impact of WFC on specific populations, it seems that the specific needs, wants and values of a people must be evaluated before sweeping assumptions such as 'changing opinions' can be made.

Higgins & Duxbury (1992) evaluated dual-career and traditional – career men families. This study was of special interest as most Hispanic families follow the single-earner (more traditional) family structure (as reported in our survey). The authors explored the relationship WFC has on traditional career men (professionals with a housewife) compared to dual career men where the spouse is also a professional worker. They suggested that conflict will be stronger in dual-career men than in traditional-career men and that there will be a stronger negative relationship for dual-career men in regard to conflict and quality of work life. The authors found that maternal career employment has a significant effect on dual-career men because of out-dated organizational policies, lack of flexibility in the workplace, and the notion that there are separate worlds for work and family with dual-career men lacking social support for their role in that environment.

Acculturation

Greenberg (2001), in his review of the cross-cultural organizational justice literature, discusses the pros and cons of addressing organizational justice concerns cross-culturally. He suggests that justice is norm based. His analysis contends that understanding people's perceptions of fairness in organizations requires considering the prevailing cultural standards in which the organization operates. The prevailing cultural standards within which employees operate will have significant impact on their perceptions of work/family balance as well. Greenberg (2001) also suggests that observed connections between culture and justice perceptions may be impacted by cultural diffusion and to this end it seems that many psychological variables should be impacted by such variables as level of acculturation and specific cultural values.

Corroborating these arguments, Blancero & Blancero (2001) found that almost one-third of individuals felt that they were treated differently at work as a result of being Hispanic. What is of concern here is the occupational group that was studied. This sample consisted of highly educated individuals in professional positions. In another finding of note, Blancero & DelCampo (2003) found that older Hispanics reported lower levels of fairness of the psychological contract. This finding may be based on the level of acculturation of the Hispanic worker. It seems plausible that younger Hispanics may be more acculturated to mainstream American culture. Similarly, it seems that socioeconomic status (SES) will also have an effect on the overall perceptions of Hispanic workers. In this case, the perception of work-family conflict may be impacted by level of Hispanic identity as well as SES.

Kray & Lind (2002), Ambrose (2002), Lamertz (2001) and Grienberger, Rutte and van Knippenberg (1997) all examine two-way interactions with reports of

organizational justice.   These studies find that social influences have a significant effect on reports of organizational justice. They find that co-worker or social group member's reports of injustice have strong effects on individual reports of injustice. Severity and level of injustice were shown to have stronger and independent effects. This finding will also add to the acculturation/assimilation hypotheses as those individuals who more closely identify with their ethnic group are more susceptible to the reports of ethnically stereotypic views of family and culture and the balance of work and family roles.

Chrobot-Mason & Leslie (2003) attempted to explain the importance of multicultural competence for managers.   They used 360-degree feedback (i.e., feedback from multiple sources in the organization both above and below the individual in the organizational hierarchy) in order to determine that multicultural competence is an important managerial skill. This resulted in many positive outcomes including increased job satisfaction, high managerial effectiveness ratings and high ratings of fairness and perceptions of discrimination. They conclude that, in today's workforce it is important for managers to understand the unique plight of workers from a myriad of cultures and to understand the specific challenges, feelings and past injustices of each group.

Hypothesis Development

In a closely related examination, Yang & Choi (2000) examined specific differences between ethnic (in this case Chinese) and American perceptions of work and family demands.   Their research furthered the concept that ethnic groups have different perceptions of work and family and respond differently to these stressors. The authors surveyed American and Chinese enterprises to compare the extent to which different sources affected WFC. When exploring cross-national differences, the authors focused on time-based conflict and cited Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) as a major source for WFC time and strain based conflict information.   The authors describe national differences in orientations to self and family as major differences that affect work-family relationships. They state that overwork is likely to be perceived as sacrificing family for one's own career in the US, but as sacrificing self for the family in China. American cultural norms put family before work, but Chinese norms put work before family. The results showed that "although work demand was significantly correlated with unpaid working hours in the United States, the relationship was not significant in China" (Yang & Choi, 2000, p. 122). Interestingly, the correlation between family demand and age was positive in China but negative in the United States.

Overall, Yang & Choi (2000) report that family demand is greater in the US than in China and the effect of family demand on WFC is greater than that of work demand in the US. Additionally, they report the effect of family demand on WFC is greater in the US than in China and the effect of work demand on WFC is greater in China than in the US. The authors found that WFC was indeed experienced by Chinese men and women working in organizations.   WFC was an especially important factor for Chinese when it involved time for family and work obligations. They also found that American employees experienced greater family demand than did Chinese employees.

In sum, we find that as the Hispanic population grows, the specific issues associated with this group should be examined beyond that of the existing stereotypes. Research in the area of Work-Family Conflict has shown significant results in the level of conflict in differing family structures, designs and arrangements. The literature reviewed on the topic of acculturation leads us to believe that one's level of acculturation might also be a factor that explains differing outcomes and feelings in terms of work family conflict.

Overall, the current literature arrives at the conclusion that Hispanic career satisfaction is lower than racioethnic unspecific samples (DelCampo, 2004; Blancero & DelCampo, 2003; Foley, Kidder & Powell, 2002) and additionally, that racioethnic identity predicts the level of workplace satisfaction for Hispanic business professionals (DelCampo, 2004). Further, researchers report that status plays a large role in Hispanic acculturation, identity and job satisfaction (DelCampo, 2004; Tyler & Blader, 2002). Armed with this knowledge, it can be hypothesized that Hispanics at different levels of socioeconomic status will have different responses to work and family stressors.

Hypothesis 1a: WFC will be higher in Hispanic populations with lower SES than those with higher SES.

Hypothesis 1b: WFC will be lower in Hispanic populations with higher SES than those with lower SES.

Hypothesis 2: Socioeconomic status will moderate the relationship between racioethnic identification and WFC such that when SES is low the relationship between racioethnic identification and WFC will be strengthened.

Method

The present investigation was conducted through a survey of approximately 400 individuals employed at a major southwestern United States university and a survey of approximately 300 members of a large national Hispanic affinity association. The southwestern United States university workers were selected due to the high percentage of individuals in working-class occupations employed in the certain departments. The membership of the Hispanic affinity group was solicited at their annual meeting and represented a broad range of professional occupations. For the purpose of this study, 'Hispanic Professional' is operationalized as those individuals who self-identify themselves as Hispanic, have at least a 4-year college degree, and are employed full-time in the United States.

Instrument
The instrument used was a 96-item questionnaire on issues pertaining to work and family balance. Racioethnic identification was measured using Sanchez & Brock's (1996) approach of measuring not only level of acculturation but also Hispanic identity. Hence, an individual can closely identify with their Hispanic heritage, e.g. speak Spanish, yet still be highly 'acculturated' as well. Work-Family Conflict was

evaluated via Reitzes & Mutran's (1994) scale that evaluates employment identity as well as identities in a variety of intimate relationships. Data was analyzed using ANOVA and regression analysis.

Results

Results of the analyses are reported in Table 1 and indicate that Hypotheses 1a and 1b (predicting that lower socio-economic status will indicate higher levels of work-family conflict) were not supported. In fact, it appears the opposite is true: those individuals with lower socio-economic status actually report lower levels of work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that socio-economic status moderates the relationship between the level of racioethnic identification and work-family conflict. The hypothesis predicts that the relationship will be such that when socio-economic status is low, the relationship between racioethnic identification and work-family conflict will be strengthened. The analyses presented show that socio-economic status has no relationship with these variables. However, anecdotally, there is a strong (inverse) relationship between Hispanic identity and Work-Family Conflict which has some interesting ramifications which are discussed below.

Discussion

While none of the hypotheses presented showed significance, several interesting conclusions are presented. Hypotheses 1a and 1b show exactly the opposite of the proposed relationship. Individuals in the lower socio-economic status group actually have lower-levels of work-family conflict than those in the high socioeconomic group. While one might think that Hispanics in low-paying jobs may not have the education or capacity to compartmentalize their work and family relationships, we find that they are able to do.so. Stereotypically, Hispanics are considered loyal and family-oriented. It seems that perhaps these values are somewhat diluted by an upwardly-mobile career. Taken in concert with the Hypothesis 2 finding that those individuals with high levels of Hispanic identity are also more prone to presenting low levels of work-family conflict, perhaps the perceived 'white-washing' of high level minority employees is a measurable negative outcome. While this is in no way a blanket statement that upwardly mobile Hispanic (or other minority) individuals lose elements of their identity, the maintenance of some level of Hispanic identity can have positive outcomes for one's family and work separation.

Further research in this area is needed, as most previous studies have focused primarily on middle-class Anglo-Americans. This study comparing professional and working-class Hispanics found some differences in level of WFC due to level of acculturation, indicating that different ethnicities may have differing views on the challenge of balancing work and family. Other ethnicities should be studied to increase understanding of the impact of this challenge, and different levels of socioeconomic status within ethnicities could provide still more information. Finally, studying different types of families from all walks of life can provide a much broader

understanding of the implications of this important area of family studies and organizational research.

Interestingly, those Hispanics who most closely identify with their heritage have the lowest levels of WFC; this is in contrast to conventional knowledge which would dictate that those with ambiguous identity might have increased difficulty with many issues including work-family conflict. For example, past research (Michener & Delamater, 1999; Kroska, 1997) shows that identity is an important factor in linking individuals to larger society and reducing role ambiguity. In this vein, Hispanics who closely identify with their heritage might enjoy the cultural benefits such as more social support from their intimate relationships. In contrast, those Hispanics who do not identify closely with their heritage and perhaps are more acculturated might have higher levels of WFC due do this disidentification.

While the findings that WFC and socioeconomic status are related and compelling, future research should further investigate the correlates of Hispanic identity, levels of acculturation, and other forms of identification (work groups, workplace demography, professional associations, etc.). In this initial examination, the authors posit that while working class Hispanics and Hispanic professionals have varied levels of WFC, the role of Hispanic identity in this relationship has yet to be determined. With further examination through longitudinal evaluation, the authors hope to show the influence of racioethnic identity, level of acculturation, and other variables on work-family conflict.

Table 1: *ANOVA*

Class of Individual

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	104.161	1	104.161	81.580	.000
Within Groups	443.047	293	1.277		
Total	547.208	294			

Table 2: *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.436(a)	.190	.188	1.12995

a Predictors: (Constant), Class

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	.096(a)	.009	.000	1.42328

a Predictors: (Constant), iden_sca, Class
*R Square decreases indicating no moderation

Table 3: *Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3
1. Class	294	.590	.492	1	-.436**	-.418**
2. Identity	294	2.69	1.254	-.436**	1	.221**
3. WFC	294	2.54	1.324	-.418**	.221**	1

**correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

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