J Fam Econ Iss (2012) 33:95–107
DOI 10.1007/s10834-011-9261-4

ORIGINAL PAPER

Family Structure, Gender, and the Work–Family Interface: Work-to-Family Conflict Among Single and Partnered Parents

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Published online: 11 June 2011

Abstract This study examined whether single parents experience greater reductions in work-to-family conflict from using resources than partnered parents do. The question of whether single mothers, single fathers, partnered mothers, or partnered fathers experienced differing levels of work-to-family conflict was also addressed. Data were from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce, and only those respondents with at least one child under the age of 18 living in the household were included in the analysis ($N = 1325$). Findings indicated that single-parent status was *not* directly related to work-to-family conflict. Rather single-parent status interacted with other variables, including gender, control over work hours, and the number of other adults in the home, in predicting work-to-family conflict.

Keywords Family structure · Single parents · Work and family · Work-to-family conflict · Work-to-family spillover

It has long been noted by scholars that contemporary families often struggle in navigating work and family life (Hall and MacDermid 2009; Hochschild 1997; Kanter 1977). Past examinations have identified a number of resources (e.g. Byron 2005; Karimi and Nouri 2009; Voydanoff 2005a, b) that workers may draw upon as they negotiate work and family life. Such resources are viewed as especially beneficial if they help people to reduce conflicts between work and family, such as work-to-family conflict. Scholars have also been mindful of the role of gender in shaping how people experience work and family life. Indeed, the challenges faced by parents juggling work and family are often connected by scholars to broad social changes tied to gender, such as rising labor participation rates of women, especially among mothers, and changing gender roles (e.g. Jacobs and Gerson 2001). The increased prevalence of single-parent households has often been mentioned as one key demographic shift; however, little research has explored whether the experiences of single parents balancing work and family, including their work-to-family conflict, differ from those of partnered parents (e.g. Clark 2000; Hansen 1991; Eagle et al. 1997). Although rates of single parent families have recently stabilized in the United States, they remain relatively high. For instance, in 2009 roughly 67% of children lived with two parents compared to an estimated 85% in 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009). Further, the 1996 welfare reform legislation has put pressure on welfare recipients, many of whom are single mothers, to increase their labor force participation (Bok and Simmons 2002; Gemelli 2008; Hays 2003; Lleras 2008; Moen and Roehling 2005).

In accordance with such trends, scholars have repeatedly called for further research addressing family structure and the work–family experiences of workers, including work-to-family conflict (e.g. Burris 1991; Voydanoff 2002). Such research has been viewed as integral to the ongoing challenge of detailing how models of work–family processes apply to differing ecological niches and social contexts (Menaghan and Parcel 1990; Perry-Jenkins et al. 2000). Despite such calls, research on how family structure shapes work–family outcomes, such as work-to-family conflict, has remained relatively rare. Typically, in quantitative studies, single-parent status has been introduced into models as one independent variable (usually as a

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control variable) rather than focusing on an examination of how single parents might benefit from certain resources more than other parents, in terms of reducing work-to-family conflict. The existing scholarship has suggested that conflicts between work and family may be greater for single parents compared to other parents (e.g. Forma 2009; Winslow 2005). Studies have also delved closely into the lives of single mothers juggling work and family (Baxter and Alexander 2008; Ciabattari 2007; Hertz 2006; Hertz and Ferguson 1998; Mannis 1999; Son and Bauer 2010), but such research often has not included the experiences of single fathers and usually lacks a comparison group of partnered/married parents. This has made it difficult to determine how single parent families might differ from other family structures in their experiences navigating the work–family interface, including work-to-family conflict.

This study attempts to redress this gap in the literature by examining whether family structure moderates the relationship between key resources that parents may draw upon as they negotiate work and family and the work-to-family conflict they report experiencing. The goal is to determine how resources might impact parents' work-to-family conflict differently dependent on family structure. In other words, the study seeks to address whether key resources might matter more for single parents compared to married or partnered parents in potentially reducing work-to-family conflict. The question of whether gender moderates the relationship between family structure and work-to-family conflict is also addressed. This question allows us to consider whether the experiences of single fathers and single mothers differ from each other and from the experiences of partnered mothers and fathers in terms of work-to-family conflict. Existing literature is used to propose four hypotheses that guide the analysis. The hypotheses are addressed using data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce with analysis restricted to individuals with at least one child under the age of 18 living in the home. This allows for a comparison of how family structure interweaves with other variables in predicting the work-to-family conflict of parents.

Theoretical Perspective: Work-to-Family Conflict and the Demands-and-Resources Approach

The idea that work and family are separate spheres has been successfully challenged by scholars who have documented that work and family influence one another in a myriad of positive and negative ways (Campione 2008; Haddock et al. 2006; Huang et al. 2004; Schieman and Young 2011; Tuttle and Garr 2009; Winslow 2005). As such, work–family scholarship has often looked at the interface between work and family in terms of how these two domains intersect and affect one another. In particular, scholars have shown that work and family have the potential to conflict with one another, and have noted the bi-directional nature of such conflicts with work seen as impacting family and vice versa. Some studies have utilized overall conceptualizations of work–family conflict (e.g. Voydanoff 1988; Winslow 2005) without specifying the direction of the conflict; whereas more recent scholarship has tended to use more precise conceptualizations of conflict that explicitly take into account the direction of the conflict (Cook and Minnotte 2008; Delgado and Canabal 2006; Hill 2005; Minnotte et al. 2010; Pedersen et al. 2009; Schieman and Young 2011; Seery et al. 2008; Shreffler et al. 2010; Voydanoff 2005a, b). In other words, these scholars have investigated work conflicting with family (work-to-family conflict) and/or family conflicting with work (family-to-work conflict). As such, scholars have generally viewed work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict as separate concepts with largely different predictors (Byron 2005; Voydanoff 2005b).

The present study focuses on work-to-family conflict, which has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict that occurs when the demands of work are incompatible with family, resulting in work making it difficult to attend to family needs (Burley 1995; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Voydanoff 1988, 2002). It should be noted that other terms have sometimes been used by scholars to refer to concepts that are nearly identical to work-to-family conflict, such as work-to-family interference, work-to-family strain, and negative work-to-family spillover. In many respects, these concepts are largely interchangeable, as they all measure the extent to which work conflicts with family life. In reviewing the literature, I use whichever term was employed by the author(s) of the studies in discussing their results.

This study is informed by a demands-and-resources approach, which views individuals as encountering demands and resources as they navigate the interface between work and family (Voydanoff 2005a, c). If demands are high and the individual does not have enough resources available to buffer these demands, then conflict between work and family may occur. Along these lines, studies have shown that individuals do not just passively encounter work-to-family conflict; instead individuals actively use resources at their disposal to reduce such conflict (Haddock et al. 2006). In particular, I conceptualize work hours and job pressure as demands that make work-to-family conflict more likely for working parents. Number of adults in the household, control over work hours, and financial support are conceptualized as important resources that may reduce work-to-family conflict among working parents.

Previous Research and Hypotheses

The existing scholarship of single parents and work issues has explored a variety of research questions. One crucial area of research has examined issues surrounding welfare reform, including how lack of fit between work and family, may limit the ability of single parents to participate in the paid labor force (e.g. Ciabattari 2007; DeBord et al. 2000; Gemelli 2008; Howe and Pidwell 2004; Kaushal et al. 2007; Kim 2010; Livermore et al. 2011; Neblett 2007). Another line of research has looked at the relationships between maternal employment and child outcomes with particular attention given to the role of family structure in such relationships (for a review see Perry-Jenkins et al. 2000; Perry-Jenkins and Gillman 2000). Far fewer studies have examined whether the sources of work-to-family conflict differ for single-parent families or whether some resources matter more to single-parent families than they do for other family structures. The paucity of research that has been conducted in this area is surprising considering that the challenges faced by single parents balancing work and family are generally considered to be greater than those faced by other household types (Baxter and Alexander 2008; Burden 1986; Heath and Orthner 1999), hence potentially leading to a greater need for resources to manage work-to-family conflict. Having only one individual, rather than two, available to attend to family needs creates unique stressors that are likely not encountered by other family structures (Baxter and Alexander 2008; Hertz and Ferguson 1998; Jacobs and Gerson 2001). For instance, single-parent families, especially those headed by women, have been shown to be more likely to have low incomes, to report financial worries, and to persistently use the Food Stamp Program, suggesting that such families have fewer monetary resources to use in attending to work and family demands (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Hays 2003; Hernandez and Ziol-Guest 2009; Malone et al. 2010; Schmitz 1995; Son and Bauer 2010). Further, many societal institutions, such as work and education, have been demonstrated to be organized according to the assumption that not only are all workers partnered, but all workers have a stay-at-home partner available to attend to non-work needs (Mannis 1999; Moen and Roehling 2005). Such assumptions have led to institutional arrangements that can be especially problematic for single-parent families. For instance, work by Glass and Estes (1997) indicated that single parents were in great need of family-friendly employer policies, but they were among the least likely to have access to such policies. Altogether, this work has pointed to the importance of an examination of the work–family interface that considers whether resources have different impacts on outcomes, such as work-to-family conflict, dependent on family structure.

Family Structure and Work-to-Family Conflict

Numerous studies have examined the varied sources of work-to-family conflict for individuals (for a review see Voydanoff 2007), and studies have generally suggested that single parents exhibit higher levels of work-to-family conflict, negative work-to-family spillover, and work–family interference than other workers do (Byron 2005; Forma 2009; Winslow 2005). For instance, the findings from a meta-analysis of studies examining work–family conflict indicated that single parents experienced greater work-to-family conflict than married parents (Byron 2005). Further, Winslow (2005) found that there was a significant positive relationship between single parenthood status and the experience of work and family conflicting with one another. The findings also suggested that single parents experienced greater work–family interference than married nonparents with working spouses; this relationship held for both single fathers and single mothers. Additionally, studies have indicated that single mothers reported experiencing role overload, job tension, job-family role strain, and difficulties managing work and family life (Burden 1986; Burris 1991; Kelly and Voydanoff 1985; Son and Bauer 2010). Indeed, the findings from one study found that the high levels of work-to-family conflict experienced by single mothers may interfere with the ability to obtain and maintain employment (Ciabattari 2007). Such research suggests that family structure shapes work-to-family conflict in important ways and points to a differential need for resources that may reduce this form of conflict. Far fewer studies, however, have examined whether single parents differ from other parents in the importance of resources for reducing work-to-family conflict. Further, we know little about single mothers and single fathers and their potentially differing levels of work-to-family conflict.

Gender, Family Structure, and Work-to-Family Conflict

Examinations of how work and family interfere with each other, including the experience of work-to-family conflict, have often considered the potential role of gender in shaping the experiences of workers juggling work and family (e.g. Minnotte et al. 2010; Hochschild 1997; Moen and Roehling 2005; Myrie and Daly 2009; Winslow 2005). Indeed, the very terrain of work and family has often been regarded as gendered, with mothers and fathers potentially having different experiences contingent on gender roles, leading to theoretically divergent levels of work-to-family conflict. Research examining the interactions between family structure and gender in predicting work-to-family conflict and how single parents manage work and family has been relatively rare. Typically research has considered the role of gender and family structure in predicting conflict between

work and family without examining interactions (e.g. Winslow 2005), or has focused solely on the experiences of mothers as they manage work and family (e.g. Baxter and Alexander 2008; Ciabattari 2007; Hertz 2006; Hertz and Ferguson 1998; Hughes and Gray 2005; Mannis 1999; Son and Bauer 2010). One study of military families did compare the experiences of single mothers and single fathers, and it failed to find any significant differences in their success of managing work and family life (Heath and Orthner 1999). Despite this finding, it remains likely that single fathers and single mothers encounter different issues negotiating work and family life, similarly to how partnered parents experience the work–family terrain differently dependent on gender; such differences may lead to differing levels of work-to-family conflict. For instance, studies have demonstrated that single fathers often have greater financial resources than single mothers (e.g. Bianchi et al. 1999; Hilton and Kopera-Frye 2007), which suggests that they may have greater assets available to attend to the demands associated with work and family life thereby potentially leading to less work-to-family conflict. Further, research has also indicated that single fathers tend to enjoy greater kinship network support despite single mothers reporting greater need for such support (Hilton and Kopera-Frye 2007). Such kinship support may be instrumental in potentially lowering the work-to-family conflict experienced by single fathers.

Although single fathers may have access to greater resources than single mothers, they likely face greater struggles negotiating work and family than partnered parents, which may lead to higher levels of work-to-family conflict compared to partnered parents. This is because partnered parents of both genders have another parent present in the household to share parenting responsibilities with. Hence, it is expected that partnered parents will report less work-to-family conflict than single parents regardless of gender, and that single mothers will report greater work-to-family conflict than single fathers. In keeping with these expectations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1 Gender will moderate the relationship between single-parent status and work-to-family conflict, such that women who are single parents will report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than men who are single parents and single parents of both genders will report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than partnered parents.

Number of Other Adults in the Household and Work-to-Family Conflict

Even though gender is one key factor that may shape levels of work-to-family conflict, research has indicated that both mothers and fathers are able to draw upon various resources as they navigate work and family life (Byron 2005; Karimi and Nouri 2009; Voydanoff 2005a). As noted in the theoretical perspective, these resources can serve to reduce work-to-family conflict. Indeed, a study by Son and Bauer (2010) found that single mothers creatively drew on a variety of resources in managing their work and family lives. Findings from previous studies, including the work of Son and Bauer (2010), lead the present study to argue that resources might matter more for single parents compared to partnered/married parents in predicting work-to-family conflict. Hence, it is proposed that family structure will moderate the relationship between key resources and work-to-family conflict for parents. Treating family structure as a potential moderator allows us to see how resources, such as number of other adults in the household, might differentially shape work-to-family conflict contingent on family structure. The question addressed is comparative—do resources differentially matter dependent on family structure? As discussed by Baxter and Alexander (2008), the presence of other adults in the household has been an important source of social support that parents rely on as they negotiate work and family life. Such adults can serve as resources to draw on when a difficulty is encountered in work and family life. For instance, if a parent has to work overtime without notice, then a parent with another adult present in the household can call on that person to watch children or cook dinner. The more adults present in the household, the more resources a parent has to potentially recruit for helping with such difficulties. Parents without other adults in the household may not be able to easily locate someone to help with such tasks. Further, studies have shown that sometimes older children can help single mothers maintain employment (Son and Bauer 2010), and living with others has been found to be associated with higher levels of employment among unmarried mothers with children (Radey 2008). Hence, the number of other adults in the household is conceptualized as a type of resource that parents may draw on to potentially reduce work-to-family conflict.

Baxter and Alexander (2008) posited that the lack of a resident partner as one main reason why single mothers might experience greater work-to-family strain than coupled mothers do. In the face of such challenges, single mothers, especially poor single mothers, have been found to use shared household arrangements more often than other mothers, as a way to reduce financial costs and deal with daily stresses (e.g. Ciabattari 2007). One study found that for unmarried mothers moving in with family or friends during the year following childbirth buttressed employment among such mothers (Livermore and Powers 2006). Research by Hertz (2006) indicated that for the largely middle-class single mothers she interviewed that other adults in the household were often a key source

support for single mothers. Oftentimes arrangements began as largely financial, with single mothers renting space in their homes for extra income; however, across time roommates often became involved in their children's lives in important and supportive ways (Hertz 2006). Altogether, previous work has suggested that the number of other adults in the household may serve as crucial instrumental and emotional support systems in the face of encroaching work demands, which may help to reduce work-to-family conflict. Moreover, this type of support likely matters more to single parents than partnered parents in shaping work-to-family conflict. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2 Single-parent status will moderate the relationship between number of other adults in the household and work-to-family conflict, such that the number of others in the household will be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single-parents than for married or partnered parents.

Financial Support and Work-to-Family Conflict

Financial support can be used by all parents as a resource to potentially reduce work-to-family conflict. Scholarship has repeatedly documented the dearth of financial resources of single-parent families, especially single mothers (e.g. Hernandez and Ziol-Guest 2009; Malone et al. 2010; McLanahan and Booth 1989; Menaghan and Parcel 1990; Moen and Roehling 2005), which may result in single parents needing greater access to financial support from others (such as parents, relatives, or friends) compared to partnered parents. Further, the 1996 reform of welfare policies in the United States pushed many single parents into the paid labor force, but failed to succeed in pushing the incomes of many single-parent families over poverty-line thresholds (Moen and Roehling 2005). The precarious financial situation of many single-parent families has left them with less monetary resources to use in obtaining balance between work and family life compared to dual-earner couples, which suggests that single-parent families might rely on financial support from others to a greater extent than other parents do in reducing work-to-family conflict. Even among single parents with higher incomes previous studies have suggested that financial concerns are paramount. For instance, research by Hertz (2006) found that financial support from others was a key resource that is used by single mothers, regardless of their income level, to deal with competing time demands. Even among middle-class single mothers, access to financial support from others became central to maintaining a certain standard of living, while maximizing time spent with children (Hertz 2006). Further, regardless of income most families occasionally encounter issues, such as unexpected medical care expenses, that may tax their financial resources leading to a need for financial support. It is argued that the ability to draw on financial support from others, such as friends or relatives, likely matters more to single parents than it does to partnered parents in terms of predicting work-to-family conflict; hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 Single-parent status will moderate the relationship between financial support and work-to-family conflict, such that financial support will be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single parents than for married or partnered parents.

Control Over Work Hours and Work-to-Family Conflict

Control over the scheduling of work hours refers to "the extent that individuals are able to select the times that they start and/or finish work" (Schieman and Glavin 2008, p. 592). Control over the scheduling of work hours is conceptualized in the present study as a resource that parents may draw upon to reduce work-to-family conflict as they negotiate the work–family interface (Golden 2008). Previous research has suggested that work demands, including paid work hours, may increase the overall conflict experienced between work and family domains (McLoyd et al. 2008). Increasing the flexibility of workplaces, especially in terms of employees controlling the scheduling of their work hours, may be one effective tool for time-pressed individuals, including single parents, to deal with the challenges they face that may lead to work-to-family conflict (Christensen and Staines 1990; Jacobs and Gerson 2001; Tausig and Fenwick 2001). Further, studies have demonstrated that working single-mothers seek to maximize the time they spend with their children (Hertz 2006; Hertz and Ferguson 1998), and control over work hours may enhance the ability of single parents to accomplish this goal. This is because controlling the scheduling of hours may allow single parents the ability to schedule their hours to match the hours that their children are available. For instance, parents (single or otherwise) could schedule their work hours to coincide with their children's school hours thereby potentially reducing conflict between work and family.

Studies also have pointed to the importance placed on control over work hours, such as some degree of flexibility in the scheduling of hours, by single parents (Son and Bauer 2010). For example, one Australian study found that single mothers were more likely than other mothers to report having an unmet need for flex-time, a key mechanism that allows workers greater control over work hours (Hughes and Gray 2005). Another Australian study found that control over the scheduling of hours mattered more in reducing the work-to-family strain of single mothers than it did for

married or partnered mothers (Baxter and Alexander 2008). Ciabattari (2007), with data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, demonstrated that flexible work schedules (which allow workers greater control over the scheduling of work hours) were a particularly important resource for single mothers. Together these studies suggest that control over the scheduling of work hours is a key resource used by single mothers in potentially reducing work-to-family conflict. Despite the lack of research on single fathers and control over the scheduling of work hours, it is posited that control over work hours likely operates in a similar manner for single fathers.

It is argued that while control over the scheduling of work hours is a potential resource for all parents, it likely matters more single parents in reducing work-to-family conflict. Partnered parents, if they are unable to control the scheduling of their own paid work hours, can still potentially count on the other partner having control over his or her work hours; thereby allowing the partnered couple more overall flexibility than the single parent for meeting demands. For instance, if a partnered mother does not have control over her work hours and is unable to leave work early to pick up a sick child from school, then there is always the possibility that the father has enough control over his work hours to pick the sick child up. In contrast, a single parent without control over work hours has no "second line of defense" against such events that result in the need to leave work unexpectedly or to switch work hours temporarily to deal with a family issue. Hence, control over work hours is likely more important for single parents than other parents in reducing work-to-family conflict. Given these expectations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 Single-parent status will moderate the relationship between control over work hours and work-to-family conflict, such that control over work hours will be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single parents compared to married or partnered parents.

Method

Sample

Data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) were used to examine the proposed hypotheses. The Families and Work Institute (Bond et al. 2003) developed a questionnaire addressing work and family life that was used by Harris Interactive to collect the data. A nationally representative sample of employed adults was interviewed during an eight month time frame. The sample was generated using random-digit dialing with interviewers determining eligibility at the time of the telephone call. Only adults aged 18 years or older who were employed in the paid labor force were eligible to participate in the study. A computer-assisted telephone interviewing system was used with the interviews lasting approximately 45 min. The resulting dataset for the 2002 NSCW contained 2,810 employees, including 1,640 women and 1,170 men. For the purposes of this study, analysis was restricted to individuals with at least one child under the age of 18 living in the home at least half of the year ($N = 1325$).

Measures

Dependent Variable

Work-to-Family Conflict was measured with an index of five items that has been used in previous scholarship (e.g. Cook and Minnotte 2008; Hill 2005; Maume and Houston 2001; Voydanoff 2005a). Respondents were asked how often in the past 3 months have each of the following occurred: (a) Has work kept you from doing as good a job at home as you could?; (b) Have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?; (c) Have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?; (d) Has your job kept you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?; and (e) Have you not been in as good a mood as you would like to be at home because of your job? Response categories ranged from 1 = never to 5 = very often. Responses were summed and divided by 5 to create an index, with high scores representing higher levels of work-to-family conflict. The alpha reliability coefficient for the parents in the sample was .87.

Independent Variables

Gender was a dummy variable coded 1 for men and 0 for women. *Single-parent status* was also a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent is a single parent and 0 if the respondent is not a single parent. *Number of others 18 years of age of older in the household* was measured by asking the respondent to indicate how many people over the age of 18, other than themselves, lived in the household. For all respondents this variable represented the number of adults other than the respondent that live in the household. *Control over the scheduling of work hours* was measured by asking respondents to indicate how much control they had over the scheduling of their work hours. The response categories ranged from 1 = complete control to 5 = none. Responses were then recoded such that high scores represent greater control over work hours. *Financial support* was measured by asking respondents to indicate

their extent of agreement with the statement "I have the financial support I need from my family or friends when I have a money problem." The response categories ranged from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree. Responses were then recoded such that high scores represent greater agreement that the respondent receives needed financial support.

Control Variables

In addition to the independent variables, the analyses also included a number of control variables, including income, education, the presence of children under age 6, age, and job pressure. *Presence of children under 6* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent had at least one child under 6 living in the household at least one half of the year. Education was measured by a series of dummy variables with high school education used as the reference category. *Less than high school* was coded 1 if the respondent's highest level of education was less than high school. *Some college* was a dummy variable coded 1 if some college was the highest level of education attained by the respondent. *College* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent's highest level of education was a four year college degree. Lastly, *post-graduate* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent had attained a post-graduate degree. *Age* was measured in years. *Hours worked per week* included all the hours the respondent reported from any jobs he or she held at the time of interview.

Race was entered as a series of dummy variables, with white used as the reference category. *African American* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent identified as non-Hispanic African American and 0 if the respondent identified as any other race. *Hispanic* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent reported being Hispanic and 0 if the respondent did not report being Hispanic. *Other race* was a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent self-identified as having a race/ethnicity other than white, African American, or Hispanic. Household income was entered as a series of dummy variables representing income quintiles with the highest income quintile ($90,000 or above) being used as the reference category. *Income quintile 1* was coded 1 for those whose household incomes were less than $23,000 and 0 for all those who reported greater incomes. *Income quintile 2* was a dummy variable coded 1 for family incomes between $23,000 and $40,000 and 0 for all others. *Income quintile 3* was coded 1 for family incomes between $40,001 and $60,000. Lastly, *income quintile 4* was coded 1 for those whose family incomes were between $60,001 and $89,999. *Job pressure* was measured using five items with an alpha reliability coefficient of .53 for parents in the sample. Representative items are "I never have enough time to get everything done on the job" and "My job requires that I work very fast." Responses were coded such that high scores represent higher levels of job pressure.

First, descriptive statistics will be presented. Then, the analysis pertaining to the hypotheses will be discussed. The hypotheses were tested using OLS regression. The model included all of the independent variables along with the interaction terms necessary to test the four hypotheses. Significant interactions were graphed in order to aid in the interpretation of the relationship between the interaction and work-to-family conflict. Inspection of variance inflation factors did reveal some issues with multicollinearity with the introduction of the interaction terms. To address this, the non-dummy variables were centered and this sufficiently dealt with multicollinearity issues.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis are presented in Table 1. Table 2 contains the results from the OLS regression analysis. The results indicated that single parent status by itself was not directly related to work-to-family conflict. Rather family structure only appeared to matter in terms of its interactions with other variables. Hypothesis 1 predicted that gender would moderate the relationship between single-parent status and work-to-family conflict, such that women who were single parents would report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than men who were single parents and single parents of both genders would report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than partnered parents. The results provided partial support for this hypothesis. As indicated in Table 2, there was a significant interaction between gender and single-parent status in predicting work-to-family conflict (see Fig. 1), which was partially in line with the predictions of Hypothesis 1. As demonstrated in Fig. 1, single mothers reported the highest levels of work-to-family conflict, and single fathers reported the lowest levels of work-to-family conflict. The finding that single mothers experienced the highest levels of work-to-family conflict supported Hypothesis 1, whereas the finding that single fathers reported the lowest levels of work-to-family conflict failed to provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between the number of other adults in the household and work-to-family conflict, such that more adults present in the household would be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single-parents than for married or partnered parents. The results provided support for this hypothesis. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant interaction between the number of other adults in the household and work-to-family conflict

Table 1 Descriptive statistics ($N = 271$ single parents and 1,184 partnered parents)

Variables	Single parents		Partnered parents	
	M	SD	*M*	SD
Work-to-family conflict	2.61	.97	2.57	.91
Family income less than $23,000	.40	.49	.09	.29
Family income $23,000–$40,000	.29	.45	.17	.38
Family income $40,001–$60,000	.21	.41	.21	.41
Family income $60,001–$89,000	.08	.27	.27	.45
Family income $90,000 and above	.02	.15	.26	.44
Less than high school education	.14	.34	.12	.32
Some college	.36	.48	.28	.45
College degree	.14	.35	.22	.41
Postgraduate degree	.05	.22	.09	.28
Age in years	37.73	10.17	39.07	8.47
African American	.28	.45	.09	.28
Hispanic	.08	.27	.12	.32
White	.61	.49	.79	.41
Other Race	.05	.22	.04	.20
Male	.28	.45	.58	.49
Presence of children under 6	.34	.47	.44	.50
Total work hours	44.76	14.08	46.19	14.73
Number of others in household	1.82	1.04	2.32	.71
Job pressure	2.89	.76	2.97	.71
Control over scheduling hours	2.96	1.42	3.11	1.42
Financial support	2.82	1.13	3.08	.99

(see Fig. 2). As indicated in Fig. 2, single parents who had lower levels of other adults present in the household reported the highest levels of work-to-family conflict, whereas single parents with higher levels of other adults in the household reported the lowest levels of work-to-family conflict. Overall, it appeared that this variable matters little in predicting the work-to-family conflict of partnered parents, as their work-to-family conflict remained fairly steady across differing levels of other adults in the household as reflected in the graph depicted in Fig. 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between financial support and work-to-family conflict, such that having the financial support needed from family or friends when a money problem was encountered would be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single parents than for married or partnered parents. The results did not support this hypothesis, as there was not a significant interaction between financial support and single-parent status in predicting work-to-family conflict. There was, however, a direct and significant relationship between having the financial support needed from family or friends when a money problem was encountered and work-to-family conflict, which suggested that this variable matters regardless of family structure.

Hypothesis 4 expected that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between control over work hours and work-to-family conflict, such that control over work hours would be related to a greater reduction in work-to-family conflict for single parents compared to married or partnered parents. The results provided support for this hypothesis, as indicated by the significant interaction between control over work hours and single-parent status in predicting work-to-family conflict (see Fig. 3). As shown in Fig. 3, single parents who had low control over work hours reported the highest levels of work-to-family conflict, whereas single parents who had more control over work hours reported the lowest levels of work-to-family conflict. A similar relationship existed for partnered parents, but partnered parents with low levels of control reported lower work-to-family conflict than their single-parent counterparts as reflected in the graph of the interaction depicted in Fig. 3.

Discussion

In light of calls for increasing attention to how family structure shapes work-to-family conflict, this study investigated four hypotheses about family structure and work-to-family conflict. Support was found for three of the four

Table 2 Regression analysis predicting work-to-family conflict ($N = 1325$ working parents)

Variables	*B*	SE *B*	β
Single parent	.09	.09	.04
Family income less than $23,000	.17	.10	.06
Family income $23,000–$40,000	.02	.09	.01
Family income $40,001–$60,000	.08	.08	.03
Family income $60,001–$89,999	.05	.07	.02
Less than high school education	.28	.08	.10**
Some college	.17	.06	.08**
College degree	.22	.07	.10**
Post graduate degree	.28	.10	.08**
Black	−.17	.08	−.06*
Hispanic	−.29	.08	−.10***
Other race	−.13	.11	−.03
Male	.02	.06	.01
Age	−.01	.003	−.05
Presence of children under 6	−.03	.06	−.01
Total work hours	.01	.002	.18***
Job pressure	.40	.03	.31***
Number of others 18+ in household	.02	.04	.02
Control over scheduling hours	−.08	.02	−.12***
Financial support	−.08	.03	−.09**
Gender × single parent	−.28	.13	−.07*
Single parent × number of others	−.14	.06	−.07*
Single parent × financial support	−.01	.05	−.003
Single parent × control over hours	−.09	.04	−.06*
Adjusted R^2		.21	

For income $90,000 and above is used as the reference category. For race/ethnicity white is used as the reference category. For education high school graduate is the reference category

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

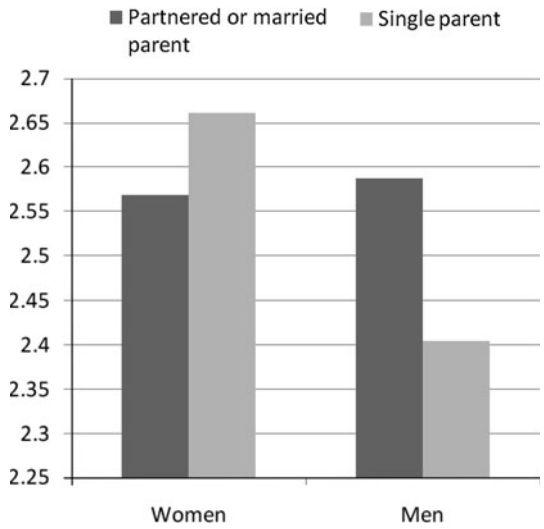

Fig. 1 Interaction effects between family structure and gender on work-to-family conflict

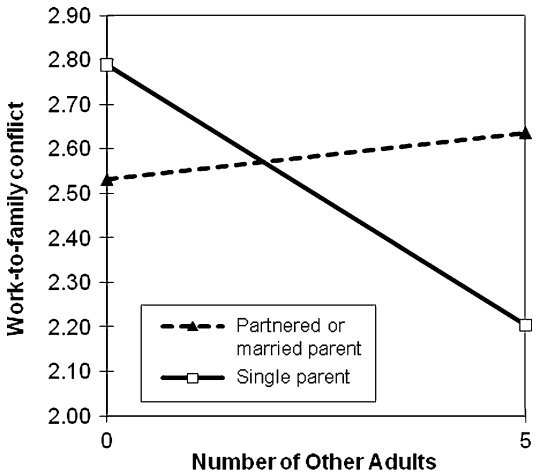

Fig. 2 Interaction effects between family structure and number of other adults in the household on work-to-family conflict

hypotheses. Results pertaining to Hypothesis 1 regarding the interaction between gender and family structure in shaping work-to-family conflict suggest that single mothers report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than other parents. This significant interaction is in line with previous research indicating that single mothers experience struggles navigating the work–family terrain that can lead single mothers to experience work-to-family strain (e.g. Baxter and Alexander 2008; Ciabattari 2007). We should be mindful of the challenges faced by single mothers and their

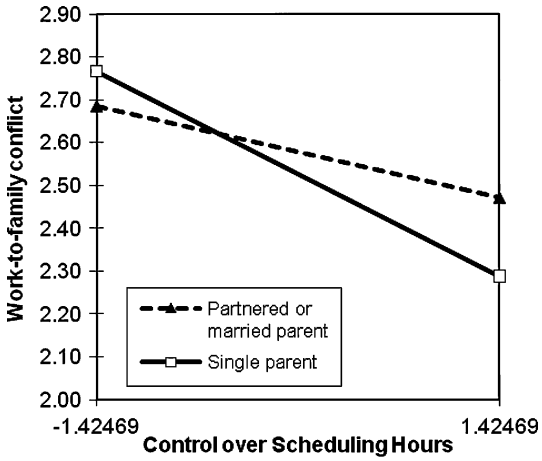

Fig. 3 Interaction effects between family structure and control over work hours on work-to-family conflict

higher "risk" of experiencing work-to-family conflict. The present study also considered the experiences of single fathers negotiating work and family life and their reports of work-to-family conflict. Surprisingly, the results from the OLS regression and the graph of the interaction between gender and single-parent status indicate that single fathers report lower levels of work-to-family conflict than single mothers, partnered mothers, and partnered fathers. One potential explanation for this finding is that single fathers may have access to greater resources than single mothers do, which allows them a smoother navigation of the work–family terrain. Previous scholarship suggests that not only do single fathers have greater financial resources, but that they also receive greater support from kinship networks (Bianchi et al. 1999; Hilton and Kopera-Frye 2007). We should, however, keep in mind that the present study controls for income so access to greater financial resources does not give us a complete explanation for this finding. Further research is needed to determine the precise reasons for single fathers reporting less work-to-family conflict than single mothers and partnered parents.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between the number of other adults in the household and work-to-family conflict, and this hypothesis was supported. There is a significant interaction between the number of other adults in the household and work-to-family conflict, such that the number of other adults in the household is related to lower levels of work-to-family conflict for single parents, but not for partnered parents. In fact, inspection of Fig. 2 reveals that for partnered parents number of other adults in the household may be related to a slight increase in work-to-family conflict. This finding suggests that for single parents having other adults present in the household is a resource that they may draw on in navigating work and family life thereby potentially reducing work-to-family conflict. The finding is in line with recent qualitative research by Hertz (2006) which indicated that single mothers often benefited from the presence of other adults (often roommates in her study) in the household. Other adults can be counted on to provide instrumental and emotional support to children, and can provide a "second life of defense" in dealing with unexpected issues that arise in negotiating work and family life. It is also possible that other adults in single-parent households help out with household labor tasks, such as cooking dinner and doing housework, which also has the potential to reduce work-to-family conflict. For partnered parents the presence of other adults in the household is not associated with reduced levels of work-to-family conflict. For partnered parents who have adults besides themselves living in the household (such as their partner, adult children, friends, roommates, or in-laws), it is possible that such shared living arrangements generate conflict and stress, and these stresses may cancel out the potential benefits of an extra pair of helping hands. For many partnered parents in the sample the only other adult present in the household is their partner. Despite the expectation that the partner may provide a "second line of defense" against encroaching work–family responsibilities, the results suggest that other adults in partnered households may be related to a slight increase in work-to-family conflict. Perhaps, in couples, the nature of the relationship changes and the door is opened for competing work–family responsibilities to contribute to work-to-family conflict that would not be as evident in other household structures. Further, women in partnered relationships may experience stress and frustration due to the "second shift" (Hochschild and Machung 1989) and unmet expectations for men's participation in household labor.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between having the financial support needed from family or friends when a money problem is encountered and work-to-family conflict. The results failed to provide support for this hypothesis. However, the findings do reveal a direct effect between this variable and work-to-family conflict. Having the financial support needed from family or friends when a money problem is encountered is related, regardless of family structure, to lower levels of work-to-family conflict.

Hypothesis 4 expected that single-parent status would moderate the relationship between control over work hours and work-to-family conflict, and the results provide support for this hypothesis. As detailed by the results of the OLS regression and the graph of the interaction between single-parent status and control over work hours (Fig. 3), when single parents have low levels of control over their work hours they report the highest levels of work-to-family conflict; however, when single parents have high levels of

control over work hours their work-to-family conflict is lower than partnered parents. Further, a similar relationship appears to exist for partnered parents, but partnered parents have lower levels of work-to-family conflict than single parents when control over work hours is low (as depicted in Fig. 3). These results point to the importance of flexible scheduling arrangements for all workers, but particularly for single-parent families.

This study has two primary limitations. First, while the National Study of the Changing Workforce contains a large enough sample of single parents and partnered parents to allow for interesting comparisons, the sample of single parents is not large enough to integrate three-way interaction analyses of gender, family structure, and resources. Further, the sample of single parents is also not large or diverse enough to fully consider how race and ethnicity interact with family structure in predicting work-to-family conflict. Initial analyses did incorporate interactions between race and ethnicity and family structure, but no significant relationships were found. It may be the case that single parents, regardless of race, face similar challenges negotiating work and family life, but the sample is not large or diverse enough to substantiate such a claim. Second, the study uses a self-report measure of work-to-family conflict, which is subjective in nature and may not accurately gauge the precise amount of work-to-family conflict that is experienced by the respondent. This measure, however, has been used in previous studies of work-to-family conflict (Cook and Minnotte 2008; Hill 2005; Maume and Houston 2001; Voydanoff 2005a). Despite these weaknesses, the present study takes important steps in enhancing our understanding of how family structure shapes the work-to-family conflict of working parents.

Altogether, the results of the present study suggest that considering family structure in a more nuanced manner than entering it as a control variable is necessary to understand how family structure is related to work-to-family conflict. A demands-and-resources approach to understanding work-to-family conflict was used to guide the analysis, and the results suggest that it is helpful to consider family structure in theorizing the resources used by individuals to reduce work-to-family conflict. In particular, it was found that resources, including control over work hours and the presence of other adults in the household, appear to matter more for single parents than they do for partnered parents in potentially reducing work-to-family conflict. However, the study also revealed that having financial support from family or friends when a money problem is encountered was related to lower levels of work-to-family conflict regardless of family structure. These findings have important implications for how we theorize the work–family interface, and suggest that we should be mindful of the potential moderating role of family structure in theorizing how resources shape work-to-family conflict. Other variables, such as financial support, may be important for reducing work-to-family conflict for all individuals. Further, theorizing about the work-to-family conflict and family structure should also consider the role of gender in shaping the work-to-family conflict of single parents. The present study indicates that single mothers may face greater struggles in navigating work and family than single fathers face, in terms of the level of work-to-family conflict reported. Future research should continue to integrate more complex considerations of how family structure interacts with other key variables in shaping work-to-family conflict and other work–family variables.

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