Emotional Exhaustion, Work-Family Conflict, and Marital Satisfaction Among Professional Psychologists.

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT, AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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BY
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ABSTRACT

While a wealth of research has examined how the occupational role affects family domain functioning, there is limited research investigating these issues among mental health professionals. Using a sample of 160 professional psychologists, this study examined the relationships between emotional exhaustion at work, work-family conflict (WFC), and marital satisfaction as well as gender differences in the strengths of these relationships. Analyses indicated that increased emotional exhaustion was associated with increased WFC and that both emotional exhaustion and WFC were negatively associated with marital satisfaction. However, WFC did not emerge as a significant mediator of the relationship between emotion exhaustion and marital satisfaction. Analyses of gender differences indicated that the negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction was only present among men. These results support the notion that work strain is associated with decreased marital satisfaction among professional psychologists and suggest that men and women may experience the work-family interface differently.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Work and family are two important domains in most adults’ lives. This is due, in part, to the recent increase of dual-earner families in the United States. According to Jacobs & Gerson (1998), the percentage of dual earner married couples rose from 35.9% to 59.5% between 1970 and 1998. Furthermore, by 1998 men were the sole income earner in only 30% of married couples. More recent estimates cite that the prevalence of dual earner couples has risen to 78% of all marriages (Bond, Thompson, Galinksy, & Pottas, 2003) – meaning that only about 20% of households are sustained by one income. Some researchers have even estimated that the prototypical “American Dream” family of a male breadwinner, stay at home mother, and two children accounts for less than 7% of all families (Nieva, 1988).

Complimenting this shift in occupational patterns, it has been noted that the increase in dual earner couples has led to a breakdown of traditional gender roles. While women have entered the work force, men have begun to take on more responsibilities within the home, such as child rearing duties and household chores (e.g., Duxbury, Higgins, & Lee, 1994). As most women and men now each have responsibilities in both employee and family roles, research on the challenges of balancing work and family has flourished (Barling, 1990; Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999).
Despite the growing attention to work and family issues in the general occupational health literature, there is a paucity of research investigating these issues among mental health professionals. This study aims to begin to fill this gap by examining the work-family interface among professional psychologists. Specifically, the goals of this study are to (a) examine the role of work-family conflict in mediating the relationship between work stress and marital satisfaction and (b) investigate whether or not the spillover of work to family domain differs for men and women.

To provide background for the present study, this paper first examines the existing literature on the work-family interface. Then, utilizing the conservation of resource (COR) perspective (Hobfoll, 1989), a model linking the antecedents and outcomes of interrole conflict is proposed. Specifically, burnout is discussed as a strain-based antecedent of work-family conflict and marital satisfaction as an outcome of work-family conflict. Finally, gender differences in the hypothesized relationships are explored.

Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict

While the literature has focused on numerous aspects of the work-family interface, the examination of cross-domain effects is an important area in the field. Cross-domain effects refer to the extent to which the boundaries that separate work and family are permeable. In other words, positive and/or negative experiences in one domain influence how a person experiences the other domain. This notion has led to a wealth of research examining how family level variables affect the occupational role and vice versa and so far, research has supported a cross-domain effects model (e.g., Ford, Heinen, &
A number of concepts have been developed to describe the relationship between work and family domains, including “work-family conflict,” “work-family interference,” “work-family facilitation,” and “spillover.” While some of these concepts recognize the potential for positive relationships between these two domains (e.g., spillover), the majority of the theoretical and research literature has focused on the negative relationships between work and family.

Interrole conflict has been proposed as the mechanism that accounts for the negative relationships between work and family domains. Interrole conflict occurs when the multiple roles individuals fulfill on a day-to-day basis conflict with one another. The term work-family conflict (WFC) refers to when interrole conflict occurs between the work and family domains. As defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), WFC is “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). While this definition is still accepted, it has been refined to recognize that the relationship between these two domains is bidirectional. WFC is now used to specifically refer to the interrole conflict that occurs when work interferes with family and family-work conflict (FWC) refers to the conflict that occurs when family interferes with work.

While WFC and FWC are reciprocal, each is associated with unique antecedents. Work domain variables lead to WFC and family domain variables lead to FWC (Byron, 2005). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) categorized key antecedents of conflict between
work and family domains into three types: time-based pressures, strain-based pressures, and behavioral incompatibilities. Time-based pressures occur when one is physically present or mentally preoccupied with either the work or family domain, making it difficult to fulfill obligations in other roles. In the work domain, long work hours, schedule inflexibility, shift-work requirements, and overtime or evening work have all been found to create conflict between work and family roles (e.g., Byron, 2005; Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1994; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996). In the family domain, household and child-care related responsibilities can create time-based conflict with work responsibilities (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Strain-based pressures involve factors that relate to stress, strain, or tension. Work stress, work role overload, conflict with one’s occupational role, work role ambiguity, and job exhaustion have been identified as possible strain-based pressures leading to WFC (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Leiter & Durup, 1996). Family related strain-based pressures include factors such as parental conflict and marital discord (Byron, 2005).

One important caveat to this model is that work and family do not seem to equally conflict with one another. Pleck (1977) first proposed a theory of asymmetric permeability between work and family domain boundaries. According to Pleck, occupational boundaries may be more clearly defined and more strictly enforced, whereas family boundaries may be more subject to change. Consistent with this theory, research across a wide range of occupations has demonstrated that work conflicts with family more than family conflicts with work (e.g., Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997; Leiter, 1996;
Swanson, Power & Simpson, 1998). Consequently, the majority of research has focused on work-family conflict.

Research focused on the work-family interface with professional psychologists has similarly found that clinicians are more likely to feel their work conflicts with their family duties than vice versa (Rupert et al., 2009). This finding is not surprising; given the intensely personal and emotionally demanding nature of psychological work, the potential for work strain to encroach on family life seems particularly high. The present study thus focused specifically on work to family conflict among professional psychologists.

Consistent with previous theory and research on WFC (Gutek, Searle, Klepa, 1991; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992), WFC was examined as a mediator between work and family domain variables. According to this mediational model (see Figure 1), stressors in the work domain are thought to increase the amount that work conflicts with family, which in turn decreases satisfaction with the family domain. A number of studies have supported this notion. For example, WFC has been found to mediate the relationship between work-role overload and general life stress (Parasuraman et al., 1996), job stressors and depression (Stephens, Franks, & Atziena, 1997), workload and health complaints (Geurts et al., 2003), work demands and family satisfaction (McElwain et al., 2005), and emotional exhaustion at work and intentions to leave one’s marriage (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005). To date, no studies have examined WFC as a mediator between work and family outcomes among psychologists. One study, however, has found that negative spillover (a related construct) mediated the relationship between emotional exhaustion at work and family support and life satisfaction (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2009).
In the present study, the relationship between emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, and marital satisfaction was examined in professional psychologists. While marital satisfaction is an important aspect of general well-being for most adults, very few studies have examined how the stress and strain of clinical work may spillover into a marriage. It may be that the more clinicians devote to their job, the less energy they are able to spend in their own relationships. Hence, this study examined emotional exhaustion as a strain-based antecedent of WFC and marital satisfaction as a family domain outcome. Consistent with previous cross-domain effects models, it was proposed that WFC would mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion at work and marital satisfaction.

**Emotional Exhaustion as a Strain-Based Pressure**

While some professions are dependent on physical labor, others are dependent on emotional labor (Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). Professions high in emotional labor are characterized by high levels of emotional communication and a high degree of emotional exertion. Professionals who maintain a high degree of intimate interaction with their clients, such as clinical psychologists, are often at an increased risk of suffering emotional exhaustion due to high levels of emotional labor.

The term burnout has been somewhat of a catchall phrase or overall descriptor that refers to instances when the emotional exertion involved in being a human service
professional is overwhelming and results in impaired professional functioning and personal psychological distress. As described by Maslach and Jackson (1981), the three facets of burnout are high levels of emotional exhaustion, low levels of feelings of personal accomplishment, and high levels of client depersonalization. Individuals suffering from burnout may develop a cynical or impersonal attitude towards their clients, be unable to recognize any positive aspects of their work or feel a sense of pride, and/or feel emotionally drained. The latter of these, emotional exhaustion, is typically considered the key feature of burnout (Collins & Long, 2003; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, 2001).

Recognizing the toll of emotional labor, the empathic communication model of burnout focuses on the relationship between empathy and burnout among human service providers (Miller et al., 1988; Miller, Birkholt, Scott, & Stage, 1995). Research has suggested that feeling with clients, versus feeling for clients, is associated with increased emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment among a variety of providers. It may be that mental health workers who experience similar or parallel emotions as their client, rather than a more distanced concern, are at an increased risk for experiencing the negative effects of this emotional labor, such as emotional exhaustion or a decreased sense of personal accomplishment.

Compassion, similar to empathy, is also part of the emotional labor of clinical work. Compassion is an essential element in rapport building and effective therapeutic intervention. Yet, as Radey and Figley (2007) write, “as our hearts go out to our clients through our sustained compassion, our hearts can give out from fatigue” (p. 207). When clinicians take on too much of their clients problems, they may feel mentally, physically,
and emotionally exhausted as well was hopeless and disconnected from others. Despite good self-care habits and social support, some populations or particular clients can overburden the most skilled clinician (e.g., Fahy, 2007; Radey & Figley, 2007; Smith, 2007).

As Barnett, Baker, Elman, and Schoener (2007) note, being a psychologist carries many occupational challenges and stressors, including: (a) clients who place a high emotional demand on psychologists, such as those with an Axis II pathology or those who engage in risky behavior in an effort to manipulate the therapist, (b) clients with chronic difficulties who show little to no improvement or perhaps relapse, (c) clients who attempt or complete suicide, (d) clients who are aggressive to themselves or others, (e) professional isolation, (f) being on call and having to respond to crises, (g) concerns about malpractice complaints, and (h) the frustrations of insurance and managed care (increased paperwork, difficulty in receiving payments, etc.). Psychologists are not immune to suffering the consequences of the emotional labor associated with these stressors.

Ironically, despite being trained to assess and analyze the emotional states of others, clinical psychologists are at an increased risk of ignoring their own emotional well-being (Siebert & Siebert, 2007). Even if aware of the signs of exhaustion, psychologists may be inclined to minimize or deny the importance of these signs in an effort to maintain the “caregiver” role. There may also be more practical obstacles to attending to one’s own emotional well-being in the face of ongoing client demands and professional responsibilities. The present study focused on emotional exhaustion as a type of strain or distress that may develop in response to the demands of clinical work. As
emotional exhaustion at work increases, it may spillover into psychologists’ family lives through WFC.

**Emotional Exhaustion and Work-Family Conflict**

The conservation of resource (COR) model provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989; Innstrand, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum, & Aasland, 2008). As originally described by Hobfoll (1989), the basic tenant of the COR model is that individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources. There are four types of resources: objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies. Object resources, such as a house, are valued because of their physical nature. Conditions, such as tenure, are resources to the extent that they are valued and sought after. Personal characteristics are resources that promote resiliency to stress and lastly, energy resources include time, money, and knowledge. Energy resources are of value because they aid in the acquisition of other resources. Stress results when there is a threat of a loss of resources, an actual loss of resources, or lack of an expected gain in resources. Furthermore, continued loss of resources is hypothesized to lead to a general negative “state of being.” This project specifically focused on emotional exhaustion as a type of work strain representing a loss of or a threat to a person’s resources.

As delineated by Grandey and Cropanzano (1999), the COR model suggests specific hypotheses about relationships between work strain, WFC, and family functioning. It is expected that work role stress and WFC are related to each other such that those who experience more job strain (i.e., loss of resources) experience more WFC.
As more strain is experienced in one domain, fewer resources are available to fulfill one’s role in another domain. Expending resources at work might drain the available resources and hence leave fewer resources available for family demands. In this way, work role strain interferes with fulfilling family demands (WFC) and family functioning. Furthermore, the COR model proposes that experiencing WFC in and of itself consumes resources and thus leads to more distress in the work and family domain.

If the threatened resources are not protected or replenished, a “loss spiral” might ensue as those who lack resources are the most vulnerable to future losses (Hobfoll, 1989). As more resources are lost, individuals are less able to offset losses. For example, an increase in emotional exhaustion may lead to an increase in work-family conflict, which in turn may contribute to a further increase in emotional exhaustion. Hence, the ability to recover from workload demands may decrease over time (Geurts et al., 2003). The resource loss builds up over time, leading to an unfavorable accumulative process, resulting in impaired well-being in both the family and work domains that may be chronic.

Research has supported the relationship between WFC and emotional exhaustion in a variety of professions. Increased WFC has been associated with increased emotional exhaustion among correctional officers (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer. 2010), medical residents (Ringrose, Houterman, Koops, & Oei, 2009), nurses (Burke & Greenglass, 2001), teachers (Cinamon, Rich, & Westman, 2007), government employees (Haar, 2006), and a range of other professions (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005). The one study to date that has examined work-family conflict among
psychologists has also found a relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict in this population (Rupert, Stevanovic, & Hunley, 2009).

One important conceptual issue concerns the direction of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WFC. In many studies, WFC has been viewed as a predictor of emotional exhaustion (e.g., Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Lambert et al., 2010; Peeters et al., 2005; Rupert et al., 2009), while others have conceptualized emotional exhaustion as a predictor of WFC (e.g., Demeroutie, Bakker, & Bulters, 2004; Westman, Etzion, & Gortler, 2004). A recent study by Innstrand and colleagues (2008) has fully delineated the dynamic relationship between WFC and burnout. Innstrand and colleagues (2008) followed a sample of 2,235 respondents from a variety of professions over the course of two years in an effort to investigate the longitudinal relationships between WFC and emotional exhaustion. They compared three path models: WFC to exhaustion, exhaustion to WFC, and a reciprocal model. Results indicated that the reciprocal model was the best fit to the data. In line with the COR theory’s prediction of loss spirals, the results indicated that WFC and emotional exhaustion predict each other over time. The second best fit for the data was the path model that predicted WFC from emotional exhaustion. In the present study, emotional exhaustion was thus conceptualized as a strain-based work pressure that may lead to WFC.

**Family Domain Outcome: Marital Satisfaction**

As illustrated in Figure 1, the dominant model of interrole conflict predicts that high levels of WFC lead to negative consequences in the family domain. In studies addressing the negative cross-domain effects of WFC, variables aimed at assessing the family as a unit are often studied as outcome variables. For example, the majority of
studies included in a comprehensive meta-analysis done by Ford, Heinen, and Langkamer (2007) used a measure of family stress, family support, and/or family conflict as an outcome measure, with a few assessing marital satisfaction. While the results of the meta-analysis suggested that high WFC is consistently associated with poor family functioning, they did not provide information on how this relationship might differ between the varying facets of family functioning (e.g., family stress, family conflict, family support, and marital satisfaction). It would be beneficial to understand how specific relationships within the family are affected by WFC. This study examined one important relationship, that between the psychologist and a spouse or partner.

Marital satisfaction is an important aspect of many adults’ lives. For example, whereas satisfaction with parenting predicts life satisfaction only at certain life stages, marital satisfaction predicts life satisfaction throughout the lifespan (Theriault, 1996). Furthermore, being in an unhappy marriage is associated with significantly lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem and overall health along with elevated levels of psychological distress and depression for both men and women (Hawkins, 2005; Whisman, 2006). These data suggest that marital satisfaction is an important element to people’s psychological well-being.

The study of marital satisfaction is particularly important in today’s society. Not only are about 50% of marriages estimated to end in divorce (National Marriage Project, 1999), but research also suggests that couples report lower levels of marital satisfaction today than the average reported level in the 1970s (Rogers & Amato, 1997).

Many researchers have noted that marital trends cannot be analyzed without also taking into account shifting occupational and economic trends (e.g., Bradbury, Fincham,
& Beach, 2000; Goldstein & Kenny, 2001). For example, an economic analysis of marriage suggests that marriage became less advantageous to both women and men as women entered the workforce and were able to earn an income. While the traditional sexual division of labor created a system in which each party had a needed commodity that they were able to trade, now marriage is no longer strictly economically necessary for many women, nor is it necessary for men interested in having a family. Some researchers argue that the breakdown of the sexual division of labor accounts for the increased marital dissatisfaction and high divorce rate.

Another possibility, however, is that as husbands and wives both became busier with taking on more responsibilities in areas of life that were previously delegated to the other sex, they experienced more WFC. This would be consistent with other areas of research that have found WFC to account for a significant amount of variance in life and family satisfaction (e.g., Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007). So far, the research supports the hypothesis that increased WFC is associated with decreased marital satisfaction. In an interesting study, Rogers and Amato (2000) compared two samples of married individuals—one cohort married between 1964 and 1980 (and interviewed in 1980) and one cohort married between 1981 and 1997 (and interviewed in 1997). They found that individuals in the later cohort reported significantly more marital discord than individuals in the first cohort. Moreover, increased WFC levels of the second cohort accounted for a significant proportion of this difference. Supporting this finding, Bedaian, Burke, and Moffet (1988) found that in a sample of professionals, work to family conflict was significantly related to decreased marital satisfaction for both men and women. Interestingly, they also found that WFC was a better predictor of decreased marital
satisfaction than parental demands—supporting the importance of examining how specific family relationships are affected by WFC. Barling and McElwain (1992) found that role conflict negatively affected three aspects of marital functioning—overall satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and psychological aggression towards a spouse. Other research has replicated the relationship between WFC and decreased marital satisfaction (e.g., Burley, 1995; Mathews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Sears & Galambos, 1992).

A similar pattern of work-family conflict and decreased marital satisfaction has been found among psychologists and other mental health professionals. A study done by Burley (1995) using members of the American Psychological Association revealed that WFC and marital satisfaction were significantly related. Further, Kessler, Werner-Wilson, Cook, and Berger (2000) found that among female marriage and family therapists, as the number of hours worked per week increased, the amount of emotional work they reported investing in their intimate relationships decreased. In recent in-depth interviews, some clinical workers acknowledged that their work, at times, significantly impacted interactions they had with their significant other (Killian, 2008). For example, a therapist reflects, “I get physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted, and I also become emotionally shutdown and I am not as emotionally responsive to people. I feel like I don’t have any more to give, it is all used up and gone.” This quote encapsulates how emotional exhaustion may negatively impact one’s romantic relationships. Overall, the data seems consistent with the notion that the emotional labor of clinical work may leave professional psychologists with little time or energy to devote to their own intimate relationships. In fact, there is evidence from a series of three studies with marriage and family therapists to indicate that not having time to devote to one’s own family because
of the time and energy a clinical practice consumes is the most frequent way clinician’s feel their work negatively impacts the quality of their marriage (Duncan & Durden, 1990; Duncan & Goddard, 1993; Wetchler & Piercy, 1986).

Two studies have provided more direct quantitative support for the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction. In a longitudinal study, Leiter and Durap (1996) studied a group of hospital staff and found that both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment were related to marital satisfaction. While Leiter and Durap did not directly measure WFC, they speculated that WFC was the mechanism through which emotional exhaustion impacted marital satisfaction. Despite the evidence that suggests that WFC may mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital functioning, only one study has directly examined this relationship (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005). This study yielded mixed findings. Work-family conflict did not mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction, but, as already noted, it did mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave one’s marriage. The present study extended these findings by testing a mediational model on a sample of professional psychologists.

**Work to Marriage Spillover and Gender**

One important question is whether men and women experience work-family conflict differently. As discussed earlier, Pleck (1977) proposed that work and family boundaries are asymmetrically permeable, such that work conflicts with family more so than family conflicts with work. Furthermore, he also hypothesized that men and women differed in regards to this permeability. Pleck hypothesized that due to a strong work allegiance, work demands are more likely to spillover into the family domain for men and
hence men should experience more WFC. On the other hand, due to a strong allegiance to home life, family demands are more likely to spillover into the work domain for women and hence women should experience more FWC than men. This gender difference in cross-domain effects may reflect differences between men and women in the extent to which each sphere is central to their identity. Consistent with this notion, gender role theory suggests that women are still more likely to place a greater importance on their family roles, whereas men are still more likely to place a great importance on their work roles (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002). In other words, the “professional” role for men is more salient and central, whereas the “wife” or “mother” role is more central for women. Hence, work may be more central to men’s identity and work stressors may more negatively affect men than women (Lai, 1995).

One line of research has tested Pleck’s (1977) theory by examining differences in the average level of WFC experienced by men and women. Supporting this notion, many studies have found that men experience more WFC than women (e.g., Byron, 2005; Demeroutie et al., 2005, Mannon et al., 2007; Rupert et al., 2009; Somech & Drach-Sahavy, 2007). However, many studies have not found any gender differences in levels of WFC (e.g., Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). To complicate this point, McElwain, Korabik, and Rosin (2005) found that, women actually reported higher levels of WFC than men. In this study, the researchers utilized an exclusively professional sample of individuals in the banking, accounting, and telecommunication industries and matched men and women on type of industry and level within
organization. They speculated that men may not inherently experience more WFC than women, but perhaps tend to more often be in professional positions that lead to WFC.

The rational view of WFC posits that the amount of work-family conflict an individual experiences is directly related to how much time is spent in the work role (Gutek et al., 1991). Supporting this, a meta-analysis on the antecedents of WFC found that employees who have higher job involvement, work longer hours, and experience more job stress tend to have higher levels of WFC (Byron, 2005). Given that men tend to work longer hours than women whereas women are much more likely to work part time compared to men (Hill, Jacob, Shannon, Brennan, Blanchard, & Martinengo, 2008; Nomanguchi & Milkie 2003; Plasky & Holah, 1998), men should in general experience more work to family conflict. Consistent with this notion, the one study to date that has examined work-family conflict among psychologists found that men reported working significantly more hours a week than women (40 vs. 31 hrs/wk) and tended to report higher levels of WFC (Rupert et al., 2009).

Other studies have tested Pleck’s (1977) hypothesis by examining the strength of the relationship between work stress, WFC, and family satisfaction. Using Pleck’s rationale, if men are more likely to allow work to spillover into their family lives than women, gender should significantly moderate the relation between work domain stressors and family domain outcomes such that that a stronger relationship is found for men than women. Although research examining gender as a moderator has been limited, there is some support for Pleck’s hypothesis. For example, a meta-analysis examining antecedents of work-family conflict concluded that job involvement was more strongly
related to WFC for men than for women (Byron, 2005). Further, a recent meta-analysis of work and family cross-domain relationships found that the relationship between job stress and family satisfaction was stronger for men than for women (Ford et al., 2007). Findings regarding gender as a moderator of the relationship between WFC and family functioning, however, are less clear-cut, with some finding stronger relationships for men (Burley, 1995; Byron, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991) and others finding no gender differences (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; McElwain et al., 2005).

Two studies have found that gender moderates the strength of cross-domain effects in samples of psychologists and counselors. Using data from a larger study on the wellbeing of psychologists, Burley (1995) examined the relationship between WFC, gender, and marital adjustment. The results support Pleck’s gender role theory and indicate gender as a significant moderator. Specifically, WFC was more strongly related to marital adjustment for men than for women. In a study of marriage and family therapists (MFT), Kessler et al (2000) examined the relationship between job and marital satisfaction. Gender again emerged as an important moderator. For male MFTs, there was a positive relationship between job and marital satisfaction. However, for female MFTs, there was no significant relationship between job and marital satisfaction. As both of these studies matched participants on their professional roles, it seems that differences in professional responsibilities or job stress alone cannot account for the observed gender differences.

In sum, Pleck (1977) proposed that work demands are more likely to spillover into the family domain for men and hence men should experience more WFC. However, there have been inconsistent findings on whether levels of WFC differ for men and
women. Some studies suggest that men experience more WFC than women (Byron, 2005; Demeroutie et al., 2005; Mannon et al., 2007; Rupert et al., 2009; Somech & Drach-Savy, 2007) and others suggest no gender difference (Bolger et al., 1989; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Eagle et al., 1997; Frone et al., 1992). In terms of the role of gender as a moderator, there is limited, but relatively consistent evidence that the strength of the relationships between stress at work, WFC, and family functioning are stronger for men than for women (e.g., Burley, 1995; Byron, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Ford et al., 2007; Kessler et al., 2000). The two studies to date that have examined the role of gender in the work-family interface of psychologists support Pleck’s theory and the current study extended these findings by examining the role of gender in moderating the direct and indirect paths of the proposed mediational model.

**Current Study and Hypotheses**

Research has provided consistent support for WFC as a mediating variable between work and family domains. Specifically, increased work demands or strains are associated with increased WFC, which in turn relate to negative outcomes on a range of family satisfaction or family relationship variables (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Frone et al., 1997; Frone et al., 1992; Geurts et al., 2001; Gutek et al., 1991; McElwain et al., 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1996; Stephens et al., 1997). Emotional exhaustion, a work strain variable that is particularly relevant to human service providers, has been consistently shown to relate to WFC (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Cinamon et al., 2007; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Haar, 2006; Peeters et al., 2005; Ringrose et al., 2009) and a growing body of literature has related WFC to lower marital satisfaction (Barling & McElwain, 1992; Bedaian et al., 1988;
Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Burley, 1995; Mathews et al., 1996; Rogers & Amato, 1997; Sears & Galambos, 1997). Further, there is evidence that gender may moderate these relationships (Burley, 1995; Byron, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Ford et al., 2007; Kessler et al., 2000).

Despite the emotionally demanding nature of psychological work, very limited research has examined work to family conflict among professional psychologists. Further, the research specifically examining WFC and marital satisfaction among mental health professionals has been largely anecdotal and has not typically employed standardized measures of either WFC or marital satisfaction (e.g., Duncan & Durden, 1990; Duncan & Goddard, 1993).

The current study had two primary objectives: (a) to examine work-family conflict as a mediator of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction and (b) to assess gender differences in WFC and in the strength of the relationships among emotional exhaustion, WFC, and marital satisfaction. This study has the potential to clarify the mechanism through which emotional exhaustion at work influences the personal lives of psychologists and has implications for identifying psychologists who are at an increased risk for carrying the stress of work home with them and weakening their own relationships.

**Objective one: Mediation model.** As illustrated in Figure 2, it was expected that WFC would mediate the relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Marital Satisfaction. In this regard, the following specific hypotheses were tested:

**H1:** Increased levels of emotional exhaustion will be associated with increased levels of WFC.
**H2:** Increased levels of emotional exhaustion will be associated with decreased levels of marital satisfaction.

**H3:** Increased levels of WFC will be associated with decreased levels of marital satisfaction.

**H4:** The strength of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction will significantly drop when WFC is in the model.

**Figure 2. Hypothesized Mediational Model**

**Objective two: Gender differences.** In general, it was expected that there would be gender differences in WFC and gender would moderate the relationships among the variables in the mediational model (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). The following specific hypotheses were tested:

**H5:** Men will have higher mean scores than women on WFC.

**H6:** For both men and women, increased emotional exhaustion will be associated with increased WFC. However, this relationship will be stronger for men.
**H7.** For both men and women, increased WFC will be associated with decreased marital satisfaction. However, this relationship will be stronger for men.

**H8:** For both men and women, increased emotional exhaustion will be associated with decreased marital satisfaction. However, this relationship will be stronger for men.
Figure 5. Hypothesized Emotional Exhaustion X Gender Interaction Predicting Marital Satisfaction
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants

The current study used data from the second wave of a larger longitudinal project designed to examine work-family conflict and burnout among professional psychologists. The sample was drawn from the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, a nonprofit credentialing organization. To be a member of the National Register, psychologists must meet the following requirements: (a) hold a doctoral degree in psychology, (b) have completed at least two years (3,000 hours) of supervised experience in health services, including a one-year internship and a one-year supervised postdoctoral experience, (c) hold an active, unrestricted license at the independent practice level, and (d) have no history of disciplinary action. After initial acceptance, the National Register verifies the licensure status of its members at least twice yearly.

For the larger project, a random sample of 3000 National Register members were sent recruitment materials. In response to the recruitment mailings, 363 psychologists identified themselves as interested and provided an e-mail address. All 363 were invited to participate in Time 1 and Time 2 data collection points. Of this group, 221 completed the web-based Time 1 survey (60.88%) and 224 (61.71%) completed the Time 2 survey. Participants who completed Time 2 of the survey and identified themselves as married, partnered, or in a committed relationship were selected for the current study. This
selection resulted in a final sample of 160 (71.43% of the total Time 2 sample). The sample consisted of 70 men (43.2%) and 90 women (56.8%), with an overall average age of 54.71 ($SD = 10.48$). The majority of the sample had children ($n = 127$, or 78.4%). Of those with children, 52.47% ($n = 67$) reported one or more child living in the home. Nearly all respondents were White ($n = 154$, or 95.1%). In terms of professional qualifications, the sample was entirely made up of doctorate level psychologists; 80.2% ($n = 130$) held PhDs, 18.5% ($n = 30$) held PsyDs, and 1.2% ($n = 2$) held EdDs. On average, participants reported 21.55 ($SD = 10.33$) years of professional experience post licensure and respondents worked approximately 38.01 ($SD = 12.63$) hours per week. The majority of respondents listed their primary work setting as solo private practice ($n = 70$, or 43.8%) or group private practice ($n = 37$, or 22.8%). Additionally, a smaller percentage of respondents reported working in a hospital setting ($n = 14$, or 8.6%), community mental health clinics ($n = 7$, 4.3%), out-patient clinics ($n = 10$, or 6.2%), or another type of work setting ($n = 22$, or 13.7%).

**Procedure**

For the larger longitudinal study, two separate recruitment mailings were conducted, the first to 2000 members and the second to 1000 members of the National Register. Each mailing included a letter explaining the longitudinal study of work and family life, an Interest Form, and a prepaid business envelope. Psychologists interested in participating in the study were asked to return the Interest Form and provide a current e-mail address to be used for future communication. Reminder postcards were sent through the mail approximately three weeks after the initial contact.
The project used an online survey platform (Opinio) to collect two waves of data, spaced approximately six months apart. Participants who returned an Interest Form \((n = 363)\) were first sent a prenotice e-mail through Opinio alerting them that data collection would begin in the following weeks. At the start of data collection, participants were then sent an e-mail message inviting them to participate in data collection. This e-mail contained a secure link to a detailed consent form and the web-based survey. Subsequently, two reminders were sent to participants who had not completed the survey. All psychologists who returned the initial Interest Form and provided a valid e-mail address, regardless of their participation at Time 1, were contacted to participate at Time 2.

**Materials**

The Time 2 survey included several instruments designed to assess a variety of constructs related to the work-family interface of professional psychologists. For the present study, data from the following instruments was used: Work–Family Conflict Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and demographic questions.

**Work-Family Conflict Scale** (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). The Work-Family Conflict Scale is a five-item scale that assesses the degree to which work responsibilities interfere with family. Respondents rate from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) their agreement or disagreement with five statements indicating difficulty participating in the family domain due to participation in the professional domain. A sample item is “Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.” See Appendix A for the full scale.
Information on the original development and validation of this scale is provided by Netemeyer et al (1996). Their initial data provide support for the content, discriminant, and construct validity of this scale. For example, the measure was associated with the number of hours worked ($r = .35, p < .001$), role conflict ($r = .40, p < .001$), and job tension ($r = .58, p < .001$). The scale also demonstrated adequate internal consistency as measured by Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .88$). This scale is widely used in the work-family literature and has successfully been used with samples of various professions, including clinical psychologists (e.g., Rupert, Stevanovic, & Hunley, 2009). Ratings for each item were totaled to yield a Work-Family Conflict score, with higher scores representing higher levels of inter-role conflict. Reliability for the current sample was high ($\alpha = .94$).

**Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey** (MBI-HSS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI-HSS was used to assess the level of emotional exhaustion in participating psychologists. The MBI-HSS was specifically designed to assess burnout among professionals in the human services and is the most frequently used instrument in the literature (Arthur, 1990; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The scale assesses three distinct aspects of burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The Emotional Exhaustion (EE) subscale assesses feelings of being emotionally drained and overextended by one’s work. The Depersonalization (DP) subscale assesses cynical and impersonal attitudes towards clients. The Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscale assesses feelings of competence and achievement in one’s work.
Psychometric data were reported by the authors in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual* (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The three factors have been successfully replicated in various human service populations, including teachers, legal aid employees, and psychologists. Each subscale has also been found to have adequate internal consistency, as estimated by Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (EE = 0.90, DP = 0.79, and PA = 0.71). The authors demonstrated the convergent validity of the MBI in three ways. First, an individuals MBI-HSS score was found to significantly correlated to behavioral ratings done by those close to the respondent. Second, scores on the MBI-HSS were significantly correlated with the presence of job characteristics associated with burnout, such as client caseload. Lastly, MBI-HSS scores have also been shown to significantly correlate with the hypothesized personal outcomes, such as intention to leave one’s job. Furthermore, the MBI-HSS has also been shown to have discriminant validity. For example, the JDS measure of “General Job Satisfaction” had a negative correlation with both the emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.23, p < .05$) and depersonalization ($r = -0.22, p < 05$) subscales, as well as a positive correlation with personal accomplishment ($r = 0.17, p < .06$). While the MBI has been shown to relate as expected to job satisfaction, it has been demonstrated to be measuring a construct distinct from job dissatisfaction (which only accounts for 6% of the variance in burnout).

The MBI-HSS is a self-report questionnaire made up of 22 items. To complete the MBI, participants must rate the frequency of feelings related to each subscale using a 7-point scale (0 = never; 6 = every day). Higher scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and lower scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscales reflect higher levels of burnout. In the present study, the total score on Emotional
Exhaustion was used to capture the level of job exhaustion psychologists experience as an index of job strain. Reliability of this subscale was high ($\alpha = .92$).

**Dyadic Adjustment Scale** (DAS; Spanier, 1976). The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was used to assess marital satisfaction. The DAS is currently the most widely used self-report measure of marital adjustment satisfaction (South, Kreuger, & Iacono, 2009). It is a self-report, 32-item questionnaire that assesses four relevant aspects of marital satisfaction: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression. The scale also yields an overall measure of dyadic adjustment. The full scale has a theoretical range of 0 to 151, with high scores indicating higher levels of marital satisfaction.

The dyadic consensus subscale requires respondents to rate the extent of agreement or disagreement between themselves and their partner on 13 topics relevant to marital quality (e.g., “Amount of time spent together”) from always agree to always disagree.

The 10-item dyadic satisfaction subscale requires respondents to rate how often different marital situations occur (e.g., “How often do you and your partner quarrel?”) from *all the time* to *never*. This subscale also asks respondents to choose a statement that best describes how they feel about the future of their relationship from “My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going” to “I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.” Lastly, this subscale asks participants to rate their degree of happiness of their relationship ($0 = extremely unhappy, 6 = perfect$).
The dyadic cohesion subscale required respondents to rate how often they engage in five different activities with their partner (e.g., “Laugh together”) from 0 (never) to 5 (more often than once a day). Lastly, the affectional subscale consists of 4 questions that ask respondents to report on physical intimacy within the relationship.

Information on the original development and validation of these scales is provided by Spanier (1976). The initial data provide support for the content, criterion, and construct validity as well as the internal consistency of the reliability of the four subscales (Consensus = 0.90, Satisfaction = .94, Cohesion = .86, Affectional Expression = .73) and the total score (0.96). The current study utilized the dyadic satisfaction subscale as an index of marital satisfaction as others in the occupational health literature have done (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Leiter & Durup, 1996). Items were summed to create a total satisfaction score and this scale demonstrated adequate internal reliability (α = .83). See Appendix A for the full dyadic satisfaction subscale.

**Demographics.** Demographic information was collected from participants through a series of questions on their personal (age, sex, race, number of children, marital status) and professional life (income, experience, specialty area, theoretical orientation, credentials, number of hours worked a week, type of work, and work settings).
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The current study examined WFC as a mediator of the relationship between work domain stressors and family domain outcomes. Specifically, as seen in Figure 2, the study proposed a meditational model in which emotional exhaustion at work increases WFC, which then directly decreases marital satisfaction. Furthermore, gender differences in the overall experience of WFC as well as in the strength of the pathways in the model were investigated. Based on gender role theory and past research, it was expected that the relationships in the mediational model would be stronger for men than for women.

Before proceeding with data analysis, total scores for WFC, emotional exhaustion, and marital satisfaction were calculated. To reduce missing data, mean imputation was used. If participants answered at least 4 out of the five items measuring WFC or 7 out of the 9 items measuring emotional exhaustion, their average response rating for that measure was used to replace any missing data points. To accommodate the different metrics used throughout the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, sample wide item means were imputed for individuals who answered at least 8 out of the 10 items. This produced an additional three usable WFC scores, two emotional exhaustion scores, and two marital satisfaction scores for an additional seven participants. This method allowed for total scores to be calculated for each participant who answered at least 80% of the items in each measure.
WFC as a Mediator

The hypothesized role of WFC in mediating the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction was examined using the approach recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (1997, 2002). With this approach, requirements for a mediation process include the following steps: (1) the total effect of the independent variable (emotional exhaustion) on the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) must first be significant, (2) the path from the independent variable (emotional exhaustion) to the mediator (WFC) must be significant, (3) the path from the mediator (WFC) to the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) must be significant with the independent variable (emotional exhaustion) controlled for, and (4) the relationship between the independent variable (emotional exhaustion) and the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) must decrease significantly after the mediator (WFC) has been controlled for in the model. In the current study, a Sobel test (Sobel, 1988) was used to test the significance of the mediation. In order to show mediation, the results must satisfy the requirement in Steps 1–4. Hypotheses 1-3 predicted that conditions 1-3 would be met and Hypothesis 4 predicted a significant Sobel test. Figure 6 presents the path model along with the standardized regression coefficients from the mediational analyses.

First, the preliminary regression revealed that emotional exhaustion was significantly associated with marital satisfaction, $B = -.09, \beta = -.20, t(160) = -2.54, p = .012$, indicating the presence of an effect that might be mediated. Participants with higher levels of emotional exhaustion at work tended to report being less satisfied with their marriages. Second, as expected, emotional exhaustion was significantly associated with WFC, $B = .47, \beta = .59, t(159) = 9.14, p < .001$. People high in emotional exhaustion at
work also tended to experience high levels of WFC. Third, when emotional exhaustion was not controlled for, WFC was significantly associated with marital satisfaction, $B = -0.11, \beta = -0.18 t(159) = -2.35, p = .02$. Participants who reported experiencing higher levels of WFC also tended to report lower levels of marital satisfaction. However, with emotional exhaustion controlled for, the relationship between WFC and marital satisfaction was nonsignificant, $\beta = -0.1, ns$. Lastly, with WFC in the model, the direct path between emotional exhaustion at work and marital satisfaction was no longer statistically significant, $\beta = 0.14, ns$.

Figure 6. Mediational Model for Association between Emotional Exhaustion and Marital Satisfaction as Mediated by WFC.

Note. Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized $\beta$s). Path coefficients outside parentheses are zero-order correlations (rs). Path coefficients in parentheses are standardized partial regression coefficients from equations that include the other variable with a direct effect on the outcome.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

A Sobel test (Sobel, 1988) was used to test the significance of the indirect effect. However, contrary to Hypothesis 4, results indicated that there was not a significant drop in the strength of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction with the introduction of WFC into the model, $Z = -1.19, p = .23$. Hence, while both
emotional exhaustion and WFC were correlated with one another and marital satisfaction as predicted by Hypothesis 1-3, the pattern of relationships does not support the proposed mediational path model.

**Gender Differences**

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine gender differences in emotional exhaustion, hours worked, WFC, and marital satisfaction. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of these variables for men and women. There were no significant differences in total levels of marital satisfaction, $F(1, 160) = .07, p > .05$, or emotional exhaustion, $F(1, 160) = .04, p > .05$. However, men reported working significantly more hours per week than women, $F(1, 158) = 12.45, p = .001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Family Conflict</td>
<td>15.13</td>
<td>7.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>39.26</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours Worked</td>
<td>41.91</td>
<td>12.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, and marital satisfaction are on different metric scales.

Hypothesis 5 specified that men would report significantly more WFC than women. Contrary to expectations, results revealed that there was no significant difference in men and women’s work-family conflict scores, $F(1, 159) = 2.23, p > .05$. To probe the
possible gender difference further, an exploratory ANCOVA was run to control for the
effect of hours worked. The covariate, total hours worked per week, was significantly
related to WFC, \( F(1, 156) = 35.24, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .18 \). With the influence of hours
worked controlled for, there was also a significant effect of gender on WFC, \( F(1, 156) = 9.85, p = .002, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06 \). However the direction of this gender difference was in
the opposite direction than predicted by Hypothesis 5; women reported more WFC than
men.

One additional ANCOVA was run to explore possible gender differences in
emotional exhaustion when controlling for hours worked. The covariate, total hours
worked per week, was significantly related to emotional exhaustion, \( F(1, 157) = 19.49, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11 \). However, with the influence of hours worked controlled for, the
effect of gender on emotional exhaustion remained nonsignificant, \( F(1, 157) = 1.91, p > .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01 \).

Next, to test hypotheses 6-8, the strength of the relationships between emotional
exhaustion, WFC, and marital satisfaction were compared for men and women. It was
expected that gender would moderate the relationships among the variables in the
mediational model. As depicted in Figure 3, 4, and 5, three moderational models were
tested. The hypothesized role of gender in moderating the paths of these relationships was
examined with the approach recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck
(1997, 2002), as this method allowed us to directly assess gender differences in the
strength of the relationships for each path in the model.

To test the moderational model in Figure 3, for example, emotional exhaustion (a
continuous predictor) was centered by subtracting the sample mean from all individuals’
scores. Gender (a dichotomous predictor) was coded as 0 (male) or 1 (female) to facilitate interpretation and post-hoc testing. Next, the interaction term (Emotional Exhaustion X Gender) was created from the cross product of emotional exhaustion and gender. In the multiple regression analysis, the main effects of emotional exhaustion and gender were entered in Step 1, followed by the interaction term (Emotional Exhaustion X Gender) in Step 2. A similar procedure was used to test all three hypothesized moderational models. In each case, the interaction was examined to test the significance of moderation.

The first model proposed that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WFC would be stronger for men than for women. As illustrated in Table 2, contrary to Hypothesis 6, there was no significant Emotional Exhaustion X Gender interaction. In other words, emotional exhaustion is associated with WFC similarly for men and women.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Effects for Emotional Exhaustion and Gender on Work-Family Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>9.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emotional Exhaustion X Gender</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The second model proposed that the relationship between WFC and marital satisfaction would be stronger for men than for women. As illustrated in Table 3, contrary
to Hypothesis 7, there was no significant WFC X Gender interaction. This suggests that WFC is equally related to marital satisfaction for men and women.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Effects for Work-Family Conflict and Gender on Marital Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Work-Family Conflict</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-2.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work-Family Conflict X Gender</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The third model proposed that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction would be stronger for men than for women. As illustrated in Table 4, there was a significant Emotional Exhaustion X Gender interaction. That is, the strength of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction depended on gender.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Effects for Emotional Exhaustion and Gender on Marital Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-2.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emotional Exhaustion X Gender</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>2.48*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. 
To determine the nature of the significant Emotional Exhaustion X Gender interaction, procedures outlined by Holmbeck (2002) were followed. Specifically, two new group variables were created. Males were assigned a value of zero in one of the variables and females were assigned a value of zero in the other variable. Then, two new interaction terms were created by multiplying each conditional variable with the centered emotional exhaustion variable. Finally, two regressions were run—one to generate the simple slope for men and one to generate the simple slope for women. In the first regression, the main effect of emotional exhaustion, one of the conditional group variables, and the interaction term of emotional exhaustion and the conditional group variable were entered simultaneously. In the second regression, the other conditional group variable and the corresponding interaction term were used.

As suggested by the regression lines appearing in Figure 7, the simple slope for women was nonsignificant, $B = -0.011, \beta = -0.023, t(158) = -0.220, p > .05$, indicating that for women emotional exhaustion at work was not associated with marital satisfaction. However, for men, emotional exhaustion at work was associated with marital satisfaction, $B = -0.19, \beta = -0.4, t(158) = -3.56, p < .001$, as predicted. Consistent with Hypothesis 8, the results showed that whether emotional exhaustion was associated with marital satisfaction depended on participants’ gender. However, the pattern of findings was not totally consistent with predictions in that experiencing more emotional exhaustion at work was associated with lowered marital satisfaction only among men.¹

¹ As this analysis indicated that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction was significant only for men, additional analyses were conducted to determine if this effect was moderated by WFC. Using males only, the mediational model was tested following the same steps as followed with the entire sample in testing hypotheses 1-4. These analyses failed to support the mediating role of WFC.
Figure 7. Regression Lines for Relation between Emotional Exhaustion and Marital Satisfaction as Moderated by Gender
CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION

Overview

The results of the current study support the notion that strain in the workplace is associated with increased work-family conflict and decreased marital satisfaction among professional psychologists. Results also support the hypothesized relationship between WFC and marital satisfaction. Contrary to expectations, however, WFC did not mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, results regarding gender differences were mixed. Two findings suggest that men and women experience the work-family interface differently. Men worked more hours than women and the negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction was only present among men. On the other hand, men and women only differed in the experience of WFC after hours worked was statistically controlled for and gender did not moderate the relationships between either emotional exhaustion and WFC or WFC and marital satisfaction. These findings are discussed in more depth below.

Emotional Exhaustion, WFC, and Marital Satisfaction

The first objective of the current study was to evaluate WFC as a mediator of the relationship between work domain stress and family domain satisfaction. Emotional exhaustion was conceptualized as a strain-based work stress and marital satisfaction was investigated as a potential family level outcome. It was hypothesized that greater levels of
emotional exhaustion would be associated with increased WFC, which in turn would be associated with decreased marital satisfaction. Consistent with past research on the negative cross-domain effects between work stress and family satisfaction (e.g., Ford et al., 2007; Frone et al., 1992; Frone et al., 1997; Geurts et al., 2003; McElwain et al., 2005), the results of the linear regressions were supportive of the proposed relationships in this model. Psychologists who reported feeling emotionally drained or burned out from their work were also more likely to report that it was difficult for them to fulfill family responsibilities and duties. These psychologists also tended to report less satisfaction with their marital relationships. It appears that the more clinicians feel that their work leaves them emotionally exhausted and conflicts with their family time or responsibilities, the less satisfied they are with their marriage.

These findings are consistent with the COR model of work and family (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989; Innstrand et al., 2008). The COR model assumes that individuals have a finite amount of personal resources and asserts that if a strain is experienced in one domain, fewer resources are available to fulfill one’s role in another domain. In this way, emotional exhaustion at work may drain a psychologist’s available resources and leave fewer resources available for family demands (WFC), thereby lowering the quality of the marital relationship.

A developing body of research has focused on how the emotionally demanding nature of clinical work can have deleterious effects on the providers’ own family relationships (Baker et al., 2007; Burley, 1995; Cray & Cray, 1977; Duncan & Durden, 1990; Duncan & Goddard, 1993; Fahy, 2007; Kessler et al., 2000; Miller et al., 1988; Radey & Figley, 2007; Rupert et al., 2009; Smith, 2007; Wetchler & Piercy, 1986).
However, relatively few studies have examined how the unique work stress of professional psychologists is related to marital functioning (Burley, 1995; Duncan & Goddard, 1993). This study reinforces the notion that work and family are interdependent life domains and indicates that emotional exhaustion at work and work-family conflict are both important and relevant constructs for the marital satisfaction of professional psychologists.

As suggested by the COR model, a large body of research suggests that WFC acts as a mediator between work strain and family functioning (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Geurts et al., 2003; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; McElwain et al., 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1996; Stephens et al., 1997). The current study investigated lowered marital satisfaction, a specific facet of family functioning, as a potential consequence of WFC. As expected, the results of the current study are consisted with past literature that has linked WFC to marital satisfaction (Barling & McElwain, 1992; Bedaian et al., 1988; Burley, 1995; Mathews et al., 1996; Rogers & Amato, 2000; Sears & Galambos, 1992). As WFC increased, marital satisfaction decreased. However, contrary to expectations, WFC was not found to mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction. Rather, the results suggest that emotional exhaustion and WFC are both directly associated with marital satisfaction.

The failure to find significant mediation was surprising. However, subsequent analyses of gender differences indicated that emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction were significantly related only for men. Thus, additional regression analyses were conducted to examine whether WFC acted as a mediator between emotional
exhaustion and marital satisfaction for men. But, the model still failed to reach significance.

The failure to find significant mediation may, in part, be related to insufficient statistical power. The relationship between emotional exhaustion and WFC was relatively large, while the relationship between WFC and marital satisfaction was relatively small. This pattern is characteristic of a proximal mediator, which is associated with reduced power (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007; Hoyle & Kenny, 1999). While emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict were expected to be correlated, common method variance as well as the cross sectional nature of the data may have inflated the relationship. Multicollinearity in regression increases the standard errors and makes it harder to reject the null hypothesis (Field, 2009). Hence, it is possible that the current study did not have an adequate sample size to detect a mediated effect that was actually present.

It should also be noted, however, that previous research examining WFC as a mediator between job strain and marital satisfaction has yielded mixed results (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992). Further, findings from a recent meta-analysis suggest that WFC does not fully mediate the relationship between the work and family domain (Ford et al., 2007). It may be that WFC is not the primary linking mechanism between job strain and marital satisfaction. To fully explain the process of cross-domain influence, future research should examine other possible linking mechanisms. Negative mood spillover and marital behavior, two potential mediators, may help to further explain the relationship between job strain and marital satisfaction.

Negative mood spillover, or the transfer of job-generated moods to the family domain, is one factor that may mediate cross-domain effects (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000;
Hughes, Galinksy, & Morris, 1992; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000; Schulz, Crown, Cowan, & Brennan, 2004; Story & Repetti, 2006). Negative mood spillover occurs when occupational stressors create feelings of irritability, tension, or frustration. After work, these negative moods are carried into the home and transferred to family relationships and interactions (e.g., Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Schulz et al., 2004). A number of studies support the notion that negative moods mediate the relationship between job stress and marital relations (Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Hughes et al., 1992; Sears & Galambos, 1992; Story & Repetti, 2006).

Marital behavior provides another potential explanation for the relationship between job strain and marital satisfaction (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). Research has demonstrated that after a stressful day at work, spouses are more withdrawn from family interactions and more likely to act in combative ways towards other family members (Barling, 1990; MacEwen, Barling, & Kelloway, 1992; Repetti, 1989; Repetti, 1994; Repetti & Wood, 1997; Schulz et al., 2004; Story & Repetti, 2006). Over time, withdrawal and negative interactions may weaken the marital relationship and decrease marital satisfaction.

It is likely that negative mood spillover and angry or withdrawn marital behavior work in tandem to affect marital satisfaction (e.g., Story & Repetti, 2006). Future research on professional psychologists should address how daily levels of emotional exhaustion are related to shifts in negative affect and the effects this may have on the quality of family relationships. Using a daily diary methodology and having both partners provide ratings would allow researchers to make daily within-subject comparisons of job stressors, affect, and behavior.
To more fully understand the relationship between work and marital satisfaction, it might also be important to consider positive linking mechanisms. The concept of work-family facilitation has been suggested as a way to understand the extent to which participation at home (or work) is made easier by experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at work (or home) (Ford et al., 2007). For example, there is some evidence to suggest that skills obtained in the job domain can be used to manage family demands (Edward & Rothbard, 2000). It may be that resources and positive affect can be transferred from one role to the other. Future research might examine how professional skills and resources directly influence family functioning and perhaps also act as a buffer against the negative consequences of strain. Among professional psychologists, feelings of personal accomplishment may be related to increased family satisfaction and may also moderate the negative consequences of emotional exhaustion.

**Gender Differences**

The second aim of this study was to examine gender differences in WFC and in the strength of relationships among emotional exhaustion, WFC, and marital satisfaction. Pleck’s (1977) theory of asymmetric permeability suggests that men and women differ in the permeability of work and family boundaries. Specifically, Pleck hypothesized that work demands are more likely to spillover into the family domain for men than for women because the “professional” role is more salient for men. The current study tested this theory in two ways. First, mean gender differences in the experience of the work-family conflict were examined. Next, the gender differences in the strengths of the relationships between emotional exhaustion, WFC, and marital satisfaction were
analyzed. Although findings were mixed, the majority were not consistent with predictions based on Pleck’s theory.

Our initial analysis of gender differences in WFC was not significant; however, consistent with previous research on professional psychologists, women worked significantly fewer hours a week than men (Rupert et al., 2009). Given that the time spent in the work role is related to the experience of WFC (e.g., Byron, 2005), a follow up analysis was conducted to test for a gender difference in WFC with hours worked controlled. When hours worked was controlled, a significant difference emerged. Unexpectedly, women reported significantly more WFC than men when controlling for hours worked. Interestingly, there was no gender difference in emotional exhaustion even when hours worked was controlled for, suggesting that women do not find clinical work more taxing than men.

This gender difference in WFC is interesting given that past research in this area has been highly inconsistent. Furthermore, most studies have used individuals from the general population and failed to match participants on important professional variables (e.g., McElwain et al., 2005). It is possible that past findings may have been influenced by systematic differences in the industry and position level held by men and women (e.g., Duxbury et al., 1994; O’Neil & Greenberger, 1994). The participants in the current study were all professional psychologists engaged primarily in clinical work. Using a more homogeneous population in terms of work roles and controlling for hours worked may have allowed a different pattern of gender differences to emerge. The one previous study to date that has examined WFC among professional psychologists found that men
reported more WFC than women; however, this study did not control for hours worked (Rupert et al., 2009).

The findings of the current study suggest that when hours worked are controlled, women feel work impinges more on their family life than men. Given that women in our sample reported taking on more household responsibility than male participants, it may be that women simply had more family obligations for which work could conflict. An alternative interpretation is that women may have fewer resources available to them, thus limiting their ability to cope with work demands (Hobfoll, 1989). This interpretation would be consistent with research that has found that employed men are more likely to report having help with household duties than employed women (Geller & Hobfoll, 1994).

It may also be that men do not feel conflicted about spending time at work, because they view their work responsibilities as being more central to their lives/identity (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Lai, 1995; Pleck, 1977). Men may organize their schedules around their work and hence items on the WFC measure, such as “the amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities” or “things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me,” may not apply to them. This is consistent with the notion that traditionally men’s family role has been that of the breadwinner, while women have traditionally been responsible for domestic labor (e.g., childcare and housework) and taken the role of nurturer (Coltrain & Shih, 2010; Meth et al., 1991). For men, there is more consistency between the work and family roles and it may be that time spent in the work role is viewed as fulfilling a family responsibility. On the other hand, paid work and working outside of the home may be
viewed as inconsistent with women’s caretaker or nurturer role (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Bridges, Etaugh, & Farrell, 2002). Hence, women may be more likely to feel that work conflicts with their family responsibilities.

As a second way to examine gender differences in the relative permeability of work and family boundaries, gender was tested as a potential moderator of the relationships between emotional exhaustion and WFC, WFC and marital satisfaction, and the direct relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction. Contrary to prediction, the relationship between work strain and WFC did not show any significant gender differences. As emotional exhaustion increased, both men and women showed a similar pattern of increased WFC. Furthermore, no gender differences emerged in the relationship between WFC and marital satisfaction; as WFC increased, marital satisfaction decreased for both men and women.

These findings are inconsistent with past literature that has found support for the role of gender in moderating the relationship between work strain and role conflict and role conflict and family satisfaction (e.g., Burley, 1995; Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Byron, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; McElwain et al., 2005). However, research in this area has typically included participants from a variety of professions. In the current study, all participants were highly educated psychologists fulfilling similar professional roles and hence may have had similar levels of work-role commitment. Pleck (1977) hypothesized that work inherently spills over into the family life more for men due to gender roles, but it may be that the impact of gender roles is mitigated when men and women fill the same professional role. Unlike the general population, male and female professional psychologists have similar professional skills and resources and have both had to adapt
their behavior to meet similar role requirements. To the extent that all professional psychologists are fulfilling the same social role, there may be fewer gender differences in behavior (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). Future research should examine the meaning men and women assign to their roles as psychologists, marital partners, and parents.

One gender difference emerged that is consistent with Pleck’s theory (1977). The major finding of this study revealed that emotional exhaustion at work was significantly related to marital satisfaction only for men. Men who reported experiencing more emotional exhaustion also tended to report lower levels of marital satisfaction; however, there was no significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction among women. This finding is in line with a recent meta-analysis that found that the relationship between job stressors and family satisfaction was stronger for men than women (Ford et al., 2007). As a whole, the literature seems to suggest that work strain may be more likely to spillover into the family life for men and hence men’s family relationships may be more negatively affected by job strain. It is important to note that in the current study, men and women did not differ in their level of work strain even with hours worked controlled. This seems to suggest that female psychologists are better able to prevent their work strain from negatively impacting their family relationships. As Pleck hypothesized, this difference may be due to gender differences in role identity; women are more likely to place a greater importance on their family roles, whereas men are more likely to place a greater importance on their work role (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002).

This finding might also be interpreted in light of gender role expectations. As men are largely expected to be the provider, there is a similarity between men’s family and
work role that does not exist for women (Coltrain & Shih, 2010). In other words, the employee role may be more consistent with the role of husband and/or father because both involve the role of provider or breadwinner. This would be consistent with research that has found men tend to place a greater emphasis on their duty to provide economic support to the family (Simon, 1995). This may mean that men do not compartmentalize their work and family roles as much as women and hence there is greater similarity between the two spheres. Furthermore, it may be more acceptable for men to allow work to influence their family relationships (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Bridges et al., 2002; Coltrain & Shih, 2010; Pleck, 1977). While men may be less likely to perceive conflict between work and family, they may be more likely to let work strains impact on their marital relationship.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results of this present study should be considered in light of several limitations. First, the mediational model assumes that there are causal links that occur over time between work strain, WFC, and family functioning. Work strain is thought to cause work to conflict with family, which in turn is believed to result in lowered family functioning. However, because this study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature, no direct conclusions about cause and effect can be drawn. While the general findings are consistent with much of the previous research in this area, we cannot draw conclusions about temporal relationships. It may be that WFC serves as a stress that increases exhaustion at work or low marital satisfaction may cause individuals to feel more WFC. Longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the direction of the relationships. Statistically
speaking, longitudinal studies are also needed to fully test work-family conflict as a mediator of the relationship between work demands and family satisfaction.

Second, the current study only addressed the ways in which work stress and WFC may impact marital satisfaction. The full cross-domain effects model, however, suggests that experiences in the family domain also impact the work domain through family-work conflict. Future research should examine how stress and strain in the family domain impacts career satisfaction among professional psychologists. Using more complex data analysis strategies, such as structural equation modeling, to test more comprehensive models of WFC and FWC would be an important advancement.

Thirdly, this study relied on participants to self-report on their levels of emotional exhaustion, WFC, and marital satisfaction using a web-based questionnaire. Exclusive dependence on self-report measures as a single data collection method limits the validity of the findings. We cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the relationships between variables are due to common method variance. Furthermore, sole reliance on the psychologist’s self-report limits our ability to understand the impact job strain has on the family unit. The validity of results could be enhanced by gathering information using multiple methods and multiple informants, particularly other family members. For example, future studies could have children and spouses report on participants’ level of WFC and marital quality, utilize a diary methodology, or incorporate observational data. Using multisource and multimethod data would increase the validity of future work in the field.

Fourthly, we must be cautious about generalizing these findings from our sample of National Register of Health Provider members to all professional psychologists. Our
relatively low response rate makes this generalization even more tenuous. However, on the positive side, our respondents were similar to other national surveys of psychologists in terms of basic demographics (APA, 2007). But, there may be other differences between our sample and the general population of practicing psychologists. Our sample was largely composed of middle-aged doctorate level white psychologists with many years of professional experience. These results cannot be generalized to psychologists of color or individuals in a different stage of life (e.g., graduate students or new clinicians). Further, the small sample size not only limits generalizability, but also the ability to detect small effect sizes. Further research with larger, more diverse samples is needed.

Lastly, it is important to be mindful that the current study used gender as a proxy for gender role identity. While gender role theories assume that there tend to be categorical differences between men and women in how much they value work and family, the role of wife or mother may, in fact, not be the most salient role for highly educated female professionals. A logical next step for the work-family literature would be more directly measuring gender role beliefs. Furthermore, research has suggested that gender identity may interact with other social role variables such as race (Dillaway & Broman, 2001). Future work would benefit from paying greater attention to how gender identity and race and ethnicity interact to shape the work-family interface.

**Conclusions and Implications**

Most broadly, these findings suggest that psychologists do not compartmentalize their experiences of work and family into separate domains. Rather, work and family dynamically overlap and outcomes in one domain are influenced by experiences in the other domain. Among both male and female psychologists, WFC was associated with
decreased marital satisfaction and among men marital satisfaction was also linked to emotional exhaustion at work. Despite having similar training and professional duties, men and women psychologists may feel differently about their work and family lives. Women may be particularly likely to feel conflicted over their numerous responsibilities, while men’s work and family roles seem to be more consistent. This may allow strain from work to influence the marital relationships of men to a greater extent. These findings highlight how crucial it may be for professional psychologists to actively engage in self-care. Female psychologists may need to be attuned to ways in which they feel their professional duties are intruding on their family lives and male psychologists may need to be particularly mindful of carrying the stress of clinical work home with them.
APPENDIX A

MEASURES
**Work-Family Conflict Scale**

Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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1. The demands of work interfere with my home and family life.

2. The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.

3. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.

4. My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties.

5. Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.

**Dyadic Satisfaction Scale**

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate the response that best reflects your relationship.

1. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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3. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

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<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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4. Do you confide in your mate?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
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5. Do you ever regret that you have married (or lived together)?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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6. How often do you and your mate quarrel?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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7. How often do you and your mate get on each other’s nerves?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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8. Do you kiss your mate?

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<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>Almost every day</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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9. The following scale represents different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness in most relationships. Please indicate which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

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<th>0</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely unhappy</td>
<td>Fairly unhappy</td>
<td>A little unhappy</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Very happy</td>
<td>Extremely happy</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

___ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

___ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

___ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

___ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

___ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

___ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.


VITA

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