Work–Family Conflict: Fighting the 'Good Fight'

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The experience of work–family conflict, and attendant negative outcomes, for women who attempt to balance the often contradictory and competing identities of mother and employee is ever–present and indeed escalating. In this article, I adopt a feminist poststructural lens to focus on the discursive field of work–family interaction, which has historically been dominated by a discourse of work–family conflict, and more recently by a discourse of work–family balance or integration. I argue for a return to, and a poststructural turn upon, the discourse of 'work–family conflict'. Rather than a focus on how to satisfy priorities of the two domains, I argue that the experience of work–family interaction is frequently experienced as negative because of an escalation of the 'occupation' of the family domain by the encroachment of the work sphere. Women experience conflict because they are in a battle to defend the importance of the family and their identities as mothers. A return to 'conflict', calling for a focus on the temporal, spatial and affective occupation of the family domain as a key dimension in the experience of work–family conflict, highlights the role of language in the construction of the subjectivity of working mother as defender. Work–family conflict is herein conceptualized as a state of war and the domain of the family is the battleground.

Introduction

The discourse of 'work–family conflict' has dominated the landscape of management literature and public dialogue on work–family interaction for over 40 years (Runte and Mills, 2006) and has highlighted the negative outcomes for employees, families and organizations (c.f.., Duxbury, et al., 1994; Grover and Crooker, 1995; Konrad and Mangel, 2000). Also inherent in the research is the assumption that this conflict is the result of competition for the limited resource of the employee's time and commitment. Time expended on role performance in one domain necessarily depletes time available for the demands of the other domain. This perspective is an extension of the human capital theory, based on the assumption of a scarcity of resources: individuals have a finite amount of energy and when involved in multiple roles, the demands of these roles will deplete available resources (Becker, 1985). Work–family conflict was linked to women's escalating engage-

ment in market–work during the Cold War era (Runte and Mills, 2006). Parenting by women (dare I say the word, "mother"hood) is often presented and experienced as contradictory to the identities of women as employees or market workers (e.g., Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Williams, et al., 1991; Warren and Johnson, 1995; Epstein et al, 1999; Voydanoff, 2004; Hill, 2005). In contrast, fathers typically work longer hours and are viewed as more committed to their work than men without children (Hundley, 2001; Jacobs and Gerson, 2001); the belief that providing financially for their family satisfies their familial responsibility, the traditional male–breadwinner perspective, persists (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Hill, 2005). Although conflicting results are reported, there is considerable evidence supporting that work–family conflict is experienced more by women, than by men (Duxbury et al., 2003)

Even as there is recognition of gender differences in work–family role performance and experience, work–family conflict literature has increasingly adopted a gender–neutral stance (e.g., Duxbury et al., 2003) an attempt, in part, to recognize the increased engagement of men in family life and the nonwork roles beyond the scope of parenting, such as eldercare and volunteerism. A genderless perspective is also championed by a poststructural feminist organizational discourse. Organizational theory has been criticized for ignoring the diversity amongst women, thereby essentializing a universal "woman" (Calas and Smircich, 2006). This critique of essentialists has been taken up by poststructural feminism which points to a notion of the "self" that is fluid, contradictory, and emerges from one's relationships with others within everyday practice; a gendered perspective is presented as essentializing women and thus incompatible with subjectivity and fluidity of identity.

In this paper, I present work–family interaction as a gendered discourse and adopt a woman–centered lens (Calas and Smircich, 2006) as well as through a mother–centered lens as I draw on my own experience as a mother and as an academic. The first section of this paper focuses on the place for a woman–centered perspective in poststructural feminist research on work–family, arguing that essentialism as a concern should not limit our ability to critique and deconstruct this discourse. For many women, one of the most powerful everyday practices that can shape the 'self' and consume time, energy and emotion, is the experience of motherhood. A gender–free analysis of work–family conflict may distract from this lived experience given women's principle engagement and identification with this role (Caproni, 2004). Further, the social structures and processes that categorize (limit? empower?) women are situated within discursive fields (Weedon, 1999); to not examine how language and power relations act to shape and contain women's subjectivity limits the ability of poststructuralim to otherwise critique patriarchal norms as well as to reflect the lived experience, which for many women embraces motherhood. A poststructual examination of the implications of masculinist norms has been applied to other dimensions of organizational theory (e.g. Calas and Smircich, 1991 and Bradshaw, 1996 on leadership; Calas and Smircich, 1997 on business ethics; Meyerson, 1998 on stress). Feminist poststructural critiques of work–family interaction are all but lacking in organizational research, according to Calas and Smircich

(2006) (Martin, 1990 and Runte and Mills, 2004, are Calas and Smirchich's identified exceptions). Reluctance to essentialize women may be the cause of silence by poststructural feminists on this issue.

This paper thus offers a poststructural feminist analysis of work–family conflict as a gendered discourse. It is organized in two parts. I begin with an overview of essentialism within a poststructural analysis of women's experience of work–family interaction as a problematic that has paralyzed work–family research, and present a case for a feminist poststructual analysis of women's experience of work–family interaction. I will then examine, through the metaphor of "conflict," the extant research on work–family interaction, presenting a poststructural turn on the mainstream discourse of conflict in the context of contemporary organizational life.

Poststructural Feminism: Speaking the "M(other)-Word"

It was the early days of my PhD coursework. My daughter, Tigana, (who was three at the time), was walking with me to university. Her daycare was onsite and one of my great joys was walking to campus with her each morning. It often felt as if it was our only quality time together since I was so immersed in my studies. As Tigana and I walked to the university that morning, the sun was warm and Tigana nestled her hand in mine. She asked if we could go to the playground after daycare. I paused before answering. She stopped and looked up at me. She said in such a mature sounding voice, "It's OK, Mom, Daddy told me you were very busy. You can be my mom again when you're done." At that moment, I realized that I was walking around with a scarlet letter on my forehead—an "H" for Hypocrite. If I was going to research work-family balance, I was going to have to start living it. We spent an hour on the swings that evening and I rediscovered the joy and freedom of being "mom".

A critique of essentialism has been characteristic of much poststructural and feminist analysis. A unitary view of women sharing a common world, shared condition of oppression, or common "women's voice" is rejected in favour of recognition of the different situations, subjectivities and experiences of individual women (Calas and Smircich, 1992). In other words, all women are individuals, and attempts to make generalizations about "women" or categorize them on the basis of roles, such as mother, are therefore inappropriate. Many postmodern feminists, therefore, refuse to recognize "woman," or terms or concepts, such as "mother" that portray woman as a collection of "essences". Deleuze (1994), for example, calls for feminists to acknowledge a "postgender" world and not to focus on "women" as a conceptual entity. Butler (1995) sees identity categories, which would include "mother" as being "sites of necessary trouble" (p. 372); Lorber (2000) calls for the elimination of all gender categories in feminist discourse. The problematic of essentializing women is to limit the subject positions available to them. The role of "mother" is gendered and essentializes women; children, following this logic, are "parented" by "parents" and gender isn't relevant.

This attitude, however, makes it difficult to challenge gender barriers. As Braidotti (1994, p.117) has noted, "one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never controlled." Further, identity categories, even as they are "bound up in the cultural systems and property regimes" of masculinist and Western imperialism (Iriguary, 1985, p. 110) are taken up by many women and have significant implications on their negotiations within and movement between multiple life roles (Caven, 2006). Is the role of mother universally experienced? Certainly, not. The experience of parenthood, for all women and all men, is individually experienced and negotiated. Even as the role of "mother" is differentially experienced, however, it is nonetheless a shared experience that brings women together. The identity of "mother," remains a significant element of women's lived experience (Caven, 2006) which has significant implications regarding women's engagement in other life roles, such as employee (Runte and Mills, 2004).

In terms of work–family interaction, research supports that women experience the interaction of these domains as more problematic than do men (Gutek et al., 1991; Kinnumen and Mauno, 1998; Duxbury et al., 2003). "Despite the construction of the labour market, the welfare state, families, households and local communities as an interconnected gendered system, the distinction between the labours of production and reproduction continues to have salience… (and) remains a gendered one in which the activities undertaken in each sphere are differentially valued and rewarded (McDowell, 2004 pp. 147–148)." To not discuss gender as an element of work–family research out of a fear of essentializing women is to deny the lived experience of women, even as we can recognize that the "roles" are socially constructed, individually negotiated and sites of masculinist power that may (or may not) reflect shifting social conditions (Runte and Mills, 2006). Further, the elimination of gender categories in organizational discourse is illusionary, with evidence that even with gender unspoken, a masculinist agenda is maintained (Calas and Smirchich, 1992; Martin, 2000; Smithston and Stokoe, 2006). We must first speak of gender, before we can move past these "blindspots" (Martin, 2000). So, how then do we reflect the lived experience of women, who engage with the identity of "mother," without essentializing women?

Rather than supporting, the elimination of such gender categories to counter the risks of essentialism, Goldenberg (2007), drawing on Frye (1996), challenges the discourse of essentialism itself. To categorize "women" is not to dismiss their uniqueness as individuals. Goldenberg champions the adoption of a more complex analysis of categories in which sameness and difference co–exist in a relational dance: "each woman and group of women acquires deepened and more complex and more fully experienced meaning/identity through the webs of likeness and contrasts built by communities and processes that are varieties of the practice of differences' (Frye, 1996, p. 1007 cited by Goldenberg, 2007, p. 151). To identify linkages between women is not to preclude the existence and experience of differences amongst them. "A woman's subjectivity is not stabilized or essentialized by identity categories (e.g., race, class, gender) because her ways of existing in the world can shift depending on social relations, historical experiences, and material conditions. Poststructural theories of subjectivity capture the active process of taking up certain

subject positions in an ongoing process of becoming—rather than merely being—in the world (Jackson, 2004, pp 673-674)."

Poststructural feminism may therefore engage in the work–family debate by describing and deconstructing the complex web of subjectivity, identity and discourse that has drawn together and drawn distinctions between women as they maneuver between and within the work and family milieus. To acknowledge that many women have strong claims to their identities as "mothers" is not to claim that all women experience the role identically, nor that they must necessarily assume this role. It is important not to dismiss how this role does bring together women, even as they differentially negotiate the role as individuals. Concerns over work–family boundaries would be less pervasive if work did not hold such a privileged place in conceptions of what constitutes a meaningful life. This prioritization of work as the site of identity not only pervades work–family research within organizational discourse (Runte & Mills, 2006), it dominates family oriented literature (Graham, 1999; Sotirin et al, 2007). In the next section of this paper, I examine the discourse of conflict, which has been used within the extant research to describe the problems of multiple roles engagement. I execute a feminist postmodern turn on the conclusions of this literature, which have predominantly focused on workplace needs, and reclaim the term "conflict" as a reasonable and appropriate outcome to the temporal, spatial and affective occupation of the family domain by the masculinist priorities of work.

Reframing the Discourse of Work-Family Conflict

I am sitting in my office. The sunshine is streaming in. The children are at home and I am trying to write this paper. My older daughter recognizes the irony that "mommy is leaving us to write a paper on why family is important!" My reply to her commentary this morning was that "Today mommy is fighting the battle for all children. You get next weekend!"

Work–family conflict is defined, by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77) as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect." The meaning of "conflict" in the work–family literature has shifted little within the management literature, even as the social context of women's engagement in market work has altered significantly (Runte and Mills, 2006). Although more recently challenged by the discourses of work–family balance and work–family enrichment, which will be discussed in a later section, a research focus on the incompatibility of work and family roles remains dominant (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The research focuses, therefore, on identifying this role conflict and mitigating deleterious outcomes, through processes such as role segmentation and outsourcing of family responsibilities to "ease the burden of family role demands and enable [employed parents] to devote less time to the family role and more time to work" (Parasaramun et al, 1996, p. 282). The roles, particularly family roles, are presented as "burdens" (Parasuraman et al., 1996, p. 282) that "impede" (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998, p. 158) or "intrude" (Parasuraman et. al.,

1992, p. 342) upon function and therefore need to be "accommodated" (Allen, 2001, p. 417). Organizational remedies, such as onsite daycare, emergency childcare, and flexible work scheduling have been discussed at length as possible strategies to solve this challenge (Hughes and Galinsky, 1988; Kossek and Nichol, 1992; Powell and Mainiero, 1999). Family–based strategies, such as outsourcing of time consuming family tasks, such as housecleaning and childminding, are also proposed remedies (Parasaramun et al, 1996). Personal strategies, such as time management training and development of better coping strategies are also outlined (Matsui et al., 1995; Rotondo, et al., 2003). Work–family conflict is clearly presented in management research as an undesirable state which must be ameliorated or eliminated. Conflict is a "problem"; elimination of conflict is the goal. I certainly do not want to cast dispersion on the importance of programs such as onsite daycare and eldercare assistance to help people deal with the incredibly complex dynamic of family–life. Although these research and organizational strategies are necessary and offer women assistance to manage the daily challenge of role satisfaction, this research orientation is incomplete. A focus on ameliorating conflict between work and family expectations does not address why the challenges themselves are persistent.

Accepting that organizational discourse is gendered (Calas and Smirchich, 1992, Martin, 2000), a feminist challenge to the dominant discourse of work–family conflict is necessary to understand the lived experience of women negotiating between and within work and family roles and identities. Weedon (1997) calls for a poststructural feminism that attends to meaning as an *effect* of language: "The meaning of the signifier 'woman' varies from ideal to victim to object of sexual desire, according to its context. Consequently, it is always open to challenge and redefinition with shifts in context" (p. 25). I am contesting the language of "conflict." To challenge this entrenchment of the discourse of conflict as a "problem", I ask a simple question: Is conflict necessarily a bad thing? There is little doubt that many of the women and men who attempt to move between the sites of work and family find the experience challenging, even negative. It is also reasonable to assume that, given the choice, they would rather not experience the negative consequences of multi–role engagement. Few people would choose to feel 'bad'. Managerial research has focused on the antecedents of work–family conflict to ameliorate these negative outcomes. What mainstream management theory, however, has not succeeded at is answering the simple question—why? As a mother and academic myself, I ask:

If researchers have worked for so many years studying work-family conflict, why do I still feel so conflicted all the time?

This question gets at the heart of the issue. I believe that work–family research has not succeeded in helping women and men with the work–family interface because the research has focused on identifying factors that make work–family interaction more or less problematic (antecedents) without critically assessing the reason for the conflict. This is akin to examining soldiers' training and munitions choices as a cause of wartime casualty rates without asking the basic question: why are we at war in the first place? So, I ask the simple question: why do women

experience conflict between the roles of mother and employee?

I look to the discourse of "conflict" to find one, of the many possible answers, to this question. Conflict within the work–family literature has been singularly defined by mainstream managerialism; how it has been lived by women, however, may open up the discourse to new interpretations. Conflict, as a metaphor for battle, allows us to see work–family interaction as a battlefield. Work (as a masculinist realm) has occupied the family domain, which has historically been seen, and continues to be, a site of female identity. To develop this metaphor of conflict as battle, I will discuss the intersection of current organizational trends with the work–family battleground.

Flexible and Friendly Worksite: As earlier discussed, work–family conflict has dominated mainstream management research for many years and has maintained a focus on the negative outcomes of role interaction. Work–family research has recently focused on the implications of new business structures and technologies as antecedents and outcomes of work–family concerns. Research has focused on the implications of technologies that enable employees to be available to employers outside of traditional working hours. Through computer and wireless technologies, employees can access and be accessed by work, whether they are at home or at their child's soccer game. Further, following workplace rationalization and downsizing in the 1990s, employees have been required to work longer and longer hours. This expectation that employees will put in longer working hours (and this can be facilitated through the aforementioned technologies) has decreased the time available for nonwork activities, such as family. A more recent phenomenon has shifted organizational behaviour. As the labour market has become more competitive and a dearth of employees looms large (at least in Canada) employers have attempted to create positive work environments. This has also, arguably, been the result of shifting expectations of the newest generation of employees who seek to have greater social relationships and satisfaction in their work. Consequently, there has been a movement towards the creation of fun and friendly workplaces where employees are actively encouraged to see each other as friends and families. To summarize, three trends are dominating organizational life in Canada: employees are performing work functions when not physically at a work site, working longer hours, and working for organizations that are attempting to create a family–like environment. Research has presented these three trends as reflective of a movement towards family–friendly workplaces that seek to improve flexibility for employees as well as more positive working environments. And, yet, work–family conflict is escalating in Canada (Duxbury et al., 2003). Holding up a poststructural feminist lens to these organizational structures reveals an alternate interpretation which may account in part for the continued experience of work–family conflict. Work is an occupying force and the home has become a site of occupation. These three organizational trends can be reframed as organizational occupation strategies. Work has invaded: 1) the spatial domain of family through the guise of flexible work *place* 2) the temporal domain of family through flexible work *time* scheduling and; 3) the affective domain of family by *affecting* a family–like façade to garner employees commitment

which represents in reality a "one sided and uneven commitment that is in the narrow interest of employers" (Osterman, 1985, p. 699).

Spatial Occupation

It is ten o'clock on Saturday morning. I look around the family room. My four year old daughter has been nestled beside me as I work on this paper. The warmth of her little body is so inviting and I nestle her in closer to me. As her television program comes to an end, however, she pulls away. She reaches down and picks up a handful of plastic horses, her most cherished toys. It is when I feel the horses' hooves literally dancing across my forehead that I realize that she is giving me a clear signal. Put away your work, mommy, you're at home and I want to play!

Tremlay (2002) estimates the percentage of teleworkers in the Canadian workforce (year 2001) as approximately 8% of the Canadian employed labour force. Telecommuting or telework refers to market work conducted from home that is often supported by telecommunications technology (telephone, Internet access, or computer) (Nilles, 1998). Often portrayed as a family–friendly workplace benefit (e.g. Hammer et al., 2005; Kossek et al., 2006), telework offers the potential for concurrent satisfaction of work and family tasks. Research demonstrates, however, that telework can result in higher work–family conflict, particularly for women. "The more the workplace is brought into the home via job and organizational design, the more likely it increases *work–to– family conflict,* particularly for individuals who like to integrate work and family roles (say watching children while taking a work call) Kossek, et al., 2006)." The definition of telework used in these studies relies on the existence of formalized or semi–formal organizational policies. A teacher surfing the Internet from home on a Saturday is not technically a teleworker. A professor grading student papers while sitting in the family room as her children play nearby is not a teleworker. The father, sitting in front of my daughter and I at a family theatre event two weeks ago, who checked his Blackberry and text messaged throughout the performance, oblivious to the distraction he presented to those around him, was not a teleworker (although at the time I thought of many other labels by which to define him!). This is supplemental work: work completed by an employee, who works fulltime outside of the home, done outside of normal working hours for the benefit of the employer (Venkatesh and Vitalari, 1992).

Canadian research supports that full time market workers are increasingly doing supplemental work (Silver and Crompton, 2002; Towers et al., 2006). "The professed aim of the employer in providing the kind of technology that allows people to work at home is that it helps achieve a good work/life balance by permitting flexibility (i.e. positive spillover) (Towers et al., 2006, p. 598)". Approximately one in four people 'check in' with work during vacations; half do work on their holidays (AMA, 2004). Places previously reserved for family engagement are, at least temporarily— on an "as needed basis"— occupied for work priorities.

The spatial manipulation of the domains of work and family is reflective of the separation

of work and family spheres following industrialization. Rather than promoting the distinction between the spheres, the new structuring entails the capturing of the domestic sphere. The boundary between work and family is blurring, but that is because the employer has set up an office in your home (or car, or cottage). Brown and O'Hara (2002, p. 1574) observe that "Mobile work does not just 'take place' but rather 'makes place' transforming locations as diverse as public and private transport, cafés, sites of leisure, and offices". This is a "mass invasion" (Towers et al., 2006) of nonwork space. Gant and Kiesler (2002) claim that this occupation has been made possible only because of technology. It has also, however, been made possible by a discourse of work–family conflict that has sought to remedy the challenges of multiple role engagement by offerings, such as telework, that give the air of facilitating employee's (women's) desire for closer connection to family, whilst still prioritizing workplace needs. We take work into the family sphere with us, in part, because we believe that we must—there is not enough time to get it done during the regular working hours, or we believe that proximity to children is a reasonable compromise to engagement with our children; or we believe (perhaps with full justification) that if we do not respond to that email on Saturday night that there will be punitive consequences. Work activities have bled over into the family domain. We have thus invited the occupier into our homes because of the promise that it will ameliorate the 'problem' of conflict. Instead, the home has been "occupied" by work. One may *work* from home.

Time

It is now nearing midnight. This paper must be written by tomorrow. I am tired. I have yet to prepare for the next week's classes or meetings. Between grading student papers, attending meetings and teaching classes, research is something that must be done during the evenings or on weekends. The flexibility of my job means that I can pick my children up from school each day; it also means, however, that I can work all the time.

"Working time constitutes a starting point for understanding the shifting balance between work and family in American households" (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001, p. 40). Although this permeability of spatial boundaries creates conditions whereby both family and work needs may be satisfied during both work and nonwork hours, it is most often work that spills over into nonwork time (Hochschild, 1997; White, et al., 2003). The work hours at the physical workplace setting have not dropped to reflect the fact that employees also conduct work at nonwork locations, such as at the home. The occupation or taking over of the family domain also incorporates a temporal absorption of family time into the work realm. This absorption may be coercive or made an attractive alternative, an occupation cloaked in velvet.

The "traditional" family model of employed father and at–home mother has given away to the dual earner family, which has been characterized as being composed of one family with three jobs: two market, one family (Pirotrkowski and Hughes, 1993). Two of those jobs, one market

the other family, are held by women. Work time, sets the upper limit on time available for family. Runte and Mills (2003, p. 244) outline that the concept of "balance" is misleading when the time devoted to work and family spheres is already disproportionally weighted in favour of the work domain: "the elimination of the full time housework role shifts the work–family 'balance' from a 50/50 division within the couple, to 100% of normal working hours now going to market employment."

Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, and Beutell (1996) reported that workers who spent more time at work, reported more work overload, reported greater parental demands, reported less family involvement, and spent less time in family activities, reported higher work–to–family conflict. This is consistent with the recent work of Valcour (2007) who empirically demonstrated a link between work–family conflict and hours worked and a negative relation between hours worked and work–family balance. Despite an increased presence in the work domain, women continue to devote less time to market work activities than do men (Pleck, 1985; Dean, 1992; Rodgers, 1992). However, the gender difference in time devoted to child care and household tasks exceeds the gender difference in time devoted to paid employment (Pleck, 1985; Rodgers, 1992). Hence, women's cumulative time commitment to market and non–market work exceeds that of men.

Given the total net increase in family hours devoted to market work, the scales are further unbalanced when one considers the overall escalation of working hours expected of employees within, at least, the North American workforce. Rationalization of organizational structures in the 1990s resulted in organizations scaling back their workforces. Employees are expected to absorb the slack, many employees are now fulfilling duties previously satisfied by two or even three workers. Consequently, to simply satisfy minimum work demands, many employees have little choice but to work excess hours. The number of employees working in excess of 50 hours per week in Canada has increased over the past decade (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001). The increased globalization of markets in recent years has also escalated the demand that employees be readily available to satisfy consumer needs in other time zones. Technologies, previously discussed, may make this expectation of time commitment more palatable as much of the labour expectation can be satisfied at home. You may be working, but at least you get to *see* your children!

The temporal dimension is clearly a site of occupation. Time previously devoted to family tasks is no longer available given that both parents are engaged in market work. The little time remaining is increasingly being shifted towards the satisfaction of workplace priorities. An outcome of this temporal occupation of family time is the unavailability of opportunity to develop a counterattack. It has been presented elsewhere (Runte and Mills, 2006) that suburbanization removed women from the location of work and isolated them from opportunities to engage in social action. Likewise, the temporal occupation of family time has limited women's opportunity to question the primacy of the work domain in their daily lives. There is no time for collective response, because simply there is no time!

Affective

I am putting my 4 year old daughter to bed. She holds my hand next to her heart and sleepily asks me to drop her off at school tomorrow morning. "Not just you," she states emphatically, "Both you and daddy." I ask her why both of us need to walk her in. She (literally) rolls her eyes and answers "because it feels happier that way." What we would consider an inefficient use of time (I could work on this paper while my husband takes her to school!) is, to her, a highlight of her day.

Corporations focus intensely and narrowly on economic interests. The intrusion of workplace priorities, logics and language into nonwork domains has been subject to considerable debate by social theorists (c.f. Bauman, 1991; Deetz, 1992; Warner, 2005). Tasks, functions and emotional engagement previously linked to the family domain has been outsourced to commercial providers (Folbre, 2001; Hochschild, 2003, Runte & Mills, 2003) and family time has become increasingly dominated by the language of work (Sotirin et al., 2007). Prepackaged meals, to be heated in your own kitchen, are the modern equivalent of a "home cooked meal". A stay-at-home mother becomes the "Family CEO". Playdates for children are scheduled, children carry daytimer agendas, and family meetings are held to debrief the family's collective and individual year-end goals. A discourse of efficiency has thus crossed the boundary from work to home (Ciulla, 2000; Warner, 2005; Sotirin et al., 2007). Sotirin et al. (2007, p. 249) warn:"Framing family as a management enterprise promotes not just more efficient households but conceptions of the "good" family that cast love intimacy and care as means in the ongoing work of fashioning family members into successful entrepreneurial subjects." This orientation also makes possible the temporal and spatial occupation previously discussed. If work and family are organized around the same structures which prioritize time efficiency and productivity, structuring in work activities is facilitated during time that previously would have been "wasted". Work has occupied the family domain by dictating the language spoken and the priorities emphasized.

I am now sitting in the office, it is Sunday afternoon. I heard some talking in the hallway a few minutes ago and investigated. A group of colleagues were chatting on their way back from the coffee room. I jokingly asked them if they were going home anytime soon. One looked at me and laughed "hey, you guys are my family!" "A family," I replied, "doesn't fire you when you turn 65!"

Paralleling the absorption of workplace logics and language into familial life, the language and logics of the family domain have been increasingly evident in organizational life. Grugulis, Dundon, and Wilkinson (2000) discuss the way in which play is used to create a family-like organizational culture. The creation of group-oriented activities, such as collective social events within these cultures of fun can be positioned as mechanisms for creating community by focusing on employee wellness (Costea, et al., 2005). The ultimate goal, however, is to create a family-like work environment with positive social interaction and collectivism with the ultimate goal of maximizing organizational productivity. The discourse of "family" is thus invoked in the business press and boardroom to trumpet positive work environments with (in the business' perspective)

positive organizational outcomes: "That [family] sentiment is the Holy Grail for HR managers, especially today when employee loyalty is so hard to come by" (Grant, 2005, p. 13). Walmart, for example, utilized the ideals of family when successfully appealing to workers to resist unionization (Schlender, 2005) and to cultivate a culture in which employees are to prioritize their Walmart "family" over their own (Bianco, 2006). Work has capitalized on the discourse of the family, but to further organizational goals. They have raped the meaning from the words "family" and "community" by exploiting their affect to maximize profit.

Conclusion

Management research highlights the challenge and importance of balancing work and family priorities. A focus on the incompatibility of role expectations stimulated a wealth of research on the antecedents and outcomes of work–family conflict. From this literature and from the engagement of employers attempting to ameliorate conflict, family–friendly organizational initiatives emerged. Nonetheless, work–family conflict persists. As I argue in this paper, conflict between the domain expectations of work and family persist in part because of the one–sided and uneven emphasis on the priorities and demands of the work domain. The discourse of conflict, which in the mainstream research has been narrowly defined, has not been open to competing conceptualizations. My conceptual analysis of work–family conflict has developed the metaphor of conflict from a feminist poststructural perspective. Conflict is not a clash of work and family expectations; rather, conflict is a battle that is the outcome of work's occupation of the family domain. The family domain has been invaded through the extension of working hours into time previously reserved for nonwork activities. The intensification of worktime is also seen in the movement of employment related activities into the physical space of family and other nonwork pursuits. Technology has been the enabler of a process that speaks to the priorities of work in our daily lives. Work has literally taken up residence in our homes. This spatial occupation is also reflected in the exploitation of the emotional connotations of the family. Employers utilize the discourse of family (friendship, community and connectiveness) to strategically foster a one–sided commitment to the organization. This capture of the affective discourse of family results in a dilution of the values associated with family. The absorption of the discourse of work into the family domain makes this blurring of affective boundaries appear more natural, even as it supports the prioritization of work in all aspects of daily life.

It is not my purpose in this paper to argue for a return to the entrenched borders between the work and family domain as previously drawn up by industrialization. These borders were in effect political boundaries that kept the inhabitants and their interests isolated from each other. Men were the workers; women maintained the (albeit lesser important) domain of the family. Women and men were not issued the requisite passports to move between these territories. Fluid movement between the domains of work and family would allow for women and men to negoti-

ate their own identities. The current system, however, is not offering this opportunity because the priorities of one domain (work) dominate.

In this paper, I have adopted the discourse of war, claiming and redefining the metaphor of conflict. The boundaries between the domains of work and family are being redrawn as work increasingly occupies the time and space previously reserved for nonwork interests, such as family. Organizations have staked claim to the discourse of family, using the affective positioning of family life to further business interests. I asked earlier in this paper what I portrayed as a simple question: *If researchers have worked for so many years studying work-family conflict, why do I still feel so conflicted all the time?* I have offered what may appear to be an equally simple answer: We experience conflict because we are in a state of war. Even if one accepts that the role of "mother" is socially constructed and that the priorities of family have been forced upon women by a patriarchal society, it is an identity that many women, including myself, take on. Willingly and joyfully. I love being a mother. I would literally lay down my life for my daughters. (I would not do likewise for my employer!) I contend that we live in a state of conflict because we are defending our families from an occupying force. Conflict is not a desired state. It is, however, a *necessary* state that must persist until an armistice can be negotiated that does not call for the surrender of the family.

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