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DEMANDS, RESOURCES, AND OUTCOMES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH
CHILDREN

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To my baby, Bailey.

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Lori, gracias.

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Abstract

Even as a growing population, college students with children continue to be underrepresented in research. This is unfortunate because compared to their peers without children, they are more likely to leave college without a degree. The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of college student parents by examining what factors increase school-family conflict, outcomes of school-family conflict, and potential resources that help alleviate school-family conflict and negative outcomes. Based on the jobs-demands resource model, a new model of resource allocation was proposed such that resources should be divided by domain (e.g., family and school) and would be most beneficial when the resources aligned with the domain of conflict. Results indicated that perceived family demands and perceived academic demands predicted school-family conflict. Outcomes of school family conflict included burnout, decreases in sleep quality, quantity, and family life satisfaction. Beneficial resources included childcare, family monetary support, and family social support. Overall, family resources were found to moderate relationships and could be seen as more beneficial than academic resources. However, having a mentor was rated highly. Practical implications for universities to aid in the success and retention of college students with children are discussed.

Keywords: College students with children, student parents, school-family conflict, student resources, childcare

Introduction

The number of college students with children has increased by over 50% between 1995 and 2011 (Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014). Previous research has examined the aspects of parental and student roles that increase strain. However, there are still significant gaps in the literature. For example, previous literature focuses heavily on older non-traditional age students returning to university (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006) and examines student parents from a qualitative perspective (Haleman, 2004; O'Shea, 2015). This paper aims to contribute to the literature by examining school-family conflict in traditional age students from a job demands-resources perspective. Specifically, the current study examines the factors that increase school-family conflict, how school-family conflict affects school and health outcomes, what resources help to mitigate the negative relationship between school-family conflict and outcomes, and whether certain resources may be more beneficial at certain time points depending on the type of conflict being experienced.

Literature Review

Population, challenges, and benefits

Today, 26% of the college population take on dual roles of student and parent. These 4.8 million student parents make up 15% of the total college population at 4-year public and private not-for-profit institutions and 30% of the total college population at 2-year institutions (Gault, Cruse, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014).

Juggling roles between student and parent has important consequences. In addition to taking classes, parents on average devote more than 30 hours per week to dependent care (Miller, Gault, Thorman, 2011). This additional time spent on others takes away from their ability to focus on school and achieve educational success. With time being split between school and the

duties of a parent, student parents are more likely to leave college without a degree. After six years, 53 percent of student parents do not obtain a degree compared to 31 percent of students without children (Nelson, Froehner, & Gault, 2013).

While the demands of college are greater for students with children, the benefits are substantial. Students who obtain a bachelor's degree make more on average than a student who only receives a high school diploma (National Center for Ed. Stats, 2014). The median annual earnings in 2014 for an individual who completed his or her bachelor's degree was \$51,980, compared to \$30,000 for an individual who only completed high school. In addition to financial benefits, completing a college degree also has benefits for the student's child(ren). When parents achieve educational success, it is more likely that the child will also achieve educational success. The parent is more likely to be involved in the child's learning, the child is more likely to have greater access to resources, and there is a greater likelihood that the child will also go on to higher education (Suitor, Plikuhn, Gilligan, & Powers, 2008; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005; Ricco, Sabet, & Clough, 2009). Although statistics illuminate concerns about the retention and graduation of student parents, little research aims to aid in this issue.

Defining School-Family Conflict

The strains of being a student parent can be represented by the construct of school-family conflict. Previous research does not provide a clear definition of school-family conflict; however, it conceptually shares many similarities with work-family conflict (WFC). WFC is a form of interrole conflict, which is experienced when pressures from one role are incompatible with pressures from a separate role (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). For example, WFC arises when pressures from one's role as a worker clash with responsibilities from the role of spouse or parent. Similarly, school-family conflict occurs when one's duties as a student are

incompatible with responsibilities as a parent. Additionally, WFC has two domains, work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW) (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996). WIF occurs when work negatively affects the home life of an employee and FIW occurs when issues at home negatively affect an employee at work. In similar fashion, school-family conflict can be divided into school interfering with family (SIF) and family interfering with school (FIS).

WFC is composed of time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time-based conflict is based on the notion that completing tasks takes time and a person has limited time to complete tasks. This form of conflict can occur in two separate ways. First, time devoted to completing tasks in one role, makes it difficult or impossible to complete tasks in a competing role. Secondly, this form of conflict can arise when a person is physically in one role, for instance work, but is psychologically preoccupied with another role, such as parent (Bartolome & Evans, 1979). This form of conflict will also occur in student parents. Strain-based conflict occurs when stress and fatigue from one role, make it difficult to complete tasks in a separate role. An individual has a limited amount of physical and psychological resources, if too many resources are devoted to one role, then there will be little left for another role, thus causing conflict. Behavior-based conflict occurs when expected behaviors in one role are not compatible with another role. For example, the role of a student tends to require a more serious attitude, which can therefore affect behavior, whereas the role of a parent requires more nurturing and loving behaviors. Previous studies have confirmed that all three types of conflict contribute to WFC (Frone et al., 1997; Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002). It is likely that school-family conflict arises from these three forms of conflict as well.

Previous Research and Findings

Previous research has shown that certain factors lead to increases in school-family conflict. These factors include taking classes full-time, traditionally 12 or more credit hours a semester; age of child, specifically having a child under the age of five; and having custody of child (Home, 1997; Scott, Burns, & Cooney, 1996; van Rhijn, 2009; Anderson, 2001). Factors that prevent school-family conflict include having a significant other (Chang & Fine, 2007; Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Kirby, Biever, Martinez, Gomez, 2004). In addition to looking at predictors of school-family conflict, researchers have also looked at outcomes, or consequences, of school-family conflict. The greatest studied outcome with school-family conflict is stress (Kirby et al., 2004; O'Shea, 2015). Additional outcomes include poor psychological health and physical health, and burnout (Major, Klein, & Erhart, 2002; Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009; Rupert, Stevanovic, & Hunley, 2009).

To alleviate the negative effects of school-family conflict, research has looked at several moderators. These include both school and family resources. Academic resources include online classes, mentors, university sponsored resources, and positive academic experiences (Home, 1997; Pare, 2009; Tinto, 1987). The second type of resources, family resources, aid in household and child responsibilities. These can include family monetary support, family and friend social support, and childcare. Resources such as these have been found to reduce stress and help student parents persist in school (Scott, Burns, Cooney, 1996; Hobfoll, 1986; Home, 1993; Home, 1997; Calloway, 1990; Austin & MacDermott, 2003).

Much of the research on school-family conflict draws from the work-family conflict literature. One missing component of the WFC literature, and therefore also the SFC literature, is a discussion about how certain resources may be more beneficial than others depending on the

time point. In WFC literature, there is a focus on either putting resources before the interference to reduce conflict (Figure 1) or after the interference to reduce negative outcomes (Figure 2; Rantanen, Mauno, Kinnunen, Rantanen, 2011; van Daalen, Willemssen, & Sanders, 2006). However, this practice may be missing an essential understanding. The distinction between resources that originate from the organization and those that originate in the family resources may relate to the effective placement of resources, such that placing one group of resources before the conflict, and the other group of resources after the conflict would have the greatest impact. The conflict domain is likely the determining factor about which category of resources is most effective before and after the conflict. For example, when work demands are in danger of increasing WIF, resources are needed in the work domain to prevent the conflict from occurring. Once the conflict occurs or remains stable, family resources would prove most beneficial to reduce negative outcomes of existing WIF (Figure 3). In the case of FIW, the reverse would prove to be most beneficial with family resources needed to prevent conflict from arising and organizational resources most beneficial after the conflict to prevent negative outcomes (Figure 4).

This idea of aligning the type of resources with the source of conflict has not been explicitly studied in previous literature. However, if the results of previous studies are reexamined through this lens, it is evident that resources are more beneficial when they are congruent with the conflict domain. For instance, van Daalen and colleagues investigated how various forms of social support could reduce WFC (van Daalen, Willemssen, & Sanders, 2006). The authors found that social support from work (colleagues and supervisors) reduced WIF and social support from spouse reduced FIW but not WIF. Thus, an organizational resource reduced conflict in the work domain and a family resource reduced conflict in the family domain. While

not the purpose of their study, the authors showed that a resource is only beneficial when it is analogous to the conflict domain. These results, and many others (e.g., Odle-Dusseau, Britt, Greene-Shortridge, 2012; Beutell, 2010), illustrate how family and school/organizational resources need to be separate and distinct categories when testing them as moderators in WFC models. Additionally, the resource domain and the domain of the demands and/or outcomes must be congruent in order for a resource to have maximum benefit. By making these distinctions, it is possible that previous models could be reconfigured to better represent the experience of individuals. This paper aims to explicitly test the idea of resource placement and distinction within SFC, with results potentially translated to WFC.

Proposed Model

Job-Demands Resource Model

The job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides a strong theoretical foundation for this study. This model posits that outcomes are a product of both job demands and job resources (Figure 5). When demands exist and resources are low, outcomes will be negative; however, a high stock of resources can help to reduce the negative effects of job demands and improve outcomes. For this study, school-family conflict takes the place of job demands in the model. Job demands represent any psychology or physical aspect of a job that can physically and/or psychologically draining. In this case, juggling between two roles, student and parent, can be both physically and psychologically draining for an individual. This demand can lead to some of the negative outcomes discussed, such as drop out intention and reduced family life satisfaction. However, resources, including both family and academic resources, can act as a buffer between demands and outcomes. Resources can also buffer the impact of

predictors on conflict, thereby preventing conflict before it even occurs. As noted, the domain and placement of these resources is of central interest in the current study.

Model Distinctions

WFC can be subdivided into family interfering with work (FIW) and work interfering with family (WIF) because meta-analyses have supported the notion that these two separate forms of conflict have different antecedents and outcomes (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Byron, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). This same idea can be applied to school-family conflict, with school interfering with family (SIF) and family interfering with school (FIS). It is probable that SIF and FIS, much like FIW and WIF, have different predictors and outcomes and the current study hopes to add to the school-family conflict literature by investigating this distinction (Figure 6 & Figure 7).

Predictors

In regard to predictors, both individual factors and perceived demands can lead to increases in school-family conflict. Individual factors that can increase SIF include taking classes full-time, traditionally 12 or more credit hours a semester, which has been related to increases in strain and stress (Home, 1997). The more credit hours a student takes during a semester, the less time he or she can devote to family responsibilities. The reason behind this is due to resource drain theory which views resources such as time, attention, and energy as limited (Tenbrunsel et al., 1995; Staines, 1980). If time, attention, and energy are being heavily devoted to the school domain, little resources remain for the family domain. This time spent away from the family means that the student-parent may have to spend more money on childcare or experience greater strain determining who can supervise the child.

Perceived academic demands will also increase SIF more so than FIS. This is due to role overload, which is the concept where individuals feel like they do not have enough time or energy to complete all the tasks of a given role (Barnett & Baruch, 1985). If a student parent is devoting an overwhelming amount of time, energy, and attention to school, then it is likely that the student parent will have few resources remaining to devote attention to the family domain. Thus, causing conflict.

Individual factors that can affect FIS include the age of children, custody of children, having a significant other, and personal income. Age of children, specifically young children, has been related to high strain (Home, 1997) and is a factor that increases a student parent's likelihood of leaving college without a degree (Lovell, 2014). If a child is not yet five years old, then they are not old enough to enroll in kindergarten. This is an important factor because kindergarten, and the public education system, provide free education and a safe place for the children during the day. For a child under the age of five, a parent is responsible for either paying for daycare, arranging someone to watch the child, or supervising the child themselves. Finding an arrangement for the child's whereabouts during the day can prove burdensome. In addition to young children, having custodial responsibility of the child increases strain because the individual is responsible for the child's needs. This is in direct contrast to an individual who has a child but has little custodial responsibility of the child. For example, an individual who has a child, but the child is being raised by the other parent or a relative, has little custodial responsibility. Having a significant other is also beneficial to reducing FIS. If a student parent has a significant other, especially a significant other who lives with him/her, then the significant other can help with household responsibilities, such as cooking and household upkeep, and is also able to help with taking care of the child, for example, supervising the child if the parent

needs to study during the weekend or late at night. One study of student parents found that single parents reported higher levels of conflict between their school and family roles compared to student parents with a significant other (van Rhijn, 2009). A fourth personal factor that affects FIS is personal income. Parents who indicate low SES have reported higher levels of parenting stress and higher levels of dysfunction in parent-child relationships (Anderson, 2001; Chang & Fine, 2007; Fiore, 2008). One study found that general financial stress impacted 91.7% of student parents and led 41.7% of the student parents to consider dropping out (Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Branscomb 2006). Perceived family demands will also lead to increases in FIS more so than SIF because of role overload theory. More time, energy, and attention is being devoted to family responsibilities; therefore, few resources are available for the school domain. Thus, I predict:

Hypothesis 1. Taking classes full time and having high perceived academic demands will be associated with high levels of school interfering with family.

Hypothesis 2. Having a child under the age of five, having custodial responsibility of the child, being single, being low SES, and having high perceived family demands will be associated with high levels of family interfering with school.

Outcomes

Much like predictors, outcomes of school-family conflict are dependent on whether conflict is being experienced in the family or school domain. In the work-family conflict literature, Frone and colleagues (1992) found that work interfering with family will lead to turnover or turnover intentions because the heart of this conflict lies in the work domain and individuals may believe that changing jobs may reduce work-to-family conflict. For example, an individual may believe that another job has flexible hours, less workload, or the ability to work

from home, all factors that will reduce work interfering with family. On the other hand, if a worker is experiencing family interfering with work, quitting his or her job will not alleviate this conflict because the conflict resides in the family domain. Instead, the individual may report absenteeism and poor performance. While these examples pertain to WFC, similar and distinct outcomes can be seen for SIF and FIS.

Regarding SIF, it is likely that a high level of conflict will result in increased drop out intentions and reduced family life satisfaction. Drop out intentions will increase because much like the work-family literature, student parents will see leaving school as an opportunity to reduce conflict in their life. These students may look for other universities that provide better resources for students with children, or they may drop out of college entirely to focus on family and/or work. Family life satisfaction will be affected by SIF because more time and energy are being devoted to the school domain; therefore, little resources are left for family and individuals may begin missing out on family events or feeling like they are not spending enough time with their family. The WFC literature supports this idea and has shown support that work interfering with family leads to a reduction in family life satisfaction (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997).

Regarding FIS, it is likely that a student parent will experience decreases in school satisfaction, GPA, percent of classes attended, and negative health outcomes, such as sleep, physical and mental health (i.e., burnout). Similar to the WFC literature, performance in school will be affected when the conflict arises out of the family domain. This form of conflict will drain resources from a student parent that leaves him/her with little time and energy to excel in school. Additionally, conflict coming from the family domain will lead to negative health outcomes. Conflict originating in the family domain has been shown to have stronger negative

effects on health than when conflict comes from the work domain (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997). Given these previous findings, I predict:

Hypothesis 3. School interfering with family will be positively associated with dropout intentions and negatively associated with family life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4. Family interfering with school will be negatively associated with GPA, attendance, sleep quality and quantity, and perceived academic performance, and positively associated with burnout.

Placement of Moderators Matters

As previously mentioned, resources help to prevent the occurrence of school-family conflict, as well as reduce negative outcomes associated with school-family conflict. It is predicted that resources will be most beneficial to student parents when the resource utilized is congruent to the domain of the demands and/or outcomes. For instance, if the conflict is arising due to family demands, then family resources should be employed, or if conflict is arising from school demands, then academic resources should be used. This idea of resource distinction and placement in regard to the job demands resource model has not been previously studied in any school-family conflict or work-family conflict literature. Furthermore, this new model allows for two opportunities for resources to reduce negative school and health outcomes—one before the interference occurs and an opportunity after it has occurred.

It is important to investigate two possible opportunities for resource aid because sometimes conflict is unavoidable. For instance, if conflict is arising out of the family domain, a student may not have access to family resources such as a significant other or monetary support. In this case, FIS will most likely occur. By having two opportunities for resources to mitigate negative outcomes, the student could look to academic resources that will prevent negative

school outcomes. For example, the student could look into taking 12 or fewer credit hours or taking classes online. This may decrease the likelihood that the student drops out or feels stressed.

In the relationship between predictors and FIS, family resources have a more central role as moderators than organizational resources. For instance, hours spent on family, housework, and childcare increase family role demands and lead to significant increases in FIS, but not SIF. In order to combat family stress, resources that are related to the family domain, such as family support, are necessary to reduce family demands (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999). In contrast, academic resources, such as online classes, do not help in reducing the demands of family, housework, or childcare. Academic resources would be better suited to aid in the relationship between predictors and SIF. Having the option to take online classes or discuss stress or career plans with a mentor will do a better job in reducing SIF than compared to FIS.

In addition to resources helping to decrease potential conflict, resources can also mitigate conflict once it has emerged and prevent negative outcomes. Student parents experiencing FIS have time, energy, and attention consumed by the family domain, leaving little of these resources to complete tasks in the school domain. To help aid this resource deficit, student parents can rely on academic resources to help accomplish schoolwork. For example, if a student is experiencing FIS because they have a young child and are unable to find reliable childcare, then they can enroll in online classes or use university sponsored resources such as drop in childcare. These academic resources would make the student less likely to miss class and reduce the likelihood of withdrawal from the university. Once a student begins to experience FIS, only academic resources can reduce the negative effects of FIS on outcomes. If family resources did increase after someone began to experience FIS, then FIS would decrease and as a result, negative

outcomes would also decrease. However, the negative outcomes would decrease because FIS decreased, not because a resource moderator was added between FIS and outcomes.

Regarding SIF and outcomes, family resources can help to buffer the negative effects of SIF on outcomes. In similar fashion as stated above, high demands at school leave little time, energy, and attention for the family domain. This lack of psychological and physical resources for the family domain creates stress in the family domain. Once stress is experienced in the family domain, only family resources can help to reduce the negative impact of SIF on outcomes. For instance, if a student has a high workload and a major test approaching, then he or she will have little time to prepare dinner for the child(ren). Unable to fulfill family responsibility, a student parent is now experiencing stress in the family domain. This stress can be reduced if an individual has a spouse or family social support, such as a friend or relative, who can do the grocery shopping and prepare dinner. Again, only family resources can reduce the negative outcomes of SIF. If academic resources were increased after someone began to experience SIF, then SIF would decrease and as a result, negative outcomes would also decrease. However, the outcomes would decrease not because a moderator had been added between SIF and outcomes, but because a moderator had been added before SIF causing a reduction in SIF, following which a reduction in outcomes also occurred.

The increase in student parents over the past 10 years exemplifies the need to better understand the experiences of college students with children and what resources are most beneficial to their success. One way in which this study hopes to add to the school-family conflict literature is exploring what resources aid in student success and when these resources should best be utilized. Overall, this model not only benefits student parents, but also will inform

universities how to increase retention rates and student performance for a unique and growing subset of the college population. I therefore predict:

Hypothesis 5. There is an indirect effect of class load and perceived academic demands on drop out intentions and family life satisfaction through school interfering with family.

Hypothesis 6. Academic resources will moderate the relationship between predictors and school interfering with family.

Hypothesis 7. Family resources will moderate the relationship between school interfering with family and outcomes.

Hypothesis 8. There is an indirect effect of age of child, custody, relationship status, SES, and perceived family demands on GPA, attendance, burnout, sleep quality and quantity, and perceived academic through family interfering with school.

Hypothesis 9. Family resources will moderate the relationship between predictors and family interfering with school.

Hypothesis 10. Academic resources will moderate the relationship between family interfering with school and outcomes.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were undergraduate students from a large public comprehensive university in the Southwestern United States. Participation required that the individual have a child under the age of 18 and be enrolled in undergraduate classes for the semester in which they took the survey. A total of 71 participants completed the study. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 47 ($M = 25.23$, $SD = 7.45$) and 70.4% were female. Sixty percent of the participants had one child, 11.30% had two children, 18.30% had three, and the remaining 9.80% had four or more

children. The age of the children ranged from newborn to 26-years-old ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 6.77$). To be included in the study the participant had to have at least one child under the age of 18. Three participants had a child over the age of 18 as well as children under the age of 18. Fifty-two percent of the participants were in their first four semesters of college and they majored in natural sciences (32.39%), Business (18.31%), Social Sciences (16.90%), Humanities (9.86%), Engineering (5.63%), and other (16.90%). A majority of the students (90.1%) indicated taking classes full time, defined as 12 hours or more of coursework. Additionally, a majority of the students indicated that they were either in a relationship (39.4%) or married (32.4%). Regarding custody, 14.1% indicated that they had zero custody, because the child either was adopted or lives with the other parent full-time, 14.1% indicated that they had 50% or less custody, and 71.8% indicated that they had greater than 50% custody. For the participants who indicated that they had zero custody, their data was not included in further analyses unless it was an analysis involving custody. This brought the sample to a total of 61 participants in most of the analyses.

Data was collected through a 30-minute online survey. Participants were recruited through the psychology department's human subject pool management system (SONA), class announcements, word of mouth, and fliers posted around campus. Participants who completed the online survey received either class credit, a \$10 gift card, or no compensation depending on how they were recruited.

Measures

Students completed Likert-type items to assess school interfering with family, family interfering with school, predictors, family resources, academic resources, and outcomes.

School interfering with family. School interfering with family was measured using 6 - items from a scale originally developed by Olson (2014). The scale is rated on a 5-point Likert-

scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The original measure focused on work and home conflict. The items were revised by substituting “work” with “school” or rewording parts of the question so that it applied to school/family conflict as opposed to work/family conflict. A sample item reads, “I have to put off doing things at home because of demands on my time at school.”

Family interfering with school. Family interfering with school was measured using 6 additional items from Olson’s (2014) work-family conflict scale. Again, the scale was rated on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Words were altered to reflect school/family conflict. A sample item reads, “Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with family matters at school.”

Class load. Class load was measured by asking students if they were enrolled in classes full-time or part-time during the semester in which they took the survey. A full-time student is defined as anyone enrolled in 12 or more credit hours. Part-time is defined as anyone enrolled in less than 12 credit hours. This variable was scored dichotomously (0 = part-time 1 = full-time).

Family demands. Family demands were measured by age of child(ren), what percentage of time they had custody of their child(ren), whether or not they had a significant other, and monthly household income. Monthly household income was measured on an 8-point scale ranging from less than \$1,000 to greater than \$4,000. The scale increased by \$499 increments.

Perceived demands. *Perceived family demands* were measured using a 6-item adapted scale from Boyar, Carr, Mosley, and Carson (2007). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A sample item includes, “My family requires all of my attention.” *Perceived academic demands* were measured using 6-items from the academic sub-scale of Solberg, Hale, Villareal, and Kavanagh’s (1993) college stress inventory measure.

The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-scale (0 = never, 4 = very often). A sample item reads, “Difficulty handling your academic workload.”

Academic resources. Online classes were assessed by asking students if they participated in at least one online class. This item was scored dichotomously (0 = no, 1 = yes). Mentorship was assessed by a 6-item scale developed by Waters, Cross, and Shaw (2010). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A sample item reads, “At my college/university, there is a professor, advisor, or mentor who believes that I will be a success.” University sponsored resources were measured by asking the students if their college/university has adequate resources for students with children. Students responded using a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A follow up open-ended question asked “if any, what resources have been beneficial to you as a student parent” and “what else could the university do to aid in your success as a student parent while enrolled?”

Family resources. *Family monetary support* was assessed by asking if a family member provides the student with money to help with school or other expenses and if the financial support is monthly, such as an allowance, or whenever the student is in need. The measure also asked about the average amount of money received over a 30-day period. For the purpose of analyses, parental monetary support was coded dichotomously, such that those who did not receive any form of support were coded as “0” and those who received support, frequently or infrequently, were coded as “1”. *Social support* was measured by parent support, friend support, and significant other support, if applicable. The scale for social support was adapted from Sands and Plunkett (2005) and all three scales have 5-items measured on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A sample item for social support is “at least one of my

parents has motivated me to stay in school.” *Perceptions of childcare* was measured by using a 5-item scale from Curtis (1997). A sample question reads “our child care arrangement meets the needs of the family.” Participants answered on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Outcomes. *Drop out intentions* were measured by 3-items on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A sample item includes “sometimes I think about quitting school.” *Family life satisfaction* was measured using a scale adapted by Zabriskie and Ward (2013). The scale is 5-items and is measured on the same Likert-scale as drop out intentions. *GPA* was measured using student’s self-report. *Attendance* was measured by 3-items on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), which inquiries about the frequency of certain events occurring. A sample item reads, “when I do not attend class, it is because I have a valid excuse.” *Sleep quantity* was measured by asking, “over the last year, how much sleep did you usually get on a typical night?” *Sleep quality* was measured by 5-items on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) developed by Knudsen, Ducharme, and Roman (2007). Items asked participants to think about the past year and indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item. A sample item included “had trouble falling asleep.” Thus, a low score on this measure indicated poor sleep quality and a high score indicated good sleep quality. *Burnout* was measured by the Shirom and Melamed (2006) burnout scale which includes three subscales – physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness. The measure contained 11 items on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = never or almost never, 7 = always or almost always). An overall score was computed by taking the average of all the items. *Perceived academic performance* was measured by a self-report measure. The measure has 5-items on a 5-

point Likert-scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). A sample item includes “I fulfill responsibilities specified (e.g., study, homework, readings, papers) in the course outline.”

Demographic variables. Demographic variables included items inquiring about gender, age, major, and type of degree being sought.

Results.

Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables are presented in Table 1. Regarding predictors, perceived family demands had an average of 3.95 with 75 percent of the student parents averaging 3.19 or higher. Perceived academic demands had an average of 3.64 with 75 percent of the student parents averaging 2.81 or higher. Both scales were measured on a 5-point scale with a higher score indicating high levels of each variable. Thus, student parents reported high levels of both perceived family and academic demands.

Regarding conflict, student parents indicated slightly higher FIS than SIF with averages of 3.40 and 3.29 respectively. Additionally, for both FIS and SIF their scores ranged from 1.00 to 5.00 indicating more variability in FIS and SIF than in predictors. This is most likely due to a wide range of resources utilized by student parents.

Regarding outcomes for SIF, student parents indicated low levels of dropout intentions ($M = 1.99$) and moderate levels of family life satisfaction ($M = 3.32$). Regarding outcomes for FIS, student parents indicated good GPAs ($M = 3.29$), low levels of sleep quality ($M = 2.16$) and quantity ($M = 5.85$), high levels of burnout ($M = 4.55$), and high levels of perceived academic performance ($M = 4.26$)

Hypotheses 1 through 4: Relationship between Predictors, School-Family Conflict, and Outcomes. Hypothesis 1 through 4 predicted the relationship between predictors, school-family conflict, and outcomes. In order to test the following hypotheses, multiple simple

regressions were run. For example, for hypothesis one, which investigates the predictors (i.e., course load and perceived academic demands) of SIF, each predictor was entered into the model individually and simple regression was run for each predictor. In instances where two predictors were found to independently significantly predict a criterion, the predictors were entered into the model simultaneously to see if both predictors explained unique variance in the model fit, or to see if one predictor was no longer a significant predictor once entered with the other predictor. This procedure of simple regression followed by stepwise regression was carried out for the testing of hypotheses one through four.

Hypothesis one predicted that taking classes full time and having high perceived academic demands will be associated with high levels of school interfering with family. This hypothesis was partially supported in that, perceived academic demands significantly related to SIF ($b = .629, p < .001$) and explained a significant proportion of variance in SIF scores ($r^2 = .216, p < .001$; Table 2). However, class load was not a significant predictor of SIF. It is important to note that out of the 61 participants, only 7 indicated that they were taking classes part-time. Next, a competing model was tested to confirm previous research that SIF and FIS have different predictors. Specifically, four of the family predictors (i.e., age of child, significant other, custody, income) were not significant predictors of SIF (Table 2). Perceived family demands was a significant predictor of SIF ($b = .527, p < .01$; Table 2); however, when perceived family demands was entered into the model as a second predictor with perceived academic demands, perceived family demands did not significantly improve model fit (Table 3).

Hypothesis two predicted that family predictors would lead to increases in FIS. As seen in table 4, perceived family demands was a significant predictor of FIS, ($b = .745, p < .001$), and explained a significant proportion of variance in FIS scores, ($r^2 = .282, p < .001$). However,

income, child age, custody, and significant other were not significant predictors of FIS.

Perceived academic demands was also tested in a regression analysis to predict FIS to see the difference in school and family predictors affecting FIS. Perceived academic demands was found to be a significant predictor of FIS ($b = .725, p < .001; r^2 = .331$) and when added into the model with perceived family demands, it significantly improved the model fit (Table 5; $\Delta R^2 = .133, \Delta F(1,58) = 13.256, p < .001$).

Hypothesis three predicted that as SIF increased, drop out intentions would also increase, and family life satisfaction would decrease. SIF significantly negatively predicted family life satisfaction ($b = -.427, p < .001$) and explained a significant proportion of variance ($r^2 = .230, p < .001$). However, SIF was not a significant predictor of dropout intentions. Additional outcomes (i.e., GPA, attendance, sleep, burnout, and perceived academic performance) were also tested for SIF. SIF was a significant predictor of burnout ($b = .584, p < .001$) and explained a significant proportion of variance ($r^2 = .295, p < .001$). No other outcomes were found to be significant (Table 6).

Hypothesis four predicted that as FIS increased, GPA, attendance, sleep, and perceived academic performance would decrease and burnout would increase (Table 7). FIS was a significant predictor of sleep quality ($b = -.304, p < .05; r^2 = .102, p < .05$), sleep quantity ($b = -.260, p < .05; r^2 = .073, p < .05$), and burnout ($b = .733, p < .001; r^2 = .404, p < .001$). However, it was not a significant predictor of GPA, attendance, or perceived academic performance. Additional outcomes were tested beyond the proposed model. FIS was found to significantly predict dropout intentions ($b = .279, p < .015$) and family life satisfaction ($b = -.528, p < .001$).

FIS and SIF were both independently found to be significant predictors of burnout. Thus, I was interested in further exploring the relationship between school family conflict and burnout.

When SIF was added to the prediction model between FIS and burnout, it was found to significantly improve the model fit (Table 8; $\Delta R^2 = .039$, $F(1, 58) = 4.047$, $p < .05$), indicating that SIF serves as an explanatory variable in burnout beyond FIS. Similarly, both FIS and SIF were found to be significant predictors of family life satisfaction when tested separately. Therefore, their combined effect was examined. When FIS was added to the model of SIF and family life satisfaction it was found to significantly improve model fit (Table 9; $\Delta R^2 = .106$, $\Delta F(1, 57) = 9.119$, $p = .004$), suggesting that FIS explained variance in predicting family life satisfaction above and beyond SIF.

Hypothesis 5: SIF mediates the relationship between Predictors and Outcomes.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that SIF would mediate the relationship between predictors (i.e., class load and perceived academic demands) and outcomes (i.e., drop out intentions and family life satisfaction). Since class-load and dropout intentions were not significantly related to SIF, they were not tested in the mediation analysis. Therefore, SIF was tested as a mediator between perceived academic demands and family life satisfaction. As Figure 8 illustrates, the indirect effect of perceived academic demands on family life satisfaction was $-.17$ and the 95% confidence interval did not contain zero $[-.50, -.05]$; thus, SIF significantly mediates the relationship between perceived academic demands and family life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6 and 7: Moderation Analysis for SIF Model. Hypothesis 6 and 7 predicted that academic resources, such as online classes, mentor, and university sponsored resources, would moderate the relationship between predictors (i.e., class load and perceived academic demands) and SIF, and that family resources, such as family monetary support perceptions of childcare, and social support, would moderate the relationship between SIF and outcomes.

None of the proposed academic resources moderated the relationship between predictors and SIF. Perceptions of childcare was found to moderate the relationship between SIF and dropout intention ($F(1, 39) = 4.976, p < .05$; Table 10) such that as SIF increases, dropout intentions increased at a significant rate ($b = .345, p = .035$) for students who view their childcare arrangement as poor (Table 11; Figure 9). The slope of SIF on dropout intentions was non-significant for students with average or above average perceptions of childcare arrangements. Ratings of poor, average, and high perceptions of childcare were based off of standard deviation of responses. Participants who were labeled as having “low” perceptions of childcare had scores one standard deviation below the mean, participants who were labeled as having “high” perceptions of care had scores one standard deviation below the mean, and participants who had “average” perceptions of care had scores in the middle 68% of responses.

Perceptions of childcare quality was also found to moderate the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction ($F(1, 55) = 7.595, p < .05$; Table 12) such that as SIF increases, family life satisfaction decreases at a significant rate for poor ($b = -.758, p < .001$) and average ($b = -.487, p < .001$) perceptions of care (Figure 10; Table 13).

Lastly, family monetary support was found to moderate the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction ($F(1, 55) = 4.302, p < .05$; Table 14; Figure 11) such that as SIF increases, family life satisfaction decreases at a significant rate ($b = -.567, p < .001$) for student parents who indicate no family monetary support (Table 15). The slope for student parents who indicated family monetary support was non-significant. Parental and friend social support was not a significant moderator between SIF and outcomes (i.e., dropout intentions, family life satisfaction). Academic resources were also tested to see if they moderated the relationship

between SIF and outcomes (i.e., drop out intentions, family life satisfaction), but none were found to be significant.

Hypothesis 8: FIS mediates the relationship between Predictors and Outcomes.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that FIS would mediate the relationship between family predictors (i.e., age of child, custody, significant other, and perceived family demands) and outcomes (i.e., GPA, attendance, sleep, burnout, perceived academic performance). FIS was found to significantly mediate the relationship between perceived family demands and burnout. As Figure 12 indicates, the indirect effect of perceived family demands on burnout was .380 and the 90% confidence interval did not contain zero [.21, .77]. FIS did not mediate the relationship between any other predictors and outcomes.

Hypothesis 9 and 10: Moderation Analysis for FIS Model. Hypothesis 9 proposed that family resources would moderate the relationship between predictors and FIS. Out of the proposed moderators (i.e., parental monetary support, family and friend social support, childcare) only parental social support was found to moderate the relationship between perceived family demands and FIS ($F(1,57) = 3.120, p < .05$; Table 16, Figure 13) such that as perceived family demands increased, the rate of increase for FIS was greatest for those who indicated low social support (Table 17). The slope of perceived family demands and FIS was significant for low social support ($b = 1.036, p < .001$), average social support ($b = .763, p < .001$), and high social support ($b = .499, p < .05$). High, average, and little support were based off of standard deviations. Participants who had low parental social support had scores one standard deviation or more below the mean, participants who had “high” parental social support had scores one standard or more above the mean, and participants who had “average” support had scores in the

middle 68% of responses. Academic resources were also tested to see if they moderated the relationship between SIF and outcomes, but no resources were found to be significant.

Hypothesis 10 proposed that academic resources (i.e., online classes, mentor, university sponsored resources) would moderate the relationship between FIS and outcomes (i.e., GPA, attendance, sleep, burnout, perceived academic performance). No proposed academic resource moderators were found to moderate this relationship. Family resources were also tested to see if they moderated the relationship between FIS and outcomes, but no resources were found to be significant.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, given the lack of research regarding student parents in general, this study aimed to understand the experiences of college students with children at a public 4-year comprehensive university. Specifically, the study examined predictors of conflict in student parents and outcomes associated with being a student parent. Second, a new model of resource allocation was proposed to understand if certain resources are more beneficial than others, and if some resources are more beneficial at one time point, compared to another.

Based on the work-family-conflict literature, it was proposed that SIF and FIS would be distinct constructs and that both forms of interrole conflict would have independent predictors and outcomes. Some predictors and outcomes were found to be directly related to only one type of conflict; however, some were found to be related to both. In line with the hypotheses, perceived academic demands predicted increases in SIF and perceived family demands predicted increases in FIS. However, perceived academic demands also predicted FIS and perceived academic demands was a better predictor and explained a greater percentage of the variance in FIS than did perceived family demands. This goes against the proposed model that when conflict

is high in one domain (i.e., the family) the conflict will be felt in that domain (i.e., FIS). Burnout and family life satisfaction were both significant outcomes of FIS and SIF. According to the proposed model, burnout would be a significant outcome of FIS and family life satisfaction would be a significant outcome of SIF. Yet, when family life satisfaction was added to the outcome model of FIS and burnout, family life satisfaction explained a significant proportion of the variance. The same holds true for when burnout was added to the outcome model of SIF and family life satisfaction suggesting that FIS and SIF can lead to negative outcomes in both the family and school domain.

Moderators were also tested to explore how and when they could be beneficial to student parents. One moderator that was found to moderate two relationships was perceptions of childcare. Perceptions of childcare moderated the relationship between SIF and dropout intentions as well as the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction. Findings suggest that it may not be important to just have access to childcare, but rather, it is important to have access to reliable and affordable childcare.

In the following sections, I review the predictors, outcomes, and resources that help to illuminate the experiences of college students. I then discuss the limitations of the current study as well as directions for future research. Lastly, I discuss the practical implications of this study.

Predicting Student Parent Conflict

As previously stated, SFC conceptually shares many similarities with WFC. Both are forms of interrole conflict. WFC describes the balancing act between work and family whereas SFC describes the balancing act between school and family. Previous research has supported the notion that WFC can be subdivided into WIF and FIW (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996). Additionally, meta-analysis have confirmed and further supported this notion by showing that

WIF and FIW have different antecedents and outcomes (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Byron, 2005). Thus, in line with the WFC literature, it was suggested that SFC could be separated into SIF and FIS and they would have different antecedents and outcomes. Since previous SFC literature has not subdivided the construct, it was theorized that the predictors of these constructs would be based off of the conflict domain. For instance, a predictor of SIF would be something related to school and a predictor of FIS would be something related to family. Thus, it was proposed that perceived academic demands and course load would predict SIF and perceived family demands, child's age, custody, income, and relationship status would predict FIS.

Out of these seven hypothesized predictors, only two predictors, perceived academic demands and perceived family demands, were found to predict SIF and FIS. In fact, both variables predicted SIF and FIS. However, perceived academic demands was found to be the stronger predictor out of the two for both SIF and FIS. When looking at the relationship between perceived academic demands and SIF, perceived family demands was no longer significant when included in the prediction equation with perceived academic demands. Additionally, when perceived academic demands was added to the prediction equation for perceived family demands and FIS, perceived academic demands significantly improved the model fit. The proposed notion that perceived academic demands would be the best predictor of SIF was supported; however, it was believed that perceived family demands would be a better predictor of FIS and this was not supported.

There are number of explanations for why perceived academic demands was strong predictor for both SIF and FIS. First, student parents may place greater importance on academic success than traditional college students. Traditional students may see college as the next logical step in life, something that they always assumed they would attend, and/or something their

parents made them attend. However, for student parents, college may be seen as a way for a better life for both them and their children. Previous qualitative studies have indicated that student parents believe they had no other options but to go to school because if they didn't go to school, then they wouldn't be able to get a job and pay for bills, day care, and everything else (Haleman, 2004). Participants stressed that they had to go to school before anything else. In addition to the instrumental purposes of college, student parents have also indicated that college provides them an opportunity for personal growth and an opportunity to model positive educational expectations for their children (Haleman, 2004). Second, student parents may have an added pressure at school to "prove" that they belong. Previous qualitative studies have shown that student parents wanted to be seen as capable by faculty and had a high drive to maintain a good GPA (Van Stone, Nelson, & Niemann, 1994).

Outcomes of Student Parent Conflict

In line with previous research of WIF and FIW having different outcomes (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Byron, 2005), it was proposed that SIF and FIS would also have different outcomes. SIF was found to significantly predict a decline in family life satisfaction. FIS negatively predicted sleep quality and sleep quantity, and positively predicted burnout and drop out intentions. FIS and SIF both predicted an increase in burnout and a decrease in family life satisfaction. According to the proposed model, it was suggested that FIS would explain a greater proportion of the variance in burnout and SIF would explain a greater proportion of the variance in family life satisfaction. The proposed model was correct that when both FIS and SIF were included in a model predicting burnout, FIS did account for a greater proportion of the variance in burnout; however, it was incorrect when describing the relationship between conflict and family life satisfaction. When both FIS and SIF are included in a model predicting family

life satisfaction, FIS explained a greater proportion of variance in family life satisfaction than SIF.

Burnout has been defined as emotional exhaustion, where one has feelings of being emotionally drained with no resources left to give (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). School and parenting are both high responsibility roles and when a person must juggle the responsibilities of both, it should not be surprising that the person may feel emotionally, physically, and psychologically exhausted. Student parents speak of “cost” when it comes to juggling the roles of being a student and a parent (Van Stone, Nelson, & Niemann, 1994). When they are studying, they may feel that they are neglecting their kids. Conversely, when they spend time with their children, they may feel that they are neglecting their school work. These competing roles and feelings of guilt may wear a person down over time.

Dropout intentions was another significant outcome of SFC. It was originally proposed that SIF would predict drop out intentions because, in line with the WFC literature, a person may see dropping out of school as a way to reduce stress in one domain and focus on the other domain, family. However, this study found that FIS was a stronger predictor of drop out intentions. The reason for this finding may be that student parents see themselves as a parent first. Previous research has illustrates this fact with journal titles such as “ ‘I Generally Say I Am a Mum First...But I’m Studying at Uni’ ” (O’Shea, 2015) and qualitative studies where student parents describe how they identify as parents over students because a majority of their time is engaged in family activities (Haleman, 2004). Therefore, students may view their family responsibilities as hindering their school responsibilities and since they identify strongly with their identity as a parent, they consider leaving college, rather than reducing the amount of time they spend with their families. Additionally, in the WFC literature, researchers speak of turnover

as an outcome of WIF because workers with children may look for other work that is less demanding. However, student parents may not have this option. Specifically, they may not feel that they have the option to leave one university for another. Instead, they may choose to leave college completely and pick a career that allows them to have set hours and, in contrast to school, no responsibility outside of these set working hours.

Mediating Role of SIF and FIS

Drawing from the work-family conflict literature, it was proposed that SIF and FIS would mediate the relationship between predictors and outcomes. While this has been studied in organizations for working parents, it had yet to be examined in the student parent literatures. Results from this study indicated that SIF significantly mediated the relationship between perceived academic demands and family life satisfaction. Additionally FIS was found to mediate the relationship between perceived family demands and burnout. These findings support the notion of interrole conflict. That is, when pressures arise in one role that are incompatible with pressures from another role, stress occurs that results in affective and health-related outcomes (Kahn et al., 1964; Greenhaus, 1985).

Beneficial Resources

Of the proposed resources, three were found to be important as moderators – perceptions of childcare, family monetary support, and parental social support – and additional resources were indicated as important by participants through open text box responses. The most consistent beneficial resource, both quantitatively and qualitatively, was perceptions of childcare. Of the participants who responded to the open-text box of “What do you believe the university could do to aid in your success as a student?” the most frequent response was on-campus affordable daycare. Perceptions of childcare was found to moderate the relationship between SIF and

dropout intentions as well as between SIF and family life satisfaction such that poorer perceptions of childcare quality led to more negative levels of the outcome variables (Figure 9 & 11).

Previous research has indicated that student parents who use childcare were nearly three times more likely to graduate than students who did not use childcare (41% vs 15%; Eckerson, Talbourdet, Reichlin, Sykes, Noll, & Gault, 2016). However, while childcare may be available in the area where a student parent resides, it is often expensive. For example, the average range for childcare is \$4,8643 in Mississippi to \$16,430 in Massachusetts. Additionally, childcare is more expensive than the average fees and tuition at 4-year public universities in 31 states and in DC (Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014).

While previous literature continually emphasizes the important of on-campus childcare for student parent success (Baumgartner & McBride, 2009; Gonchar, 1995; McBride, 2010; Lovell, 2014), the percentage of institutions with on-campus childcare has been steadily decreasing since 2002 for both public 4-year institutions and public 2-year institutions (Gault, Noll, & Reichlin, 2017). As stressed at the beginning of this paper, academic success for a student parent also translates for educational success for the child. A parent who graduates from college is more likely to be involved in the child's learning, the child is more likely to have greater access to resources, and there is a greater likelihood that the child will also go on to higher education (Suitor, Plikuhn, Gilligan, & Powers, 2008; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005; Ricco, Sabet, & Clough, 2009). Thus, one of the most important findings from this study may be the importance of childcare for student parent success and retention.

A second moderating resource in this study was parental monetary support. Monetary support was found to moderate the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction such that

student parents who receive no monetary support from their parents experience significant decrements in family life satisfaction when SIF increases, while student parents who do receive monetary support do not see a significant change, positive or negative, in family life satisfaction based on SIF. A possible reason that student parents who receive monetary support from parents do not see a significant change, positive or negative, in family life satisfaction is because monetary support, for the purposes of this analysis, was coded dichotomously such that 0 indicated no support and 1 indicated support. Therefore, a person who received \$100 from their parents here or there to cover groceries or bills was coded the same as a person who receives a larger monthly amount from their parents to cover rent. However, this finding showed that some form of monetary support may be better than no monetary support for family life satisfaction. This seems plausible because a student parent who can rely on their parents either in times of need to help them out on a monthly basis may not stress about money. Therefore, when emotional resources are not being exhausted, they can focus on family responsibilities and spending time with their family. However, it is important to note that monetary support is not an option for every student, but rather a privilege to some.

Third, parental social support was found to moderate the relationship between perceived family demands and FIS such that perceived family demands have a greater effect on FIS for student parents with low parental social support. Previous research has indicated the benefits of family and social support for reducing stress (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). In addition to stress, these findings illustrate that family social support may reduce the interference of family into the school domain. A student who indicates high family social support believes that at least one of their parents has motivated them to stay in school, given them advice about school, or expressed an interest in the student's education. If a parent

cares about his/her college-aged child's educational success, then it is possible that the parent is able help out with house hold responsibilities, such as childcare, grocery shopping, or picking the grandchild up from school. This allows the student more time and energy to focus on the school domain, such as attending class or studying for an upcoming exam. Therefore, when a family member is helping in the family domain, the student parent has more time to focus on school work and thus, experience lower levels of FIS.

All three of the significant moderators were related to family resources. Notably, none of the academic resources moderated the relationship between perceived academic demands and SIF or between FIS and outcomes. Thus, it appears that online classes, mentors, and university resources for parents are not viewed as beneficial to resolving the school family conflict that student parents experience, at least in the forms that they appear at the focal university. While online classes and mentors were not found to moderate the effects of predictors, SFC, or outcomes, online classes were utilized by student parents and mentors were viewed favorably at the focal university. For example, 57% of students indicated that they had taken at least one online class and the average response to mentorship was 3.94 on a 5-point scale, with a higher score indicating a high belief that someone at the university (professor, advisor, mentor, etc.) who believes in the student's success.

To further understand student parent needs in terms of university resources, two open text-box questions were included in the survey. One of the open text-boxes asked student parents to indicate what university resources have been beneficial to you as a student parent. Out of the 32 student parents who responded to this open text-box, 20 indicated that they were either not aware of any available resources for student parents or they indicated none. When asked about resources s/he has found beneficial at the university, one student indicated "none. Literally

nothing.” Another student indicated similar feelings of a lack of resources by stating “What resources? I know of none. This college is not designed for people like me.”

The second open text-box asked student parents what resources they believed would be beneficial to their success as a student parent. Out of the 51 student parents who answered this survey, the most common answer was affordable on-campus daycare. Additional answers included, greater variety of class times, financial aid and scholarships, counseling services, parent programs, and support groups. Regarding class times, one student indicated that they were unsure how they were going to take a math class at the university because “with required tests being at night, I can’t do it.” Another student also disliked that some classes were offered only at night:

All of my classes are in the evenings and on weekends. This is certainly not helpful for me, as a parent. Those are the times when my children are home. Since I started this program, I have missed both of my daughters' birthdays, all of their after school activities, and more. I realize that this isn't a large program, but a daytime option would be so helpful.

While these responses may sound alarming, they are the norm for many student parents, especially student parents who attend 4-year universities. As previously mentioned, since 2002 the percentage of college students with children has continued to rise at both 2- and 4-year universities, but during that same time period the number of available resources such as childcare has declined (Gault, Noll, & Reichlin, 2017).

Practical Implications

From this study, there are several possible avenues for practical implications. First, there is still a need to understand student parent populations on campuses. Each campus has a unique

population and administrators, staff, and faculty should be aware of the obstacles and needs of student parents. By understanding the experiences of college students with children, strides can be made toward promoting retention and degree completion. Additionally, a better understanding of the student parents on campus can create awareness and pave the way toward a more inclusive campus environment where student parents feel welcomed and supported. Colleges can include a question about parental status on application forms or surveys, or use financial aid data collected from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to estimate the number of low-income students on campus who are raising dependents.

The most important finding from this study may arguably be the importance of access to reliable and affordable childcare for student parents. Perceptions of childcare impacts both college drop-out intentions and family life satisfaction by reducing the impact of school interfering with family conflict. On-site childcare provides a reliable resource allowing them to attend classes as well as complete homework and study for upcoming exams as necessary. While on-campus childcare may seem as an additional cost to university, the cost is an investment in the education of current student parents as well as their children.

Lastly, colleges can offer student parents targeted scholarships. The financial burden of paying for college has been found to increase stress and reduce the likelihood a student finishes their degree (Home, 1993; Home, 1997). In this study, monetary support was found to moderate the relationship SIF and family life satisfaction. Thus, offering scholarships to student parents may aid in their retention and success as both a student and a parent.

Limitations

As with any research, this study had limitations. The biggest limitation of this study was recruiting student parents. While it is estimated that 15% of the student population at 4-year

universities is comprised of student parents, I was only able to gain responses from 71 participants. The response rate cannot be calculated as the true number of student parents at the focal university is unknown. A greater number of participants would benefit the understanding of the experiences of college students with parents. Second, this study was a quantitative study that included limited options for student parents to expand on their experiences. This study would have benefited from additional open text-boxes asking participants to explain a time school interfered with family or a time they felt family demands interfering with their school responsibilities.

Future Research

The study provided a good foundation for quantitatively understanding the experiences of college students with children. However, given the unique experiences and powerful stories of student parents, future research would benefit from the use of a mixed-methods approach. Second, future research should explore the differences between college students with children and without children. While it can be hypothesized that student parents experience more stress, it may be possible that they also exhibit more motivation compared to non-student parents. These predictions cannot be tested without a comparable group of student parents and non-student parents. Lastly, individual coping mechanisms should be explored for student parents. While all student-parents juggle the responsibilities of school and family, future research could explore whether there are certain buffers such as attachment styles and self-efficacy that moderate the relationship between strain and psychological well-being (i.e., burnout).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study examined the experiences of college students with children. Specifically, it examined predictors of school-family conflict, outcomes of school-

family conflict, and resources that mitigate school-family conflict and negative outcomes. This study illustrated how perceived family demands and perceived academic demands are the strongest predictors for increases in school-family conflict and how health, sleep quality, sleep quantity, and family life all decrease because of school-family conflict. Resources that were found to be beneficial include on-campus childcare, family monetary support, and parental social support. It is recommended that university conduct surveys or focus groups to understand the experiences and needs of college students on campus so that they can provide an array of beneficial resources such as, childcare, counseling, financial aid, scholarships, and support groups.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
1. Age	25.98	7.56	-																									
2. Gender	0.70	0.46	-0.016	-																								
3. SIF	3.29	1.13	0.177	0.051	(0.945)																							
4. FIS	3.40	1.05	0.002	0.077	.608**	(0.924)																						
5. Class Load	0.89	0.32	0.099	-0.233	-0.090	0.007	-																					
6. Child Age	0.36	0.48	.703**	0.037	0.165	-0.051	-0.051	-																				
7. Custody	0.86	0.35	.253*	-0.196	0.124	0.204	-0.134	0.194	-																			
8. Relationship Status	0.77	0.42	0.098	-.268*	-0.078	-0.170	0.170	0.085	.287*	-																		
9. Income	4.48	2.60	.366**	-0.006	-0.156	-0.089	-0.033	.325*	.455**	-0.073	-0.082	(.828)																
10. Perceived Family Demands	3.94	0.75	-0.035	.262*	.351**	.531**	-0.106	-0.025	.455**	-0.073	-0.082	(.828)																
11. Perceived Academic Demands	3.63	0.83	0.018	0.174	.465**	.575**	-0.084	0.004	0.061	-0.097	-0.121	.478**	(0.836)															
12. Online Classes	0.57	0.50	0.082	0.097	0.072	-0.081	-0.102	-0.043	-0.533**	0.160	0.185	0.058	0.092	-														
13. Mentor	3.94	1.13	0.077	0.121	-0.194	-0.182	-0.025	0.096	0.046	0.010	0.064	-0.028	-0.191	-0.025	(.926)													
14. University Resources	2.53	1.21	-.403**	-0.121	-.364**	-0.198	0.204	-.412**	-0.197	-0.116	-0.175	-0.207	-0.243	-0.047	0.115	-												
15. Parental Social Support	3.65	1.40	-0.415	-0.084	-0.057	-0.001	-0.031	-.329**	-0.152	0.004	-0.119	0.094	0.070	0.037	-0.027	0.182	(.950)											
16. Friend Social Support	3.83	0.87	-0.099	0.114	-0.252	-0.171	-0.024	-0.010	-0.021	-0.099	-0.014	0.122	0.222	0.053	0.067	.258*	0.176	(.833)										
17. Significant Other Social Support	3.88	1.20	0.018	-.261*	-0.065	-0.058	0.146	-0.014	0.153	.418**	.237	-0.011	-0.017	-0.027	.253*	0.124	0.072	0.036	(.953)									
18. Perceptions of Childcare	3.85	0.64	-0.026	0.032	-0.034	0.115	-0.062	0.056	0.139	0.043	-0.108	.477**	.441**	-0.022	-0.203	0.047	.334*	.308*	0.091	(.842)								
19. Dropout Intentions	1.99	0.94	-0.131	0.208	0.222	.312*	-0.076	0.004	0.084	-0.130	-0.103	0.091	0.145	-.271*	-0.061	-0.052	0.053	-0.078	-0.125	-0.222	(.760)							
20. Family Life Satisfaction	3.32	1.01	-0.125	0.022	-.480**	-.550**	-0.032	-0.120	0.173	0.033	-0.053	-.268*	-.331	0.220	0.099	.347**	-0.008	0.237	0.218	0.099	-0.296	(.873)						
21. Perceived Academic Performance	4.26	0.70	0.221	-0.084	0.081	0.001	0.019	0.186	0.168	.334**	0.080	0.183	0.158	0.178	0.099	-0.159	-0.065	0.199	.290*	0.231	-0.226	0.128	(.865)					
22. Attendance	4.25	0.75	.358**	0.122	-0.011	-0.067	-0.086	.311*	.594**	0.167	0.222	-0.140	-0.007	.276*	-0.059	-0.221	-0.194	-0.105	-0.008	-0.021	-0.141	-0.006	0.180	(.807)				
23. Sleep Quantity	5.85	1.01	-0.072	-0.166	-0.073	-.269*	0.049	-0.026	-0.174	-0.003	0.059	-0.175	-.406**	0.005	.257*	.202	0.064	-0.128	0.240	-0.271	-0.095	0.191	0.080	-0.169				
24. Sleep Quality	2.16	1.00	-0.070	-0.126	-.327*	-.319*	0.240	-0.106	-0.097	0.119	0.153	-.290*	-.301*	-0.017	-0.119	.272*	0.196	0.030	0.097	0.026	-0.056	0.112	-0.181	-0.068	0.217	(.836)		
25. Burnout	4.55	1.21	0.042	0.236	.543**	.636**	-0.196	0.170	-0.017	-0.161	-0.160	.455**	.527**	-0.146	0.000	-.370**	0.012	-0.022	-0.017	0.104	.430**	-.349**	-0.013	-0.039	-0.192	-.436**		
26. GPA	3.29	0.45	0.176	0.038	.265*	-.0114	-0.034	0.158	0.067	0.168	0.200	-0.098	-0.114	-0.090	-0.011	-.363**	-0.131	-.296*	-0.019	-0.070	-0.098	-0.032	0.221	0.174	-0.073	-0.131	-0.069	(.934)

Note. Diagonal values are internal consistencies. Gender is a dichotomous variable: 0 = male, 1 = female. Custody is a dichotomous variable: 0 = no custody, 1 = indicated some percentage of custody. Relationship Status is a dichotomous variable: 0 = single, 1 = in a relationship or married. Online Courses is a dichotomous variable: 0 = no online classes ever taken, 1 = at least one online class taken. $N = 61$ for correlations not containing custody. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Table 2
Predicting SIF

Predictor	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
Class Load	-.315	.455	-.090	-.693	.491	.008
Perceived Academic Demands	.629	.156	.465	4.035**	.001	.216
Age of Child	.507	.276	.216	1.838	.070	.047
Custody	.199	.181	.132	1.104	.273	.017
Relationship Status	-.208	.345	-.078	-.602	.549	.006
Income	-.068	.056	-.156	-1.21	.229	.024
Perceived Family Demands	.527	.183	.351	2.877*	.006	.123

Note. Class Load is a dichotomous variable: 0 = part-time, 1 = full-time. Age of Child was a dichotomous variable: 0 = at least one child is under the age of 5, 1 = all children are 5 years or older. Custody is a dichotomous variable: 0 = 0% custody, 1 = some percentage of custody. Relationship status is a dichotomous variable: 0 = single, 1 = in a relationship or married. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .001$

Table 3

Model Fit Predicting SIF

Model	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F-Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.465	.216	.216	16.284	1	59	.000
2	.488	.238	.021	1.627	1	58	.207

Model 1: (Constant), Perceived Academic Demands

Model 2: (Constant), Perceived Academic Demands, Perceived Family Demands

Table 4
Predicting FIS

Predictor	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig.	r^2
Age of Child	-.142	.282	-.066	-.505	.616	.004
Custody	.602	.348	.204	1.729	.088	.042
Relationship Status	-.421	.318	-.170	-1.32	.190	.029
Income	-.036	.052	-.089	-.689	.493	.008
Perceived Family Demands	.745	.155	.531	4.819**	.001	.282
Class Load	.023	.426	.007	.055	.956	.000
Perceived Academic Demands	.725	.134	.575	5.398**	.001	.331

Note. Age of Child was a dichotomous variable: 0 = at least one child is under the age of 5, 1 = all children are 5 years or older. Custody is a dichotomous variable: 0 = 0% custody, 1 = some percentage of custody. Relationship status is a dichotomous variable: 0 = single, 1 = in a relationship or married. Class Load is a dichotomous variable: 0 = part-time, 1 = full-time. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .001$

Table 5

Model Fit Predicting FIS

Model	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F-Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.531	.282	.282	23.219	1	59	.000
2	.645	.416	.133	13.256	1	58	.001

Model 1: (Constant), Perceived Family Demands

Model 2: (Constant), Perceived Family Demands, Perceived Academic Demands

Table 6
Outcomes for SIF

Drop Out Intentions	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	.184	.106	.222	1.732	.089	.049
Family Life Satisfaction	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	-.427	.103	-.480	-4.165**	.001	.230
GPA	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	-.109	.053	-.265	2.054	.055	.070
Attendance	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	-.007	.087	-.011	-.081	.935	.000
Sleep Quality	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	-.190	.109	-.327	-2.655	.080	.107
Sleep Quantity	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i> ²
SIF	-.066	.117	-.073	-.566	.574	.005

Burnout	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig.	r^2
SIF	.584	.118	.543	4.968**	.001	.295

Perceived Academic Performance	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig.	r^2
SIF	.050	.080	.081	.621	.537	.007

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .001$

Table 7
Outcomes for FIS

GPA	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	-.049	.058	-.114	-.859	.394	.013
Attendance	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	-.048	.093	-.067	-.513	.610	.067
Sleep Quality	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	-.304	.117	-.319	-2.587*	.012	.102
Sleep Quantity	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	-.260	.121	-.269	-2.148*	.036	.073
Burnout	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	.733	.116	.636	6.325**	.001	.404
Perceived Academic Performance	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	.001	.086	.001	.011	.992	.000
Drop Out Intentions	B	SE(B)	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	r^2
FIS	.279	.112	.312	2.504*	.015	.098

Family Life Satisfaction	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig.	r^2
FIS	-.528	.105	-.550	-5.013**	.001	.302

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .001$

Table 8

Model Fit for Predicting Burnout

Model	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F-Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.636	.404	.404	40.011	1	59	.000
2	.666	.443	.039	4.047	1	58	.049

Model 1: (Constant), FIS

Model 2: (Constant), FIS, SIF

Table 9

Model Fit for Predicting Family Life Satisfaction

Model	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F-Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.480	.230	.230	17.345	1	58	.000
2	.580	.336	.106	9.119	1	57	.004

Model 1: (Constant), SIF

Model 2: (Constant), SIF, FIS

Table 10
Dropout Intentions Predicted from SIF and Perceptions of Childcare

Predictor	β	p	95% CI
SIF	1.473	.651	.161, 2.785
Perceptions of Childcare	.651	.183	-.322, 1.624
Interaction	-.351	.031*	-.669, -.032

* $p \leq .05$

Table 11
Conditional Effects of SIF at Values of Perceptions of Childcare

Perceptions of Care	β	p	95% CI	
Poor	.3456	.035*	.222,	.713
Average	.118	.250	-.143,	.381
High	-.108	.630	-.403,	.186

* $p \leq .05$

Table 12

Family Life Satisfaction Predicted from SIF and Perceptions of Childcare

Predictor	β	p	95% CI	
SIF	-2.053	.001*	-3.27,	-.83
Perceptions of Childcare	-.987	.003*	-1.89,	-.08
Interaction	.403	.008*	.10,	.69

* $p \leq .05$

Table 13
Conditional Effects of SIF at Values of Perceptions of Childcare

Perceptions of Care	β	p	95% CI
Poor	-.758	.001*	-1.10, -.41
Average	-.487	.001*	-.74, -.25
High	-.236	.08	-.51, .03

* $p \leq .05$

Table 14
Family Life Satisfaction Predicted from SIF and Monetary Support

Predictor	β	p	95% CI	
SIF	-.5667	.001*	-.81,	-.32
Monetary Support	-1.275	.093	-2.77,	.22
Interaction	.449	.042*	.01,	.88

* $p \leq .05$

Table 15
Conditional Effects of SIF at Values of Monetary Support

Monetary Support	β	p	95% CI	
No Support	-.567	.001*	-.81,	-.32
Support	-.117	.516	-.47,	.24

* $p \leq .05$

Table 16

FIS Predicted from Perceived Family Demands and Family Social Support

Predictor	β	p	95% CI	
Perceived Family Demands	1.477	.001*	.59,	2.35
Parental Support	.752	.104	-.16,	1.66
Interaction	-.195	.008*	-.51,	-.12

* $p \leq .05$

Table 17

Conditional Effects of Perceived Family Demands at Values of Family Social Support

Family Social Support	β	p	95% CI	
Little Support	1.036	.001*	.59,	1.48
Averaged Support	.763	.001*	.45,	1.07
High Support	.499	.020*	.07	.92

* $p \leq .05$

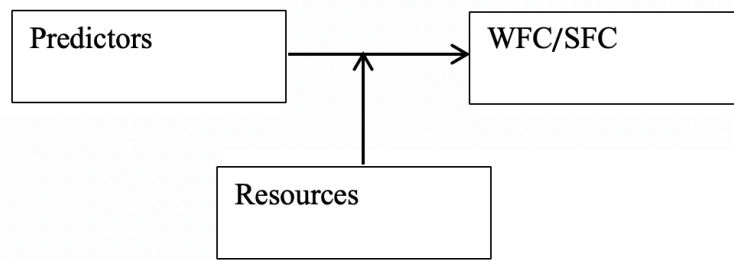


Figure 1. Current WFC Models Predicting Conflict

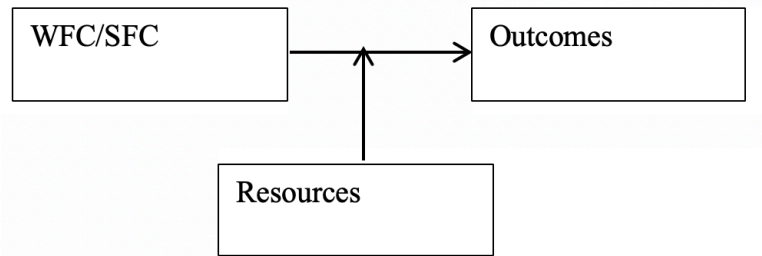


Figure 2. Current WFC Models Predicting Outcomes

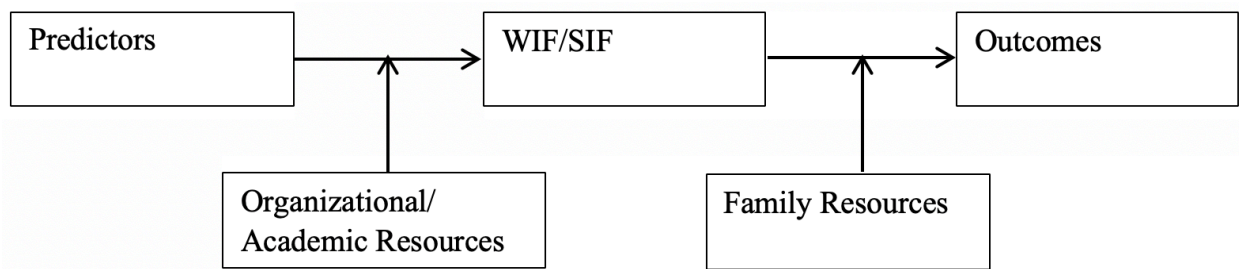


Figure 3. Conflict Domain Congruent Resources WIF/SIF

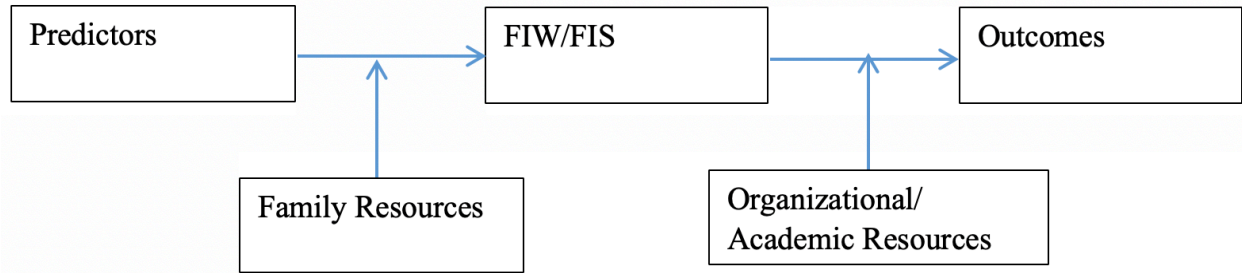


Figure 4. Conflict Domain Congruent Resources FIW/FIS

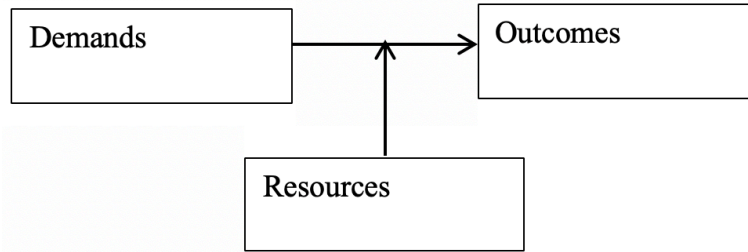


Figure 5. Job-Demands Resources Model

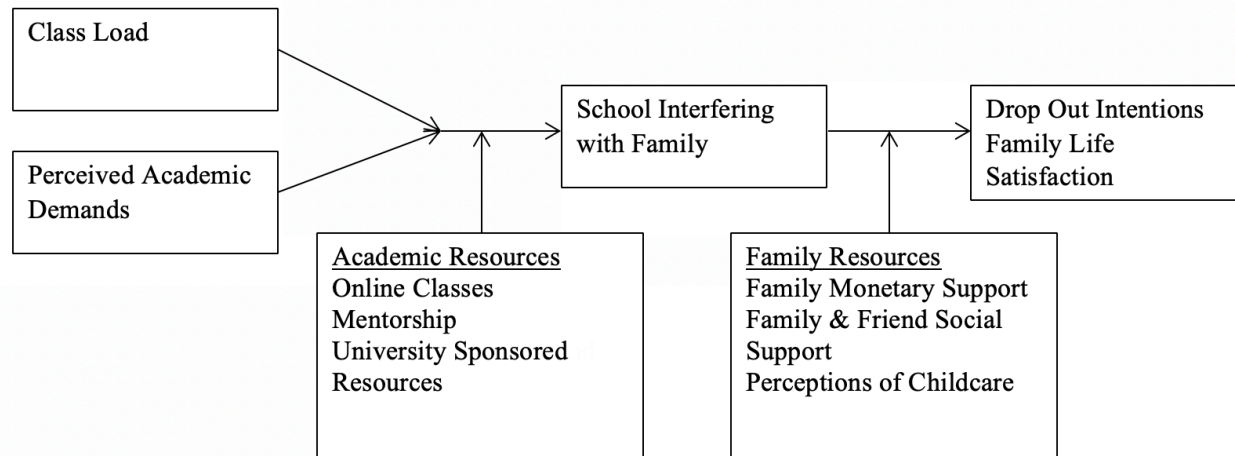


Figure 6. School Interfering with Family Model

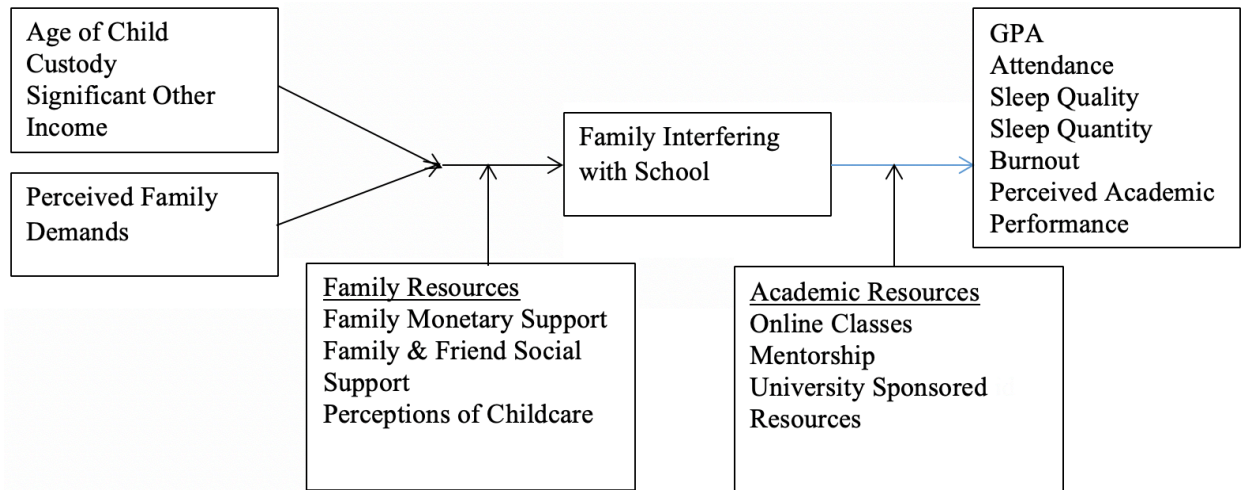


Figure 7. Family Interfering with School Model

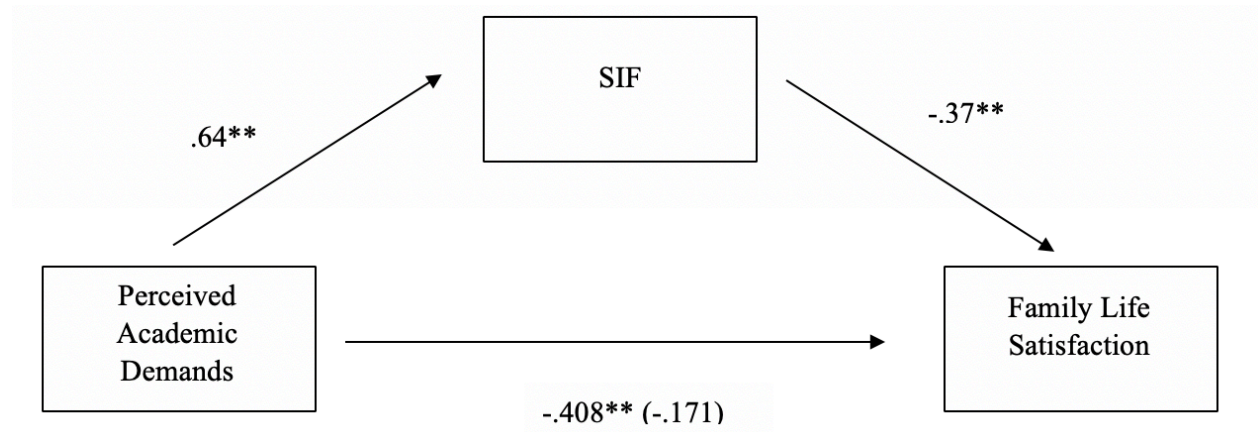


Figure 8. School interfering with family mediates the relationship between perceived academic demands and family life satisfaction

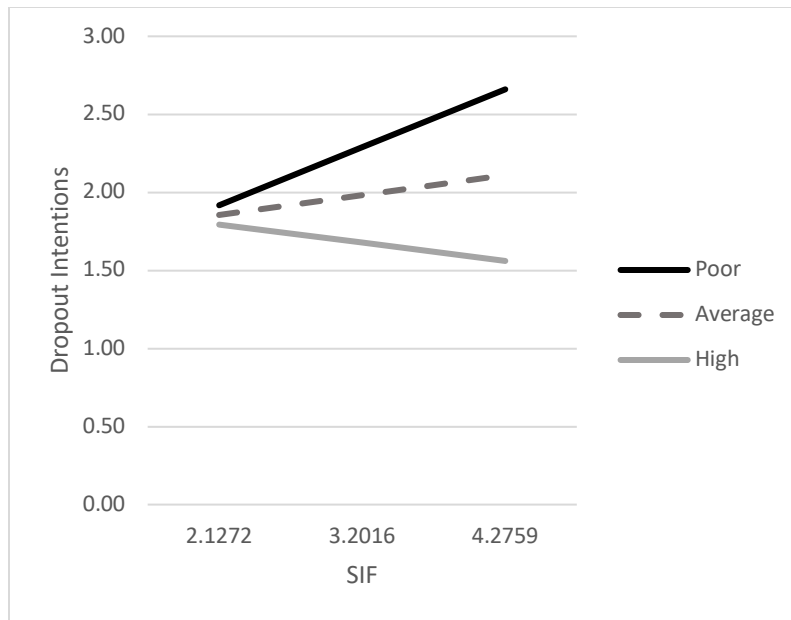


Figure 9. Perceptions of childcare moderate the relationship between SIF and Dropout Intentions

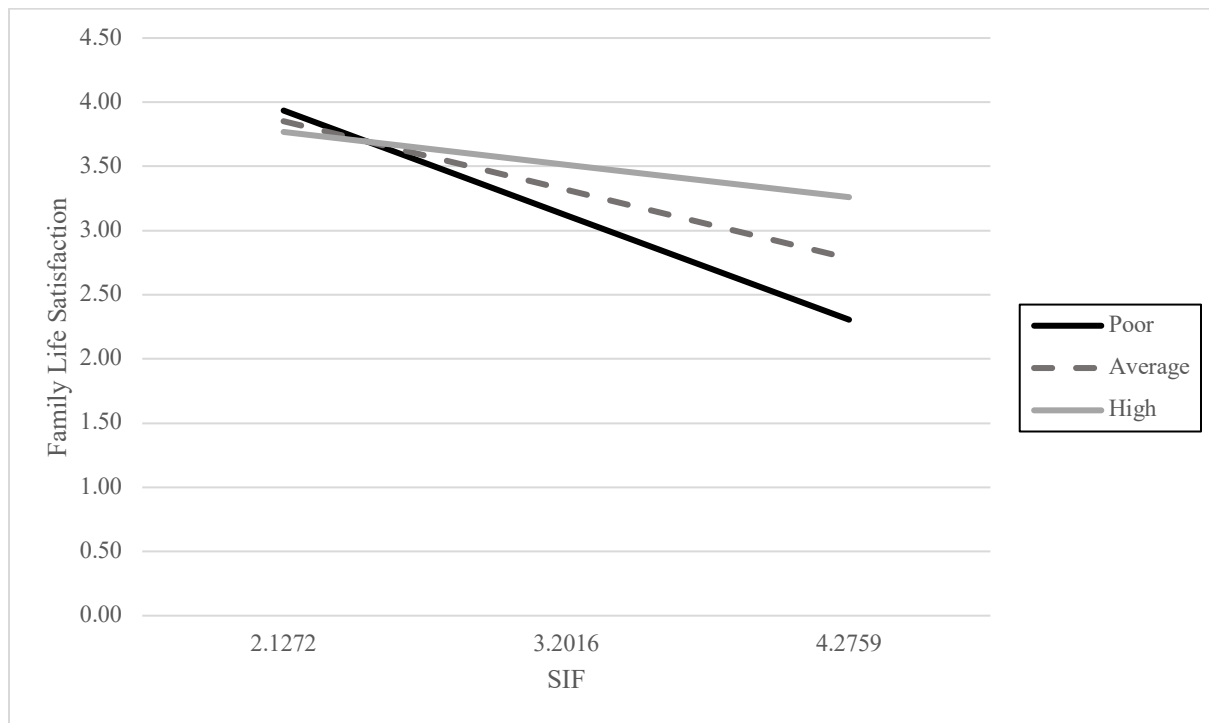


Figure 10. Perceptions of childcare moderate the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction

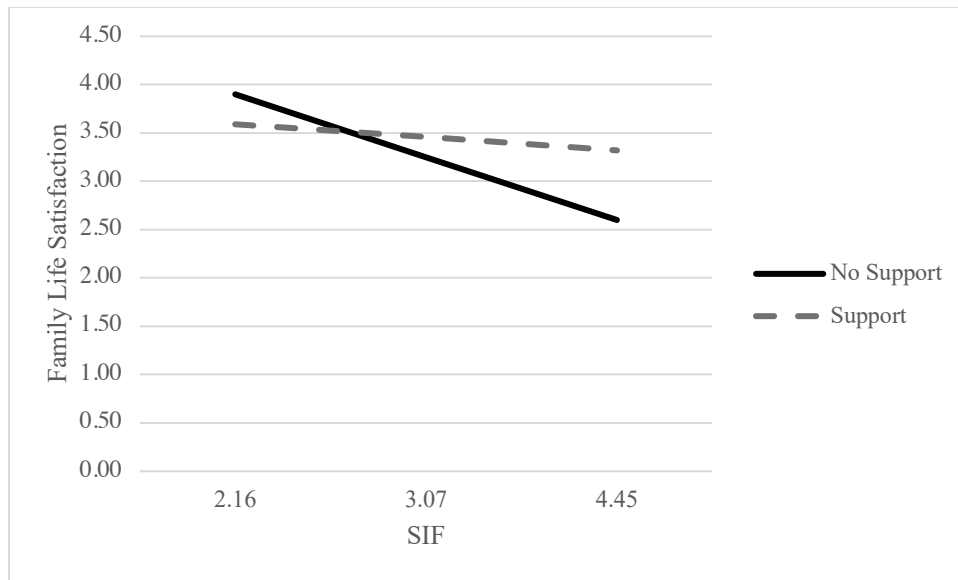


Figure 11. Monetary support moderates the relationship between SIF and family life satisfaction

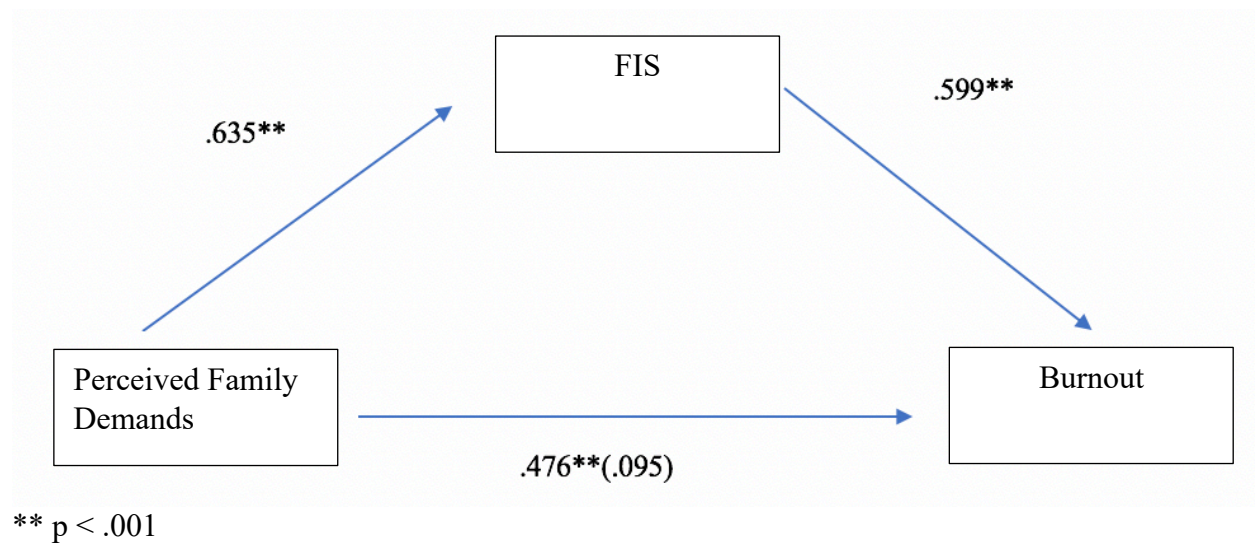


Figure 12. FIS mediates the relationship between perceived family demands and burnout

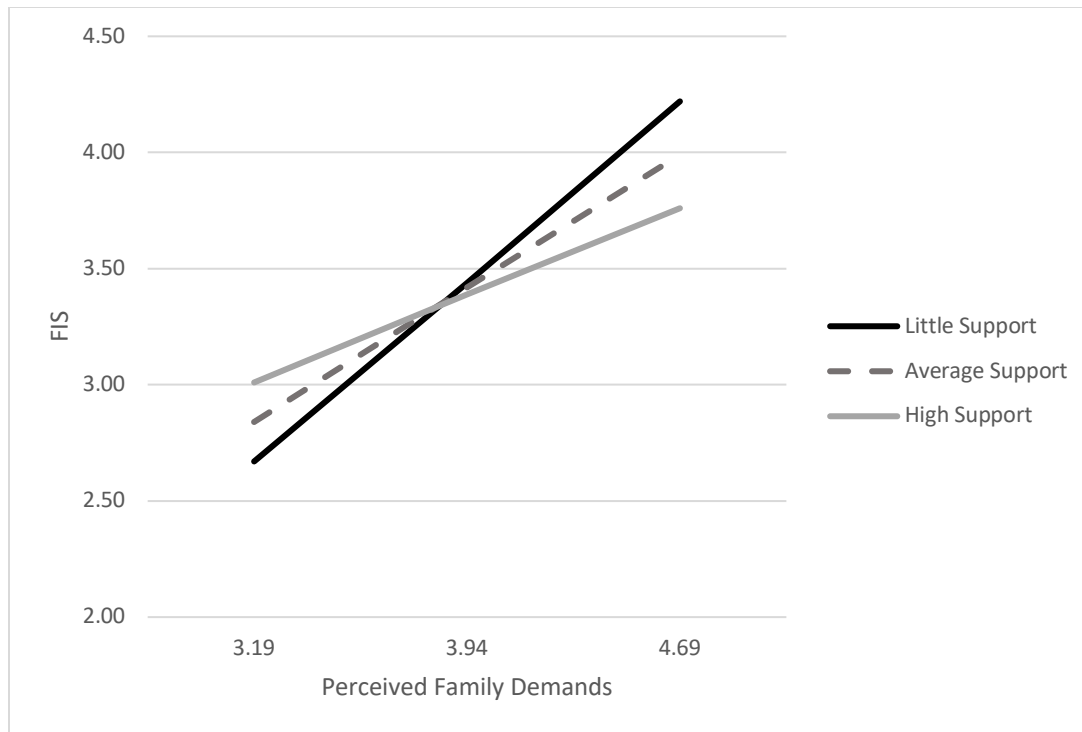


Figure 13. Parental social support moderates the relationship between perceived family demands and FIS