

care may have a strong impact on their experiences (Bowen and Pittman, 1995). Consequently, we extended our analysis beyond a simple contrast of 1991 to 2001 data to comparisons which take into account the following demographic variables: (1) gender, (2) job type, (3) parental status, and (4) time in dependent care. While this list is by no means exhaustive it does focus on those factors which previous research has shown influence both the nature of an individuals' participation in work and family roles and/or shape the meaning individuals give to family and work and the identities they develop. An understanding of these modifiers is critical for policy makers and employers who need to be able to identify who is at risk. It should also allow for the development of solutions which are specific to the various groups.

Gender and Work-Life Balance

There is a large body of literature to attest to the fact that women experience higher levels of work-family conflict than do men. Why this is so is still the topic of some debate. Some suggest that women may be biologically "programmed" (through sex-based hormonal systems, for example) to respond differently to stressors (Jick and Mitz, 1985). This hypothesis is borne out by differences in symptomatology shown by women versus men (i.e. whereas women tend to respond to stress by exhibiting emotional symptoms, such as depression, mental illness, and general psychological discomfort, men tend respond by manifesting physiological disease, such as heart disease and cirrhosis).

Others argue that gender differences in the stress response are attributable to differences in socialization processes and role expectations that expose women to a higher level of stressors. In the home domain, women, irrespective of their involvement in paid work, have been found to be significantly more likely than men to bear primary responsibility for homechores and child care (Statistics Canada, 2000). In the workplace, women have been found to be disproportionately represented in occupations with "built-in strain" such as clerical work, which couples high work demands with little discretionary control (Statistics Canada, 2000). Although it is difficult to determine which of these mechanisms is most responsible for women's differential response to stress, there is little doubt that women are exposed to different (if not more) stressors than men at both work and at home.

Job Type and Work-Life Balance

There is a large body of research available supporting our contention that the type of job an individual holds may affect work-life balance (Quick et al., 1997 or O'Neil and Greenberger, 1994). Some of these studies suggest that managers and professionals are more able to achieve balance than their counterparts in non-professional positions. Those who espouse this view offer the following evidence to support their beliefs:

- Managers and professionals are more likely to occupy occupations which afford more flexibility and personal control over the timing of work. Increased flexibility and control have been linked to greater balance.
- Professionals typically hold jobs that offer greater extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary) which can offset some of the "costs" that demanding jobs entail (i.e. allow those with higher incomes to purchase goods and services to help them cope).
- Non-professional employees are more likely to work in high demand, low control jobs. Seminal work by Karasek (1979) indicates that employees in these types of positions typically report higher levels of stress and poorer physical and mental health.