

The Rosabeth Moss
Kanter Award
FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH

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ANNOUNCING THE 11TH KANTER AWARD WINNER:

BALANCING BORDERS AND BRIDGES: NEGOTIATING THE WORK-HOME INTERFACE VIA BOUNDARY WORK TACTICS

Glen Kreiner, Elaine Hollensbe, and Mathew Sheep
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This cutting-edge research examined the ways in which people manage boundaries between home and work in order to reduce the negative effects of work-home challenges. The authors identified four types of tactics that can be used in order help manage boundaries: behavioral, temporal, physical, and communicative.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



Glen Kreiner
Associate Professor of Management
Pennsylvania State University

What were the major findings of your study?

1. First of all, regardless of their circumstance, people CAN make a difference in their own work-family balance. It might be major (like taking a new job) or it might be minor (like setting expectations with co-workers). We studied a group for whom work-family balance is very difficult - Episcopal priests. They take vows on two different occasions to place something first in their lives - their spouses and their priesthood. This puts tremendous pressure on them to succeed in both realms. And yet, they do it. If they can manage this balance, everyone can learn some way to improve on it for themselves.
2. Second, we found 4 categories of tactics that individuals can enact to better manage the work-family boundary: behavioral (such as making good use of technology), temporal (such as “banking” your time when either work or home is asking too much), physical (such as using tangible items like keys and calendars to your benefit), and communicative (such as confronting those who violate your work-family boundary). The paper outlines 11 specific tactics we found that help manage the work-family interface.

3. Third, we found it was important to distinguish between “work-family conflict” (which is a fairly general, ongoing state of tension between work and home) and “boundary violations” (which are events or episodes that breach or neglect the desired work-home boundary). Separating these two allows people to better diagnose their situation and consider remedies.

Were you surprised by the findings?

The thing that surprised us most about the findings was the sheer diversity of tactics and techniques that people used to creatively - and effectively - manage the work-home boundary. We were familiar with the work-family balance literature, but to really drill down and explore how people do it was quite enlightening. It's simultaneously inspiring and empowering to see the many ways we can improve that all-too elusive idea of work-family balance.

What do you think are the most important implications of your findings for employees? For human resource practitioners?

For employees, the tactics we identified can be very empowering. They range from the simple to complex and from short-term to long-term. But the bottom line is that there is a lot each individual can do to improve their work-family balance.

For HR practitioners, we found that there are different kinds of “fit” between individuals and what they expect from others and/or their workplace regarding the work-family boundary. Workers have expectations for their peers, their customers/clients, their subordinates, their supervisors, and their workplaces generally as to how work and home should be integrated or segmented. By ascertaining what each individual expects regarding the work-family boundary (rather than creating blanket one-size-fits-all programs), HR practitioners can better meet the interests and expectations of their workforce. Also, HR professionals can greatly benefit from understanding these tactics, using them themselves, as well as training others on how to use them effectively.

TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS FROM KANTER AWARD FINALISTS...

1. Is flexibility the answer to work-life conflict?

- Work-life conflict negatively impacts productivity, personal effectiveness, and relationships both at home and at work, and **schedule flexibility**, including part-time work and flextime is effective at **reducing work-life conflict and work pressure** (Russell, et al.).
- However, remote workers or employees in client-facing positions experience **less work-life conflict** when the employer sets **more rigid work schedules** because the support from the employer buffers them from overly demanding clients and job tasks (Blair-Loy).

2. What tactics and techniques can employers offer to help employees transition successfully between work and home?

- Mindfulness training, guidelines for communication, prioritization skills, transition routines, and cross-training are **specific tactics and techniques** that employers can provide to help employees successfully self-manage the boundaries between work and non-work roles (Kreiner, et al.; Carlson, et al.).
- In a 24/7 culture, it is important to convey that **employees are not expected to work all hours** (Blair-Loy; Campos, et al.; Kreiner, et al.; Carlson, et al.).

3. How can you promote employee engagement without creating work-life imbalances?

Work environments where employees are highly engaged and **approach work with energy and enthusiasm** may inadvertently cause employees to feel overextended. Work-life programs are a direct way in which organizations can support both employee engagement and work-life balance. Further, conscientious employees and managers can help buffer the negative consequences of employee engagement by **openly discussing work and non-work demands** (Halbesleben, et al.).

4. How do work-life programs positively impact the health of the workforce of today and tomorrow?

- Supporting employees to combine work and family roles not only enhances well-being, but also helps to **improve an employee's physical health and job performance** over time (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers).
- In general, a **child's Body Mass Index** is not negatively impacted by his/her **mother's workforce participation**. In fact, research has shown that children who spend increased time in school or childcare have a lower incidence of childhood obesity (Fertig, et al.).

5. Are managers the greatest obstacle to women's advancement?

- Even though **female employees reported slightly less family-work conflict** than their male counterparts, their managers (**both male and female**) perceived them as having greater family-work conflict, which has significant implications for women's organizational advancement (Hoobler, et al.).
- Study results indicate that **family time demands have very little impact on work roles**. Manager training is critical to help the supervisors who are evaluating employees recognize the unintended bias that exists against women who have child rearing responsibilities (Hoobler, et al.; Michel, et al.).

6. Is the 'second shift' fair and equal?

- **Women work more total hours** (paid and unpaid work) than men when they combine parenting with full-time employment (Sayer et al.).

- In countries with more traditional gender roles, the **number of hours of housework** that women do in comparison to their partners has little effect on whether a woman sees this situation as **fair and equal**. However, in more egalitarian or non-traditional countries, women are quicker to note when they believe their portion of the housework is unfair (Greenstein).

7. What are the best two minutes you ever invested?

The first 2 minutes upon returning home from work or school are brief yet key opportunities for reuniting with family members, exchanging information about the day, and reconnecting. **The importance of this greeting ritual should not be overlooked.** It is a building block for the high quality family relationships that contemporary parents idealize and can easily be embedded into the bustle of daily life (Campos, et al.).

8. How can men achieve better work-life fit?

Men who extend their identity beyond that of ‘breadwinner’ see a **stronger sense of resilience and life satisfaction** and are able to be **deeply involved in both their work and family lives** (Sherman; Shows & Gerstel).

9. Is the “Motherhood Penalty” a common global issue, or just a U.S. quandary?

Estimates of the wage penalty for American, British, and German mothers are about 10-18%, with German mothers experiencing higher wage penalties. Although mothers in the United States would tend to see greater penalties than their European counterparts, **some women aim to compensate for this bias** by returning to work earlier, devoting less time to childcare, and remaining in full-time jobs (Gangl & Zeifle; Aisenbray, et al.).

10. Why should an organization consider providing childcare?

In addition to helping parents of young children feel more secure and less distracted at work, **high quality early care promotes academic achievement** during middle childhood and beyond, particularly for low-income children. Organizations should support quality childcare for all employees (Dearing, et al.).

THE KANTER AWARD

Named in honor of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, who has been identified as the most influential contributor to modern literature on work and family, the Kanter Award is given for the best research paper(s) published during the year. The rigorous nomination process for award selection involves 38 scholarly reviewers from 4 countries who decide on the Kanter winners from among over 2500 articles published in 77 scholarly journals. This award raises awareness of excellent work-family research, fosters debate about standards of excellence, identifies the “best of the best” studies on which to base future research and outlines specific implications of the research for work-life and human resource professionals.

The Center for Families at Purdue University and the Boston College Center for Work & Family developed the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award to raise the awareness of high quality work-family research among the scholar, consultant and practitioner communities. Through the generous sponsorship of the **Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP)**, the standards of quality for work-family research will continue to rise, and actionable findings from the best studies will become more commonplace in business communities to inform policy and best people practices.

KANTER TOP 20 NOMINATED ARTICLES

- Aisenbrey, S., Evertsson, M., & Grunow, D. (2009). Is There a Career Penalty for Mothers' Time Out? A Comparison of Germany, Sweden and the United States. *Social Forces* 88(2), 573–606. silke.aisenbrey@yu.edu
- Blair-Loy, M. (2009). Work Without End? Scheduling Flexibility and Work-to-Family Conflict Among Stockbrokers. *Work and Occupations* 36(4), 279–317. blair-loy@ucsd.edu **FINALIST**
- Bowman, J. & Cole, A. (2009). Do Working Mothers Oppress Other Women? The Swedish "Maid Debate" and the Welfare State Politics of Gender Equality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35(1), 157–184. John.bowman@qc.cuny.edu
- Campos, B., Graesch, A., Repetti, R., Bradbury, T., & Ochs, E. (2009). Opportunity for Interaction? A Naturalistic Observation Study of Dual-Earner Families After Work and School. *Journal of Family Psychology* 23(6), 798–807. bcampos@uci.edu
- Carlson, D., Grzywacz, J., & Zivnuska, S. (2009). Is Work–Family Balance More Than Conflict and Enrichment? *Human Relations* 62(10), 1459–1486. dawn_carlson@baylor.edu
- Dearing, E., McCartney, K., & Taylor, B. (2009). Does Higher Quality Early Child Care Promote Low-Income Children's Math and Reading Achievement in Middle Childhood? *Child Development* 80(5), 1329–1349. eric.dearing@bc.edu
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- Halbesleben, J., Harvey, J., & Bolino, M. (2009). Too Engaged? A Conservation of Resources View of the Relationship Between Work Engagement and Work Interference With Family. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94(6), 1452–1465. halbesjr@uwec.edu **FINALIST**
- Hoobler, J., Wayne, S., & Lemmon, G. (2009). Bosses' Perceptions of Family-Work Conflict and Women's Promotability: Glass Ceiling Effects. *Academy of Management Journal* 52(5), 939–957. jhoobler@uic.edu **FINALIST**
- Kreiner, G., Hollensbe, E., & Sheep, M. (2009). Balancing Borders and Bridges: Negotiating the Work-Home Interface via Boundary Work Tactics. *Academy of Management Journal* 52(4), 704–730. glen.kreiner@psu.edu **WINNER**
- Michel, J., Mitchelson, J., Kotrba, L., LeBreton, J., & Baltes, B. (2009). A Comparative Test of Work-Family Conflict Models and Critical Examination of Work-Family Linkages. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 74, 199–218. jmichel@fiu.edu
- Russell, H., O'Connell, P., & McGinnity, F. (2009). The Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Work–life Conflict and Work Pressure in Ireland. *Gender, Work and Organization* 16(1), 74–94. Fran.mcginny@esri.ie **FINALIST**
- Sayer, L., England, P., Bittman, M., & Bianchi, S. (2009). How Long Is the Second (Plus First) Shift? Gender Differences in Paid, Unpaid, and Total Work Time in Australia and the United States. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 40(4), 524–545. sayer.12@sociology.osu.edu
- Seitz, S. (2009). Accounting for Racial Differences in Marriage and Employment. *Journal of Labor Economics* 27(3) 385–437. seitzsh@bc.edu
- Sherman, J. (2009). Bend to Avoid Breaking: Job Loss, Gender Norms, and Family Stability in Rural America. *Social Problems* 56(4), 599–620. jennifer_sherman@wsu.edu
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- Van Steenbergen, E. & Ellemers, N. (2009). Is Managing the Work–Family Interface Worthwhile? Benefits for Employee Health and Performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 30, 617–642. E.F.vanSteenbergen@uu.nl

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