The blurring of roles between work and personal life: implications for organizations and individuals

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FALL 2015 BC WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE MEETING
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Framing the Issue

- Integration of work and family increasingly commonplace
Framing the Issue

- **Integration of work and family** increasingly commonplace
  - Decentralized work
  - Technological innovations
  - Contingent labor and the ‘Gig Economy’
Driving Factors

- The trend toward more integration has been driven by organizations and workers

  - Global markets do not recognize traditional rhythm of the local workday
  - Workers demand flexibility to juggle paid and nonpaid roles
The Problem

- But: some evidence that integration has **negative consequences** for workers

  - Role blurring associated with **higher work-family conflict** (Voydanoff 2005; Glavin & Schieman, 2012)

  - Intensive telecommuters (+15 hours per week) report **lower job satisfaction** (Golden & Veiga, 2005)

**Growing integration = Growing problems for workers?**
Today’s Talk

1. What are the psychosocial consequences of role integration and blurring for workers?

2. How can we alleviate any of these potential negative consequences?

**Family supportive work contexts** that foster positive integration experiences???
Role integration
Contemporary workers as ‘boundary creators’ and ‘border crossers’

**Boundary Flexibility**
(Shifting physical, Temporal boundaries)

**Boundary Permeability**
(Intruding calls, emails, thoughts etc.)
Role Segmentation

- Domains are physically, temporally distinct
- Unique mindset, behaviours attached to each domain
- Infrequent role transitions that require effort and time

Role Integration

- Place & time less important for governing work/family activities
- Domain boundaries permeable and flexible
- Frequent role transitions requiring little effort or thought

The Work-family Continuum
(Kossek & Lautsch, 2007)
Integration

- I was never someone who would leave work at work; like even when I had regular jobs I couldn’t turn it off. . . . When I’m not working I can’t stop thinking about it. It’s a huge influence, and I’m not very positive about it. . . . It’s very scary . . . I’ll come to work or I’ll work from home. I’ll work on the weekends. . . . It’s almost impossible for me not to have some part of my brain with the company. . . . I never go to a dinner party without thinking, “Is this person useful for the company?” Either they are someone, or they know someone who would want to invest. And it’s not that I will be rude, pushy, or inappropriate but I cannot stop thinking about it . . . (John)

From Ezzedeen and Zikic 2015
Role Integration/blurring Indicators

From Glavin & Schieman (2012), we consider integrators as those who:

- work on job and family tasks at the same time while at home
- send and receive work-related contact outside of the workplace
- frequently think about work when they are not working
American-Canadian differences

Highly Integrated Roles*

- WSH Respondents
- CANWSH Respondents

* ‘frequent’ responses for all items
Gender and Parental Status

Highly Integrated Roles

- Men: 10.0%
- Women: 5.0%

- Children: 10.0%
- No Children: 10.0%
Occupations held by ‘integrators’

- Chief executive
- Postsecondary researcher/teacher
- Physical therapist
- Real estate broker
- Sales representative
- Software developer
- Mechanic
Integrator Well-being (CANWSH Study; n=5796)

Well-being outcomes regressed on integration type and controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration Type</th>
<th>Psychological Distress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrators (9% of sample)</td>
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## Integrator Well-being (CANWSH Study; n=5796)

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Well-being outcomes regressed on integration type and controls

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<th>Sleep Problems</th>
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Possible Solutions:
Family supportive work contexts

Role integration in the context of....

- **Structural supports**: job flexibility
- **Interpersonal supports**: supervisor and coworker support
- **Employment supports**: job security?
Findings

- Evidence of **gender differences** in the efficacy of supportive work contexts

- **For men:**
  - No evidence that **interpersonal supports** or **job security** reduce the negative consequences associated with integration
  - However, some evidence for **women**...
Mental Health of Women Integrators With Low and High Supervisor Support

Graph showing the level of distress among Integrators, Moderate Integrators, and Segmentors with low and high supervisor support. The graph indicates higher distress levels among Integrators compared to Moderate Integrators and Segmentors in both low and high supervisor support conditions.
Summary of Results

- For both men and women, *coworker support* and *job security* had no influence on the integration-well-being association.

- Only *supervisor support* reduced the negative consequences of integration—and only among women.
Summary & Discussion

- The border between work and family life is blurred for a growing number of North American workers.

- Results suggest role integration is linked to an array of negative well-being indicators.

- Supervisory relationships may be key to avoiding pitfalls associated with role integration.
## Role Blurring Factor Loadings

**Appendix. Principle Component Factor Analysis (Orthogonal Rotation Matrix) With Work–Family Role Blurring and Work-to-Family Conflict Items**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work–family role blurring items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacted outside of work</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about work</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multitasking on work and home tasks</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work-to-family conflict items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time for family/important people because of job</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough energy because of job</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work kept you doing good job at home</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job kept you from concentrating on family/personal life</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.24</td>
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