Boundary Control and Identity Management: A New Frontier for Occupational Health
Session Objectives

• Define boundary control, its linkages to work-family, career identity management strategies & occupational health outcomes.

• To share an application that can be used in occupational health research/training

• Consider future research; e.g. how boundary control may vary in enactment across occupations and workplaces and cultures

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Transforming Work-Family Boundary Relationships

- People increasingly managing own boundaries
- Technology rise of smart phones = 24-7 work
- Family and personal connectivity
- Email and text overload
- Rising hours, availability expectations, overwork
- Identity & career, family intertwined
- Formal, informal connectivity patterns
- Boundary blurring increasing across gender, culturesy

Sources: Kossek & Lautsch, 2008, 2012
Boundary Control Occupational Health Variation/ Stratification

- Some jobs **constantly connected**, freedom to work 24-7; **electronic tethering**; high self regulation
- Others not formally **connected for job demands but using smart phones for personal use (safety issue)**
- **Family variation** (kids, parents, social strata)
- **Personality** (addictive behaviors, conscientiousness)
- **Individual Fit** (job supplies, demands preferences)
- **Supervisor, group, partner Fit**  Important to look at individual styles in relation to congruence of others
- **Boundaries are enacted in a social context**; Occupational work culture, norms matter
Why are work-life boundaries increasingly important for Occupational health?
Why This Matters

**Individuals**
- Reduced stress
- Reduced work/life conflict
- Reduced burnout
- Improved wellbeing
- Health, addiction, mood disorder

**Organizations**
- Higher employee engagement
- Reduced turnover
- Higher productivity
- Attracting top talent
- Reduced health/leave costs
- Safety, Accidents
Model

Flexstyles

Developed with Center for Creative Leadership

Kossek, Ruderman, Brady, Hannum, JVB, 2012
Behaviors

The degree to which you **combine** or **separate** tasks associated with work and those associated with your personal life.
Separation
Integration
Behaviors

- Integrators
- Separators
- Work Firsters
- Family Firsters
- Cyclers
Identity

The degree to which you identify with and invest yourself in work and family roles.
Identity

- Work Focused
- Family Focused
- Dual Focused
- Other Focused
Boundary Control

The degree to which you **feel in control** as you manage the boundaries between your work life and personal life.
Boundary Control

High Boundary Control

Moderate Boundary Control

Low Boundary Control
What’s Your Style?
What are tradeoffs of your style & level of boundary control for well-being on and off the job?
## Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Behavioral Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Style</th>
<th>Positive Perceptions</th>
<th>Negative Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrators</td>
<td>Can do it all; always available</td>
<td>Exhausted; always in a hurry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separators</td>
<td>Reliable; professional</td>
<td>Rigid; not adaptable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Firsters</td>
<td>Dedicated to work; professional</td>
<td>Workaholic; detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Firsters</td>
<td>Dedicated to family; protective</td>
<td>Rigid; self-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclers</td>
<td>Fully engaged; flexible</td>
<td>Chaotic; exhausted</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Validation Study of Implications of Styles for Outcomes: Boundary Control & Role Overload Matter

Kossek, Ruderman Braddy & Hannum, Journal Vocational Behavior, 2012

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Separator Tradeoff: Stunted Life

Tradeoff:
- Stunted Life
- Long days (Job or Family Creep)
- Others' misunderstanding about availability
- Perceptions about professionalism
- Higher switching costs & role restructuring
- Lack of buffers, Transition times

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Integrator Tradeoff: Switching Costs
Cycler Tradeoff: 
Role Confusion

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# Work Life Indicator Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Your score suggests that:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Interrupts Work -</td>
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<td>Your family life interrupts your working hours.</td>
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<td>Behaviors</td>
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<td>Family responsibilities</td>
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<td>relationships to interrupt</td>
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<td>your work life.</td>
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<td>Work Interrupts Family -</td>
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<td>Your work interrupts your family time.</td>
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<td>Behaviors</td>
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<td>Work responsibilities and</td>
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<td>relationships to interrupt</td>
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<td>your personal life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Focused - Identify</td>
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<td>You strongly identify with and invest yourself in your career.</td>
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<td>with and invest yourself</td>
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<td>in your work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Focused - Identify</td>
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<td>Your identity is primarily based on roles outside of family.</td>
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<td>with and invest yourself</td>
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<td>in your family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boundary Control - Feel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>You feel in control of how you manage the boundary between your</td>
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<tr>
<td>in control of how you</td>
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<td>work life and personal life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>manage the boundaries</td>
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<td>between your work life</td>
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<td>and personal life.</td>
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Development Planning Guide

Step 1: Identify What Is Not Working For You

Step 2: Learn About Boundary Management Techniques

Step 3: Envision A Better Life

Step 4: Get Support

Step 5: Track Your Progress

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Positive ROI

Positive boundary control:

- Better engagement at work and home (enrichment over depletion)
- Enhanced well-being
- Skills and perspectives can be shared
- Better Health, safety
- Fewer accidents, arguments, rushing, less depression, mood disorder

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OHP for Individuals

- Reflect & assess regularly
- Create social support systems
- Experiment & self-monitor
- Identify role models
- Create substitutes & efficiencies
- Track your progress

Kossek & Lautsch, 2008, 2012 & CCL work life indicator
Find out about employees’ work life values.
Perspective Taking; diversity skill
Set/communicate clear expectations about boundaries and performance.
Be sensitive to burnout and heavy workloads/ long hours.
Be a role model for paying attention to well-being.
Provide options for increasing employee control over work patterns.
OHP for Orgs.

- Development of Leaders
- Individual, Team clarification of values for self managing boundaries.
- Promotes conversations between supervisors and direct reports
- Coaching
- Stress reduction, work-life improvement initiatives/ training & learning
- Implementation flexible work arrangements
- Link boundary management to support organizational change for new ways of working: telework or global work, new work processes.
Supporting Different Styles

- Training Example
- Emotional support
- Role modeling
- Instrumental support
- Creative work-family management

Example of Cross- Cultural Values variation in group collectivism: Unique moderator of elder but not child care hours

• Globe In-group collectivism “reflects “the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families (P, 12) & “the extent to which family is important in life, people are motivated to make their parents proud, and parents are supposed to make sacrifices for their children” (House et al., 2004, p.485)

• Country level values regarding in-group collectivism will will moderate the relationships between (a) gender, (b) career identity, and (c) family identity with eldercare hours but not childcare hours.

Future research

- **Individual Level.** Measures should differentiate between peoples’ preferences and what they actually do to assess gap between w-f demands & supplies & Occ. Health

- **Nested work-nonwork Environment Systems Levels.** Measures should differentiate between life partners and coworker preferences and target’s congruence, & outcomes

- **Cross-cultural value variation influences** (femininity, masc. pubic and private space norms)

- **Crossover.** How does lack of boundary control of worker/partner affect health/well-being families? How does lack of boundary control of worker/partner affect health of families?

- **Workplace customization climates** (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012); Diversity and inclusion contexts vary in support for boundary control.

- **Occupations, access to flexibility, global hours;** (telework, global hours), link to boundary control enactment & well-being. (Predictability, segmentation)
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Work Life Boundary Management References - Kossek


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