

Trouble at the Border?: Gender, Flexibility at Work, and the Work-Home Interface

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Using data from the 2002 National Survey of the Changing Workforce, this article examines the effects of schedule control and job autonomy on two forms of work-home role blurring: receiving work-related contact outside of normal work hours and bringing work home. Schedule control is associated positively with the frequency of receiving contact and bringing work home, although those effects are stronger among men. Job autonomy is associated positively with contact among men only, but it is associated positively with bringing work home among both women and men. Schedule control and job autonomy also modify the association between these forms of role blurring and work-to-home conflict: (1) contact is associated positively with work-to-home conflict among individuals with low job autonomy; and (2) bringing work home is associated positively with work-to-home conflict among individuals with greater schedule control. We discuss the theoretical implications of our findings for the linkages among gender, work conditions associated with control, and the work-home interface. Keywords: work-home balance, schedule control, job autonomy, flexibility, work-family interface.

For some people, what happens at work stays at work. For others, the parameters of the work-home interface are not clearly demarcated (Nippert-Eng 1996). Sociological analysis of the work-home interface is important for several reasons. First and foremost, problems at the border between work and home domains represent some of the most pervasive and problematic role-related stressors that individuals encounter (Kelloway, Gottlieb, and Barham 1999). More importantly, researchers have identified an array of deleterious personal, social, and health consequences associated with work-home role blurring and interference (Bellavia and Frone 2005; Grzywacz and Marks 2000; Voydanoff 2005a, 2005b). These observations underscore the value of documenting the social-structural conditions that influence the work-home interface. Our central thesis is that work-related control is among the most important of those conditions.

The ability to control when and how one works has been a long-standing theme in sociological research on the nature and consequences of work (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). We examine two forms of work-related control—schedule control and job autonomy—because they often represent important *resources* for managing the intersecting demands of work and home (Bakker and Geurts 2004). That is, schedule control and job autonomy are typically viewed as allowing individuals to effectively navigate and manipulate the boundaries that distinguish work and home domains; by extension, inter-role friction should be reduced (Voydanoff 2004, 2005b). We contend, however, that an alternative perspective has often been overlooked: Work-related control may actually *increase* the blurring of borders between work and home. Moreover, the impact of role blurring on work-to-home conflict may be contingent upon one's level of work control. To our knowledge, prior studies have focused solely on the relationship between work-related control and work-to-home conflict

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while tending to ignore the potential ways work-related control predicts role blurring *and* modifies its association with work-to-home conflict. Thus, we address two central questions: (1) Are schedule control and job autonomy associated with levels of work-home role blurring? (2) Do schedule control and job autonomy modify the association between role blurring and work-to-home conflict? In addition, given the well-documented gender differences in the experience of the work-home interface (Blair-Loy 2003; Duxbury and Higgins 1991; Hochschild 1989, 1997; Milkie and Peltola 1999), we examine whether or not any observed patterns differ for women and men. In these efforts, we seek to apply and refine views of border theory and propositions about the implications of *resourceful* versus *demanding* work conditions for the work-home interface.

Theoretical Framework

Border Theory and the Conceptual Dimensions of the Work-Home Interface

Border theory provides an organizing framework for understanding the ways that individuals construct and navigate the parameters between work and home (Clark 2000). It is often assumed that actors are motivated to manage the work-home border in ways that yield a “balance,” which implies high levels of satisfaction and role functioning, and, more importantly, *low levels of work-to-home conflict*. Research on the work-home interface has focused primarily on this latter construct—work-to-home conflict—which involves the extent that individuals perceive that work interferes with the responsibilities and expectations of family, and competes for individuals’ finite amounts of time and energy (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1987; Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly 1983). That is, role pressures that emanate from work are incompatible with family or hinder family-related role performance (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). These ideas reflect a central theme in research on the work-home interface: The *interference* elements of these structural arrangements and their associated role-related processes are generally viewed as undesirable and problematic. As structural, organizational, and cultural forces alter the nature of work and family life, however, the conceptual dimensions of the work-home interface are becoming increasingly multifaceted. In some instances, these processes may be more appropriately viewed as work-home *border blurring* (Voydanoff 2005a).

The concept of border blurring derives from border and boundary theories, which specify the physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries that distinguish work and nonwork roles (Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate 2000; Clark 2000; Nippert-Eng 1996). In this framework, “flexibility” and “permeability” are highly relevant concepts. Flexibility is the degree to which work duties are allowed to be performed outside of the usual spatial and temporal arrangements of the workplace. Spatial and temporal rigidity constrain work to specific time and space parameters. By contrast, permeability involves the extent that aspects of one domain may intrude on another domain. These concepts have implications for work-home *border crossing* and *integration*. According to Sue C. Clark (2000), “a person who has fully integrated family and work makes no distinction about what belongs to home and what belongs to work: the people, thoughts, intellectual and emotional approaches are the same, no matter whether the task has to do with work or home” (p. 755). Some elements of this process may involve the intentional and efficacious blending of work and home domains; others may be less favorable or controllable.

Although greater flexibility and permeability ease the transition between roles, they also may increase the blurring of boundaries between work and home life (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006). From a sociological perspective, it is important to elaborate on the potential benefits and costs of work-home role blurring for work-to-home conflict. Here, it is necessary to specify two distinct but interrelated forms of role blurring: The frequency that

individuals bring work home and receive work-related contact or communications outside of normal work hours. Patricia Voydanoff (2005a) underscores the importance of these forms of role blurring, identifying them as “boundary-spanning demands” and documenting their *positive* association with work-to-home conflict. The reasons for the potential undesirable effects of role blurring are even more evident if we consider the ways that technologies expand permeability such that workers become accessible “anytime, anywhere” (Lewis and Cooper 1999; Valcour and Hunter 2005). This pattern is apparent in Noelle Chesley’s (2005) finding that persistent communications (i.e., cell phones, pagers) are associated positively with work-to-home conflict. Likewise, in a sample of university staff employees, Olson-Buchanan and Boswell (2006:432) found that “employees who integrate work into nonwork set fewer boundaries for using communication technologies during nonwork time and report higher work-life conflict.” Collectively, these ideas have implications for the claim that work-home role blurring largely represents favorable and desired arrangements.

While evidence suggests that work-home role blurring may elevate levels of work-to-home conflict, our central thesis is that it is also essential to consider the work *context* of role blurring. Bringing work home or receiving work-related contact outside of work may occur as part of a worker’s effort to balance work and home roles, or conversely because of a demanding and “family-unfriendly” work domain. Although we do not explicitly delineate individuals’ intentional actions and/or desirable work-nonwork arrangements, because our measure of role blurring cannot elucidate which scenario they represent, we draw upon Joseph Grzywacz and Nadine Mark’s (2000) proposition that the level of *control* workers have over the nature of work-home permeability is critical for understanding the work-home interface, and in particular, the two forms of role blurring discussed thus far. We therefore examine the extent that schedule control and job autonomy are related to levels of role blurring and if those conditions modify its association with work-to-home conflict. Here, we elaborate on border theory by questioning whether or not role blurring uniformly involves desired arrangements that workers control and use to their advantage. Moreover, we expand on an overlooked paradox: Schedule control and job autonomy are often viewed as work-related *resources*, but it is also possible that these conditions *contribute* to role blurring and *exacerbate* the negative effects of role blurring on work-to-home conflict.

Schedule Control and Job Autonomy: Resources or Demands?

The job demands-resources (JD-R) model identifies resources as involving the physical, psychosocial, and organizational elements of work that foster the adequate completion of responsibilities (Bakker and Geurts 2004). In this framework, schedule control and job autonomy are conceptualized as two central *resources*. Schedule control, or the “temporal flexibility in work schedules,” involves the extent that individuals are able to select the times that they start and/or finish work (Golden 2001). By contrast, job autonomy involves the extent that individuals have the freedom to decide when, where, and how their work gets done (Hodson 2001).

Schedule control and job autonomy are considered highly desirable work conditions that most workers prefer, especially with respect to the challenges of the work-home interface (Voydanoff 2004, 2005b). According to Jerry A. Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson (2004), schedule control and job autonomy are assumed to “help workers resolve conflicts between family and work” (p. 99). Although some evidence supports this assumption, the patterns are often observed when researchers use measures that emphasize conflict aspects of the work-home interface. We argue that different patterns may emerge for other forms of the work-home interface. As components of higher status work conditions that obligate greater levels of responsibility and commitment to the work role (Schwalbe 1985; Smith 2002), schedule control and job autonomy may encourage forms of work-home role blurring that

impede work-life balance.¹ In opposition to the resource view of schedule control and autonomy, then, which sees them as work arrangements that help one avoid work-to-home conflict, schedule control and autonomy may be alternatively conceptualized as *demands* via their propensity to encourage potentially problematic forms of work-home role blurring. Thus, we develop and outline two competing hypotheses regarding the resource and demand aspects of schedule control and job autonomy: the *resources* hypothesis and the *demands* hypothesis. Table 1 provides a summary of these hypotheses.

The *resources* hypothesis suggests that schedule control and job autonomy help workers navigate the boundaries separating work and nonwork life more easily and avoid detrimental outcomes associated with work-home role blurring. For example, an employee who is able to select where and when they work can more effectively organize work and nonwork tasks so that they do not coincide, reducing the need to integrate roles and avoid potential role interference (Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton 2005). Therefore, schedule control and job autonomy should be associated negatively with role blurring. Further, the *resources* hypothesis implies that schedule control and job autonomy should function as resources in facilitating efficacious forms of role blending and integration. Voydanoff (2005a) underscores this point in her account of “boundary-spanning resources,” asserting that the “flexibility provided by resources such as . . . work schedule flexibility . . . reduces work-family conflict and perceived stress by increasing one’s ability to perform work activities while also meeting family responsibilities” (pp. 492–93). Role blurring should therefore be associated positively with work-to-home conflict only among workers with low schedule control and job autonomy. Among workers with high schedule control and autonomy, that association is null or negative. In sum, the *resources* hypothesis predicts that schedule control and job autonomy—as resources—reduce exposure to role blurring and undermine its deleterious implications for work-to-home conflict.

An alternative view, the *demands* hypothesis, emphasizes the ways that schedule control and job autonomy obligate higher levels of involvement and responsibility for organizational outcomes (Schwalbe 1985; Smith 2002). These ideas also draw from core tenets of border theory. Workers with higher levels of schedule control and autonomy likely encounter the forceful pull of the *work devotion schema*, which “demands that one give an immense time commitment and strong emotional allegiance to one’s firm or career” (Blair-Loy 2003:7). In the language of border theory, these “central participants” should experience work-home border blurring as a more normative feature of their work conditions and the associated work devotion schema. Central participants are more likely to be socially integrated with other central participants at work, leading to stronger internalization of the workplace culture, and a deeper identification with and commitment to the organization (Clark 2000; Hodson 1996).

Collectively, these ideas suggest that individuals in positions with more schedule control and job autonomy report more demand-related border crossing and role blurring. A potential downside of these arrangements, however, involves one-sidedness in the work-home interface that favors work and manifests as unanticipated “border creep.”² From this perspective, schedule control and job autonomy may reflect consequential elements of boundary-spanning *demands* that generate or exacerbate the conflictive elements of role blurring. We draw upon these ideas to propose the *demands* hypothesis. That is, schedule control and job autonomy—as indicators of the work devotion schema and its associated demands—elevate the level of exposure to work-home

1. In additional analyses (not shown), we find evidence that supports the view of schedule control and job autonomy as conditions typically held by central participants or higher status positions within different workplace contexts. For example, individuals with more education and income—executives, professionals, and supervisors—tend to report higher levels of schedule control and job autonomy. These patterns are consistent with theory and research that documents that higher status positions within different workplace contexts tend to have more schedule control and job autonomy (Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

2. Milliken and Dunn-Jensen (2005) have used the term “work creep” to identify “a situation in which the work domain gradually encroaches on personal and family time.” They specify the term “creep” as the “gradual and often unnoticed spillover of work into family time” (p. 48).

TABLE 1 • Summary of Hypotheses and Conclusions

General Hypotheses	Supported?
<p><i>Resources Hypothesis</i> Schedule control and job autonomy are associated <i>negatively</i> with work-home role blurring (work-related contact and bringing work home). Work-home role blurring is associated <i>positively</i> with work-to-home conflict only among workers with <i>low levels</i> of schedule control and job autonomy. Among workers with high levels of schedule control and job autonomy, that association is either null or negative.</p>	<p>Not supported Partially supported: Work-related contact is associated positively with work-to-home conflict only among workers with low job autonomy.</p>
<p><i>Demands Hypothesis</i> Schedule control and job autonomy are associated <i>positively</i> with work-home role blurring (work-related contact and bringing work home). Work-home role blurring is associated <i>positively</i> with work-to-home conflict among workers with <i>high levels</i> of schedule control and job autonomy. Among workers with low levels of schedule control and job autonomy, that association is either null or negative.</p>	<p>Partially supported: Schedule control and job autonomy are associated positively with work-related contact and bringing work home among men only. Partially supported: Bringing work home is associated positively with work-to-home conflict among workers with high levels of schedule control.</p>
<p><i>Hypotheses about Gender Contingencies</i></p>	<p><i>Supported?</i></p>
<p><i>Traditional hypothesis</i></p>	<p>Partially supported: Men report higher levels of work-related contact. Supported</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of work-home role blurring are higher among men. • Schedule control and job autonomy are associated more positively with work-home role blurring among men. • The positive association between work-home role blurring and work-to-home conflict is stronger among women. 	<p>Not supported</p>
<p><i>Egalitarian hypothesis</i></p>	<p>Partially supported: No overall gender differences in bringing work home Not supported</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No differences between women and men in the levels of role blurring • The effects of schedule control and job autonomy on work-home role blurring are similar among women and men. • The positive association between work-home role blurring and work-to-home conflict is similar among women and men. 	<p>Supported</p>

role blurring and exacerbate its unfavorable effects on work-to-home conflict. In more specific terms, schedule control and job autonomy should be associated positively with the two measures of work-home role blurring. Further, role blurring should be associated more positively with work-to-home conflict among workers with higher levels of schedule control and job autonomy. Among workers with lower levels of schedule control and job autonomy, that association should be either null or negative.

Gender and the Work-Home Interface: Traditional versus Egalitarian Views

We elaborate on a *gender* view of border theory to further specify the hypotheses outlined above. The broad thesis is that women and men experience the antecedents and consequences of the work-home interface differently. In turn, these different orientations may influence the nature, extent, and consequences of work-home border crossing (Blair-Loy 2003). We outline two perspectives to frame our discussion about the potential role of gender in our hypotheses: the *traditional* versus *egalitarian* views.

The traditional perspective posits that men and women hold different role meanings, values and obligations because of culturally-embedded ideologies about work and family life (Winslow 2005). Joseph Pleck (1977) argued that because women have traditionally prioritized the household, intrusions from home-to-work are more acceptable (and prevalent) than work-to-home intrusions. Similarly, the primacy of work for men implies that work-to-home intrusions are “natural” effects of the masculine stereotype of the “good provider.” Employers’ traditional preference has been a man whose priority is work (not family) and who has a spouse to manage home life (Acker 1990; Kanter 1977; Williams 2000). Moreover, the traditionally gendered division of childcare and household labor limits men’s involvement, and by extension, shifts the balance of role commitments towards work (Gerson 1993). The gendered borders of work and family imply that it has been more *acceptable for men* to “take work home,” while interference from family to work is more likely for employed women (Duxbury and Higgins 1991; Pleck 1977, 1985). In the language of border theory, the traditional view suggests that there is greater integration of work and family roles for working men and greater segmentation of work and family roles for working women. By extension, based on this traditional view we hypothesize that men should report higher levels of work-home role blurring than women, but role blurring should be unrelated or weakly related to work-to-home conflict for men because it has been normative for them to integrate and blur the borders between work and home. Moreover, schedule control and job autonomy—as indicators of the work devotion schema—should be associated more positively with work-home role blurring among men.

Alternatively, the egalitarian perspective implies that the experiences of the work-home interface are becoming similar for women and men. Decades ago, Pleck (1977) predicted that “the objective demands of the work role . . . will emerge as the primary constraint on men’s family role if and when ideological support for the traditional division of family labor by sex is weakened” (p. 421). Several trends may have eroded the influence of traditional ideas, including increases in the number of dual-earner households and shifting gender norms about work and family life (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Moreover, the weakening of traditional norms should elevate the relevance of work demands for men’s involvement in family (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006). To the extent that these developments occur without accommodating changes in men’s work role and the influence of work on men’s identity, levels of work-home role blurring will change because of men’s commitment to and involvement in family. Pleck (1977) also foretold of the effects of decreases in occupational sex segregation for women’s experience of work-family balance, particularly as women gain access to higher status jobs. Likewise, Hochschild (1997:80) argued that “the female pattern is converging with the male pattern as women increasingly transfer their allegiance to the workplace.”

Drawing from Mary Blair-Loy's (2003) ideas about role-related devotion schemas, recent trends suggest that men, by devoting more time and energy to the noneconomic aspects of fatherhood, view themselves as more *central participants in the home* (Coltrane 1996; Gerson 1993; Townsend 2002). Although women continue to spend more time on childcare and housework than men (Bianchi et al. 2006; Bird 1999; Bird and Fremont 1991; Hochschild 1989), Makiko Fuma (2005) found that the United States has one of the highest levels of egalitarian division of household labor. Despite lingering gender-asymmetries in work/family balance, increasing egalitarian forces may cause women to become less likely to characterize work as supplemental to family, while men may become less likely to define home roles as supplemental to work (Barnett and Rivers 1996; Grzywacz and Marks 2000). The weakening of traditional norms may also elevate the relevance of work-related demands for men's involvement in family-related roles.

The collective result of these social and cultural transformations, as we interpret them, should involve the expansion of expectations for men's contributions to household duties and women's contributions to the workplace, with subsequently greater work-home role blurring for all. For our hypotheses, these patterns should contribute to a *greater equalization* across genders in: (1) the level of exposure to work-home role blurring; (2) the manner in which schedule control and job autonomy predict work-home role blurring; and (3) any observed associations between role blurring and levels of work-to-home conflict.

Methods

Sample

The data derive from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce, a nationally representative sample of the U.S. labor force interviewed by telephone between October 2002 and June 2003. Eligible participants were 18 years of age or older and participating in the paid labor force, and were randomly selected using a random-digit-dial method. A response rate of between 52 and 61 percent of eligible respondents yielded the full sample, with a 98 percent completion rate (Bond et al. 2003).³ We exclude participants with missing values on focal and control measures.⁴ This yielded a final working sample of 2,671 individuals.

Focal Measures

Receiving Work-Related Contact Outside of Normal Work Hours. One item assesses the frequency that individuals are contacted for work-related reasons outside of normal work hours: "How often do coworkers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact you about work-related matters outside normal work hours? Include telephone, cell phone, beeper and pager calls, as well as faxes and e-mail that you have to respond to." Response choices are "never" (1), "occasionally" (2), "fairly regularly but less than once a week" (3), "once a week" (4), "several times a week" (5), "once a day" (6), "several times a day" (7), and "many times a day" (8).

3. An exact response rate could not be determined because of incomplete data on the eligibility of households contacted. Eligibility estimates were thus used to predict the resulting response rate range (Bond et al. 2003).

4. We dropped 139 cases (<5 percent of the total sample) from the analyses due to missing responses. The majority of these missing values originated from the *bringing work home* measure (95 cases dropped). Subsequent analyses showed that the data losses due to this measure were random.

Bringing Work Home. One item asks: "How often do you do any paid or unpaid work at home that is part of your job?" Response choices are "never" (1), "a few times a year" (2), "about once a month" (3), "about once a week" (4), "more than once a week" (5).

Work-to-Home Conflict. Five items assess the frequency that individuals have experienced work-to-home conflict in the past three months: "How often have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?"; "How often have you not had the energy to do things with your family or other important people in your life because of your job?"; "How often has work kept you from doing as good a job at home as you could?"; "How often have you not been in a good mood at home because of your job?"; and "How often has your job kept you from concentrating on important things in your family and personal life?" Response choices are coded as "never" (1), "rarely" (2), "sometimes" (3), "often" (4), and "very often" (5). We coded and averaged items such that higher scores indicate higher levels of work-to-home conflict ($\alpha = .87$). This index and the two work-home role-blurring measures described above have been used in other recently published studies (Voydanoff 2004, 2005a).

Schedule Control. One question asks participants about schedule control: "Overall, how much control would you say you have in scheduling your work hours?" Response choices are coded as "none" (0), "very little" (1), "some" (2), "a lot" (3), "complete" (4).

Job Autonomy. Participants were asked the extent they agree or disagree with the following three statements: "I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job?"; "It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done"; and "I have a lot of say about what happens on my job." Response choices are coded as "strongly disagree" (1), "somewhat disagree" (2), "somewhat agree" (3), and "strongly agree" (4). We averaged the items such that higher scores indicate higher levels of job autonomy ($\alpha = .69$).

Gender. We use dummy codes for men (0) and women (1).

Control Measures

Age. We coded participants' age in years.

Race. We coded participants' race as white (1) versus all other categories (0).

Married. We coded marital status as married (1) versus all other categories (0).

Children. This is coded as the number of children under 18 living in the household, ranging from no children to 4 or more children under age 18 living at home.

Education. Education is coded as "less than high school (1), "high school or GED (2)," "some college (3)," "associate degree (4)," "four-year college degree (5)," and "graduate or professional degree (6)."

Occupation. Participants are categorized into the following occupational groups: "executives," "professionals," "technical," "sales," "administrative" "service," and "production." We use the modal category "professionals" as the contrast category in all regression analyses.

Job Demands. Job demands is assessed with responses to the following items: "My job requires that I work very fast;" "My job requires that I work very hard;" "I never seem to have enough time to get everything done on my job;" "My job is very emotionally demanding and tiring;" and "My job is very physically demanding and tiring." Response choices are "strongly disagree" (1), "somewhat disagree" (2), "somewhat agree" (3), and "strongly agree" (4). We scored and averaged the items such that higher scores indicate more job demands ($\alpha = .62$).

Work Hours. We contrast participants who work “fewer than 40 hours per week” with workers in two other categories: “40 to 49 hours per week” and “more than 50 hours per week.”

Supervisor. One item asks participants: “Is supervising or managing other people a major part of your job?” We coded “yes” responses as 1 (“supervisor”) and “no” responses as 0.

More Than One Job. We also controlled for whether or not the individual only has one job (coded 0) versus more than one job (coded 1).

Regular Daytime Shift. One item assesses whether or not participants’ main job is a regular day-time shift (coded 1) versus some other type of shift (coded 0).

Without outlining the details of *each* specific potential influence of our control measures, we briefly explain our rationale for their inclusion. We adjust for these controls because they may influence our focal associations. Age, race, marital status, and the presence of children in the household are basic control measures found in most work-home interface research. In the case of age, for example, the few population-based studies that have assessed age patterns yield mixed conclusions. Some have found that age is associated negatively (and linearly) with work-nonwork interference (Mennino, Rubin, and Brayfield 2005) while others document that workers in middle adulthood report the highest levels of work-nonwork interference (Grzywacz, Almeida, and McDonald 2002; Bellavia and Frone 2005). Although less is known about the influence of race, there are indications that statuses associated with the home role influence various aspects of the work-home interface (see Jacobs and Gerson 2004). In addition, it is apparent that education, occupation, job demands, work hours, and supervisor status may have influential consequences on the measures involved in our hypothesized focal associations. For example, the well-educated and professionals report higher levels of work-to-home conflict (Schieman, Kurashina, and Van Gundy 2006).

Plan of Analyses

After reporting descriptive statistics (Table 2), we present multivariate analyses in Tables 3, 4, and 5 to test our hypotheses; all models use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques. In Tables 3 and 4, we test three models with the role blurring measures as the dependent variables. In the first model, we regress work-related contact (or bringing work home) on schedule control, job autonomy, gender, and control measures. The next two models test the gender-contingent effects of schedule control (Model 2) and job autonomy (Model 3). In Table 5, we report the results for work-to-home conflict as the dependent variable. Model 1 of Table 5 regresses work-to-home conflict on schedule control, job autonomy, gender, and control measures (excluding work-home role blurring measures). Model 2 includes role blurring measures and gender but excludes schedule control and job autonomy. The separate inclusion of work conditions versus role blurring conditions allows us to assess the independent versus shared contributions of each. Then, in Model 3 we include work conditions and role blurring measures simultaneously. In Model 4, we test for interactions between work conditions and role blurring conditions, but only report statistically significant effects (job autonomy \times work contact and schedule control \times bringing working home).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics. As Voydanoff (2005a) reported, there are no gender differences in bringing work home and work-to-home conflict. By contrast, men report higher levels of receiving work-related contact. Although we observe no gender differences in

TABLE 2 • Descriptive Statistics for all Study Variables

	Men (1,119)	Women (1,552)	Total (2,671)
<i>Focal measures</i>			
Work-to-home conflict	2.530	2.474	2.497
Work-related contact	2.837***	2.382	2.573
Bringing work home	2.240	2.209	2.222
Schedule control	2.914	2.917	2.916
Job autonomy	3.046***	2.926	2.976
<i>Control measures</i>			
Age	41.136*	42.133	41.715
White	.812	.801	.806
Married	.642***	.531	.577
Number of children	.848*	.746	.789
Education	3.652	3.744	3.706
Production occupations	.351***	.084	.196
Service occupations	.090*	.117	.106
Administrative support occupations	.080***	.215	.158
Sales occupations	.078	.095	.088
Technical occupations	.041	.048	.045
Professional occupations	.209***	.282	.251
Executive occupations	.151	.159	.156
Work hours (fewer than 40)	.106***	.295	.216
Work hours (40 to 49)	.505	.498	.501
Work hours (50 and above)	.389***	.206	.283
Supervisor	.428***	.346	.380
Job demands	2.766	2.760	2.763
More than one job	.184	.171	.177
Regular shift	.739*	.782	.764

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests for differences between men and women)

levels of schedule control, men have a higher average level of job autonomy than women. Among the control measures, men tend to be younger than women, are more likely to be married, work longer hours, and are more likely to be supervisors. Men are more likely to work in production jobs, while women are more likely to hold administrative, service, and professional jobs.

Receiving Work-Related Contact Outside of Normal Work Hours

In Model 1 of Table 3, we observe that schedule control and job autonomy are associated *positively* and independently with the frequency of receiving work-related contact outside of normal work hours; in addition, men report more contact than women. Model 2 indicates that the association between schedule control and contact is more positive among men (see Figure 1). Likewise, in Model 3, the positive association between job autonomy and contact is more positive among men (see Figure 2). Collectively, these patterns are more suggestive of the patterns predicted by the demands hypotheses: Schedule control and job autonomy are associated more positively with work-home role blurring in the form of receiving work-related contact. And, consistent with the traditional view, these patterns are much stronger among men.

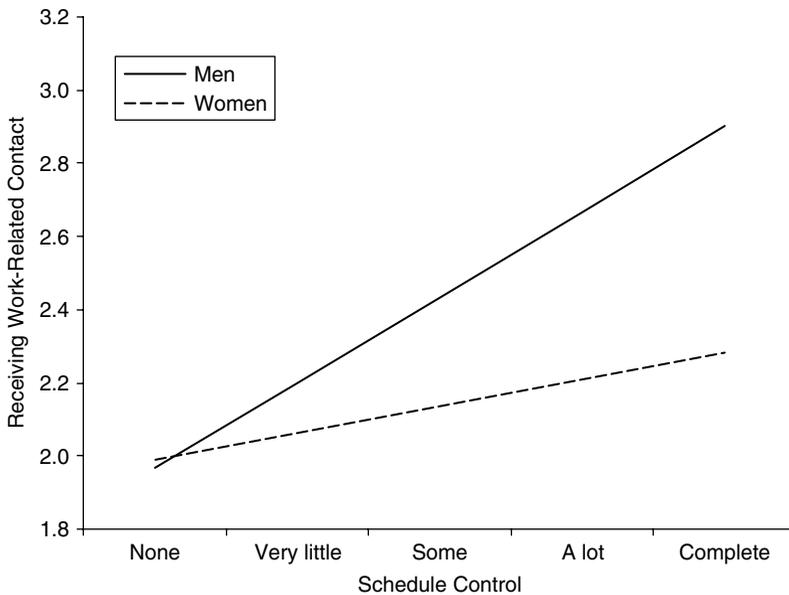
Table 3 • Regression of Receiving Work-Related Contact on Schedule Control, Job Autonomy, Gender, Interaction Terms, and Control Measures

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Focal associations</i>			
Schedule control	.134*** (.026)	.234*** (.040)	.132*** (.026)
Job autonomy	.185*** (.048)	.183*** (.048)	.341*** (.071)
Women	-.235** (.080)	-.228** (.080)	-.225** (.080)
Schedule control × women	—	-.161** (.049)	—
Job autonomy × women	—	—	-.254** (.087)
<i>Control measures</i>			
Age	-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.003)
White	.156† (.083)	.167* (.083)	.155† (.083)
Married	-.064 (.071)	-.063 (.071)	-.070 (.071)
Number of children	.045 (.032)	.045 (.032)	.044 (.032)
Education	.157*** (.034)	.155*** (.034)	.157*** (.034)
Production ^a	-.404*** (.123)	-.366** (.123)	-.399** (.123)
Service ^a	-.326* (.134)	-.325* (.134)	-.324* (.134)
Administrative ^a	-.513*** (.114)	-.508*** (.114)	-.523*** (.114)
Sales ^a	-.221† (.134)	-.227† (.134)	-.245† (.134)
Technical ^d	-.560*** (.167)	-.555*** (.166)	-.573*** (.167)
Executive ^d	-.138 (.107)	-.135 (.107)	-.144 (.107)
Work hours (40 to 49) ^b	-.005 (.088)	-.012 (.088)	.002 (.088)
Work hours (50 and above) ^b	.687*** (.104)	.668*** (.103)	.687*** (.103)
Supervisor	.612*** (.072)	.617*** (.072)	.614*** (.072)
Job demands	.353*** (.052)	.353*** (.052)	.353*** (.052)
More than one job	.264** (.085)	.267** (.085)	.265** (.085)
Regular shift	-.337*** (.081)	-.337*** (.081)	-.338*** (.081)
Constant	1.144	1.136	1.130
R ²	.218	.222	.221

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

^aCompared to professional occupations.

^bCompared to fewer than 40 hours per week.



Notes: Predicted values shown above are derived from Model 2 of Table 3. All control variables are held constant at their respective means. For categorical/contrast codes (i.e., occupation), we solved the equation using the modal response.

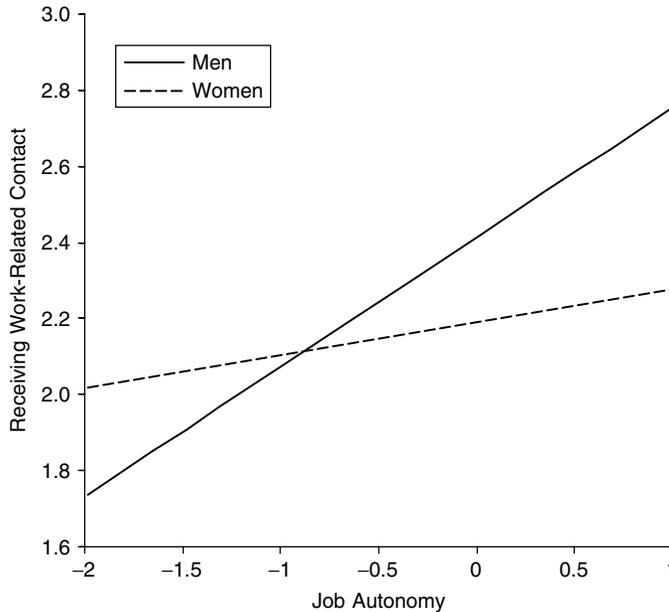
Figure 1 • Gender Differences in the Association between Schedule Control and Receiving Work-Related Contact Outside of Normal Work Hours

Although peripheral to our focal associations, the findings among our control measures deserve brief mention. Specifically, the following report more frequent work-related contact: The well-educated, supervisors, individuals in professional occupations, workers in highly demanding jobs, and individuals who work long hours, irregular shifts, or have multiple jobs.

Bringing Work Home

As shown in Model 1 of Table 4, job autonomy is associated positively with bringing work home (consistent with the demands hypothesis). Although we initially observe no variations in levels of bringing work home across levels of schedule control or gender, Model 2 indicates a significant interaction between schedule control and gender. Specifically, schedule control is associated positively with bringing work home among men only—a pattern consistent with the demands hypothesis and traditional view (see Figure 3). By contrast, Model 3 shows that job autonomy is associated positively with bringing work home similarly for women and men.⁵ Among the basic control measures, the following tend to report bringing work home more frequently: the married, the well-educated, supervisors, professionals, workers in more demanding jobs, and those working regular shifts and working more than 40 hours per week.

5. Some readers may wonder about the role of occupational status in our focal associations. For example, it is plausible that the observed effects of schedule control and autonomy are the result of occupational status in which jobs are put together as packages of demands and resources. To address this concern, our models indicate the *net effects* of schedule control and job autonomy once we have adjusted for occupation (and an array of work conditions). Thus, we observe the effects of schedule control and job autonomy even after adjusting for occupation and other potentially influential work conditions.



Notes: Predicted values shown above are derived from Model 3 of Table 3. All control variables are held constant at their respective means. For categorical/contrast codes (i.e., occupation), we solved the equation using the modal response.

Figure 2 • Gender Differences in the Association between Job Autonomy and Receiving Work-Related Contact Outside of Normal Work Hours

Work-to-Home Conflict

In Table 5 we regress work-to-home conflict on flexible work conditions and the role blurring measures. Schedule control and job autonomy are associated negatively with work-to-home conflict (see Model 1). While these patterns underscore the resource elements of these conditions, we also observe in Model 2 that receiving work-related contact and bringing work home are associated positively with work-to-home conflict—patterns consistent with the demands hypothesis. The simultaneous inclusion of work conditions and role blurring in Model 3 indicates that the negative effects of schedule control and job autonomy are slightly concealed by their positive associations with work-home role blurring.

In analyses of interaction effects, we observe in Model 4 that the positive association between receiving work-related contact and work-to-home conflict is positive and significant among workers who have *lower* levels of job autonomy (see Figure 4); among those with high autonomy, there is no association between work contact and work-to-home conflict. These patterns reinforce the resource view of job autonomy. However, when we examine the interaction effect between schedule control and bringing work home, our observations support the demands hypothesis: bringing work home is associated positively with work-to-home conflict among individuals who report more schedule control (see Figure 5).⁶ In tests for

6. We interpret the job autonomy \times contact and schedule control \times bringing work home interaction coefficient with respect to the ways that levels of job autonomy and schedule control modify the associations between those forms of work-home role blurring and work-to-home conflict. It is plausible to interpret the interaction differently by focusing on the ways that role blurring modifies the association between job autonomy/schedule control and work-to-home conflict. We chose the former interpretation, however, because of a theoretical interest in understanding the ways that hypothesized work-related “resources or demands” influence that relationship between work-home role blurring and work-to-home conflict.

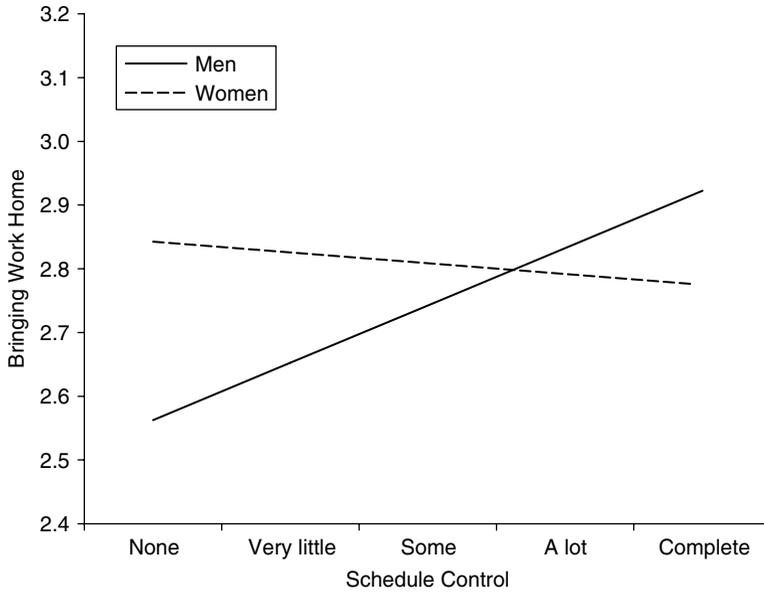
Table 4 • Regression of Bringing Work Home on Schedule Control, Job Autonomy, Gender, Interaction Terms, and Control Measures

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Focal associations</i>			
Schedule control	.024 (.019)	.090** (.029)	.024 (.019)
Job autonomy	.115*** (.034)	.114*** (.034)	.117* (.051)
Women	.069 (.057)	.073 (.057)	.069 (.057)
Schedule control × women	—	-.106** (.035)	—
Job autonomy × women	—	—	-.005 (.061)
<i>Control measures</i>			
Age	.001 (.002)	.001 (.002)	.001 (.002)
White	.097† (.059)	.105† (.059)	.097† (.059)
Married	.136** (.050)	.137** (.050)	.136** (.050)
Number of children	.016 (.022)	.016 (.022)	.016** (.022)
Education	.275*** (.024)	.273*** (.024)	.275*** (.024)
Production ^a	-1.177*** (.087)	-1.151*** (.087)	-1.177*** (.087)
Service ^a	-.812*** (.095)	-.812*** (.095)	-.812*** (.095)
Administrative ^a	-1.032*** (.081)	-1.029*** (.081)	-1.032*** (.081)
Sales ^a	-.688*** (.095)	-.692*** (.095)	-.688*** (.095)
Technical ^a	-.813*** (.118)	-.809*** (.118)	-.813*** (.118)
Executive ^a	-.405*** (.076)	-.403*** (.076)	-.405*** (.077)
Work hours (40 to 49) ^b	.227*** (.063)	.223*** (.062)	.227*** (.063)
Work hours (50 and above) ^b	.793*** (.073)	.780*** (.073)	.793*** (.073)
Supervisor	.192*** (.051)	.195*** (.051)	.192*** (.051)
Job demands	.222*** (.037)	.222*** (.036)	.222*** (.037)
More than one job	.088 (.060)	.090 (.060)	.088 (.060)
Regular shift	.158** (.057)	.158** (.057)	.158** (.057)
Constant	.259	.254	.259
R ²	.397	.399	.397

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

^aCompared to professional occupations.

^bCompared to fewer than 40 hours per week.



Notes: Predicted values shown above are derived from Model 2 of Table 4. All control variables are held constant at their respective means. For categorical/contrast codes (i.e., occupation), we solved the equation using the modal response.

Figure 3 • Gender Differences in the Association between Schedule Control and Bringing Work Home

gender contingent effects of work contact and bringing work home, we observed that the positive associations between those role blurring measures and work-to-home conflict are similar among women and men. Table 1 summarizes these results and shows whether they provide support for disconfirmation of the *demands* versus *resources* and *traditional* versus *egalitarian* hypotheses.

Discussion

Our study contributes to and extends three central themes in the work-home interface literature: (1) Work conditions that are typically viewed as resources—schedule control and job autonomy—are associated in different ways with work-home role blurring; (2) The association between work-home role blurring and work-to-home conflict varies differently across levels of schedule control and job autonomy, and those contingencies depend on the form of role blurring being considered; and (3) Despite broad sociocultural changes in work and family life that are suggestive of egalitarian trends, several of our observations vary for women and men. In general, these findings challenge the widespread view that schedule control and job autonomy *uniformly* function as resources that help people avoid trouble at the work-home border.

In an effort to test and refine border theory, we proposed two hypotheses. The resources hypothesis predicted that schedule control and job autonomy would be associated negatively with work-home role blurring and that role blurring would be associated positively with work-to-home conflict only among workers with low levels of schedule control and job autonomy. By contrast, the demands hypothesis predicted that schedule control and autonomy would be associated positively with work-home role blurring and that role blurring

Table 5 • Regression of Work-to-Home Conflict on Schedule Control, Job Autonomy, Gender, Interaction Terms, and Control Measures

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Focal associations</i>				
Schedule control	-.057*** (.012)	—	-.063*** (.012)	-.059*** (.012)
Job autonomy	-.136*** (.022)	—	-.150*** (.022)	-.161*** (.022)
Women	.022 (.037)	.047 (.037)	.025 (.036)	.028 (.037)
Work-related contact	—	.021* (.009)	.034** (.009)	.035*** (.009)
Bringing work home	—	.065** (.013)	.070** (.013)	.072** (.013)
Job autonomy × work-related contact	—	—	—	-.032** (.011)
Schedule control × bringing work home	—	—	—	.022** (.007)
<i>Control measures</i>				
Age	-.004*** (.001)	-.005*** (.001)	-.004*** (.001)	-.004*** (.001)
White	.097* (.038)	.066† (.039)	.084* (.038)	.082* (.038)
Married	.006 (.033)	-.009 (.033)	-.001 (.032)	-.007 (.032)
Number of children	.070** (.015)	.065*** (.015)	.067** (.014)	.065*** (.014)
Education	.055*** (.016)	.033* (.016)	.030† (.016)	.029† (.016)
Production ^a	-.021 (.057)	.128* (.059)	.075 (.058)	.061 (.058)
Service ^a	-.006 (.062)	.084 (.063)	.062 (.062)	.052 (.062)
Administrative ^a	-.029 (.053)	.094† (.055)	.061 (.054)	.053 (.054)
Sales ^a	.064 (.062)	.135* (.063)	.120† (.062)	.102 (.062)
Technical ^a	.094 (.077)	.178* (.078)	.171* (.077)	.162* (.076)
Executive ^a	.195*** (.049)	.216*** (.050)	.228*** (.049)	.217*** (.049)
Work hours (40 to 49) ^b	.151*** (.041)	.143*** (.041)	.135*** (.040)	.131** (.040)
Work hours (50 and above) ^b	.363*** (.048)	.289*** (.049)	.284*** (.048)	.284*** (.048)

(continued)

Table 5 • Regression of Work-to-Home Conflict on Schedule Control, Job Autonomy, Gender, Interaction Terms, and Control Measures (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Control measures</i>				
Supervisor	.025 (.033)	-.061 [†] (.033)	-.009 (.033)	-.008 (.033)
Job demands	.487*** (.024)	.508*** (.024)	.459*** (.024)	.462*** (.024)
More than one job	.034 (.039)	.027 (.039)	.019 (.039)	.018 (.039)
Regular shift	-.139*** (.037)	-.145*** (.038)	-.138*** (.042)	-.136*** (.037)
Constant	.835	.898	1.022	1.040
R ²	.266	.252	.282	.286

[†] $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

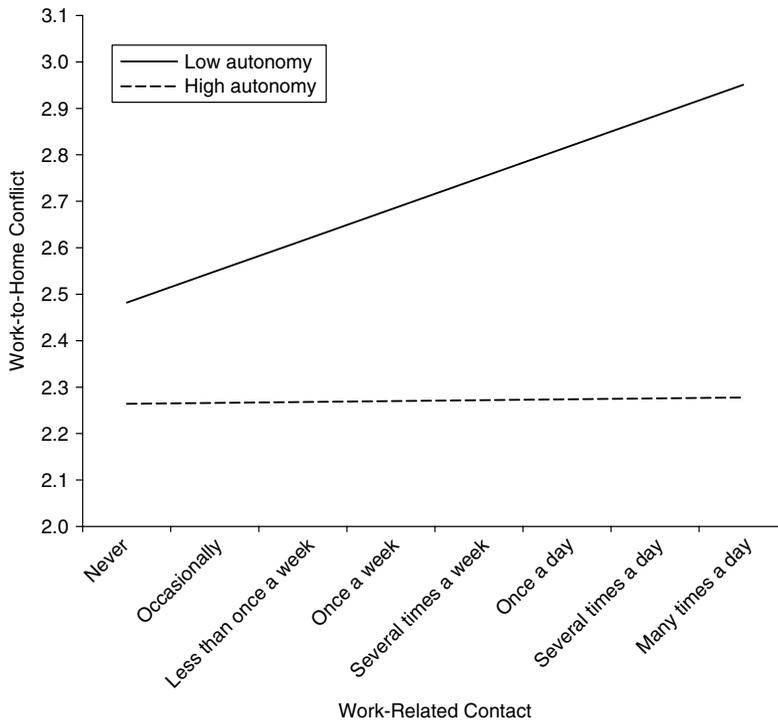
^aCompared to professional occupations.

^bCompared to fewer than 40 hours per week.

would be associated positively with work-to-home conflict, especially among workers with schedule control and autonomy. Although our observations generally support the demands hypothesis, the patterns are contingent upon gender and the form of role blurring being considered. Moreover, both forms of role blurring are associated *positively* with work-to-home conflict. Based on these patterns and the well-established inverse link between work-to-home conflict and health in previous studies (Bellavia and Frone 2005), we conclude that at least *some* elements of work-home role blurring seem to represent *adverse* arrangements.

Border theory emphasizes the ways that workers' arrangements at work shape the borders between work and home. We found that schedule control and job autonomy—often considered flexible work conditions—do not uniformly translate into “problem-free” role blurring. Specifically, schedule control and job autonomy are associated positively with the frequency of receiving work-related contact outside of normal work hours only among men. Similarly, the association between schedule control and bringing work home is positive only among men. Taken together, the patterns predicted by the demands hypothesis are more characteristic of men's experience—findings that are consistent with the traditional view of gender roles. These observations speak to current debates about communication technology and the work-home interface. One camp asserts that role blurring associated with technology use has favorable effects because it promotes flexible role arrangements (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman 2001; Valcour and Hunter 2005). Another view contends that role blurring is harmful because of its links to excessive demands, individualism, or stressful role intrusions (Galinsky, Kim, and Bond 2001; Kraut et al. 1998). There is little doubt that technology enables the greedy tentacles of work. Higher status workers may especially feel the force of norms about *ceaseless* availability and their own desires for status. These ideas challenge the notion that work-home balance is more easily attained for central participants (Clark 2000). Although it is critical to acknowledge and elaborate on cultural and organizational norms that influence the likelihood of and consequences for workers taking advantage of flexible scheduling arrangements (Galinsky and Stein 1990), it is worth exploring the implications of workers' “taking advantage” of such arrangements for the nature of their role blurring activities and its implication for role conflict.

Our observations also speak to border theory's notion that levels of permeability and flexibility influence the *strength* of work-home borders. Higher levels of impermeable, inflexible borders that thwart work-home role blending are viewed as “strong,” while low levels of

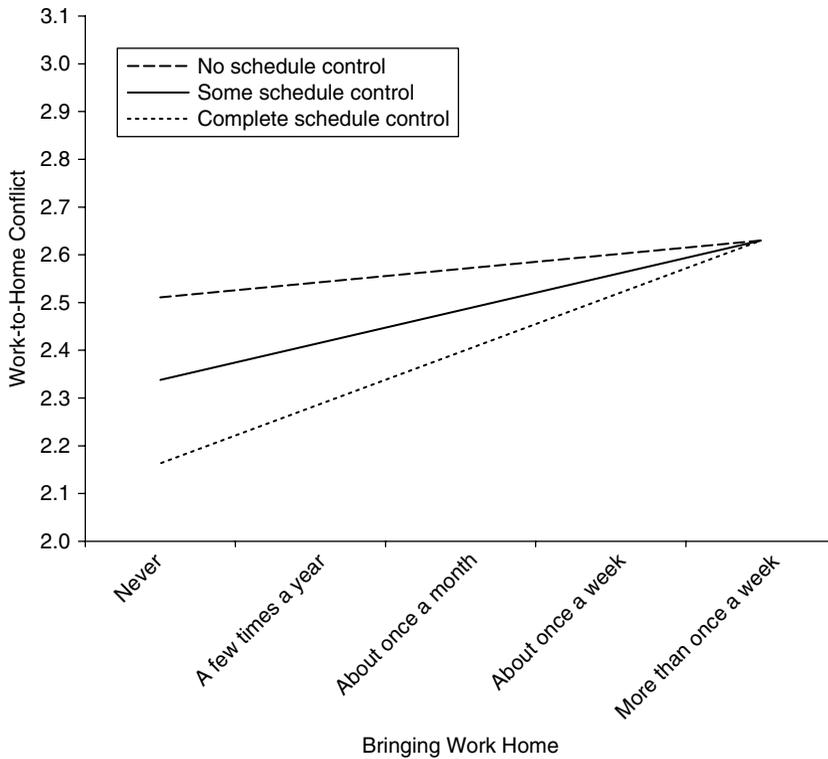


Notes: Predicted values shown above are derived from Model 4 of Table 5. All control variables are held constant at their respective means. For categorical/contrast codes (i.e., occupation), we solved the equation using the modal response. Low and high job autonomy represent the values at the 10th and 90th percentiles, respectively.

Figure 4 • The Association between Receiving Work-Related Contact and Work-to-Home Conflict at Different Levels of Job Autonomy

these characteristics that facilitate role blending are deemed as “weak.” According to Clark (2000), “popular literature frequently lauds the weak border as the one that is most functional for individuals. However, as ‘responsive workplaces’ add more flexibility, *many employees continue to express frustrations*” (p. 758, emphasis added). This point is critical but largely overlooked in the work-home interface literature. Here, our findings directly challenge the view that a weak border is necessarily *more functional* for individuals. Future research might attempt to better understand the extent that workers’ “frustrations” with more flexible work reflects a form of “high status blowback.” That is, schedule control and job autonomy are often viewed as elements of flexible workplace conditions. Tinkering with levels of these conditions, however, may not help higher status workers manage work-home borders because they may simply compress their work into smaller spaces of time (Milliken and Dunn-Jensen 2005). Additional analyses might examine the extent that individuals actively integrate work and nonwork life—as a form of *efficacious role blending*—in order to more effectively complete tasks, advance in higher status positions, and ensure the successful operation of the workplace. We are not arguing that efficacious role blending is “stress free,” but rather that these processes entail status-enhancing intentional acts.

We have also sought to elaborate and refine a gender view of border theory by testing the traditional versus egalitarian hypotheses. Our observations yield mixed conclusions. Consistent with the traditional view, men report higher levels of receiving work-related contact outside of work than women. By contrast, the finding that work-home role blurring is related



Notes: Predicted values shown above are derived from Model 4 of Table 5. All control variables are held constant at their respective means. For categorical/contrast codes (i.e., occupation), we solved the equation using the modal response. Low and high job autonomy represent the values at the 10th and 90th percentiles, respectively.

Figure 5 • The Association between Bringing Work Home and Work-to-Home Conflict at Different Levels of Schedule Control

to work-to-home conflict in similar ways for women and men is consistent with the egalitarian view. The traditional view proposed that the traditional benefits of higher status work have allowed men to blur the borders between work and home (in a normative fashion). Some of our findings are consistent with that assertion. For example, schedule control is associated positively with receiving work-related contact and bringing work home among men only; likewise, job autonomy is associated positively with receiving work contact among men only. Why are women and men different in these respects? We suspect that the *instrumental* meanings of schedule control and job autonomy may be more closely linked to role blending processes among men. That is, men may be more able to tap the productive and efficacious benefits of flexible conditions in ways that contribute to role blurring. Yet, the positive association between receiving work-related contact and work-to-home conflict implies that instrumental control over the work-home border has limited benefits. These ideas are speculative, however, because we lack measures of the meanings of border control and border crossing.

These points further underscore an important limitation of our study: Our measures do not allow direct observation of workers' *reasons* for integrating work and nonwork roles or if these are voluntary or involuntary processes. Future research should assess the extent that receiving work-related contact outside of normal work hours and bringing work home occur in a work context where the individual has power and more deliberately engages in these

role-blurring activities. Here, more explicit measures of the “work/family devotion schemas” and “central participant status” would be beneficial; unfortunately, we can only infer these processes based on prior evidence that central participants tend to have work with more schedule control and job autonomy (Blair-Loy 2003; Hochschild 1997; Jacobs and Gerson 2004). In addition, it would be helpful to determine the specific source of contact (i.e., an oppressive and intrusive boss versus a highly valued and appreciative client) and workers’ appraisals of such contact. Moreover, the limitations of our measures restrict the capacity to determine if role blurring has differential effects on work versus nonwork roles. Thus, additional research is needed to illuminate these multiple nuances in the work-home interface.

Another direction for future research involves the ways that schedule control and job autonomy shape a “selective permeability” of the work-home interface, especially technology use outside of work. We have challenged the assumption that technology necessarily *enables* the negotiation of the work-home border and the achievement of balance. A workforce that is reachable via BlackBerry—24/7—may experience personal and social costs regardless of the benefits of higher status. Moreover, the definition of “normal work hours” and the border it implies may have less relevance for higher status workers who *expect* to exchange work-related communications outside of work. Some workplace cultures may convey that work is supposed to happen at other times and places—cultural changes that insist on greater work-home blending and integration. The organization of work influences and is influenced by cultural dictates about what may or must cross the work-home border. In high status contexts, work-home integration may be less likely to coexist with successful work-home balance; instead, for many individuals, work may dominate to create one-sidedness or “border-creep” in the work-home interface.

Conclusion

Sociologists have long been interested in the ways that salient social roles intersect, especially those of work and family. Recent conceptual and theoretical specifications of the work-home interface have gone beyond the simple exploration of the conflictive elements to identify role blurring and blending dimensions. In this paper, we have sought to refine and extend knowledge on this topic by documenting the ways that two central work conditions—schedule control and job autonomy—contribute to work-home role blurring and modify its impact on work-to-home conflict. The main story from our observations is that work conditions, especially forms of flexibility, can generate negative consequences among those encouraged to be available for work 24/7. Thus, our observations challenge researchers in this area to consider both the resourceful and the stressful aspects of these work conditions, especially in relation to the work-home interface, as well as the potentially different (or similar) ways that men and women experiences these processes.

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