Personal Activities on Company Time to Make Everyday Life Work

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Introduction
Over the past decades, work and personal life have converged, partially due to rapid technological development that makes us reachable in a way not previously possible. This has changed from a situation during most of the industrial era where work was thoroughly separated from outside life. There have been a number of adverse consequences from this separation, mainly affecting women who must do household work in conjunction with a paid job.

Most studies in the field have dealt with how life outside work is affected. This chapter will instead look at how we choose to bring family, leisure, and other activities to work. This chapter will develop a typology of personal activities conducted on company time to facilitate life outside work.

The division of life
A new separation of time came along with the Industrial Revolution. Before large-scale production in factories, there were less clear boundaries between work and household. Many people worked out of their house. As more people moved to the cities to find work in factories, it became clear that working hours meant only work. Personal matters were dealt with in the small amount of spare time that people had left.

The employer is still exclusively interested in tangible and measurable outcomes of employee activity. This is the philosophy behind Taylor's *Scientific Management* (Taylor 1911) in the early 20th century. The notion that people at work should only engage in work activities and follow management's rules and regulations is still prominent (Furåker 2005). The Industrial Revolution is the origin of interest in the relationship between work and private life.

The separation of work from home is akin to a whole divided in half. The relationship between work and private life can be viewed in terms of three hypotheses: segmentation, spill-over, and compensation (Wilensky 1960). *Segmentation hypothesis* claims, in accordance with a general perception of work and leisure (Juni et al. 1996), that work and private life are two separate spheres with no actual interaction.
The notion behind this hypothesis is that “work and leisure are psychologically and physically separate” (Sumer & Knight 2001:653). According to the spill-over hypothesis, the two spheres influence each other in various ways. What happens in one sphere has an impact on the individual’s experiences and actions in the other sphere. The compensation hypothesis suggests that dissatisfaction in one sphere is compensated by increased commitment in the other sphere. Sumer and Knight (2001:654) suggest that segmentation, spill-over, and compensation may not be mutually exclusive. It is more likely that they are “overlapping, rather than competing, processes.”

Work-life balance
Theories of work-life balance mainly focus on the struggles working families experience in trying to manage everyday life. It is important to note that the concept of work-life balance has received criticism, primarily because there appears to be no such balance (see, for example, Crompton & Lyonette 2006). However, there are a number of other concepts that capture the phenomenon from slightly different perspectives: an ever-present imbalance between men and women (Petrona 2008), work-life conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985), work-life boundaries (Nippert-Eng 1996), work-life interaction (Crompton 2005), or even work-life integration (Lewis and Cooper 2006).

Work and family have been described as two greedy institutions (Coser 1974) or gravitational fields (Hochschild 2001) fighting for the individual’s time, energy, and commitment. An increasing proportion of men and women want a successful career and a successful family life (Chafetz & Hagan 1996; White et al. 2003). Such wishes are closely connected to identity theory, in which a central tenet is “people devote considerable time and energy to constructing and maintaining desired identities” (Prone et al. 1996:58). It is problematic to handle and balance working life and private life, since the needs and demands from family and private life undermine the possibility of maintaining a work-oriented identity (dedicated and successful professional). Conversely, the needs and demands from work undermine the possibility of maintaining a family-oriented identity (dedicated and successful parent or spouse). Identity is closely related to roles such as employee, parent, or spouse, and sometimes those roles come into conflict (Kahn et al. 1964).

Hochschild (2001:49) concluded, “Family life has a new tailored character.” People strive to efficiently perform not only necessary chores such as cleaning, cooking and washing, but desired activities such as going to the gym, arranging the children’s pi-
ano lessons, or even spending time with loved ones. Nolan (2002:126) supported this view by reporting how shopping, cooking, eating, and clean up take so much time that there is little or no room for conversation and emotional support within the family. The family dinner is a time of tension rather than a moment of relaxation with the opportunity to learn about each other's experiences during the day. One reason people work long hours or extensive overtime is that time in the workplace is seen as more peaceful or fun compared to time at home, Hochschild (2001:46) gave the following example:

Meanwhile, work time, with its ever longer hours, become newly hospitable to socialability – periods of talking with friends on e-mail, patching up quarrels, gossiping. In this way, within the long workday of Timmy's father were great hidden pockets of inefficiency, while in the far small number of waking weekday hours he spent at home, he was time conscious and efficient. Sometimes Timmy's dad forgot the clock at work; despite himself, he kept a close eye on the clock at home.

If the home has become a work-like place with little or no room for breathing, relaxation, or spontaneous fun, people may well try to offset this during working hours. People's busy private lives may have implied a willingness to move private matters into the workplace. D'Abate (2005), D'Abate and Eddy (2007) and Eddy et al. (2010) concluded that personal activities on company time (FACT) can be either home- or leisure-oriented.

Netemeyer et al. (1996) argued, in the same line as Frone et al. (1996), that there are differences between work-family conflict (i.e., work interfere with private life) and family-work conflict (i.e., private life interfere with work). Most research on work-life balance has "assessed only work-family conflict" (Netemeyer et al. 1996:400), but for many, a variety of demands and expectations from private life pushes into the workplace. It can involve matters such as: picking up young children from kindergarten; giving older children a ride to soccer practice; calling elderly parents to check on them; letting a plumber into the house; taking the car to a garage; sending and receiving e-mails; making telephone calls to friends; booking a doctor's appointment; or surfing the Internet for personal interest.

With support from Staines' (1980) literature review and the work by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), there are many conflicts between work and family life, leisure pursuits, and other outside-work commitments (i.e., political participation, volunteer work, or sports clubs). Bergman and Gardiner (2007:401) used the concept of availability: "To
be available is to be accessible in time and space and responsive to the needs and wants of others, for example one's employer or family. Availability is both a disposition and a capacity, emphasizing both structural conditioning and action.” Depending on the work and how it is organized, people have different degrees of availability for a wide range of non-work activities. For example, 79 percent of female and 90 percent of male white collar workers in the retail sector claim to have good opportunities to leave the workplace to carry out personal errands during working hours (Bergman & Ivarsson 2010:30).

Aim and research questions
The aim of this chapter is to classify and develop a typology of different forms of personal activities on company time, conducted to facilitate life outside work. This aim is divided into two specific research questions: To whom or what is the activity directed, and what are the motives or the function of the activity.

Method
The study had an exploratory approach and chose to depart from in-depth interviews with different groups of employees about PACT and its reasons. The purpose of the study was not been about the work-life conflict, but the topic has come up in interviews and become a central part of this sub-study.

The interviewees were selected for variation and diversity. This diversity centered on gender, age, and family situation (i.e., traditional core family, single parent, single, or members of any other form of family relationship). Furthermore, the line of business mattered. Overall, this resulted in 19 interviews (12 women and seven men) between the ages of 23 and 64. They represented both public and private organizations. More specifically, they worked in the paper and pulp industry, healthcare, sales, recruitment, restaurant, banking, social services, engineering, security, and maintenance.

The interviews were conducted with the support of a comprehensive interview guide. Questions revolved around the work situation, family, the need to perform personal activities on company time, and how one viewed these activities. The interviews lasted one to two hours. They were all conducted in person, usually at the university.

The 19 interviews resulted in more than 200 pages of printed materials. The analysis was inspired by grounded theory, particularly for what Strauss and Corbin (1998) described as the open coding of qualitative material. This means the study specifically
examined private matters in connection to life outside work, as described in the interviews. The statements were initially given fairly open concepts or codes. In the next step, the concepts were more systematized. Finally, we developed core categories around which we based our typology. The content of the typology is illustrated by citations from the interviews.

We also provide theoretical arguments about the possible outcomes in the typology to complement these strategically sampled interviews. This was partially done by comparisons with previous research and partially through logical thought operations where we asked ourselves questions such as "Given these conditions, what ought to have reasonably emerged?"

**Different directions and functions of PACT**

The aim of this chapter is to develop a typology of different forms of personal activities conducted on company time to facilitate life outside work. We used the two research questions to build the typology. These two issues constituted the two principal dimensions of the typology, along which we have placed our core categories. We will describe the two dimensions and their categories. We will then put the dimensions into a matrix in which there is a range of possible solution spaces that summarizes the different types of PACT. We will then place, illustrate, and discuss a range of empirical examples.

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<th>Function/Direction</th>
<th>Self</th>
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<th>Children</th>
<th>Others</th>
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**PACT-direction**

Previous research has shown that PACT can include resistance, where actions are directed toward management (Ackroyd & Thompson 1999). We instead captured activities by linking them to identity and social relationships outside work. Thus, the actions are directed outward from work (see also Karlsson 2012:193). In the table, *self* represents individuals and the identities maintained outside work. A potential *partner*
and children are examples of social relationships that may require attention during working hours. However, not everyone is a member of a traditional core family. The table emphasizes that there are other crucial social relations outside a traditional family arrangement. The last column, others, includes the extended family in terms of parents, siblings, friends and any commitments to associations.

**PACT functions**
In addition to the direction of the personal activities, we also categorized the various activities under more general headings. The model presents the basis of moving away from the immediate functions to longer-term and strategic considerations. The most immediate feature is recovery, or "a person's desire to be temporarily relieved from demands in order to restore his or her resources." (Sonnentag & Zijlstra 2006: 330). Researchers placed this recovery from work during evenings, weekends, and holidays. If the time outside of work is not sufficient for this, recovery enters the workplace. It can be anything from having to take a short break at the computer to clear the mind to sleeping during a night shift. One of the interviewees explains how she must recharge after emotionally tough client meetings:

> I surf the Internet just to let my brain rest. [...] I do it regularly. It's a way to get some breathing space. (Social worker)

Another interviewee explains the situation that arises when going on the week's first night shift:

> It happens quite often that one is sleeping. [...] The night between Monday and Tuesday means that you have been up almost 24 hours. You get up as usual on Monday morning, the children are going to school, and so on. You may rest a while in the afternoon but without getting any proper sleep. So you're pretty tired [as soon as the shift begins], perhaps doze a little early night. But sometimes you sleep heavily. It happens everywhere. And those who say they do not sleep on the job, they are lying. (Process operator)

We chose not to link recovery to social relationships outside of work. Certainly, an individual could give their partners or others recovery by some personal activities during working hours, but examples are hard to find and seem rather far-fetched.

The concept of care is borrowed from Warne (1996:206), who defines it as acts performed, primarily on behalf of another, for whom one has responsibility. We added to
this what are colloquially called favours between friends and acquaintances. By combining self and care, the empirical examples are leaving work to get a massage or visit the gym. These examples may well fall under the recovery function. Care for the partner covers such activities as detouring to drop off the partner at his or her workplace, leading to being late to work. This could be an act of love or a favor to one’s partner, and does not have to build on the idea of care as defined above. Favors for partners can take many forms, and there is plethora of examples in the empirical material. A nursing assistant discussed what she does when she wants something printed from the Internet:

If someone has baked a cake and brought it to the job, and I want the recipe, it can happen that I print it. But other things, I have not actually done that. I usually leave it to my husband to take that part. That he prints out at his job so I do not have to take that. (Nursing Assistant)

The next result in Table 1 involves raising children, which is perhaps an area that immediately comes to mind when we think of how the family interferes with work. These actions could involve anything from a crisis where a parent must leave work to care for children who have been hurt or ill, to picking up the kids earlier from preschool, to making personal calls during work hours to arrange for childcare. One of the interviewees saw this as a natural feature of having children:

Yes, since I have children, then you’re forced sometimes... You have to call the daycare. It’s not for my own satisfaction, it’s because I must. (Mechanic)

Many employees feel they have opportunities to do this kind of PACT. Bergman & Ivarsson (2010:30) showed that 79 percent of female managers and 90 percent of male white collar workers in the retail sector claimed to have good opportunities to leave the workplace to manage personnel matters or errands, such as those concerning children, during working hours. However, these opportunities are not evenly distributed. Corresponding figures for store employees in the retail sector are 55 percent for men and 38 percent for women. Care and favors to others may also include involvement in charities and other nonprofit organizations. Staines (1980:112) pointed to the potential conflict between work and what he called the other non-work related domains, specifically political participation.
There are quite a few examples that PACT fulfills practical functions for the individual. However, this phenomenon is traditionally known as pilfering in British contexts (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). The American context defines it as "a worker's use of company materials or tools in his or her workplace during working hours, to manufacture or transform articles that are not part of the official production of the organization" Antey (2008:29). Pilfering is often regarded as an expression of opposition to management. It may range from stealing materials and tools, to time-appropriation to perform private tasks during work hours. Some of the interviews indicated a resistance purpose with at least some of these activities. One interviewee explains how it could sound if an employee asked for personal help at the mill's workshop:

"It's pretty funny actually... You tell them you need this or that thing made. Then you get the following answer: - 'Well, it is work or leisure? Is it work related, we have no time, but if it's play or leisure we'll help you'. Leisure is given precedence, right? A few years ago it was pure mass production of these big candlesticks. [...] But now it's much tougher surveillance of material and time. (Process operator)"

He also gave examples of how chores at home blend in with work. He had many hobbies and children at home, so there were always things that need to be fixed. Night shifts were useful for this purpose, especially when he felt there was nothing useful to do when production was running smoothly and his duties were simply monitoring a computer screen.

"I bring small stuff from home that is broken and needs mending. It can be brought to the job. There, I have the tools I need and someone to ask if needed. But only small stuff, of course. (Process operator)"

Interviewees also discussed when they felt compelled to report their leaving in the time-reporting system. An IT coordinator said that certain private matters must be done during working hours, such as going to the dentist, hairdresser, or car mechanic. In those cases, she would record her leave to avoid an embarrassing situation if she ran into one of her supervisors. However, she did not report it for shorter absences. Another interviewee noted that the employer deducts time for lunches, although she and her colleagues rarely had time to eat properly because there was a steady stream of customers. If she had the opportunity to leave work before the end of the day, she did not register it in the time-reporting system, since she believed she was entitled to it. A number of interviewees discussed the boundaries for what is considered right, reasonable or even necessary. A nursing home employee mentioned
a colleague who lived in a caravan during the summer. The colleague did her laundry at work to make life easier at the RV campsite.

It is so disturbing. She takes her laundry and washes it in the washing machines that are designated for our residents. That is not okay. That is beyond the limit. (Nursing Assistant)

A janitor who lived close to work mentioned that going home to pick up a forgotten lunch box was acceptable. However, shopping for the weekend during working hours, as some of his coworkers had done, irritated him. Regarding practical chores during working hours aimed at partners and children, we find those who book time for parent-teacher meetings, look for equipment for children’s leisure activities on the net and the like.

PACT conducted for self-interest deals with leisure research. The main goal of the hobby-oriented branch of leisure research is to explain why people are attracted to the activities in which they engage. The research also identifies what people are getting from leisure activities that they do not get out of wage labor or house work (Stebbins 1992:124). It is worth noting that even individuals with an enthusiastic attitude toward work may be consumed by a particular hobby (Stebbins 2001).

A mechanic, whose major hobby was motorcycles, shared his passion with the business owner. They occasionally took a few moments to solve a technical problem on one of his current motorcycle projects, with permission to be in the company’s premises after hours and use the equipment in the workshop. The fact that his hobby interfered with working time was also part of the so-called psychological contract (Herriot et al. 1998) that strengthened his attachment to his employer. As a result, he felt loyalty to his employer, and it was hard to say no when he was asked to work overtime.

Another example of using PACT for self-interest is that of social media. Previously, Internet usage during working hours was limited to those who had access to a computer, usually those with a desktop computer provided by the employer. There were also opportunities for employers to monitor and control the use of computers for private purposes. However, with the development of smartphones, employees can connect to the Internet with their own private equipment and subscriptions (Ivarsson & Larsson 2012). The interviewees described how some employers had a more per-
missive attitude toward private Internet use, in combination with simple policies that employees should only visit certain types of pages. A woman who worked at a bank discussed how she interpreted her employer's rules.

You must not look at anything that is offensive or sexual, so to speak, or anything that is inconsistent with the bank's reputation. It's very fuzzy written (the policy). But some things seem pretty obvious. You simply don't go there. (Bank Clerk)

Other employers seem to have resigned themselves to it and decided that surfing the Web was not an issue. However, some employers adopted a total ban, since private phone calls and Facebook updates are perceived to take too much time. There are still ways to get around this. One interviewee noted:

Yes, well it happens that I check [the cell phone] sometimes, but usually I have my phone in the locker. Actually, you are not allowed to have your cell phone on the job. But some of us have ... Well, maybe if you go to the bathroom, "Ah, damn, maybe I should check the phone if there are any missed calls." Then maybe you get stuck there for five minutes or something. It does not matter. But you cannot just sit there for half an hour and leave someone else alone in the kitchen. If you do it quickly, then ... there is no problem. (Chef)

The travel agent who looked for cheap flights for herself and her partner is another example of interest-oriented PACT aimed at a partner (and herself). She felt this had no negative impact, since she learned more about travel destinations, which benefited her employer. A medical secretary pointed out that small talk about partners, children, and life outside work has an important role as a social adhesive, and a workplace composed only of work would be terribly boring:

I mean, we are not robots. It's not as if your life disappears just because you walk through the gates of the hospital. As long as [PACT] does not restrict what I'm here to do, I think it is quite okay. [...] But there is absolutely no reason why it should affect colleagues or work either. That is the basic moral. (Medical secretary)

In terms of PACT of interest aimed at children, we found statements from parents involved in their children's education or leisure. This could be everything from contacting daycare or school, to temporarily leaving work to drive the kids to a recreational activity. It is not uncommon for such recreational activities to be held in the

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early afternoon. However, such PACTs are predicated upon the ability to leave the worksite, which not everyone has. Time spent on associations and other nonprofit activities is closely related to the hours put into the interest of children and partners.

Finally, there are *calculative* functions. When directed to the self, these may involve the use of work time to search for a new job. This may include reading help-wanted advertisements, writing applications, and going on job interviews. Calculative motives aimed at the partner or the children touches upon what has colloquially come to be known as “helicopter parenting,” “hovering,” (Le Moyne & Buchanan 2011) or the Scandinavian concept of “curling parents.” (Hougaard 2000) These concepts describe parents over-protecting their children, which cell phones, text messages, and social media have made easier. This is not just about having a hard time letting go of the children. Children are expected to fulfill their parents' goals to be professionally and personally successful. It is this element that makes the activity calculative and sets it apart from the interest-function described above. For example, calculative PACT directed toward the children may be a parent bringing a child’s school project to work to enhance it. The more or less explicit thought is that the children must be helped to get good grades in school to get ahead in life. Allvin et al. (2011) brought up similar ideas, but with a focus on the function of the modern family. They argued that the family has transformed from a sanctuary including both care and respite into a source of demands and uncertainty. The individual is constantly negotiating with other family members. Some parents unite in perhaps their only common project, the children, to give them as good a start in life as possible.

**Concluding remarks**

The blurred boundaries between work and private life has interested scholars for decades. While most research has examined how work influences family and leisure, we took a different approach and tried to systematize the phenomenon in this chapter. By doing so, we came across a number of theoretical concepts and research fields that need to be more thoroughly woven into our typology. A rather complex pattern emerged, with references to leisure, care, parenthood, resistance, and organizational behavior. There is a need for further empirical studies that explain the functions of personal activities on company time as well as potential positive effects for employees and employers.
References


