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Work-Family Balance: Origins, Practices and Statistical Portrait from Canada and France

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Abstract. This study examines the concepts contributing to the notion of work-life balance. It first presents “identity at work”, based on social and recognition theories. This concept leads to a more complex factor; namely the boundaries between work and private life. The transition between these two roles is based on flexibility and permeability and leads to the segmentation or integration of roles played by the individual in his or her daily life. Integration leads to spillovers that can be both positive and negative. Work-family conflict represents a negative spillover and it is a source of pressure, tension, and anxiety for the individual. In contrast, a spillover can be positive and results in enrichment. Finding a work-life balance is not only an individual responsibility as even governments and organizations have an important role to play. Work-life balance practices are classified into two categories: working time planning policies and appeasement policies for work-family conflict. The study then uses statistical data from OECD to analyze and compare the effect of public work-family balance policies on maternal employment rates in Canada and France. Results indicate a link between the employment rates and the public appeasement policies in these two countries: appeasement policies help mothers to stay in the labour market.

Keywords: *Identity at work, Work-life boundaries, Work-family balance practices, Canada, France.*

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1. Introduction

The contemporary evolution of the labour market poses the challenge “work-life balance” for organizations. Indeed, technological changes, the entrance of the women in the labour market, as well as the growth of dual career families, means that workers must rethink the positioning of their private lives regarding their professional lives. These two spheres of life are far from being independent. Indeed, the workers who are satisfied with their professional lives have more of a chance to have better private lives².

In 2000, one study suggested that more than half of workers assert that they grant greater importance to their personal lives than to their professional lives³. Organizations face the challenge of conciliating work-life, and even more so, the well-being of the individual at work is a priority because, as suggested by Deledeuille (2012:194)⁴, this individual constitutes one “*to be complete, to be consisted jointly of his professional life and his personal life*” (free translation).

This paper first presents the origins of work-life balance. It exposes identity at work, explores the boundaries between work and private life before analyzing the effects of the intersection of the borders between these two spheres in terms of conflicts, enrichment, and how these boundaries could be managed. The paper then presents work-life balance practices and, more specifically, how organizations and governments can benefit from and contribute to a better balance between these spheres of their employees. The paper then considers some statistical data from the OECD that illustrates work-family balance in France and in Canada.

² M. Deledeuille, *Nouveaux défis pour les responsables des RH: les équilibres de vie personnelle et professionnelle*, in F. B., Hassel, *Professionnaliser la fonction ressources humaines: quels enjeux pour quelle utilité?*, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2012, chapitre 7.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., page 194.

2. Origins

2.1. *Identity at Work*

“*Identity is core to human functioning*”⁵ Ashforth & Schinoff (2016: 118). Identity at work or work identity is part of the whole individual identity. Work identity can be defined as the collection of meanings attached to the self in a work domain⁶. This concept comes from two theories: social identity theory and theory of recognition.

In the first place, work identity comes from the social identity theory applied to the field of organizational behaviour. It represents a specific form of social identification. Indeed, work can be considered as a specific social action based on autonomy and resulting from the development of identities through the use of psychological processes⁷. Thus, identity at work is the result of a process of organizational socialization and socio-professional categorization⁸.

First, the socialization process allows the individual to learn and adopt standards and values in the work that so accomplished and built his professional identity. Professional identity is a set of elements that allow self-affirmation and recognition by others within the organization and, more specifically, in his area of professional socialization⁹. In general, organizational socialization concerns the new recruits who are often unsure of their status and it can be seen as an attempt to manage them¹⁰. They must learn the political and logistical organization and be aware of the expectations of their roles and standards of behaviour within the organization. This begins with a construction of the definition of oneself and the development of social identifications. According to the organizational socialization, development is done through symbolic interactions that lead to organizational definitions and self-definitions.

⁵ B. E. Ashforth, B.S. Schinoff, K.M. Rogers, “*I Identify with Her*,” “*I Identify with Him*”: *Unpacking the Dynamics of Personal Identification in Organizations*, *Academy of Management Review*, 2016, 41(1), 28-60.

⁶ D. Miscenko, D.V. Day, *Identity and identification at work*, *Organizational Psychology Review*, 2015, 2041386615584009.

⁷ E. Renault, *Reconnaissance et travail*, *Travailler*, 2007, (2), 119-135.

⁸ B.E, Ashforth and F. Mael, *Social identity theory and the organization*, in *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 1989, 20-29.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Hence, social categorization's function is twofold¹¹: on the one hand, it divides and stabilizes the social environment and on the other, it gives the individual a meaningful definition for other individuals. In particular, the occupational categorization allows the classification of the trades and professions. This categorization is not limited to social division, because it goes beyond that to reflect a psychological division contributing to the enhancement of the individual's life, and a moral division that allows the individual to judge others in the internalization of a social role¹².

Social identification comes from the concept of group identification. It has four characteristics¹³. First, it is a cognitive self-concept as it reflects the past, present, and future of the individual. Also, it is perceived as a personal experience of success and failure of the group. Moreover, it is different from the internalization, because it provides an answer to the question "who am I?" without the incorporation of the individual in the group's values, attitudes and principles. But it may result in internalization and adherence of the individual to the group. Finally, the group identification is similar to the identification with a person; the individual identifies him/herself in relation to a social worker. Social identification has several advantages. Most importantly, it helps the individual to increase their self-esteem¹⁴. Social identification within the organization comes from three backgrounds: the distinctive character of the group, the prestige of the group, and the relief from outside the group in question¹⁵. Besides this theory of social identification, the identity at work is based on the theory of recognition^{16 17}, which emphasizes the link between the autonomy of an individual and his identity. This connection highlights the fact that work is a form of social recognition as it reflects employment status and a judgment of the hierarchy; therefore, it helps to build the identity of the individual in question¹⁸. Furthermore, the identification of the individual in relation to his work is the first step of professional recognition¹⁹.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² E. Renault

¹³ E, Ashforth and F. Mael, E. Renault

¹⁴ B.E, Ashforth and F. Mael

¹⁵ Ibid., page 24.

¹⁶ A. El Akremi, N. Sassi, S. Bouzidi, *Rôle de la reconnaissance dans la construction de l'identité au travail, Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 2009, 662-684

¹⁷ E. Renault

¹⁸ E. Renault

¹⁹ A. El Akremi, N. Sassi, S. Bouzidi

Work identity does not only reflect the individual identity as it can be seen as a collective identity, and especially in jobs that require a strong interaction between employees²⁰. The example of the engineer's 'software', as described by Perlow (1999)²² shows that for this type of profession, one cannot speak of individual identity at work. The latter finds its meaning in a more inclusive identity which is the working group identity.

There is also another type of work identity that stems from the identity to the role of the individual within the organization. Each role uses a set of values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours that are clear and precise within the working group.

The organization is an open system in constant interaction with the environment²³. It is a social system and can be approximated to a subsystem of society. In fact, the organization is a place of cultural learning. Moreover, it is where the individual confronts the culture he has acquired by such diverse institutions as school, family, and society, with the requirements of the work and those of the organization. It is a place of interaction and human implication beyond its external structure. The individuals can be influenced in work by the circumstances of communication, which are going to shape the way they reason, symbolize, and interpret their experiences and those of the other people²⁴.

The organization is also seen as an area of professional socialization for the production of professional identities²⁵. This confirms the fact that work identity is central to the study of firms as social worlds²⁶.

Organizational identification is problematic because it can be coupled to a multitude of social identities. It is defined as "*the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent*"²⁷ Hall, Schneider & Nygren (1970: 176-177). This is the most used definition; but not the only one, and does not provide a clear

²⁰ L. Perlow, *The Time Famine: Towards a Sociology of Work Time*, in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1999, vol. 44, n. 1, 57-81

²¹ R. Sainsaulieu, *L'identité au travail: les effets culturels de l'organisation*, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 4e édition, 2014, 604 p.

²² L. Perlow

²³ D. Katz, R. Kahn, *The social psychology of organizations* (2ed.). New York, NY: Wiley, 1978

²⁴ R. Sainsaulieu, page 22.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ F. Osty, I. Sainsaulieu, & M. Uhalde, *Les mondes sociaux de l'entreprise : penser le développement des organisations*, *Entreprise & société*, 2007, 398 p

²⁷ D. T. Hall, B. Schneider, & H. T. Nygren, *Personal factors in organizational identification*, in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1970, vol 15, 176-190

explanation of the concept. Indeed, the organizational identification is often confused with other concepts such as loyalty, commitment, and internalization²⁸. Furthermore, an individual who considers that group identity is synonymous with organizational identity has a negative perception towards other groups or identities within this organization. This results in intergroup conflicts within the organization²⁹.

Therefore, it is the interaction of the company with the environment that defines the boundaries of organizational roles. These roles are called “*transmitted roles*”, because the organization transmits formal job requirements to its employees. Then they turn into “*received roles*” once the individual receives them³⁰.

However, within the society, the roles of each individual are not limited to organizational roles because the individual has several roles to play as the role of employee, the role of leader, the role of father or mother, and/or the role of the husband or wife.

Indeed, on one hand, a role is the basic entity of the social system³¹. On the other hand, the unity of the human being makes it impossible to separate his professional life from his private life, as they are in constant interaction³².

However, these roles result in different identities to a single individual as they reflect the values and beliefs that can be very different from one role to another³³. This leads us to question the existence of borders between the different roles; especially on the boundaries between the roles within the organization, and those played outside of it.

In the next section, we will present in more detail these borders between the working life and the private life of the individual.

2.2. Boundaries between Work and Personal Life Identity at Work

It is often assumed that personal life is linked to work and that each of them can affect the other. For the organization, personal life affects in a

²⁸ B.E, Ashforth, F. Mael

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ D. Katz, R. Kahn

³¹ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate, *All in a day's work: boundaries and micro role transitions*, in *Academy of Management Review*, 2000, vol. 25, n. 3, 472-491.

³² D.C. Tremblay, & É. Genin, *Permeability between work and non-work: the case of self-employed IT workers*, in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 2009, vol. 33, n. 4

³³ B.E, Ashforth and F. Mael

direct manner the productivity of the individual at work³⁴ and therefore proves that "*the ideal employee is someone who has no family*"³⁵ Supiot (1983: 385). This interaction between the two spheres of life leads us to ask how we can define the boundaries between work and personal life; two spheres of the individual life that involve different values, rules and behaviour³⁶.

The boundary of one sphere of life is defined as the line between this sphere and another sphere that marks the beginning and completion of behaviours relating thereto³⁷. Similarly, the boundary of a role is defined as the set of elements that define the extent and scope of that role³⁸. A boundary is created and maintained by the individual in order to simplify and bring order to their environment.

Therefore, it differs from one individual to another. Each individual in their daily life makes transitions between roles that cause 'borders' crossing³⁹ defining a transition between two roles as a psychological movement between them that allows disengagement of one role and commitment in another. They point out that there are three types of transitions: family-work transition, work-work transition (between two roles as subordination and representation), and finally, work-elsewhere transition. Other authors, like Campbell-Clark (2000)⁴⁰, focus only on the study of transitions between the professional role and personal role (interaction work - family).

A border can be presented not only in a spatial or temporal form⁴¹, but also in a psychological form⁴². For example, the spatial boundaries are certain geographic locations such as local businesses or homes where the individual has behaviour consistent with the requirements of the role-played. The temporal boundaries may be presented as certain days of the week (the weekend for the family role and the other days for work) or as certain hours of the day (work hours and non-work hours). Such

³⁴ R. Sainsaulieu

³⁵ A. Supiot, *Femme et famille en droit du travail*, dans *Le droit non civil de la famille*, PUF, 1983, p. 385

³⁶ S. Campbell Clark, *Work/Family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance*, in *Human Relations*, 2000, vol. 53, n. 6, 747-770

³⁷ D.C. Tremblay, É. Genin, *Remodelage des temps et des espaces de travail chez les travailleurs indépendants de l'informatique: l'affrontement des effets de marchés et des préférences personnelles*, *Temporalités*, dans *Revue de sciences sociales et humaines*, 2009, vol. 10

³⁸ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate, page 472.

³⁹ Ibid, page 472.

⁴⁰ S. Campbell Clark

⁴¹ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate

⁴² S. Campbell Clark

boundaries specify when the behaviour of each role may start⁴³. As for the psychological boundaries, they are reflected by specific rules for each role and determine the emotions, attitudes, and behaviour of the individual⁴⁴.

The transition or the interaction between roles involves two key concepts that are the characteristics of the borders of a role: flexibility and permeability⁴⁵. Flexibility is the degree to which the spatial and temporal boundaries can be malleable, while permeability is the degree to which elements of a role can enter another role⁴⁶. This permeability and flexibility may mitigate the inter-role conflict because they can facilitate transition between roles when necessary⁴⁷. Campbell Clark (2000)⁴⁸ states that the permeability of borders is central to the process of role transition since it includes flexibility in its definition. In general, the degrees of flexibility as well as permeability of the roles' borders differ from one individual to another^{49 50}.

There are three types of permeability: spatial, temporal and psychological that may be connected⁵¹. The spatial permeability means that the individual is geographically located in a role but psychologically committed in another, such as work at home. The temporal permeability means that the individual can do his work during his hours of rest or vice versa. Finally, the psychological permeability is "*a form of overflow or spillover*"⁵² that means that the satisfaction of an individual in a role impacts his satisfaction in another.

In addition to this concept of permeability, transitions from one role to another are affected by the concept of contrast that comes from role identity and that reflects the number of basic features and devices related to the role in question⁵³. The transition or the interaction between two roles is very difficult if they have a strong contrast.

⁴³ D.C. Tremblay, & É. Genin (1)

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate

⁴⁶ D.C. Tremblay, É. Genin (1)

⁴⁷ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate, page 474.

⁴⁸ S. Campbell Clark

⁴⁹ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate

⁵⁰ S. Campbell Clark

⁵¹ D.C. Tremblay, & É. Genin (1)

⁵² Ibid, page 3.

⁵³ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate

Flexibility, permeability, and contrast use two concepts; namely segmentation and integration of the roles played by the individual in his daily life⁵⁴. These two concepts are part of the same continuum⁵⁵.

The segmentation of roles is usually associated with low flexibility, low permeability, and a high contrast between them. This is a voluntary separation of roles at work and those out of work; for either of them affects the other⁵⁶. This segmentation has the advantage of reducing the blurring of roles and clarifies both the roles' boundaries, and the transition's nature. However, it makes the transition between the two spheres hard and especially the psychological side⁵⁷. The transition of segmented roles is done through the process of "Van Gennep's" (1960) which consists of three stages reflecting three groups of rites: rites of separation of the current role (disengagement), rites of transition (psychological and physical if it is necessary), and rites of incorporation in the second role.

On the other side of the continuum, we find integration that represents a strong interaction and interdependence of roles of the sphere of work and those of outside work. Thus, roles are poorly differentiated; borders are poorly defined which facilitates the permeability and the passage from one sphere to another⁵⁸. In general, "*highly integrated roles tend to have similar identities, be embedded in similar contexts, and overlap in the physical location and the membership of the role sets*"⁵⁹. Thus, inter-role transitions are frequent and unpredictable. In addition, the roles are not well defined and they are characterized by a blurring. This can lead to a negative connection between role identities and can negatively impact the double commitment since the integration of roles leads to many contradictions, confusions (what role the individual must reflect?) and unplanned interruptions⁶⁰. However, integration of roles has the advantage of simplifying the transition process since simple rites of passage can facilitate the release of a role and input in another.

It is noteworthy that there is no perfect integration or perfect segmentation of roles because the individual tends to adopt a role more or

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ S. Campbell Clark

⁵⁶ D.C. Tremblay, & É. Genin (1)

⁵⁷ B. Ashforth, G. Kreiner, M. Fugate

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., page 479.

⁶⁰ Ibid., page 481.

less integrator or roughly separator⁶¹. For example, the integration of roles is often associated with porous borders; the degree of force differs from one individual to another. Some authors have treated the temporal permeability and specifically the management of time between professional and personal lives^{62 63} and others have focused on the study of the spatial and temporal permeability⁶⁴.

Finally, the psychological permeability was the subject of a lot of research in the form of studies on spillover^{65 66}. The spillover of one of the two spheres (professional and personal) can be negative, in the form of conflict, as it can be positive, in the form of enrichment.

In what follows, we will present the two forms of spillover and the way in which we can handle it.

2.3. Conflicts, Enrichment and Management of Boundaries between Work and Other Spheres of Life

Conflict between work and other spheres of life is a form of role conflict. This is defined as the existence of different expectations of the roles of the individual⁶⁷. Role conflict means that meeting the expectations of a role can negatively influence the expectations of another⁶⁸.

This conflict is characterized by pressures from role played in work and from role played within the family since these two roles are mutually incompatible in some respects^{69 70}.

Besides such inconsistency of roles, there are other possible causes such as the incompatibility of a role with the individual's expectations or the divergence of expectations emanating from roles⁷¹.

⁶¹ D.C. Tremblay, É. Genin, (2)

⁶² L. Perlow

⁶³ D.C. Tremblay, E. Genin, *Money, Work–Life Balance and Autonomy: Why do IT Professionals Choose Self-Employment?*, in *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 2008, vol. 3, n. 3, 161-179.

⁶⁴ D.C. Tremblay, & É. Genin (1)

⁶⁵ J.H. Greenhaus, N. Beutell, *Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles*, in *Academy of Management Review*, 1985, Vol. 10, n. 1, 76-88.

⁶⁶ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell, *When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment*, in *Academy of Management Review*, 2006, 31: 72-92.

⁶⁷ D. Katz, R. Kahn

⁶⁸ É. Genin, *La porosité des temps chez les cadres*, Thèse de doctorat, 2007.

⁶⁹ J.H. Greenhaus, N. Beutell

⁷⁰ D. Katz, R. Kahn

⁷¹ Ibid.

Greenhaus and Butell (1985)⁷² as the majority of other researchers focused on studying the role conflict between work and family roles. They defined this conflict as an inter-role conflict that is caused by an incompatibility of the requirements of these two roles. Work-family conflict is the result of roles received by the individual⁷³. The same authors have concluded that there are three types of conflict: conflict based on time, conflict based on tension, and conflict based on behaviour.

The conflict based on time means that time required to respond to a role makes it difficult, if not impossible, to answer the requirements of the other role. The conflict based on tension refers to the fact that the effort as part of a role makes it hard to meet the needs of another. Finally, the conflict based on behaviour means that the specific behaviour as part of a role does not allow responding to the requested behaviour as part of another.

Work-family conflict is a source of pressure, tension and anxiety for the individual. It can be seen not only as a one-way conflict: work negatively impacts the family, but also as a two-ways conflict: work negatively affects family and family negatively influences work⁷⁴. However, it should be specified that professional life has relatively impermeable borders while personal life has borders that are much more permeable to work. This leads to an asymmetry in the permeability strength of these two spheres of life⁷⁵.

The sources of conflict are multiple and can be divided into two groups: the sources from work (such as the number of working hours, inflexible work, the ambiguity of the role), and sources from working-out role (as having children or a large family or family conflicts)⁷⁶.

Previous studies have addressed the issues of work-life conflict, stress and the resulting discomfort, and therefore focused on the negative effects. However, these negative effects are not the only results of the dual role played by most employees today. Indeed, individuals can take advantage of this multiplicity of roles if they manage to strike a balance.

⁷² J.H. Greenhaus, N. Beutell,

⁷³ D. Katz, R. Kahn

⁷⁴ B. A. Gutek, A. Searle, L. Klepa, *Rational versus Gender Role Explanation for Work- Family Conflict*, in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 76, n°4, 560-568

⁷⁵ D.C. Tremblay, É. Genin (1)

⁷⁶ J.H. Greenhaus, N. Beutell

Four concepts result from this positive relationship; namely enrichment, benefits, strengthening, and simplification⁷⁷. The study of these different concepts, which can be summarized under the concept of enrichment, emerged following the growing number of studies in psychology and organizational behavior that focus on strengths rather than weaknesses in understanding individual and social systems⁷⁸.

As part of this paper, we present the work-family enrichment. The latter was defined as “*the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role*” (Greenhaus & Powell 2006: 73)⁷⁹. This implies that work and family are allies^{80 81} and not enemies, as in the study of conflict.

This concept of “enrichment” is based on the resource expansion theory, contrary to the theory of scarcity of resources on which the conflict is based⁸². It was introduced and defined for the first time by Kirchmeyer in 1992⁸³. Kirchmeyer (1992)⁸⁴ was the pioneer of the study of the implications of working life on life outside work. He based his studies about the enrichment on the assumption that resources are abundant and growing. An important result that was stressed by Kirchmeyer is that the participation of the individual in the sphere of life outside work allows him to develop his skills, increase his self-esteem, and acquire positive attitudes to work, which can increase the resources available for the job.

There are two possible ways of enrichment^{85 86}: On one side and from an instrumental way, enrichment comes in the form of improved skills, abilities and values (such as improved interpersonal skills, leadership in work as a result of raising children in the family role). On the other side and from an emotional way, enrichment comes in the form of the transfer of affection and emotion from one role to another as confidence or good humour.

⁷⁷ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell

⁷⁸ Ibid., page 73.

⁷⁹ Ibid., page 73.

⁸⁰ M. Dumas, *Conflit et enrichissement travail-famille et implication*, *Revue de gestion des ressources humaines*, 2008, 67

⁸¹ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell

⁸² M. Dumas

⁸³ C. Kirchmeyer, *Perceptions of nonwork-to-work spillover: Challenging the common view of conflict-ridden domain relationships*, in *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 1992, 13(2), 231-249

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ D.S. Carlson, K.M. Kacmar, J.H. Wayne, J.G. Grzywacz, *Measuring the positive side of the work-family interface: Development and validation of the wrk-family enrichment scales*, in *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 2006, Vol. 68, p131- 164.

⁸⁶ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell

The instrumental way aims the high performance in role B while the emotional way increases positive feelings in the role A that will increase the performance in the role B and then increase the positive feelings in the role B⁸⁷. In sum, the enrichment is reflected by the "quality of life" which is measured by two variables: the high-performance and positive feeling⁸⁸⁸⁹⁹⁰.

Like the work-family conflict, enrichment is bidirectional⁹¹. These two concepts are independent and unrelated⁹². In fact, conflict can coexist with enrichment. Each individual should find a balance between the two⁹³. In addition, studies that have evaluated enrichment and conflict of dual roles (professional and family roles) show that enrichment averaged greater than or equal to the conflict⁹⁴.

3. Work-life balance practices

Finding a balance between work and other spheres of life, often called work-life balance, is not only an individual responsibility as even organizations and governments have an important role to play. Work-life balance is a challenge for both HR manager and direction due to the evolution of HR function activities. In fact, policies of work-life balance have been demonstrated as an efficient tool to increase the commitment of employees⁹⁵ and to reduce their turnover⁹⁶. Managers contribute to the development of work-life balance policies and have a crucial role in the translation of these policies into practices⁹⁷. In particular, line managers

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ D.S. Carlson, K.M. Kacmar, J.H. Wayne, J.G. Grzywacz

⁸⁹ C. Closon, *Interface travail-hors travail: la satisfaction et la perception des politiques d'aide à la conciliation, des variables déterminantes?*, *Pratiques psychologiques*, 2009, Vol. 15, n.2, 203-212.

⁹⁰ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ M. Dumas

⁹⁴ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell, page 76.

⁹⁵ S.L. Grover, K.J. Crooker, *Who appreciates family-responsive human resource policies: the impact of family-friendly policies on the organizational attachment of parents and non-parents*, *Personnel Psychology*, 1995, 48, 271-288.

⁹⁶ D.R. Dalton, D.J. Mesch, *The impact of flexible scheduling on employee attendance and turnover*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1990, 35, 370-387.

⁹⁷ G.A. Maxwell, *Checks and balances: the role of managers in work-life balance policies and practices*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2005, vol. 12, no 3, p. 179-189.

and supervisors are responsible for the implementation and the management of these policies⁹⁸.

Work-life balance practices constitute a form of organizational support⁹⁹. They are defined as “*initiatives voluntarily introduced by firms which facilitate the reconciliation of employees' work and personal lives*” (Mccarthy et al., 2010: 158)¹⁰⁰. The aim of these practices is to reduce work-life conflict.

They encompass a wide range of programs. Originally, these practices were limited to the shorter working hours, but they have become diversified with the evolution of the context¹⁰¹. They include how long, when and where people work and other aspects¹⁰².

Work-life balance practices can be classified into two categories¹⁰³: working- time planning policies and appeasement policies of work-family conflict.

Firstly, working-time planning policies include flexible work hours or flexi-time (when employees choose their own starting and finishing times of work), shorter working hours (e.g. job sharing, part-time job) and tele-working (when employees have the possibility to work outside the office). This category provides effective solutions to the problems of reconciliation¹⁰⁴. Indeed, the individual has a limited time which led to the introduction of the term "famine of the time" and the appearance of the management of working time as a new concept¹⁰⁵. Working-time management studies the utilization of time and offers models that differ from one individual to another to help them in finding their own balance. Secondly, appeasement policies of work-family conflict include facilitating access to child-care, special maternity leave arrangements, family leave, household support services, and employee assistance programs. They aim to improve the quality of life of the employee by making allies in their professional life and their life outside work¹⁰⁶.

⁹⁸ A. Mccarthy, C. Darcy, G. Grady, *Work-life balance policy and practice: Understanding line manager attitudes and behaviors*, *Human Resource Management Review*, 2010, vol. 20, no 2, p. 158-167.

⁹⁹ F. Chiang, T.A. Birtch, H.K. Kwan, *The moderating roles of job control and work-life balance practices on employee stress in the hotel and catering industry*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2010, vol. 29, no 1, p. 25-32.

¹⁰⁰ A. Mccarthy, C. Darcy, G. Grady, page 158.

¹⁰¹ G.A. Maxwell, page 181.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ C. Closon

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁰⁵ L. Perlow

¹⁰⁶ C. Closon

These two categories of policies can be presented as one of these three forms: a strategic tool, an obligation, or an act of social responsibility¹⁰⁷. Policies can be seen as a strategic tool for the organization in the way that they allow, in the first instance, to resolve the conflict between work and other spheres of individual life, and in the second, to increase motivation, involvement, and the retention of current employees in order to attract future employees with high potential.

Moreover, policies can be seen as an obligation as a result of the evolution of the employment relationship and change in the psychological contract of work that includes a new dimension of work-life balance. In this sense, many employees can consider the implementation of reconciliation policies as an organizational requirement.

Finally, reconciliation policies can be seen as an act of responsibility and social commitment through which the organization demonstrates its contribution to the individual welfare.

In his study of the impact of work-life balance practices and policies on women's career advancement, Straub (2007: 295)¹⁰⁸ classified 14 European countries into three groups based on their performance in the field of work-life balance practices. The low performance group was comprised of Italy, Portugal and Belgium. In contrast, the high-performance group was comprised of Denmark, Ireland, the UK, The Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. In the middle, Germany, Finland, Greece, Austria and France constituted the medium-performance group in the field of work-life balance practices. In fact, these practices can be enrolled in a mandatory approach or in an incentive approach, depending on the country in question.

As mentioned above, line managers have an important and crucial role in determining the success and the effectiveness of work-life balance practices¹⁰⁹. In addition, these practices cannot be efficient without an organizational culture that supports their implementation¹¹⁰. Finally, after their implementation, work-life balance practices must be formally

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ C. Straub, *A comparative analysis of the use of work-life balance practices in Europe: Do practices enhance females' career advancement?.*, in *Women in Management Review*, 2007, vol. 22, no 4, p. 289-304.

¹⁰⁹ A. McCarthy, C. Darcy, G. Grady

¹¹⁰ F. Chiang, T.A. Birtch, H.K. Kwan

evaluated by organizations to ensure that they have beneficial effects on both the individual and the organization itself¹¹¹.

The reconciliation that involves management of boundaries between work and other spheres of life is a contemporary and widespread organizational challenge. To be managed, this challenge calls for reflection on the competencies of HR managers and HR practices.

Firstly, we need to rethink the tools HR systems utilize¹¹². Among these tools, we find the annual performance objectives interview used to assess the employee's activities, but should not be limited to this single objective, as it should be seen as a positive opportunity for exchange between the HR manager and the employee. Also, conflict prevention is another tool that may be utilized for the prevention of stress, insomnia, and psychosocial problems¹¹³.

Secondly, we must put in place training for HR managers, management and employees¹¹⁴. Such training should aim at raising the awareness of these stakeholders to the problem of conciliation and the way in which they can manage the boundaries of their lives at work and those of their lives outside work. Future HR managers must acquire different training to meet this challenge born after the recent developments in the world of work and the social environment.

This challenge must be an organizational priority since it meets the needs of the individual welfare, and therefore work performance, especially in high performance management models.

Work-life balance practices are important and are getting the attention of all the organizations since these practices influence organizational performance. In fact, there are two explanations of the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance¹¹⁵: individual-level explanations, such as organizational citizenship behaviour, improved work-related attitudes and reduced work-life conflict, and organization level explanations, such as improved productivity, retention, and recruitment.

These positive effects attest that work and family can be allies whereby work-family interface has a positive side; namely work-family

¹¹¹ T.A. Beauregard, L.C. Henry, *Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance*, *Human resource management review*, 2009, vol. 19, no 1, p. 9-22.

¹¹² M. Deledeuille

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ T.A. Beauregard, L.C. Henry, page 10.

enrichment^{116 117}. The organizations have a crucial role in this enrichment since their work-family balance practices are determinant to this aspect.

4. Work-Family Balance: Statistical Portrait for the French and Canadian Cases

The issue of work-life balance concerns all employees of both genders. We limited ourselves to the case of women.

The aim of this analysis is to explore the effect of public work-family balance policies on maternal employment rates in Canada and France.

We selected France because it is widely cited in the literature with regard to work-life balance. Since Canada, and more specifically Quebec, are inspired by French policies, we have chosen comparison between France and Canada.

In the first part, we will outline the evolution of women's employment rates in France and Canada. Then, we will present some work-balance practices used by these two countries. To start with, we will compare the time dedicated to care work by men and women in both countries. After that, we will present and compare three governmental appeasement policies: public spending on family benefits, parental leave system and childcare support. All data was taken from "OECD Family Database"¹¹⁸.

4.1 The Evolution of Employment Rates (%) for Women

Table 1 dresses some statistical data of the evolution of employment rates (%) for women (25-54 years old) with dependent children (0-14 years old) by the age of the youngest dependent child from 2005 to 2013.

Based on table 1, in France, employment rate for women with no children aged between 0 and 14 has increased 1.5% from 2005 to 2013. Moreover, the employment rate for those who have dependent child (aged 0-14) has also risen during the same period. This increase is 3.4% and is higher than the growth of the employment rate for women without children under the age of 14.

We can conclude that during the period 2005-2013, in general, employment rate for women has grown in France. This leads us to conclude that there are some work-life balance policies that encouraged

¹¹⁶ D.S. Carlson, K.M. Kacmar, J.H. Wayne, J.G. Grzywacz

¹¹⁷ J.H. Greenhaus, G.N. Powell

¹¹⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

women with children under the age of 14 to work and which had contributed to this augmentation.

In Canada, the employment rate for women (25-54 years old) with no children aged between 0-14 has increased from 2005 to 2013 and this rise is equal to 2.1% (table 1). Moreover, the employment rate for those with dependent child (0-14 years old) has also increased during the same period, but this growth was lower than the previous rate 1.3% (see table 1).

Table No. 1: The evolution of employment rates (%) for women (25-54 years old) with dependent children (aged 0-14) by age of the youngest dependent child, 2005-2013

Country	Age of youngest child	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
France	No children aged 0-14	77.7	78.2	80	79.9	78.4	79.8	78.6	78.5	79.2
	Youngest child aged 0-14	70.2	70.5	72.1	73.9	73.6	73.5	73.4	72.9	73.6
	- Youngest child aged 0-2	59.6	58.8	60	62.5	62.1	62.2	62.2	61.5	63.6
	- Youngest child aged 3-5	71.3	72.1	73.6	76.3	74.9	74.2	74.3	74.8	74.3
	- Youngest child aged 6-14	76.2	77	78.9	80	80.2	80.1	79.9	79.2	79.3
Canada	No children aged 0-14	79.7	80.6	81.4	81.6	80.7	80.5	81	81.3	81.8
	Youngest child aged 0-14	74	74	75.6	75.1	74.2	74.2	74.1	74.6	75.3
	- Youngest child aged 0-2	67.3	66.6	68.5	67.3	67.2	68.2	67.1	68	69.6
	- Youngest child aged 3-5	71.5	69.8	73.1	70.8	70.4	69.7	71.2	71.5	72.5
	- Youngest child aged 6-14	77.6	78.5	79.6	80.2	78.7	78.9	78.9	79.3	79.5

Source: Data of OECD (maternal employment) adapted from Canadian Labour Force Survey for Canada and from EU-LFS for European countries.

When we compare France and Canada during the period 2005-2013, for women aged between 25 and 54 years old, the employment rate is higher for Canadian women with dependent children, aged from 0 to 14, than for French women (Table 1). Canadian women are more encouraged to work than French women, even when they have children under the age of 14.

Also, in France and Canada, the employment rate for women with no children under the age of 14 remains higher than the employment rate for those who have children younger than 14 years old. This proves that

having children aged less than 14 years old contributes to the non-work of some women.

When considering the age of the youngest child, statistics for France and Canada for our period of study show that the employment rate for women with dependent children raises with the increase of children's age. In other words, the age of children is a determining factor for the employment rate of women (25-54 years old) in France and Canada (table 1). In fact, for women with dependent children aged between 0 and 2 the employment rate is the lowest (table1).

Table 2 presents employment rates for partnered mothers and sole mothers in France and Canada. It shows that the employment rate for partnered mothers (25-54 years old) with at least one dependent child aged between 0 and 14 has increased during the period 2005-2013, valid in France and Canada. This evolution was higher in France than in Canada (5% versus 1.8% respectively). In contrast, employment rate for sole mothers with at least one dependent child (aged 0-14) has slightly decreased during the same period for the two countries.

One may conclude that, both in France and Canada, sole mothers with at least one child were not encouraged to work. Work-life balance practices in both countries were favorable to the work of partnered mothers with at least one dependent child despite the work of sole mothers.

Table No. 2: The evolution of employment rates (%) for partnered mothers and sole mothers (25-54 years old) with at least one dependent child aged 0-14

	Partnered mothers				Sole mothers		
	2005	2009	2013		2005	2009	2013
France	70.6	74.8	75	France	68	67.3	66.8
Canada	74.3	74.5	76.1	Canada	72.2	72.1	71

Source: Data of OECD (maternal employment) adapted from Canadian Labour Force Survey for Canada and from EU-LFS For European countries.

Concerning France, the increase of employment rate for partnered mothers with at least one dependent child under the age of 14 may be explained by the change in employment patterns in couple households with children (see table 3). In fact, during the period 2003-2013, for the French case, the proportion of couple households with full-time dual earner has increased by 2.59% and those of couple households with one-and-a-half earner has increased by 0.42%. This proves that partnered

mothers in France with at least one child under the age of 14 are accepting full-time jobs more than part-time ones despite joblessness.

Table No. 3: Change in the distribution of employment patterns in couple households with at least one child aged 0-14 between 2003 and 2013

	Proportion (%) of couple households with:														
	Full-time dual earner			One-and-a-half earner			Sole earner			Jobless			Other		
	2003	2013	Change	2003	2013	Change	2003	2013	Change	2003	2013	Change	2003	2013	Change
France	38.76	41.35	2.59	25.78	26.2	0.42	27.99	23.15	-4.84	4.37	5.03	0.67	3.09	4.27	1.18

Source: Data of OECD (Changes in patterns of employment in couple households with children, 2003 to 2013) adapted from EU-LFS for France

4.2 Appeasement Policies

In general, the number of children under school age is a determining factor in time dedicated to care work, valid for men and women both in France and Canada (Table 4). The time dedicated to care work includes the time spent to care after household members or to informally help one another. It includes all episodes of care work declared as primary or secondary activity only for the French case. There is a positive relationship between the number of children under school age and the time dedicated to care work (see table 4 for more details).

Table No. 4: Time dedicated to care work, by number of children under school age (7 years)

	Men age 25 to 44			Women age 25 to 44			
	No Child	1 child	2 children or more	No Child	1 child	2 children or more	
France (1999)	1.1	3.6	4.5	France (1999)	2.2	8.8	12.8
Canada (2005)	2.1	5.6	6.6	Canada (2005)	1.9	7.7	8.8

Note: Care work includes here all episodes of care work declared as primary or secondary activity, except for the United States and Canada. It also includes the time spent to care for household members

Source: Data of OECD (time use of work and care) adapted from National Time Use Surveys as reported in the HETUS dataset.

Trying to reduce this time of care work and to help parents find their balance between work and family, many appeasement policies have been put in place in France and Canada. We will present three work-family

balance policies introduced by the two governments, which are: public spending on family benefits, parental leave system and childcare support. Public spending on family benefits can be in cash, in services or in tax breaks. In 2011, statistics show that the French total public spending on family benefits calculated in percent of GDP is higher than the Canadian one (see table 5 for more details). This result is valid for the three forms of public spending: cash, services, and tax breaks towards families. In fact, public spending on family in services is very small in Canada compared to those in France (table 5).

Table No. 5: Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, in per cent of GDP, 2011

	Cash	Services	Tax breaks towards families	Total
France	1.57	1.36	0.68	3.61
Canada	1.02	0.22	0.19	1.43

Note: Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here.

Source: Adapted from Social Expenditure Database preliminary data (www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm), September 2014

When it comes to paid leave available to mothers and fathers, statistics from table 6 show that in 2015 the total paid leave available for both parents in Canada (27.3 weeks) are higher than the total paid leave in France (24.5 weeks). This is a result of the fact that paid parental and home care leave in Canada far exceed those in France.

In contrast, French parents have access to a more generous paid maternity leave than Canadian parents. This generous compensation in France and especially the generous average payment rate for paid maternity leave may result in encouraging French mothers to leave the labor market for a long period. This may make it difficult for French mothers to come back to work, although, the weak average payment rate for paid maternity leave (less than 50%), encourages them to stay at work.

Table No. 6: Paid leave entitlements available to mothers and fathers, in weeks, 2015

		Paid maternity leave			Paid parental and home care leave available			Total paid leave available		
		Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks
France	Mothers	16	93.5	15	26	14.6	3.8	42	44.7	18.8
France	Fathers	2	93.5	1.9	26	14.6	3.8	28	20.2	5.7
Canada	Mothers	17	48.3	8.2	35	54.7	19.1	52	52.6	27.3
Canada	Fathers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Sources: Data adapted from OECD (Parental leave systems) that are adapted from OECD Social Expenditure Database

Finally, when comparing Childcare support in 2012 (Table 7), the Canadian case shows that the Gross childcare fees for two children (aged 2 and 3) represents 39% of the average wage. These fees are lower for the French case since they represent 18.7% of the average wage.

Table No. 7: Gross childcare fees for two children (aged 2 and 3) in % of average wage, 2012

	Gross childcare fees in % of average wage
France	19.7
Canada	39.0

Note: The average wage reflects the earnings of an “average worker”
Source: OECD Tax-Benefit model 2014

4.3 Concluding Remarks about These Statistics

When analyzing the employment rates in Canada and France and the public appeasement policies, we can establish some links between them. In Canada, it appears that several factors encourage Canadian mothers to work: the public spending on families, especially the low level of spending; childcare support characterized by the high gross childcare fees as a percentage of the average wage, and the low paid maternity leave. This is not the case for France, where the high level of public spending on families, the extent of childcare support (the moderate gross childcare fees as a percentage of the average wage), and the generous total paid leave, especially the generous paid maternity leave, are all factors that encourage French mothers to stay at home to take care of their children.

Data about organizational work-life balance practices was not available so we were not able to compare Canadian and French organizational practices and to analyze their effects on employment rates for mothers with children under the age of 14. Future research may extend this work by investigating how these organizational practices may influence employment rates.

5. Conclusion

Labour market transformations and specifically the growing number of working-women have led to the increase of families with two breadwinners. Consequently, the issue of balancing work and family has become essential in modern societies.

Nevertheless, work-family balance emanates theoretically from the concept of work identity and therefore the conflict of roles (role at work and family role) to which workers are increasingly subject.

The aim of this paper was to review the literature on concepts such as work identity, work-family conflict and work-family balance policies while emphasizing how they are defined. We underline the importance of these practices for both the individual and the organization.

Finally, we took the example of two countries: France and Canada. France is widely cited in research about work-family balance while Canada is partly inspired by the French policies. Recent statistical data from OECD shows that these two countries are close in terms of work-family balance. In fact, employment rates for women have increased in France and Canada during the last eight years. This may be explained by work-family policies. We limited our analysis to work-family policies developed by these two governments: public spending on family benefits, the parental leave system and childcare support. We conclude that Canadian policies encourage Canadian women to stay in the labour market more than do comparable French policies.

Our study is incomplete since the contribution of organizations (organizational work-family policies) was not taken into account. Future research should investigate this issue by shifting the focus to detailed studies in different institutional contexts such as France and Canada, preferably deploying multiple case studies in order to take account of organizational as well as institutional variations. Actor strategies, notably those of firms and unions, are also to be considered in this equation, if we are to ascertain a clearer picture of which factors are really influencing this crucial issue of work-family balance.

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