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Controlling or Channeling Demands?
How Schedule Control influences the Link between Job Pressure and the Work-Family Interface

PHILIP J. BADAUWY
University of Toronto

SCOTT SCHIEMAN
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Schedule control is theorized as a job resource that should reduce the extent to which work demands bleed into nonwork time and decrease work-to-family conflict. However, schedule control might also come with greater expectations that workers fully devote themselves to work even during non-conventional work times; in this scenario, schedule control might act as a channel through which job demands can more easily permeate nonwork roles and generate conflict. Drawing on four waves of panel data from the Canadian Work, Stress, and Health Study (2011-2017), we use fixed effects regression techniques to discover some contradictions in the resource functions of schedule control. We find that schedule control exacerbates the effect of job pressure on role blurring, and these observed downsides of schedule control are stronger for women. By discovering gendered effects in the moderating role of schedule control, this study sharpens prevailing knowledge about its functions as a resource and the ways that it might channel stressful work-related demands.

Keywords: schedule control, job pressure, work-to-family conflict, role blurring

Work-to-family conflict is a pervasive and pernicious stressor that has important consequences for workers' health and well-being (Powell, Greenhaus, Allen, & Johnson, 2019). At least one out every three workers experience work-to-family conflict (Pal, Galinsky, & Kim, 2020), and this has been increasing over time (Aumann, Galinsky, & Matos, 2011). To help explain work-to-family conflict, scholars have underscored the interrelationships between (1) job demands and resources, and (2) strains in the work-family interface (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Kelly et al., 2014). Job pressure poses a potential threat to workers' successful navigation of the work-family interface because it involves an overwhelming workload that often extends beyond what can be completed in the workplace (Schieman, 2013). In contrast, some scholars tout schedule control as a solution to help workers more effectively navigate the boundary—and therefore minimize the conflict—between their work and family roles (Kelly & Moen, 2007).

Schedule control is a job resource enacted to determine the timing of paid work; it should therefore help workers alleviate work-to-family conflict by enabling them to transition between work and home domains more easily. However, as a result of this eased transition and heightened integration between work and nonwork spheres, the boundaries that separate them can become increasingly blurred—a process referred to as *role blurring* (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004). Role blurring is defined as “a subjective, cognitive phenomenon involving perceived integration of work life and home life that is situated in a highly interdependent work-family context such as the simultaneous work and family demands that can be present when people bring their paid work into the home” (Desrochers, Hilton, & Larwood, 2005, p. 449).

Responding to or initiating work-related emails and phone calls, thinking about work outside of work, and multitasking on both work and home tasks—these represent the main role blurring activities (Schieman & Glavin, 2016). As workplaces extend and tighten the grip on employees

during their nonwork time, these permeating work demands may detract from the finite time, energy, and attention available for family-related roles—and, in turn, these processes can fuel *work-to-family conflict* (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Harkening back decades to sociological social psychology research on role theory and role conflict (Biddle, 1979, 1986; Heiss, 1981), the processes whereby work and family roles become blurred and subsequently conflict with each other have gained significant traction in multiple disciplines (Powell et al., 2019). And yet, despite recent labor market trends towards greater efficiency and productivity that create challenging expectations for workers on and off the job, the onus often remains on the individual worker to effectively manage his or her own time (Moen et al., 2013). Employers may offer schedule control to help workers cope with heightened job pressures in ways that allow them to better manage their work and nonwork roles. At the same time, however, if having more control over the timing of work does not allow overloaded or pressured workers to completely “clock out”—and engage in activities outside of their work role without distraction—then this dynamic might raise critical questions about the protective utility of schedule control. Our first objective is to resolve whether schedule control functions as a job resource and alleviates the harmful impact of job pressure on role blurring and work-to-family conflict—or if instead, schedule control acts as a channel through which job pressure can more easily extract nonwork time and conflict with the family role.

Our second objective is to contribute new knowledge about the potential gender differences in the moderating role of schedule control. The gendered nature of work and family roles provides a compelling backdrop to expect gender differences in the functions of schedule control in the work-family interface (Kim, Henly, Golden, & Lambert, 2020; Simon, 1995). However, there is a lack of research that examines the potential gender differences in the

moderating role of schedule control for workers who experience high job pressure. This is one key contribution of the present study because if women are still primarily responsible for family and domestic tasks despite their own experiences of job pressure, then their use of schedule control may be linked with the challenges of attempting to fulfill both work and nonwork roles simultaneously.

Prior cross-sectional research has shed light on the complex relationships between work and family roles, but these relationships are inherently dynamic and likely fluctuate over time. Work-family researchers have therefore encouraged scholarship that advances beyond cross-sectional designs to better capture these dynamic changes—and they have also expressed concerns with the potential bias that arises from unmeasured third variables (Allen & Martin, 2017). For instance, some researchers have questioned if unmeasured personal history (e.g., family background) and personality dispositions (e.g., neuroticism, conscientiousness) might confound the relationship between working conditions and well-being (Bakker et al., 2010; Lupu, Spence, & Emspon, 2018; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). To address these concerns, we analyze four waves of longitudinal data and employ fixed effects models to account for time-invariant, unmeasured variables. Therefore, to our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate the possibly protective or paradoxical effects of schedule control in moderating the links between job pressure and strains in the work-family interface—and potential gender contingencies—while analytically accounting for all time-stable confounders.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

A Quintessential Demand: Job Pressure

Harried lifestyles have become normative in part due to simultaneous changes in both work and family spheres. With the rise of dual-earner and single-parent families alongside growing

expectations about work productivity that increase job pressure and overtime, the need to juggle competing work and family roles has spawned new challenges to workers' well-being (Nomaguchi, 2009; Winslow, 2005). Recent transformations in work that increase workload and intensification underscore the salience of job pressure in work-stress research (Maume & Purcell, 2007; Moen et al., 2013). Job pressure is a quintessential job demand that encapsulates the intensifying and overflowing workloads—and these, in turn, represent a potent source of strain in the work-family interface (Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009). Job pressure is widespread according to a nationally-representative survey of 2,524 working Canadians—referred to as the Canadian Quality of Work and Economic Life Study (C-QWELS)—as roughly 40 percent of Canadian workers report that they are overwhelmed by the amount of work they had to do, frequently have insufficient time to complete their work, and that they work on too many tasks at the same time (Schieman, 2020). Prior cross-sectional research links job pressure to greater role blurring and work-to-family conflict (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Schieman & Glavin, 2016). In response to these new challenges in the work-family interface, scholars and practitioners have advocated for organizations to provide greater schedule control as a potentially protective resource (Cornwell & Warburton, 2014; Kelly et al., 2014; Moen et al., 2016).

Controlling versus Channeling? The Upsides and Downsides of Schedule Control

For many workers, the employer partially or fully determines work time. Schedule control entails employees having greater latitude over the timing of work—that is, their work schedule and, more specifically, their start and finish times (Golden, 2001). While not all occupations are amenable to flexible scheduling of work hours, professionals and managers are disproportionately more likely to have access to schedule control (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Schieman et al., 2009). Despite its greater prevalence among higher-status workers, access to

schedule control is observed across the spectrum of job statuses with the increased use of technologies that allow work to be completed off-site at any time of the day (Berkowsky, 2013; Chesley, 2010). According to the Families and Work Institute's 2008 National Study of Employers, nearly 80 percent of American employers allow some of their employees to adjust their starting and finishing times (Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2008).

The upsides of schedule control. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is a prominent framework that describes the ways that working conditions affect well-being. Scholarship in the JD-R tradition maintains that all types of job attributes can be classified as either demands (e.g., long work hours) or resources (e.g., job autonomy) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job pressure is one of the core types of *demands*—that is, characteristics of the job that “require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Bakker et al., 2005, p. 170). At the same time, building on the JD-R model—alongside work-family border theory—schedule control is a boundary-spanning *resource* that purportedly allows employees to achieve their work goals, minimize job demands and the concomitant physiological and psychological costs, and help them manage competing demands in work and family roles (Clark, 2000; Karasek, 1979; Voydanoff, 2005).

Guided by the JD-R model, scholars have considered that schedule control—as a fundamental job-related resource—should improve workers' ability to navigate the work-home boundary and achieve a sense of balance between these domains (Kelly et al., 2014; Schieman et al., 2009). In border theory, the concept of “boundary work” captures the navigation of the work-home border: “the process through which we organize potentially realm-specific matters, people, objects, and aspects of the self into ‘home’ and ‘work’, maintaining and changing these conceptualizations as needed and/or desired” (Nippert-Eng, 1996, p. 7). As a job-related

resource, schedule control should provide workers with greater agency to engage in boundary work as their role demands require—allowing them to achieve a more comfortable or manageable distinction between work and home life; in this way, workers should be better able to organize work and family roles in a manner that reduces their simultaneous occurrence and limits the interference between them.

In workplaces with excessive pressure, schedule control should foster work-family balance and protect workers' well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Clark, 2000; Karasek, 1979). Consistent with the predictions of the JD-R model and border theory, prior research coupled with organizational intervention studies (e.g., ROWE and STAR initiatives¹) show that schedule control helps workers manage their work and nonwork roles, reduce work-to-family conflict, and enhance health and well-being (Allen et al., 2013; Grzywacz, Casey, & Jones, 2007; Kelly et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2014; Moen et al., 2011; Occhiuto, 2017; Schieman & Young, 2013). Taken together, these theoretical and empirical perspectives inform the *resource hypothesis*, which predicts moderating effects such that greater schedule control should weaken the relationship between job pressure and both role blurring and work-to-family conflict.

The downsides of schedule control. As we articulate above, conventional views characterize schedule control as a resource. However, some scholars have suggested that schedule control might also have some hidden or unanticipated costs that dampen its utility for buffering against stress in the work-family interface (Schieman & Young, 2010). While schedule control might help workers more easily transition between work and nonwork domains, it can also exacerbate the blurring of these boundaries—and this might pose some challenges for workers. For example, role blurring activities reflect challenges in separating work from nonwork roles in contexts where they have become highly integrated (Desrochers & Sargent,

2004). Voydanoff's (2005) characterization of the "boundary-spanning" elements of schedule control implies that, *even as a resource*, it might foster exposure to some kinds of stressors that counteract its protective benefits. The potential pitfalls are embedded in these boundary-spanning dynamics. The provision of schedule control may come with "strings attached"—that is, from an exchange perspective that emphasizes reciprocity, employers might expect workers to conform to the "ideal worker" norm (Acker, 1990) and enact the demands of the "work devotion schema" (Blair-Loy, 2003). The ideal worker norm and work-devotion schema are deeply entrenched assumptions that expect workers to be accessible, available, and completely devoted to their work—even at the expense of other roles (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2017; Fuller & Hirsch, 2019). These interrelated ideas and the underlying cognitive and behavioral dynamics that they represent align with the notion of work as a "greedy institution"; from this perspective, schedule control potentially represents a channel through which the greedy institution extracts time, energy, and attention from employees during their nonwork time (Coser, 1974). This scenario suggests that it is worthwhile to consider that schedule control might not be an unfettered job-related resource in the ways that the JD-R model characterizes it.

Some prior studies support this view by documenting that higher levels of schedule control are associated with more frequent role blurring activities that include work-family multitasking, bringing work home, and receiving work-related communications outside of normal work hours (Schieman & Glavin, 2008; Schieman & Young, 2010; Voydanoff, 2005). Other research shows that the perception of role blurring behavior as normative in the workplace culture undermines the protective benefits of schedule control against work-to-family conflict (Schieman & Glavin, 2017). Likewise, Blair-Loy's (2009) qualitative interviews of commission-based stockbrokers and discount brokers reveal the potential downsides to schedule control. She

finds that having a *rigid* rather than *flexible* schedule actually protects these professionals from boundaryless work—including organizational and client demands outside of the office. Schedule control does not shield stockbrokers from being required to deal with demands outside of the office, even during conventional non-working hours (i.e., evenings and weekends); this dynamic often leaves them feeling overwhelmed by the sense that “work never ends.” Similarly, a national survey of Americans found that schedule control exacerbates the effect of long work hours (50-plus per week) on work-nonwork interference (Schieman et al., 2009). When organizations provide workers with schedule control to cope with intense demands, some workers might experience the added responsibility of deciding the times they are *not working*; under some circumstances, this responsibility might be experienced as another demand and erode the protective potency of schedule control (Moen et al., 2013). This process represents the paradox of schedule control as a resource. These theoretical and empirical views provide the rationale for the *channeling hypothesis*: Greater schedule control might (1) have direct effects by elevating levels of role blurring, and (2) exacerbate the link between job pressure and both role blurring and work-to-family conflict.

Gender and the Moderating Role of Schedule Control

A final puzzle of the present study evaluates whether or not schedule control moderates the relationships between job pressure and role blurring/work-to-family conflict *differently for men and women*. The theoretical motivation for testing gender differences is based on long-standing ideas of the gendered nature of work and family roles (Kelly et al., 2014; Simon, 1995). On the one hand, traditional gender perspectives indicate that men may be more likely than women to prioritize work over family and engage in work-related contact and tasks while not at work (Kelly et al., 2011; Pleck, 1977; Schieman & Glavin, 2016). Consistent with the gendered

model of the ideal worker norm, men may tend to favor the needs of work and reinforce the masculine stereotype (Acker, 1990). In this way, being granted schedule control in high-pressured job contexts enables men to engage in work-related activities anytime and anywhere—eroding the boundary between work and nonwork. However, gender norms about work and family may be changing over time so that men have become more cognizant of when work demands prevent them from engaging more actively in their family role (Aumann et al., 2011). For instance, the rise of involved fatherhood norms suggests that men may be increasingly striving to be more domestically engaged as well (Dermott, 2008). Collectively, these ideas predict that men with excessive work pressures may use their schedule control in ways that enable them to be more involved in their family life—and this might alleviate their experience of role blurring and work-to-family conflict.

On the other hand, some scholars have argued that broader cultural expectations and pressures on women to devote themselves to family and domestic activities still remain despite their rising participation in the labor force—known as the “stalled” revolution (Hochschild, 1997; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Pedulla & Thébaud, 2015). These lingering cultural ideologies may motivate women to seek more schedule control in the face of excessive work pressures to manage work-family borders (Kelly et al., 2011). Informed by their interviews with nurses, Gerstel and Clawson (2014) state that these women “use workplace flexibility to reinforce, even create, a gender divide” (p. 415) in the division of labor at home. Prior research demonstrates that schedule control is linked with higher levels of work-to-family conflict for women relative to men (Kim et al., 2019). However, there is a lack of research on gender differences in the moderating role of schedule control for workers in the face of job pressure. If women still perform the lion’s share of domestic tasks despite their experiences of job pressure, then their use

of schedule control may be more strongly tied to the challenges of managing both work and nonwork roles. This suggests that women with high-pressure job roles might experience the paradox of control, such that schedule control may exacerbate the harmful impact of job pressure on role blurring and work-to-family conflict more strongly among women relative to men. We evaluate these competing ideas for gender differences by testing if the interaction between job pressure and schedule control differs for women and men.

Methods

Sample

To test the hypotheses presented above, we analyze four waves of data from the Canadian Work, Stress, and Health Study (CAN-WSH), a national sample of working Canadians from 2011 (wave 1), 2013 (wave 2), 2015 (wave 3), and 2017 (wave 4). This longitudinal study is ideal for testing our research hypotheses because it was explicitly designed to evaluate the long-term effects of job demands and resources on the work-family interface; the survey includes multi-item measures of schedule control, job pressure, role blurring, and work-to-family conflict. Though the bulk of research has examined schedule control using American samples, it is also important to understand Canada as another developed country sharing the border with the U.S. in an effort to broaden the scope of research to other national contexts. The sampling frame for wave 1 consists of a regionally stratified unclustered random probability sample that was generated from random-digit-dial methods. Interviews were conducted via telephone, using both landlines and cellphones. In wave 1, the final sample consisted of 6,004 respondents, with a response rate of approximately 40%. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 4,423 respondents 2 years after the initial interview, yielding a retention rate of 74%. Wave 3 yielded 3,805 respondents (63.4% retention of wave 1). Lastly, wave 4 includes 3,378 respondents (or about 56.3% of the wave 1 sample). The sample sizes for the fixed effects analyses slightly vary

based on the dependent variable. The total person-wave observations used for role blurring and work-to-family conflict are 14,104 and 14,103, respectively.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Role blurring is measured by assessing the frequency of the following experiences in the past three months: (a) “How often were you called about work-related matters when you were not at work?” (b) “How often did you read job-related email or text messages when you were not at work?” (c) “How often did you contact people about work-related matters when you were not at work?” (d) “How often do you try to work on job tasks and home tasks at the same time while you are at home?” and (e) “How often did you think about work-related things when you were not working?” Response choices are as follows: (1) *Never*, (2) *Rarely*, (3) *Sometimes*, (4) *Often*, and (5) *Very often*. We averaged the items to create the role blurring index such that higher scores indicate more frequent role blurring ($\alpha = .82$). Prior research used these items to measure role blurring activities (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Schieman & Glavin, 2016; Voydanoff, 2005). Though role blurring and work-to-family conflict are positively correlated, factor analyses reveal that the five items used to measure role blurring and the four items used to measure work-to-family conflict load on separate underlying constructs (shown in appendix Table A). While one of the role blurring items (thinking about work during non-work time) does not load as strongly on the role blurring construct as the other role blurring items, our results do not change in analyses that removed this item from the role blurring index. We therefore retain this item in the index given that it theoretically and conceptually maps onto role blurring (i.e., work-related thoughts while not working represents cognitive blurring).

Work-to-family conflict is assessed with the frequency of the following experiences in the last three months: (a) “How often did you not have enough time for the important people in your life because of your job?” (b) “How often did you not have the energy to do things with the important people in your life because of your job?” (c) “How often did your work keep you from doing as good a job at home as you could?” and (d) “How often did your job keep you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?” Response choices are as follows: (1) *Never*, (2) *Rarely*, (3) *Sometimes*, (4) *Often*, and (5) *Very often*. We averaged the items such that higher scores indicate more work-to-family conflict ($\alpha = .89$). These items derive from the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) and have been used extensively in the work-family literature (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Schieman & Young, 2013; Voydanoff, 2005).

Independent Variables

Job pressure is assessed with the frequency of the following experiences in the past three months: (a) “How often did you feel overwhelmed by how much you had to do at work?” (b) “How often did you have to work on too many tasks at the same time?” and (c) “How often did the demands of your job exceed the time you have to do the work?” Response choices are as follows: (1) *Never*, (2) *Rarely*, (3) *Sometimes*, (4) *Often*, and (5) *Very often*. We averaged the items to create the index, whereby higher scores indicate more job pressure ($\alpha = .85$).

Schedule control is measured as a 2-item index. The first question asks, “How much control do you have in scheduling your work hours?” Response choices are: (1) *Complete control*, (2) *A lot*, (3) *Some*, (4) *Very little*, and (5) *None*. The second question asks, “Who usually decides when you start and finish work each day at your main job?” Response choices include: (1) *Someone else*, (2) *You are able to decide within limits*, and (3) *You are entirely free*

to decide. After reverse-coding responses to the first question, we standardized these items (because of the different response choices) and then averaged them such that higher scores indicate more schedule control ($\alpha = .79$) (Nijp, Beckers, Geurts, Tucker, & Kompier, 2012).

Control Variables

To rule out potential confounding by other time-varying factors, we include an extensive set of individual- and occupation-level control variables. All fixed effects models include the survey wave, education, personal income (logged, continuous in dollars), marital status, number of kids at home (continuous), occupation, job sector, and other relevant job characteristics including work hours, autonomy, authority, challenging work, and work location. These sociodemographic and employment-related characteristics are common confounders in the stress and work-family literatures, so we adjust for these to statistically isolate the focal associations represented in our hypotheses (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Kelly & Moen, 2007). Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for all wave 1 and pooled (wave 1 to wave 4) variables in the analysis. We provide more detail below on the multi-item indices of working conditions.

Working conditions. Job autonomy is a 3-item index. An example item includes: “I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.” Response choices range from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (4) *Strongly agree*. The responses were averaged to create the job autonomy index; higher scores indicate more job autonomy ($\alpha = .80$). *Job authority* is a 3-item index. An example item includes: “At your job, do you supervise or manage other people?” We coded “No” responses as 0 and “Yes” responses as 1. To create the job authority index, we summed these responses; higher scores indicate higher job authority ($\alpha = .70$). *Challenging work* is a 5-item index. An example item includes: “My job requires that I keep learning new things.” Response choices

range from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (4) *Strongly agree*. The responses were averaged to create the challenging work index; higher scores indicate more challenging work ($\alpha = .78$).

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Analytic Plan

With a few exceptions, the bulk of research on the relationship between schedule control and the work-family interface has been cross-sectional and thus unable to examine how these relationships unfold over time. While much has been learned from cross-sectional studies, our use of a panel design helps to overcome some of its common shortcomings—including the confounding that occurs with between-individual comparisons when these individuals are heterogeneous with respect to unobserved, stable characteristics (Allison, 2009). As individual differences that are fixed over time, personal history represents an overlooked but potential confounder in the literature on stress and the work-family interface. One’s upbringing and family socialization can have an enduring influence on both the type of work people select into and how they manage their work and family domains later in adulthood (Dekas & Baker, 2014; Greve & Seidel, 2014; Lupu et al., 2018). Individuals may reproduce, or even distance themselves from, how their parents engaged in work and family roles which, in turn, may shape what type of job qualities they seek as adults and how they perceive the work-family interface (Lupu et al., 2018).

While personal history may be one confounder, scholars have also used fixed effects methods to account for personality characteristics thought to be time-stable confounders in the relationship between working conditions and mental health. For instance, neuroticism— involving negative affect, emotional volatility, and difficulties coping with stress—impacts how workers perceive and appraise their working conditions (e.g., they feel more overwhelmed and threatened by their job pressure) and they also more negatively evaluate family-related stressors

(Bakker et al., 2010). Neuroticism as a personality trait represents an example of a potentially broader class of confounders for the relationships between working conditions and the work-family interface. Importantly, then, we emphasize that there might be a range of time-invariant factors that confound the relationships among job demands, resources, and the work-family interface. Despite their importance, personal history and other unchanging personality characteristics are seldom included in surveys; as such, these constitute unobserved time-invariant confounders. Fixed effects estimators are effective tools to deal with these potential biases. Rather than focusing on between-individual variation, fixed effects regression capitalizes on within-individual variation over time to account for all unobserved time-invariant characteristics that might upwardly bias the estimates of the relationships between working conditions and work-family outcomes (Allison, 2009).²

With these issues and approaches in mind for the present study, the fixed effects analyses will proceed through a series of models—all of which include the full set of control variables. In Table 2, Model 1 begins with the direct effects of changes in job pressure and schedule control on changes in role blurring. Next, in Model 2, we test the interaction between job pressure and schedule control in predicting role blurring. Next, we run the interaction between job pressure and schedule control separately for women and men, in Models 2A and 2B, respectively. We then adopt an identical sequence of models in Table 3 for the effects of job pressure and schedule control on work-to-family conflict. Hausman tests revealed there are unmeasured, time-invariant variables that are correlated with the independent variables in the model, implying that the random effects models would be biased and that fixed effects models are preferred (results available upon request). With panel data, repeated observations on the same individuals over time tend to produce standard errors that are too low, thereby increasing the risk of Type I errors.

Using the *xtreg* command in Stata, our fixed effects models correct the standard errors to account for these non-independent observations (Allison, 2009). To alleviate concerns over missing data, our analyses use multiple imputation by chained equations with ten imputations. Dependent variables were used in the imputation procedure, but cases with missing values on the dependent variable were removed before regression estimation (Von Hippel, 2007).

To deal with attrition, we use inverse probability of attrition (IPA) weights. We estimated the probability that the respondent participated in wave 4 in a logit model that included wave 1 sociodemographic characteristics, work-related conditions, and health variables. This procedure assigns higher weights to the wave 1 respondents that were less likely to remain in the study—helping to compensate for their underrepresentation in wave 4.

Results

The analysis begins in Table 2 by using fixed effects estimators and regressing role blurring on schedule control and job pressure. In Model 1, we observe a positive association between schedule control and role blurring: the estimated conditional mean of role blurring increases for every 1 standard deviation increase in schedule control ($b = .075$, $SE = .013$, $p < .001$), holding all time-varying sociodemographic characteristics and work conditions constant. Likewise, changes in job pressure are positively associated with changes in role blurring ($b = .199$, $SE = .009$, $p < .001$).

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

In Model 2, we find that schedule control *exacerbates* the positive association between job pressure and role blurring ($b = .032$, $SE = .009$, $p < .001$). This finding contradicts the *resource hypothesis*, and instead supports the *channeling hypothesis*: Increases in schedule control are associated with a stronger—not weaker—link between job pressure and role blurring.

Using the *margins* command in Stata, Figure 1 illustrates the interaction pattern, displaying predicted values of changes in role blurring across job pressure and levels of schedule control, with all other covariates held at their means.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In addition, however, we also observe gender contingencies in these relationships. As shown in Models 2A and 2B, schedule control exacerbates the positive relationship between job pressure and role blurring among women ($b = .052$, $SE = .011$, $p < .001$) but not among men. We then tested the three-way interaction between job pressure, schedule control, and gender for predicting role blurring ($b = .046$, $SE = .018$, $p < .01$). This pattern indicates that the exacerbating role of schedule control in the association between job pressure and role blurring is significantly different between men and women. That is, job pressure is more strongly associated with role blurring among workers with schedule control—but this is only characteristic of women’s experience. Figure 2 illustrates these differences between women and men.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 3 presents the fixed effects results for work-to-family conflict. In Model 1, we see that the estimated conditional mean in work-to-family conflict decreases for every 1 standard deviation increase in schedule control ($b = -.068$, $SE = .015$, $p < .001$). Moreover, changes in job pressure are positively linked to increases in work-to-family conflict ($b = .328$, $SE = .011$, $p < .001$). And, in Model 2, we find little evidence that schedule control buffers against this positive association between job pressure and work-to-family conflict—these patterns challenge the *resource hypothesis*. Moreover, in Models 2A and 2B, we find that schedule control does not moderate the association between job pressure and work-to-family conflict for women or men. In additional analyses, we found that the three-way interaction for job pressure, schedule control,

and gender in predicting work-to-family conflict was not significant (results available upon request).³

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Discussion

The present study contributes new evidence about how changes in job pressure and schedule control over time are associated with role blurring and work-to-family conflict. Our findings document the moderating functions of schedule control for the links between job pressure and strains in the work-family interface—while highlighting gender-based contingencies in these relationships.

Though we find that increases in schedule control are linked with declines in work-to-family conflict, we also make new discoveries that appear to raise questions about the resource functions of schedule control. In particular, we find support for the *channeling hypothesis*, observing that schedule control (a) is associated with increases in role blurring and (b) amplifies the positive association between job pressure and role blurring. However, we find that schedule control exacerbates the link between job pressure and role blurring more for women relative to men. This indicates that women are more likely to experience the paradox of schedule control—that is, while schedule control is a desired resource to alleviate strains in the work-family interface, it may be undermined by the greater expectations that workers will be available during nonwork time.

We also find that schedule control does not buffer the positive association between job pressure and work-to-family conflict. This suggests that increases in job pressure appear to elevate work-to-family conflict regardless of whether or not workers possess greater schedule control—a pattern that raises important questions about the validity of the *resource hypothesis*.

Conclusion

Organizational cultures that demand employees to take on excessive workloads and also require that these workers are constantly available outside of work leave little time and energy for people to engage with their loved ones—conforming to Coser’s (1974) long-standing idea that work is a *greedy institution*. But schedule control, theoretically speaking, is supposed to be a resource that might protect against the challenges associated with the greedy institution. Yet our findings demonstrate that schedule control does not attenuate the positive association between job pressure and work-to-family conflict, and even exacerbates the link between job pressure and role blurring activities—a paradox most strongly felt among women.

These findings have critical implications for the predictions of the JD-R model. According to leading scholars investigating that framework, job resources should “reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, p. 274). More concretely, in the JD-R model schedule control is unambiguously conceptualized as a job *resource*—as such, we would expect it to have protective effects. However, we discovered a pattern that complicates this narrative: Schedule control *increased* a potential source of strain in the work-family interface: role blurring activities. This discovery is important because of prior literature that establishes the downsides of role blurring for role functioning and well-being (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Glavin, Schieman, & Reid, 2011). Moreover, our discoveries also complicate the narrative embedded in the JD-R model’s core propositions about resource-based interaction effects. We observed that schedule control did not function as a stress-buffer but rather *exacerbated* the positive association between job pressure and role blurring. Collectively, these findings illustrate the paradox of schedule control that sheds light on nuances and contingencies about its functions in the JD-R paradigm.

Several dynamics might contribute to the paradox of schedule control. When organizations provide workers with greater schedule control, that latitude might also come with higher expectations about job performance and workers' heightened availability outside of work—these dynamics, while speculative, are consistent with the “ideal worker” norm (Acker, 1990) and “work-devotion schema” (Blair-Loy, 2003). Though previous experimental research demonstrated the effectiveness of schedule control, these salubrious outcomes occurred within a context that actively challenged the organizational culture and the problematic expectations of the ideal worker norm to better accommodate workers' nonwork roles (Kelly et al., 2011). For instance, as part of the interventions for the ROWE and STAR initiatives, the workers and managers attended several highly-interactive sessions that required active participation and role-playing, where everyone was encouraged to critically examine and dismantle expectations in the current organizational culture about when work should be done (Kelly et al., 2011). While these changes to organizational norms and practices are invaluable, they are unusual; most organizations do not implement these drastic changes to their work culture when offering employees schedule control. Without actively challenging these expectations about when work should be done, employees who have been granted schedule control may perceive that they *should be* taking work home during nonwork hours and nonwork days—undermining the perks of having schedule control (Schieman & Glavin, 2017; Kelly & Moen, 2007). If schedule control is to function as a resource for the work-family interface, it cannot be laced with expectations that workers should be more available (or perform extra work) during their nonwork time.

In addition to our findings for the paradox of schedule control, we also find gender-based contingencies. While schedule control exacerbates the association between job pressure and role blurring, we observe this pattern more prominently among women. This comparison between

men and women reveals an important social group difference that helps extend both the JD-R model and work-family border theory in two specific ways. First, our analyses advance prior research about whether job resources (e.g., schedule control)—as defined by the JD-R model—have uniformly favorable effects; and, if they do have beneficial effects, those benefits might be experienced differently across some social groups. Future research should further examine status-based differences in the moderating role of job resources like schedule control to better understand whether these purported resources in the JD-R model actually function as buffers—or if instead they *exacerbate* the effects of demands on the work-family interface for some groups more than others. For instance, given that prior research on schedule control predominantly focused on professional and higher status white-collar workers (Blair-Loy, 2009; Kelly et al., 2011; Moen et al., 2013), it might be reasonable to expect that schedule control moderates the impact of job demands differently across occupations. Though supplemental analyses (not shown) reveal that there are no occupational differences in how schedule control moderates the effects of job pressure across gender in the present study, we encourage researchers to evaluate the potential for status-based contingencies in the ways that different job resources function.

Second, our results stimulate a broader discussion about how contemporary workplaces might approach the issue of the expanding boundaries of work and the potential challenges it poses for workers—especially women—who often juggle competing work and family demands (Kelly et al. 2011). If workers are becoming less bounded by work time, organizations might consider the reasonableness of expectations about workload and how that drives negotiations between employers and workers about their availability outside of conventional working hours. With lingering gender role expectations, women are typically allocated greater responsibility for domestic duties and family care (Fan, Lam, & Moen, 2019), so in the face of job pressure,

women with schedule control may experience the challenges of attempting to fulfill the demands of their work and nonwork roles in ways that blur their work-family boundaries. But, with prior research establishing the link between role blurring and elevated levels of work-to-family conflict (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Schieman & Young, 2010), this may suggest that the strategy to engage in multitasking on work and home tasks may be undesirable for those who seek minimal conflict between work and family roles.

In our analyses, increases in schedule control over time did not moderate the association between job pressure and work-to-family conflict. The ability to shift the timing of work tasks to carve out time and energy for family—or nonwork life in general—critically depends on how much work needs to get done. This could also mean that with increases in job pressure and work intensification over time (Maume & Purcell, 2007; Moen et al., 2013), schedule control may be an insufficient solution for employees to reach a more satisfying fit between work and nonwork roles. The problem may be that workers are demanded to work on too many tasks that cannot be sensibly completed within a normal work shift. In practice, schedule control may be most effective in improving the fit between work and nonwork if the quantitative demands embedded in these jobs were simultaneously reduced.

Before concluding, we acknowledge a few limitations of this study. First, the temporal ordering cannot be stated with certainty. Although the JD-R model and border theory provide a strong theoretical basis for the causal direction, the present study does not account for reverse causality or reciprocal relationships between working conditions and outcomes in the work-family interface. For example, our fixed effects models estimate the associations between job pressure, schedule control, and role blurring contemporaneously, and thereby does not rule out the possibility that role blurring may be the driving force behind changes in job pressure and

schedule control. Moreover, high levels of work-to-family conflict is a chronic stressor, so it is possible that workers may attempt to reduce their feelings of work-to-family conflict by seeking more schedule control and less job pressure (Young & Schieman, 2017). Ultimately, our analyses do not definitively rule out reverse causality, so we encourage future research to account for these dynamic causal relationships to provide more insight about how schedule control and strains in the work-family interface are reciprocally related over time.

Another potential limitation involves the fact that estimates produced in the fixed effects models are solely derived from observed changes in individuals. Therefore, our analytic sample is composed of individuals who changed levels of schedule control at least once during the study period, so individuals who do not change over the four waves of data collection are excluded from the analysis. This also means that our findings do not speak to the effects of persistently high or low levels of job pressure and schedule control on the work-family interface.

Despite these potential limitations, our study is the first population-based panel study that evaluates the resource functions of schedule control in moderating the detrimental effects of job pressure on strains in the work-family interface—and whether these moderating effects differ for women and men. Schedule control should provide workers with control over the timing of work in ways that mitigate the link between job pressure and role blurring activities—but the opposite seems to be the case among women. Finally, the fact that schedule control does not attenuate the positive relationship between job pressure and work-to-family conflict over time directs additional questions to the resource framing within the JD-R model, but it also orients scholars to understand the potentially potent effects of excessive job pressure on workers in ways that make the effects of such demands less modifiable.

Appendix

Table A. Factor Loadings for 2011 Role Blurring and Work-to-Family Conflict Items

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Role blurring items		
“How often did you contact people about work-related matters when you were not at work?”	.88	-.06
“How often did you read job-related email or text messages when you were not at work?”	.86	-.10
“How often were you called about work-related matters when you were not at work?”	.75	-.02
“How often do you try to work on job tasks and home tasks at the same time while you are at home?”	.64	.10
“How often did you think about work-related things when you were not working?”	.47	.35
Work-to-family conflict items		
“How often did you not have the energy to do things with the important people in your life because of your job?”	-.11	.91
“How often did your work keep you from doing as good a job at home as you could?”	-.02	.88
“How often did your job keep you from concentrating on important things in your family or personal life?”	.00	.87
“How often did you not have enough time for the important people in your life because of your job?”	.03	.82

Notes

¹ ROWE stands for “Results Only Work Environment”, while STAR stands for “Support. Transform. Achieve. Results.”

² Fixed effects estimators assume that the variables change over time; otherwise they are time-invariant and will not be estimated in the models. Our analyses show that the focal variables in this study changed considerably during the six-year timeframe of the study. For instance, around 60 percent of respondents changed levels of schedule control for each wave, and 80 percent changed levels of job pressure for each wave. Both men and women had nearly identical levels of variation in these focal variables.

³ Some readers might wonder about the inclusion of the self-employed. Separate analyses show that all results are similar whether or not we exclude the self-employed.

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Philip J. Badawy is currently a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Toronto. His research is focused on the intersection of work and family life, and the implications of these dynamics for workers' stress and health—with a specific focus on how these processes change over time.

Scott Schieman is a professor of sociology and Canada Research Chair at the University of Toronto. He is the lead investigator of two longitudinal studies of Canadian workers: C-QWELS and the Canadian Work, Stress, and Health study. The former is tracking changes in employment, work, family, and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Means, Percentages, and Standard Deviations)

Variables	Wave 1 (n = 6,004)		Pooled Wave 1 to 4 (n= 17,611)	
	M or %	SD	M or %	SD
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
Role blurring	2.46	.94	2.48	.93
Work-to-family conflict	2.51	1.02	2.49	.99
<i>Explanatory Variables</i>				
Schedule control	-.01	.91	0.00	0.90
Job pressure	3.03	1.11	3.02	1.08
Women	59.33%		60.02%	
Age	44.92	12.06	48.27	12.10
Education:				
Less than high school	7.00%		6.45%	
High school	17.85%		15.70%	
Vocational training/some college	25.10%		25.38%	
College grad	35.45%		36.06%	
Post-grad	14.60%		16.41%	
Logged Income	10.71	1.09	11.26	1.21
Marital Status:				
Married	51.13%		53.87%	
Living with partner	14.47%		14.02%	
Div./Sep./Wid.	16.51%		16.66%	
Never married	17.90%		15.45%	
Kids at Home	.78	1.08	.71	1.05
Occupation:				
Exec/admin/management	13.27%		15.52%	
Professionals	28.23%		28.71%	
Technical	18.73%		18.67%	
Sales	6.99%		6.08%	
Admin support	6.89%		7.10%	
Service	12.66%		11.52%	
Production	13.23%		12.41%	
Sector:				
Government	29.43%		31.43%	
Private for-profit	46.57%		44.72%	
Non-profit organization	6.55%		7.02%	
Self-employed	17.45%		16.82%	
Work hours:				
<20 hours	6.91%		6.80%	
20 to 34.9 hours	16.56%		16.11%	
35 to 49.9 hours	58.21%		59.63%	
≥50 hours	18.32%		17.46%	
Autonomy	2.94	.81	2.95	.81

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variables	Wave 1 (n = 6,004)		Pooled Wave 1 to 4 (n= 17,611)	
	<i>M</i> or %	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> or %	<i>SD</i>
Challenging work	3.36	.63	3.34	.63
Job authority	.88	1.03	.89	1.04
Work location:				
Away from home at fixed location	72.69%		74.06%	
Mainly at home	9.15%		9.35%	
Mainly on the road	4.82%		4.76%	
Client/customer locations	11.41%		11.08%	
Some other work arrangement	1.92%		0.75%	

Table 2. Fixed Effects Regressions of Role Blurring on Job Pressure and Schedule Control, by Gender

	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Women (n=8,396)	Men (n=5,708)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2A	Model 2B
Job pressure	.199*** (.009)	.201*** (.009)	.216*** (.011)	.186*** (.014)
Schedule control	.075*** (.013)	-.018 (.027)	-.087* (.036)	.066 (.041)
Job pressure x Schedule control		.032*** (.009)	.052*** (.011)	.007 (.014)
Education (REF = Less than high school)				
High school	-.031 (.055)	-.035 (.055)	-.005 (.074)	-.072 (.081)
Vocational training/some college	-.020 (.058)	-.024 (.059)	-.045 (.079)	-.015 (.084)
College grad	-.023 (.062)	-.025 (.062)	-.048 (.083)	.000 (.092)
Post-grad	-.035 (.068)	-.039 (.068)	.092 (.090)	.036 (.104)
Logged income	.007 (.010)	.007 (.010)	.008 (.013)	.003 (.016)
Marital status (REF = Married)				
Living with partner	.009 (.042)	.009 (.042)	.022 (.049)	-.001 (.068)
Div./Sep./Wid.	.103* (.043)	.101* (.043)	.064 (.051)	.163* (.077)
Never married	.016 (.054)	.015 (.054)	.070 (.068)	-.052 (.084)
Number of kids	.015 (.013)	.015 (.013)	.019 (.018)	.013 (.018)
Occupation (REF = Exec/admin/management)				
Professionals	-.043 (.041)	-.040 (.041)	-.102 (.058)	.024 (.055)
Technical	-.115** (.043)	-.110* (.043)	.149* (.060)	-.069 (.062)
Sales	-.185** (.064)	-.184** (.063)	-.124 (.080)	-.281** (.102)
Admin support	-.247*** (.059)	-.244*** (.058)	-.252*** (.071)	-.293* (.123)
Service	-.064 (.056)	-.061 (.056)	-.143* (.070)	.085 (.096)

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Women (n=8,396)	Men (n=5,708)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2A	Model 2B
Production	-.258*** (.061)	-.261*** (.061)	-.264** (.098)	-.260** (.076)
Job sector (REF = Government)				
Private for-profit	.031 (.038)	.031 (.038)	-.018 (.043)	.132 (.071)
Non-profit organization	.032 (.046)	.029 (.046)	-.036 (.052)	.203* (.098)
Self-employed	.089 (.052)	.089 (.052)	.098 (.066)	.139 (.087)
Work hours (REF = <20 hours)				
20 to 34.9 hours	-.011 (.038)	-.012 (.038)	-.017 (.044)	-.012 (.076)
35 to 49.9 hours	-.079* (.040)	-.082* (.040)	-.076 (.047)	-.095 (.079)
≥50 hours	.126** (.046)	.119* (.046)	.115* (.057)	.119 (.085)
Job autonomy	.045*** (.012)	.045*** (.012)	.063*** (.015)	.017 (.020)
Job authority	.110*** (.011)	.109*** (.011)	.116*** (.016)	.100*** (.016)
Challenging work	.070*** (.018)	.068*** (.018)	.064** (.024)	.078** (.028)
Work location (REF = Away from home at fixed location)				
Mainly at home	.216*** (.048)	.223*** (.049)	.264*** (.063)	.160* (.074)
Mainly on the road	.197*** (.040)	.195*** (.039)	.331*** (.064)	.132** (.049)
Client/customer locations	.201*** (.031)	.203*** (.032)	.224*** (.048)	.185*** (.041)
Some other work arrangement	.185* (.090)	.181* (.090)	.168 (.143)	.175 (.104)
Survey wave (REF = 2011)				
2013	-.004 (.012)	-.004 (.012)	.008 (.016)	-.020 (.019)
2015	.027* (.013)	.028* (.013)	.029 (.018)	.024 (.021)
2017	.035* (.015)	.036* (.015)	.044* (.021)	.027 (.023)

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed test).

Table 3. Fixed Effects Regressions of Work-to-Family Conflict on Job Pressure and Schedule Control, by Gender

	Total Sample (n=14,103)	Total Sample (n=14,103)	Women (n=8,395)	Men (n=5,708)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2A	Model 2B
Job pressure	.328*** (.011)	.328*** (.011)	.342*** (.013)	.318*** (.018)
Schedule control	-.068*** (.015)	-.082* (.032)	-.132** (.042)	-.026 (.048)
Job pressure x Schedule control		.005 (.010)	.020 (.013)	-.010 (.016)
Education (REF = Less than high school)				
High school	-.038 (.059)	-.039 (.059)	-.087 (.068)	.010 (.098)
Vocational training/some college	-.000 (.063)	-.001 (.063)	-.072 (.080)	.066 (.100)
College grad	.029 (.068)	.029 (.068)	-.025 (.085)	.072 (.108)
Post-grad	.005 (.075)	.004 (.075)	-.033 (.094)	.020 (.121)
Logged income	.007 (.011)	.007 (.011)	-.003 (.014)	.022 (.018)
Marital status (REF = Married)				
Living with partner	.028 (.045)	.028 (.045)	-.026 (.050)	.078 (.075)
Div./Sep./Wid.	.009 (.050)	.009 (.050)	-.082 (.058)	.140 (.087)
Never married	-.006 (.057)	-.006 (.057)	.047 (.065)	-.094 (.096)
Number of kids	.019 (.014)	.019 (.014)	.033 (.019)	.008 (.021)
Occupation (REF = Exec/admin/management)				
Professionals	-.047 (.045)	-.047 (.045)	-.087 (.065)	-.006 (.062)
Technical	-.049 (.049)	-.048 (.049)	-.014 (.065)	-.114 (.077)
Sales	.034 (.073)	.034 (.073)	.061 (.101)	-.022 (.102)
Admin support	.025 (.063)	.026 (.063)	.086 (.078)	-.160 (.115)
Service	.040 (.065)	.041 (.065)	-.011 (.084)	.133 (.105)

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Total Sample (n=14,104)	Women (n=8,396)	Men (n=5,708)
	Model 1	Model 1	Model 2A	Model 2B
Production	.037 (.062)	.037 (.062)	-.035 (.114)	.041 (.076)
Job sector (REF = Government)				
Private for-profit	.066 (.041)	.066 (.041)	.040 (.050)	.126 (.073)
Non-profit organization	.108* (.049)	.107* (.049)	.053 (.057)	.281** (.090)
Self-employed	.033 (.054)	.033 (.054)	.063 (.072)	.045 (.088)
Work hours (REF = <20 hours)				
20 to 34.9 hours	.179*** (.044)	.179*** (.044)	.180*** (.051)	.164* (.082)
35 to 49.9 hours	.257*** (.045)	.256*** (.045)	.280*** (.054)	.212** (.077)
≥50 hours	.471** (.052)	.470** (.052)	.503*** (.069)	.416*** (.085)
Job autonomy	-.054*** (.015)	-.054*** (.015)	-.034 (.019)	-.087** (.025)
Job authority	.041** (.011)	.040** (.012)	.033* (.016)	.049** (.017)
Challenging work	-.101*** (.022)	-.101*** (.022)	-.100** (.030)	-.102** (.033)
Work location (REF = Away from home at fixed location)				
Mainly at home	-.078 (.044)	-.077 (.044)	-.116 (.060)	-.034 (.066)
Mainly on the road	.052 (.044)	.052 (.044)	.058 (.080)	.055 (.051)
Client/customer locations	.028 (.032)	.029 (.032)	.047 (.050)	.028 (.041)
Some other work arrangement	-.069 (.098)	-.070 (.098)	-.148 (.154)	-.010 (.112)
Survey wave (REF = 2011)				
2013	-.012 (.014)	-.012 (.015)	-.027 (.019)	.006 (.023)
2015	-.008 (.016)	-.008 (.016)	-.004 (.022)	-.016 (.025)
2017	-.029 (.018)	-.029 (.018)	-.026 (.024)	-.031 (.027)

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed test).

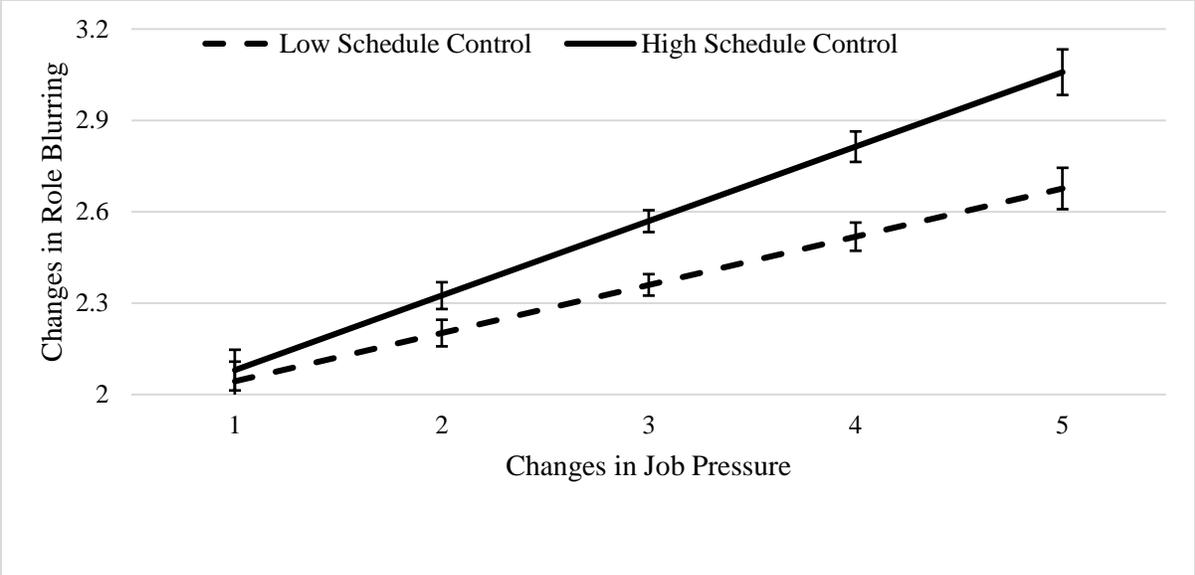


Figure 1. Predicted Value of Changes in Role Blurring (varying by changes in job pressure and level of schedule control). Low Schedule Control is 1.5 standard deviations below its mean. High Schedule Control is 1.5 standard deviations above its mean.

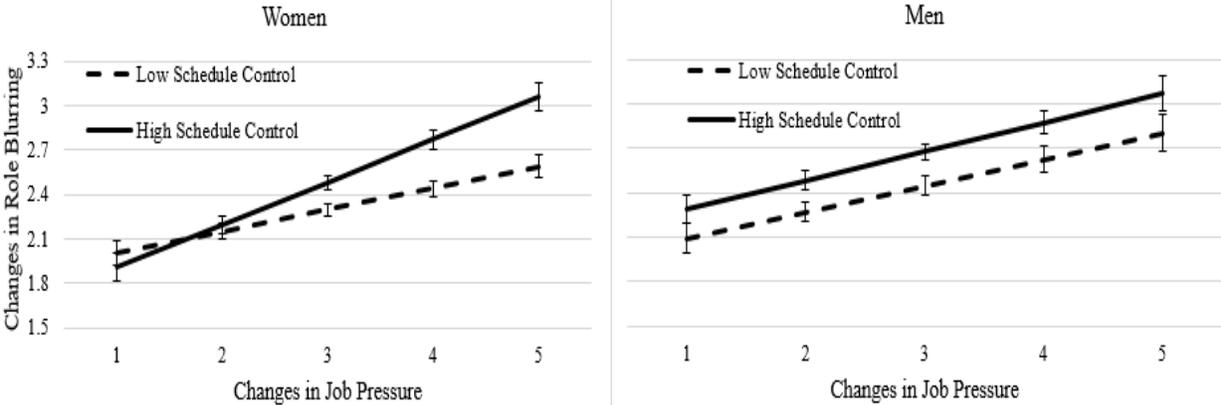


Figure 2. Predicted Value of Changes in Role Blurring (varying by changes in job pressure, level of schedule control, and gender). Low Schedule Control is 1.5 standard deviations below its mean. High Schedule Control is 1.5 standard deviations above its mean.