

Understanding the work family interface from the perspective of goal-directed action

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a place of mind

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Purpose

- To present an integrated, contextually-based conceptualization of the work-family interface useful for counselling practice



From the life
design
perspective

“How to balance work-family activities and interactions is becoming salient in people’s reflections about competence and aspirations”

“... managing interactions between different life domains “ (p. 309).

Savickas et al., 2009



Fundamental
Question

- What kind of life am I to lead?

Challenges

- Updating constructs and discourse
- Recognizing gendered/cultural issues
- Dealing with goals and values
- Accommodating resources
- Identifying joint action and projects

Updating constructs and discourse

Work-family vs work-life



Enhancement – conflict - balance



Levels versus episode



Individual focus



Causal explanations

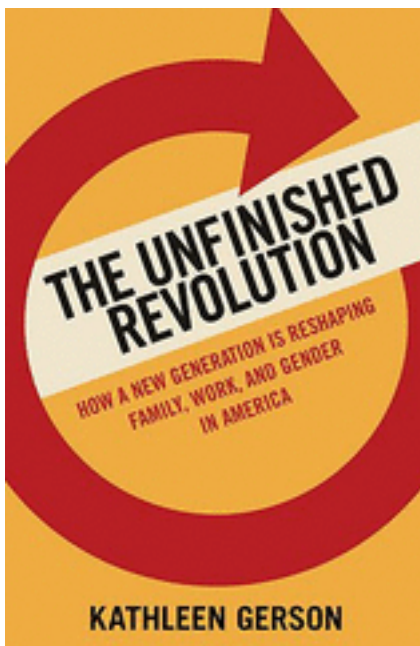


Gendered and cultured



- Conceptualized as a gender issue
- Traditional career legitimated only one part of work in society
- “... old, taken-for granted gendered life course scripts are out of date for both men and women.” (Moen, 2010, p. 89)

Goals and values



- “Young women and men must reshape family, work, and gender amid an unfinished revolution.”
- (Gerson, 2010, p. 12)

Accommodating Resources

Canadian
social policy and
organizational
responses

[Reduction of working time](#)

[Dependant care initiatives](#)

[Work stress mangement \(EAP\)](#)

[Workplace flexibility](#)

[Leaves and benefits](#)



Individual and joint actions



- Juggling
- Balancing
- Opting out
- Sharing
- Postponing
- “Warring” (Time, August 8/11)
- Negotiating
- Having fewer/no children

Contextual Action Theory

An approach to
understanding and
studying human action
as goal-directed

	Goal- directed actions	Projects	Career
Meaning/ goals			
Functional steps			
Conscious and unconscious behavior, structural resources, support			

As a Conceptual Framework

- reflects constructions of human experience
- action-related cognitions - goals
- joint processes across time
- cognitive steering
- emotional processes
- unconscious processes
- communication
- values and attitudes
- knowledge, competencies, skills and practice

Shifting understanding work-life interface to joint goal-directed action and projects

With whom

- Spouses
- Counsellors
- Friends
- Children
- Employers
- Co-workers
- Etc.

About what

- Relationship
- Parenting
- Leisure
- Identity
- Training
- Accomplishment
- Satisfaction
- Etc.

As a research method

- Moves away from survey and self-report to observation, social meaning and internal processes
- Moves away from individual focus to joint action/project
- Moves away from cross-sectional to longitudinal designs
- Moves away from levels to “episodes” or joint actions
- Moves away from causal explanations to process descriptions
- Accommodates paid and non-paid work and other activities



Research Example

(Domene et
al. 2010)

- *Transition to work as a joint project for couples in committed relationships*

Five joint projects

- Pursuing and implementing career plans
- Balancing multiple priorities
- Deciding where to live
- Progressing in the relationship
- Joining lives together



For counselling practice

- Using narrative
- Using the self-confrontation procedure
- A word about self-efficacy

Using narrative

- Facilitating the client's narrative
- Observing kinds of actions/ project narrated
- How is narrative shared
- Narrative as a joint process

Using the self-confrontation

- As an agent in narrative construction
- Awareness of processes
- Recognizing and grasping emerging self-realizations
- Addressing strong emotion
- Experiencing strength and competence

Self-efficacy

- Exploratory counsellor-client joint action helps construct perceptions of capability
- Efficacy construction in session paralleled important relational goals
- Counsellor's use of efficacy questions accompanied efficacy construction
 - (Penner 2011)

Implications

- Close to the experience and understanding of the persons it describes
- Draws attention to relational aspects of work and family life
- Understanding work-life as integrated with other life projects
- Operationalizes life-design counselling approach
- Provides a conceptualization, a research method and a counselling approach
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Thank you.

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