ROLE BLURRING, ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: A LOOK AT HOW ENTREPRENEURS USE PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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ROLE BLurring, ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: A LOOK AT HOW ENTREPRENEURS USE PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY

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Principal Topic

As individuals with high levels of autonomy, entrepreneurs can utilize permeable boundaries between work and family roles to intensify their work and increase work-family conflict as in the greedy role perspective, or to manage the demands of the two roles and reduce work-family conflict as in the flexible resource perspective. Permeable boundaries offer more channels for one role to influence and infuse the other, resulting in an open interface and integration or blurring between roles. We examine the role blurring that occurs when the work family boundary is physically permeable and a venture is located physically within the home. Our research questions are: Do entrepreneurs experience reduced or exacerbated work-family conflict from home-based ventures? What impact does ethnic background have?

Method

We use the National Minority Business Owner Survey (NMBOS) 2003 and 2005 databases which consist of a nationally representative sample of U.S. entrepreneurs, equally divided between four ethnic groups – African-American, Korean-American, Mexican-American and Caucasian. A total of 707 entrepreneurs met the data requirements. We then estimate a series of hierarchical regression models in which the role blurring from home-based ventures moderates the positive relationship between strain and time-based work-family conflict and the entrepreneur’s level of business salience and business demands. We control for venture size and age, and for entrepreneur sex, age, ethnicity, education, household size and immigration status.

Results and Implications

Our headline findings are that entrepreneurs in home-based ventures experience reduced strain-based work-family conflict, but the same level of time-based work-family conflict as entrepreneurs with externally located businesses. Although no significant difference exists between genders regarding time-based work-family conflict, women experience greater strain-based work-family conflict. Caucasian and Korean-American entrepreneurs experience significantly greater time and strain-based work-family conflict than Mexican-American and African-Americans. Surprisingly, the impact of ethnicity on both forms of work-family conflict is greater than the impact of role blurring from home-based ventures. Apparently, home-based entrepreneurs use the blurred boundaries between work and family to reduce stress and strain, but not necessarily to save time.

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