Effects of information and communication technologies on the work-life balance of resident assistants

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Abstract & Keywords

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Keywords: information and communication technologies, work-life balance, double-bind, segmentation, integration

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Effects of Information and Communication Technologies on the

Work-Life Balance of Resident Assistants

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Abstract

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Effects of Information and Communication Technologies on the Work-Life Balance of Resident Assistants

Modern use of information and communication technologies, or ICTs (Golden, 2013), has altered the enactment and structure of organizational existence (Wright, et al., 2014). Organizations, then, have been forced to appropriate (and even, in some cases, encourage) the use of such ICTs for the purposes of productive efficiency of members (Tremblay & Genin, 2008). Specifically, a balance acceptable to both employees and employers might now include the use of ICTs for the purposes of *telework* (Tremblay & Genin, 2008). For example, organizational work can be done from members' homes in lieu of an exclusively physical presence in traditional workplaces (Ruppel, et al., 2013). E-mail, smart phones, and video conferencing have allowed for the creation of clear changes in the lives of many organizational members.

One facet of this change is the slow yet steady combining of workers' existing personal and professional spheres, to the point that reference to such "spheres" as entirely distinct may prove counter-intuitive (Golden, 2013). Researchers note that the "boundaries between work and family are increasingly 'blurring'" (Wright et al., 2014, p. 508) and that such "permeability", or level of psychological-to-physical overlap of one's work to family life, and vice versa (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007, p. 38), can contribute to high levels of organizational member stress (Golden, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008; Wright et al., 2014). The trend of highly blurred boundaries is especially prevalent when employees work directly from their homes (Ruppel, Gong, & Trowoger., 2013). This study expands upon such current knowledge of work-life boundaries as they affect university resident assistants, or RAs.

The literature offers an abundance of research concerning work-life boundaries and balance (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Golden, 2014; Schultz, Hoffman, Fredman, & Blainbridge., 2012; Tremblay & Genin, 2008; Wright et al., 2014), and even some on the issue of domestic workplaces (Ruppel et al., 2013). To expand upon this research, this study considers workers who, rather than working at home, actually *live* at *work*. Therefore, it reports on research conducted pertaining to the professional and private boundaries of one such group: university resident assistants (RAs).

Although RAs find themselves in a fairly uncommon situation by virtue of living *and* working in the same physical location, their experiences and points of view will undoubtedly prove invaluable for current and future organizational members whose positions require them to be constantly on-call. In addition, such research will offer insight to organizational managers, especially those in charge of university dormitory operations, as they strive to better incorporate the needs of RAs and other such crucial employees into both policy and accepted member norms.

This study offers unique insight into the issue of work-life boundaries as they are perceived by working RAs. As the organizational work force continues to evolve, workers will certainly need understanding of specific, effective balancing practices for those actually living within workplaces, which this study strives to build toward. Additionally, study findings will contribute to better understanding of high technology use which may lead to high levels of work-life permeability.

Communication and Work-Life Balance

Acceptable uses of technology (ICTs) in work settings (whether physically in a traditional workplace or not) are understood and shared by way of communication-based

socialization. Work-life balance is such a prevalent communication topic because acceptable

uses of technology in the workplace evolve as organizations expand to discuss and include them.

The application of technology to such a vital balance, then, is the focus of this study.

      Communication is a primary medium for work-life *segmentation* (separation) and

integration (combination) (Tremblay & Genin, 2008) as means of conceptualizing personal and

professional boundaries (Wright et al., 2014). Furthermore, technology use, which contributes to

work-life permeability, is "enacted" based on socially constructed regulations shaped through

communication (Golden, 2013, p. 105). Boundary work is further complicated when situations

arise in which individuals live in their workplaces and must construct their own methods of

balancing work and private life roles through communication.

Work-Life Balance Concepts

      The concept of work-life balance has recently been highly regarded in the literature as a

merit-worthy topic. Authors have stated that work-life balance, as well as other topical concepts,

such as *spillover* (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007) and *border-crossing* (Tremblay & Genin, 2008),

have gained increasing academic importance, due to the normalization of teleworking (Ruppel et

al., 2013) and permeable work-life families (Schultz et al., 2012). Clark (2000) argues that the

concept of work-life balance is essentially understood in terms of the conceptualization of the

borders between one's personal and professional lives.

      In support of this assertion, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) define the concept of work-life

balance as the "accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared

between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains" (p.

455), which is an excellent working definition in that it has allowed researchers to study the role of technology use in the work-life balances of employees (Ruppel et al., 2013).

Boundary Permeability

While much investigation has been conducted on the topic of work-life borders (Clark, 2000) and the segmentation and integration of work and home life (Tremblay & Genin, 2008), and there also exist studies which seek to better understand perceptions of individuals who utilize telework (Ruppel et al., 2013), this study seeks to fill a gap still evident in the literature: investigation of the work-life balance perceptions of those who, rather than working from home, actually *live* where they *work*. One example of such a position would be that of a university residence hall assistant (RA).

While working as an RA, one functions as "a peer leader in charge of maintaining a positive environment and dealing with any problems that may arise on his or her floor" (Kacvinsky, 2014, p. 17), in addition to oneself being a student. RAs must be accessible to both their superiors and residents, virtually all the time (Paladino et al., 2005). Therefore, whether in class, off-campus, or sleeping in the middle of the night, RAs are always, technically, on-the-clock. In order to manage such overlapping schedules, RAs must work to accomplish a sort of personal homeostasis, in which the personal and professional sections of their existence form a satisfactory balance. This balance can be better understood through the lens of Clark's (2000) research.

Work/Life Border Theory

Clark (2000) introduced work/life border theory as a means of conceptualizing "how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in

order to attain balance" (p. 750). Citing Googins's (1991) earlier work, Clark explained that the socialized separation of money-earning tasks and leisure/family-related tasks is a relatively new idea. Prior to widespread industrialization, she reminds us, much of the time one spent with *family* was spent *working* as a group, in order to provide for continued survival. Now, in the age of consumerism, necessities are produced elsewhere and purchased for the family with money earned working in largely organizational contexts. Therefore, the time one is actually able to spend with family is deemed distinct from hours spent laboring simply for the survival of one's organization and to earn a wage.

As research pertaining to work-life balance has evolved, social scientists have begun to view personal and professional lives more like open systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978) than entirely separated spheres. This mutual influence-type model allows for the productive view of blurred borders between differing dominions of individuals' lives. Borrowing also from Lewin (Rychlak, 1981), Clark operates with a similar perception: that these domains are, in fact, separate, but are not fully cut off from one another, since "there is a degree of interaction between the two domains which depends on the strength of the border between them (p. 752)." Thus, work/life border theory was created to study these separations, or *borders*, which exist between individuals' personal and professional experiences, as well as to "explain, predict and help solve problems the individuals face when balancing home and work responsibilities" (p. 749).

RAs in the Workplace

Recently, authors within higher education have taken an interest in holistically defining the RA position (Healea, 2006; Kacvinsky, 2014). "Generally, resident assistants are upperclassmen responsible for maintaining campus residence halls, enforcing residential

policies, performing administrative tasks, developing community, and assisting students"

(Healea, 2006, p. 68). However, it is generally agreed that RAs, by virtue of their positions,

"wear many hats" (Longwell-Grice & Kerr, 2013) and engage in an interestingly multi-faceted

employment environment (Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn., 2005), although an individual

RA's day-to-day schedule is largely her/his own to construct.

   "In situations where organizations do not have clear rules or expectations regarding the

use of communication technologies to perform work-related tasks during an employee's free

time, this can lead to role ambiguity and increased stress/dissatisfaction" (Wright et al., 2014, p

511) Due to such ambiguity within the RA position, there is bound to exist a substantial degree

of border permeability (Wright et al., 2014). On the other hand, such low segmentation levels,

although they may be assumed to cause stress or anxiety, may also produce positive results in

terms of productivity. RAs may be able to utilize such open-system work-life balances in ways

most effective for their individual satisfaction levels. One way that RAs may choose to blur the

boundaries between their work and family lives is the use of technology (specifically, that of

ICTs) in order to communicate across boundaries.

   Increasingly common uses of ICTs (such as cell phones, computers, social media, etc.)

have led to the use of such media by RAs on a regular basis as a means of communicating with

and better understanding the residents they serve. Social media use, for example, has become a

lifeline for RAs seeking to reach out to troubled or at-risk students since information on such

sites is generally public, and it is not uncommon for RAs and their residents to be Facebook

friends. "Thus, Facebook may represent a new tool that RAs could use to maintain connections

to their residents or to identify concerns" (Kacvinsky, 2014, p. 17). Such open relationships with

residents, however, may also prove costly for RAs, in that such interaction can serve to further

the blurring of work-life boundaries; if such blurring is not desired, then social media may not

prove individually satisfactory.

Stress and Burnout

One negative side effect of highly blurred boundaries is stress-related discontent.

Specifically, the use of technology to integrate one's personal and professional lives may lead to

"negative outcomes, such as employee dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout" (Wright et al., 2015,

p. 509). As technology has become increasingly accessible to organizational members outside of

the physical location of the organization, many such members have taken to the use of ICTs to

make themselves more available to one sphere (either work or home) while existing in the other.

For example, an employee may answer a work e-mail while at home or take personal phone calls

while at work. This type of back-and-forth role assumption, however, has been shown to actually

increase stress, especially in cases of work-from-home employees (Wright et al., 2014).

In addition to these stresses, RAs are generally under further pressures to complete their

own educations and maintain healthy and well-balanced lives (Paladino et al. 2005). In order to

accomplish everything expected of them, RAs are under a tremendous amount of pressure to

balance their lives effectively and make conflicting schedules fit together. This pressure can lead

to insurmountable stress, which can in turn cause burnout to occur (Wright et al., 2014).

Relevance of RA Perceptions and Experiences

According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), behavior is learned based on the

context in which it is observed. People, Bandura states, are "neither driven by inner forces nor

buffeted helplessly by environmental influences" (p. 2), but are rather influenced by both,

simultaneously. When an RA demonstrates what residents have been conditioned to accept as professionally appropriate behavior, said residents will likely be inclined to replicate such behavior in their own future professional lives. Healea (2006) states that RAs are "student leaders within divisions of student affairs who are often viewed as role models by fellow students in the residence halls where they live and work" (p. 69). Because of the high visibility and level of influence held by university RAs, it is necessary to pay close attention to their perceptions and ability to communicate such influential cognitions.

RAs were deemed societally important and chosen for this study for several reasons. First, the RA position holds a great deal of potential power associated with a university's future retention and graduation rates, since many dormitory residents are first-year students, learning for the first time how to live on their own; a positive or negative experience with an RA could have an effect on a student's decision to either remain in school or drop out and return home. Second, such first-year students as an entire population constitute much of the future workforce. Through communication media, RAs convey to residents the expectations placed upon functional members of society, both through example and verbal preparation.

Importance of Study

In order to expand upon work/life border theory, this study will discuss the following research questions:

> **RQ1**: How does technology and ICT use by RAs pertain to RAs'
>
> perceptions of work-life balance, and vice versa?

RQ2: In what ways do RAs utilize communication (both ICT-mediated and otherwise) to blur, or strengthen, their perceived work-life boundaries?

Based on the premise that "work and life roles are established by communicative interaction" (Wright et al., 2015, p.510), this study will analyze the ways in which ICT-mediated communication is related to boundary and balance perceptions of these RAs, as well as gain insight into their methods of maintaining satisfactory levels of balance in their lives.

The effects of this study's findings make it worthy of attention. First, the results of this study will serve to inform future residence hall managers of the most productive information to include in their RA training (Kacvinsky, 2014). This will allow RAs to better influence a generation of largely first-year college students, giving them experiences most conducive to remaining in school after their first semesters in the dorms. Such well-run RA training programs could also help to create environments free of burnout or highly stressful living and working situations for RAs, thereby reducing turnover and accumulating a highly motivated staff with which to counsel and assist such first-year students.

Additionally, this study will inform members of possible future live-at-work organizations of the most effective methods with which to govern such organizations. Although many of the findings from this study could also be applied to other, similar types of on-call employment (firefighters, doctors, etc.), RAs were chosen because of their unique living environments – one's bedroom, essentially, functions as both a semi-private oasis and, conversely, a public office space. This type of work-life dynamic, while currently uncommon, may gain popularity with the rise of teleworking, depending on the willingness of workers to

reject the differentiation between one's physical home and place of work. Additional studies of this nature would be of great public interest in the future.

Methods

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher interviewed ten working RAs (of various experience levels) from a Midwestern university. Interviews were recorded and replayed for data analysis, after which investigation was conducted on data to categorize and further analyze it. Open coding was used to sort data into three categories: *Integration*, *Segmentation*, and *Technology Use*. Once all noteworthy quotes and narratives were catalogued via electronic spreadsheet and researcher memos were added to the data, analysis served to underscore those instances in which RAs shared perceptions about any recurring narratives. This was to separate instances in which ICT influence was relevant, to allow for deeper understanding of its role in the work-life balance of RAs.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, snowball-style recruiting methods were both appropriate and accessible. Following each interview, the researcher e-mailed participants, thanking them for their time and asking them to refer other RAs to be potential participants as well. All contact with RAs prior to interviews was done via e-mail and text message. Of the ten participants, seven were female and three were male. Interviews were conducted mostly in the university's library, although two took place in an on-campus coffee shop and one took place in the interviewee's dorm room while the RA was on-duty and, therefore, could not leave the dorm building. RAs' reported experience levels spanned from seven months to two years and seven months, with an average of just over one year.

Participants filled out a demographic form, in which each one self-identified age, experience level, year in school, race, number of currently enrolled credit hours, extra-curricular activities, and preferred pseudonyms (Appendix C). In addition, each participant signed an informed consent waiver, which provided information pertaining to confidentiality and contact information for appropriate authorities should any questions pertaining to the study arise (Appendix B). Interviews lasted between approximately twenty-eight minutes and approximately fifty-one minutes, with an average length of approximately thirty-eight minutes. Participants were asked nine open-ended questions (with additional follow-up questions added, specific to each interview), and they were encouraged to elaborate deeply and to disclose any specific narratives they deemed interesting and relevant (see Appendix A for a complete list of questions). During the recorded interviews, the researcher took down additional handwritten memos, for further reference during analysis.

Results

The results of this study are best understood through the lens of work-life tension. Only then can the role of technology-based ICTs within this tension be fully appreciated. The RAs interviewed for this study offered ample examples of work-life tension, as well as strategies for managing such tension. A common narrative discovered in the data was the use of ICTs to help aid in the day-to-day work-life management of RAs.

Work-Life Tension

Throughout the interview process, multiple RAs stressed the busy-ness and irregularity of their schedules, which were generally comprised of the combined responsibilities of school, program planning, administrative paperwork, extra-curricular activities, free time, and simply

making themselves physically and emotionally available as a "resource" for their residents. Nine out of the ten RAs interviewed mentioned the fact that those in such a position can never truly "clock out" of their jobs.

Avery, a second-year RA, explained this phenomenon well. "The thing about the RA world is that you're always in a fishbowl," she said, "and, while you may not technically be 'on-duty', you're always on-duty. There's never a time...where you're not being watched by someone." Several RAs expressed awareness of the fact that they are easily identifiable on campus, due to the sheer number of students living as residents in the dorms who might recognize them.

Five participants specifically mentioned this "fishbowl" analogy, meaning that the lives and actions of RAs are constantly on display, not only for one's direct residents, but for the entire student body and surrounding community, due to the fact that RAs are presumably more publicly recognizable and their actions may reflect back on the university. Gwen, who recently turned twenty-one years old, elaborated on her decision to act responsibly in public, even while celebrating her birthday. "I'm very aware of who I represent and how people view me," she said. "There's policies I still need to abide by."

Community image was also mentioned by Avery, who explained that, even while out running errands, she needed to be constantly cognizant of her actions. "If I go to Walmart, I could have five residents be at Walmart at the same time, and if I'm acting like a dumb hooligan, they're going to see that…" These examples clearly illustrate that, regardless of time or location, RAs face work-life tension almost constantly.

Perhaps because of this constant pressure, participating RAs found it helpful to remove themselves from the physical space of their dorm buildings, or, at the very least, their own dorm rooms. One tactic used was removal to complete homework tasks, either to another part of the dorm, the campus, the town, or even beyond. One participant in particular, Barry, who has served as an RA both in traditional dorms and in a campus-run student apartment complex, found it most effective to get entirely out of the city in which he works and lives. "It's something about getting away from [town] and getting away from everything, and it's really refreshing," he elaborated. "And because, as an RA, we're expected to be...present twenty-four-seven, it can start wearing you down....It's just a lot, so it's very important...to take time for yourself."

Many participants echoed Barry's sentiments, even offering examples of instances in which their supervisors had expressly encouraged them to leave campus to mentally and emotionally re-charge. However, it also became apparent throughout the interview process that some, though not all, RAs feel a strong sense of guilt when not immediately available to residents on a constant basis. Sharon, a first-year RA, spoke of taking time for herself to complete "emotional check-ups", which she held as crucial to her mental well-being. While on such pseudo-retreats, however, Sharon often felt guilty for not offering that time to her residents.

> Sharon: You have to be a little bit selfish, because if you stretch yourself too thin, then you're not helping anybody.
>
> Researcher: Does that make you feel selfish? Because I feel like that's not selfish at all!
>
> Sharon: Yes! I feel so guilty doing that, because when people are like, "Oh, can you hang out at this time?" I'm like, "Actually...I'm going on a run right now."

Researcher: I've already penciled myself in.

Sharon: (laughs) I have a date with myself, and I can*not* miss it again!

Walter, another first-year, shared that he even felt guilty because, out of necessity, he had to place more emphasis on school than work. He admitted, "I don't feel like I've done, probably, as an effective job of an RA, as far as hanging out with the students this semester, just because I've spent more time in my classes, and my classes are more demanding this semester." This theme of needing "me time" was prevalent across interviews, and several participants, in fact, were quoted as saying things like, "I'm a student/person, too", emphasizing that personal goals of completing one's education (as well as emotional and mental health) *should* supercede the importance of RA duties. However, the reality of guilt associated with "me time" shows clearly the blurred boundary between personal and professional time in the lives of RAs.

This line can be further obscured by the fact that RAs interviewed tended to view residents most often as friends, or at least, as one put it, "friends-ish". Most RAs perceived at least part of their job as "getting paid to make friends", but such relationships had to be handled with care, especially in disciplinary situations. Beverly, in her third year on the job, spoke to the conflict created by the problematic duality of friendship and authority, since RAs are expected to possess these sometimes contradictory qualities simultaneously.

"So, it does – that can get awkward and hairy sometimes, because the residents can be like, 'Oh, but Beverly, duh-duh-duh.' But I'm like, 'Well, no. You did X-Y-Z. Now I have to be RA.' Like, I'm not a friend right now, I have to be RA. But, majority of the time, it is a friendship-level, but you do have to be careful about, where do you set that bar? Because you still have to make sure you're

doing your job as you're supposed to, and not just letting them do whatever they

want."

By talking with RAs directly about their experiences, it became clear that, although

segmentation and integration both occur in this position, it is more common for integration

strategies to be successfully implemented. In addition, segmentation is not a likely reality for

most working RAs, due to the expectation that they be constantly available for work-related

tasks, even during time set aside for leisure activity. Avery shared this story on the subject:

"There was a time when I was out...at a friend's house,...and we weren't near

[town], and [my supervisor] called me. He was like, 'Your resident is going

through this situation. Are you here?' And I was like, 'No, I'm not. I can be there

if I really *need* to be.' And he was like, 'Yeah, you need to try to get back here so

you can help with this.'....So we had to leave so I could go help this resident that

was having issues."

The Role of Technology

Although this RA was not "on-duty", nor was she on campus, she was expected, in the

above instance, to return to the dorm to resolve a work-related issue. The fact that she was far

away did not deter her supervisor from making contact for such a request, because s(he) had the

RA's phone number and could easily contact her at any time. Free time, then, seems to come

with accompanying conditions for RAs, one of which being that they still be available to

supervisors via some sort of ICT.

RAs in this study were asked about their opinions pertaining to ICTs and social media as

tools of communication with residents. Because the university's policy leaves the decision-

making in this area almost exclusively to the RAs, perceptions on the appropriateness of such

communication varied. Of the ten participants, nine stated that they would be willing to become

Facebook "friends" with residents, although five of those nine added the stipulation that they

would accept requests, but never initiate them. Seven RAs indicated that they gave out their

personal cell phone numbers to residents, while two tended to prefer the GroupMe app, in which

users can send messages to one another without numbers ever being exchanged. Several

mentioned that text messaging residents allowed for the quick exchange of generally less

pressing information, presumably at various times (although one RA struck a mutual deal with

his residents: that neither would send text messages to the other after ten o'clock at night, unless

it was an emergency).

The Double-Bind

According to Becker's (1981) publication, "a double bind is a situation in which one

receives two simultaneous and contradictory messages", which speaks directly to the tension of

an RA attempting to balance both personal and professional life (Becker, 1981, p. 344). Through

collective analysis of each RA's narratives and perceptions, a fascinating and puzzling theme

began to emerge: the use of technology in the RA position creates a double-bind in which RAs

must, for the sake of personal health, take "me time" and, simultaneously, due to the nature of

the position, may never fully be considered "off the clock". In other words, the very

technological tools which allow RAs to strengthen work-life boundaries and *segment* their

personal and professional lives tend to, at the same time, force them to weaken such boundaries

and *integrate* work into the free time and space created for personal purposes.

  Had Avery not had her cell phone with her, she would not have received the call from her supervisor asking that she return to campus. However, without her cell phone, she might also have found it difficult to contact her friends to coordinate their free-time activity in the first place. The same ICT which serves as the medium through which to contact friends and schedule free time conversely serves as a tool for constant communication to and from work, which can jeopardize the free time so needed by hard-working RAs.

  The first research question posed by this study was: *How does technology and ICT use by RAs pertain to RAs' perceptions of work-life balance, and vice versa?* During interviews, RAs were asked questions about their own preferences and policies regarding the use of ICTs for the purposes of RA-resident interaction. These inquiries were combined with additional questions about ways RAs use ICTs to help them organize their time and work effectively. The researcher found it to be common among participants to communicate with residents often using ICTs and ICT-related media (such as social media). These tactics result in perceptions of normalcy in highly blurred-boundary environments. For example, some RAs used social media as a forum to learn about residents prior to meeting with them. Taryn, in her first year on the job, made the following comments:

   "At the beginning of the year...I look through their Facebooks to just kind of see, like, where they're from, what they're interested in. And so that kind of helps, and, as the year goes on,...it's easier to...learn all those names and who they are….So it's easier to get to know them."

  By looking at her residents' personal social media pages (which are not generally used in professional contexts) as a means to obtain work-related -- yet, in nature, relational --

information, Taryn's perception seems to be that RA work-life balance includes using personal

ICTs for work tasks which help her to do her *professional* job by way of making *personal*

connections (a practice common among participants, though not always via social media).

Because these practices may occur anywhere, one could potentially classify them as

telework (Tremblay & Genin, 2008). Thanks to modern technology, RAs can complete these

tasks, and more professional ones, like administrative work, through the use of ICTs, without

having to be physically present in the dorms, or even on campus. For example, RAs reported

being required to communicate with their supervisors via e-mail on a regular basis, regardless of

their current locations.

This study's second research question was, *In what ways do RAs utilize communication*

(both ICT-mediated and otherwise) to blur, or strengthen, their perceived work-life boundaries?

As in the above example, many RAs used ICTs to communicate with residents (as well as

supervisors), via e-mail, Facebook, GroupMe, and others. Generally, ICT-mediated

communication served to blur boundaries and facilitate relationship building, between residents

and RAs, as well as among the residents themselves. Fewer ICTs were used in segmentation

practices, even though segmentation practices did occur. Although not verbal in nature, RAs

sometimes attempted to remove themselves from the physical space of their dorms to

communicate non-availability, and one RA even shared that, when enjoying "me time", he

refuses to check his e-mail, for fear of the temptation to engage in work-related tasks. Many

times, segmentation practices shared during interviews were face-to-face or written (usually in

the form of a sign on the RA's door). Barry shared that, for him, verbal "ground rules" worked

best:

"I think what benefitted me...was that I set those ground rules right at the beginning. Like, "Hey, I'm going to be around. I'll knock on your doors and everything, but after midnight you're on your own, unless it's an emergency."....Anyone who lives where they work needs to set those ground rules. I think it's the only way you can survive and still be sane."

Discussion

Clark (2000) stated: "...there is no one desirable state of integration or segmentation. Happy, productive individuals...can be found on all ranges of this spectrum" (Clark, 2000, p. 755). Some RAs tended to prefer more segmentation-promoting communication, and others preferred environments characterized by higher levels of integration. While the participants of this study may experience tension due to the conflicting nature of ICT use and segmentation, they do not necessarily find this lifestyle to be unsatisfactory.

In fact, all RAs interviewed were genuine, upbeat individuals whose main focus was one altruistic goal: to help residents. Schedules, job descriptions, and lifestyle choices for RAs all revolve around the needs and preferences of residents, and, while they maintained that they are "people, too", RAs choices to segment or integrate their personal and professional lives most definitely take into consideration the needs of those students they serve.

Implications

The implications of this study are twofold. First, more complete knowledge of the role of ICTs in the practice of work-life balance will, as it applies to live-at-work employees, serve to educate and inform dormitory administration, especially pertaining to RA training. As

universities prepare for future generations of residents and RAs, those in power can write training and policies which have evolved with this new knowledge.

Quoting Komives (1991), Paladino et al., explain that "[a]long with work environment, leadership styles of residence hall directors can also impact the burnout potential of RAs to reduce the likelihood of burnout in RAs" (Paladino, 2005, p. 19). However, dormitory supervisors could be trained *beyond* their natural tendencies to create the best possible work environment for their RAs. For example, supervisors may ask that RAs communicate free time hours to them, in which they may not be contacted via ICT, transferring immediate responsibilities to others who are present and/or on-duty.

Second, awareness of segmentation and integration pertaining to work-life balance, as well as the fact that ICTs contribute to such practices, can help to inform the next generation of those young adults entering the workforce, as well as the administration who will hire them to complete live-at-work tasks (as well as work-at-home tasks, since many of the same general principles may be found to apply). This knowledge can help employees to most appropriately and effectively use ICTs to practice segmentation and integration, according to individual taste and employer preference.

Limitations

Like all those preceding it, this study is not without its limitations. The first of these is that all participating RAs were employed by the same university, and therefore underwent the same training. It is possible that, because of this fact, these RAs engage in similar practices due to university-specific training, and that their perceptions may have all been shaped similarly on some issues regarding ICT use in their employment.

A second limitation is that, as demonstrated through this study's snowball sampling methods, many participating RAs knew each other, which may have served to provide data mostly from individuals who are generally like-minded. In addition, this study's demographic includes mostly RAs with lower levels of experience. As experience grows, so may the opinions of RAs pertaining to ICT use (and, perhaps, work-life balance in general) may evolve and grow as well.

Future Research

If replicated, this study might span over several universities across the country (or even, farther into the future, internationally) and include more RAs with, on average, higher experience levels. Also, and perhaps more importantly, future researchers are urged to use more complete understanding of these issues to challenge the very concept of work-life *balance*, since to balance implies that personal and professional lives, even if in an open system, are sects which *can*, on the whim of the individual, be assigned changed levels of importance. However, this study questions whether the choice to segment professional from personal life even lies with the individual, considering the rise of ICT use in attempts to create what has historically been referred to as work-life balance.

In a society in which personal and professional lives are managed through the same ICTs (cell phones, social media, and others, as shown by this study), the question may be posed: Do individuals exclusively hold the power to determine their *own* work-life "balances"? Although the definition offered by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) refers vaguely to this idea, and more information and data are needed to successfully argue such a claim, an amendment to the concept of work-life balance (to be re-named work-life *negotiation* or *management*) could help to make

the literature more complete in its understanding of work-life perceptions, followed swiftly by

appropriate actions to take based upon such perceptions.

Conclusion

Although telework and the study of its effects have become increasingly common

(Tremblay & Genin, 2008), it seems that live-at-work individuals and their perceptions are less

fully understood, especially as they pertain to the use of ICTs to complete telework and negotiate

border permeability. This study provides insight into the beliefs and experiences of working

RAs, whose power of influence is as far-reaching as it is significant, due to the direct contact

such individuals have with new students and, potentially, members of the future workforce. For

these reasons, RAs and their managers should be well-informed and prepared to face the effects

of strained borders, such as stress and burnout (Wright et al., 2014). Clark's (2000) work/life

border theory will serve as a guide for key assumptions about work-life *negotiation*, or

management, as well as a more complete understanding of border relevance, in order to decrease

tension and stress in the lives of RAs and other live-at-work employees.

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Appendix A

<u>**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**</u>**: IRB Protocol # _____ Application Received: _____**

Routed: _____   Training Complete: _____

Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

Application for Approval Form
Last revised on January 2011

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)

  Evaluation of Professional and Private Boundaries of Resident Assistants

- **Type of Application:**

  - ▢ <u>**New/Renewal**</u> ▢ **Revision (to a pending new application)**

  - ▢ **Modification (to an existing #_____ approved application)**

- **Principal Investigator:** (must be <u>a</u> KSU faculty member)

Name:	**Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D.**	Degree/Title:	**Assistant Professor, Kansas State University**
Department:	**Communication Studies**	Campus Phone:	**785-532-6776**
Campus Address:	**136 Nichols Hall**	Fax #:	**785-532-3714**
E-mail	**sriforgi@ksu.edu**		

- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:**

  Sarah Riforgiate

  sriforgi@ksu.edu

785-532-6776

- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals)**:**

    - ▢ **No**

    - ▢ **Yes**

- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?)**:**

    - ▢ **Thesis**

    - ▢ **Dissertation**

    - ▢ **Faculty Research**

    - ▢ **Other:** _____

        Note: Class Projects should use the short form application for class projects.

- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**

    - ▢ **Copy attached**

    - ▢ **Consent form not used**

- **Funding Source:** ▢ **Internal**   ▢ **External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)**

    Kansas State University Office of Undergraduate Research & Creative Inquiry

    - ▢ **Copy attached**   ▢ **Not applicable**

        http://www.k-state.edu/undergradresearch/opportunities/ OURCI%20Research%20Grants--FINAL.pdf

- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at** http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html **, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**

    - ▢ **No**

    - ▢ **Yes**   **(If yes, please complete application including Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)**

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at **comply@ksu.edu**.

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	**Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D.**
Project Title:	**Evaluation of Professional and Private Boundaries of Resident Assistants**
Date:	**1/28/15**

MODIFICATION

Is this a modification of an approved protocol? ▢ ▢ **Yes**   ▢ ▢ **No** **If yes, please comply with the following:**
If you are requesting a modification or a change to an IRB approved protocol, please provide a concise description of all of the changes that you are proposing in the following block. Additionally, please highlight or bold the proposed changes in the body of the protocol where appropriate, so that it is clearly discernable to the IRB reviewers what and where the proposed changes are. This will greatly help the committee and facilitate the review.

NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

Technological communication advancements (e-mail, cell phones, video conferences, etc.) frequently cause boundaries between personal and professional domains to blur, encouraging people to engage in work-related activities in locations other than the workplace and during non-work hours (D'Abate, 2005). In some fields, the physical locations of "work" and "home" are not necessarily separated. This environmental combination leads to the constant balance and blending of work and private responsibilities. In order to better understand how physical space influences perceptions of work and private boundaries, this study considers how university resident assistants (RAs) who work, study, and live -- all in the same location -- use communication to blend, blur, or segment boundaries.

I.   **BACKGROUND** (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study)**:**

Modern technology has altered the enactment and structure of organizational existence (Wright, et al., 2014). One facet of such change is the slow yet steady combination of workers' personal and professional lives. Researchers note that the "boundaries between work and family are increasingly

‘blurring’" (Wright, et al., 2014, p. 508) and that such "permeability" (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007) can contribute to high levels of organizational member stress (Golden, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008; Wright, et al., 2014). Communication is a primary medium for work-life "segmentation" and "integration" (Tremblay & Genin, 2008) as means of conceptualizing personal and professional boundaries (Wright, et al., 2014). Furthermore, technology use, which contributes to work-life permeability, is "enacted" based on socially constructed regulations shaped through communication (Golden, 2013, p. 105). Boundary work is further complicated in situations where individuals live in their workplaces and must construct their own methods of balancing work and private life roles

The literature offers an abundance of research concerning work-life boundaries and balance (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Golden, 2014; Schultz, et al., 2012; Tremblay & Genin, 2008; Wright, et al., 2014), and even some on the issue of "domestic workplaces" (Ruppel, et al., 2013). To expand upon this research, this study considers workers who, rather than working at home, actually live at work. Therefore, this study reports on research conducted on the professional and private boundaries of one such group: university resident assistants (RAs). Through research and interview analysis, this study offers a unique insight into the issue of work-life boundaries as they are perceived by working RAs. As the organizational work force continues to evolve, workers will undoubtedly need insight into specific, effective balancing practices for those actually living in within workplaces. Additionally, study findings will contribute to better understanding of high technology use that leads to high levels of work-life permeability.

II.   **PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION** (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

Researchers will conduct 20 interviews with male and female live-in RAs residing in university residence halls, who have served varying amounts of time in this position.

III.   **OBJECTIVE** (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study)**:**

Researchers will work to better understand how individuals manage their work and private roles and identities.

IV.   **DESIGN AND PROCEDURES** (succinctly outline formal plan for study)**:**

A. Location of study: **Kansas State University**

B. Variables to be studied: **Work-life boundary perceptions, methods for work-life boundary integration and/or segmentation**

C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – **PLEASE ATTACH**)   **Interviews**

D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing   **A participant would not likely withdraw from this study unless (s)he felt uncomfortable with our interview**

from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.:	**questions, so we will take care to phrase them appropriately and make participants aware that refusal to answer is acceptable.**
E. List all biological samples taken: (if any)	**N/A**
F. Debriefing procedures for participants:	**Verbal explanation of process (face-to-face interview), written consent form, and disclosure of purpose of interview data**

V. <u>RESEARCH SUBJECTS</u>:

A. Source:	**Kansas State University residence halls**
B. Number:	**20-40**
C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)	**Resident Assistants (RAs) living full-time in their place of work in the Kansas State University residence halls.**
D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.)	**Word-of-mouth referral, e-mail recruitment**

VI. <u>RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS</u>:
The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

A. **Risks for Subjects:** (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are "no known risks" if appropriate.)

No known risks

B. **Minimizing Risk:** (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)

Subjects will be allowed to discontinue interviews at any point.

C. **Benefits:** (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)

Subjects will be offered a free, safe space to engage in introspective self-reflection, and society will benefit from subjects' insights (as they apply to numerous other professions).

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? ("Minimal risk" means that "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

▢ **Yes**   ▢ **No**

VII.   **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations.   If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

We will use pseudonyms to protect participant identities, in both transcribed documents and finished study. Additionally, we will keep transcripts in a password-protected computer, and we will store all documents in Dr. Riforgiate's office.

VIII. INFORMED CONSENT: Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of "deception" of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at

http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/consentckls.html

 Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

Yes   No   Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures.

◖   ▢   A.   Are you using a written informed consent form? If "yes," include a copy with this application. If "no" see b.

▢   ●   B.   In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If "yes," provide a basis and/or justification for your request.

◖ ☐ C. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If "no," does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain)

☐ ● D. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person).

◖ ☐ E. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If "no" explain why.) Attach copy of debriefing statement to be utilized.

*It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.

IX. **PROJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them

in one of the paragraphs above)

Yes	No	Does the project involve any of the following?
☐	●	a. Deception of subjects
☐	●	b. Shock or other forms of punishment
☐	●	c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse
☐	●	d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities
☐	●	e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues
☐	●	f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity
☐	●	g. Purposeful creation of anxiety
☐	●	h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy
☐	●	i. Physical exercise or stress

☐   ● j.   Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects

☐   ● k.   Any procedure that might place subjects at risk

☐   ● l.   Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual

☐   ● m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc?

☐   ● n.   Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection

IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!

X.   SUBJECT INFORMATION: (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the   paragraphs above)

Yes   No   Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories?

☐   ● a.   Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent)

☐   ● b.   Over 65 years of age

☐   ● c.   Physically or mentally disabled

☐   ● d.   Economically or educationally disadvantaged

☐   ● e.   Unable to provide their own legal informed consent

☐   ● f.   Pregnant females as target population

☐   ● g.   Victims

☐   ● h.   Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)

☐   ● i.   Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any alternatives options for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. (It is also important to remember that: Students must be free to choose **not** to participate in research that they have signed up for **at any time** without penalty. Communication of their decision can be conveyed in any manner, to include **simply not showing up** for the research.)

☐   ☐ j.   Are research subjects **audio** taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?

☐   ☐ k.   Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, photographed)? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?

XI.   **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**: Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects.   Financial interests are not in them selves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects.   Please answer the following questions:

Yes   No

☐   ●   a.   Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements?

☐   ●   b.   Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)?

☐   ●   c.   Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?

☐   ●   d.   Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?

☐   ●   e.   If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.

XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:

A. **KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:	Campus Email:
Caylin Smith	**Communication Studies**	**N/A**	**csmith@ksu.edu**
Dani Winters	**Communication Studies**	**N/A**	**wintersd@ksu.edu**
Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D. (Principle Investigator)	**Communication Studies**	**785-532-6776**	**sriforgi@ksu.edu**

B. **Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project <u>not</u> affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in

accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/Unaffiliated%20Investigator%20Agreement.doc

C.

The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	**Organization:**	**Phone:**	**Institutional Email:**

Does your non-KSU collaborator's organization have an Assurance with OHRP? (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search).

▢ **No**

▢ **Yes** **If yes, Collaborator's FWA or MPA #** _____

Is your non-KSU collaborator's IRB reviewing this proposal?

▢ **No**

▢ **Yes** **If yes, IRB approval #** _____

C. Exempt Projects: 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: _____

XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL ▢ Yes ▢ <u>No</u>

(If so, please give product.)

Export Controls Training:

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

   http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/ecp/index.htm

   1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage

   2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program

   3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

   If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can't recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or comply@ksu.edu and we will be happy to look it up for you.

Post Approval Monitoring: The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

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INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: **Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D.**

Title of Project: **Evaluation of Professional and Private Boundaries of Resident Assistants**

XIV. ASSURANCES: As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

A.   **Research Involving Human Subjects: This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.**

B. **Training: I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.htm.   I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.**

C. **Extramural Funding: If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.**

D. **Study Duration: I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.**

E. **Conflict of Interest: I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.**

F. **Adverse Event Reporting: I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved. Unanticipated or Adverse Event Form is located on the URCO website at: http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/index.htm. In the case of a serious event, the Unanticipated or Adverse Events Form may follow a phone call or email contact with the URCO.**

G. **Accuracy: I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.**

_____   _____

(Principal Investigator Signature)   **(date)**

PROJECT TITLE: Evaluation of Professional and Private Boundaries of Resident Assistants

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: **EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D.

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Caylin Smith & Dani Winters

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

Sarah Riforgiate, Ph.D.

sriforgi@ksu.edu

785-532-6776

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION*:*

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

- Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: Kansas State University

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

Technological communication advancements (e-mail, cell phones, video conferences, etc.) frequently cause boundaries between personal and professional domains to blur, encouraging people to engage in work-related activities in locations other than the workplace and during non-work hours (D'Abate, 2005). In some fields, the physical locations of "work" and "home" are not necessarily separated. This environmental combination leads to the constant balance and blending of work and private responsibilities. In order to better understand how physical space influences perceptions of work and private boundaries, this study considers how university resident assistants (RAs) who work, study, and live -- all in the same location -- use communication to blend, blur, or segment boundaries.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Participants will be interviewed using open-ended questions. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for data comparison. Participation will be voluntary.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT: none

LENGTH OF STUDY: Interviews will last approximately one hour each; however, participants may be contacted as late as May 2015 for follow-up and verification.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, as it is of minimal or no danger to participants, physically or psychologically.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Subjects will be offered a free, safe space to engage in introspective self-reflection, and society will benefit from subjects' insights (as they apply to numerous other professions).

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant identities, in both transcribed documents and finished study. Additionally, transcripts will be kept in a password-protected computer, and I will store all documents in the office of Dr. Sarah Riforgiate, this study's principle investigator.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: N/A

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: N/A

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature:

Date:

_____

_____

Witness to Signature: (project staff)

Date:

_____

_____

Appendix B

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT – INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION

Hello, we are a research team at Kansas State University conducting a study to learn about how people who live and work in the same location use communication to address work and life concerns. There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

We are inviting your participation, which will involve participating in an interview by sharing your experiences as a Residence Hall Assistant. The interview will be audiotaped and last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop your participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study, there will be no penalty. The results of the study may be published, but your name will not be used.

We would like to audiotape the entire interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. If you give permission for this interview to be taped, you have the right to ask for the recording to be stopped. The recordings will be kept under lock and key in 136 Nichols Hall for approximately seven years at which point they will be destroyed and will no longer be operable.

This study is anticipated to benefit participants by sharing study findings in aggregate form (no individual names will be reported). Further, other organizations and individuals may benefit from the information, which is expected to be shared in publications in aggregate form.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please ask us in person or you can contact Sarah Riforgiate, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies (sriforgi@k-state.edu or 785-532-6776). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas

State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224 or Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at any time without penalty. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be offered to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study and authorize the audiotaping of the interview:

_____   _____   _____

Subject's Signature   Printed Name   Date

Investigator's Statement: I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. I have offered the participant a copy of this signed consent document.

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Appendix C

1. Describe a typical day in the life of a Resident Assistant (RA).

2. What is it like to live and work in the same location?

3. What does "free time" look like or mean to you?

4. Is the residence hall mostly a home or mostly a place of work for you? Why is this the case?

5. What were some unexpected aspects of the Resident Assistant (RA) positon for you?

6. Describe any changes in you approach since when you first started as a Resident Assistant.

7. What role does technology play in your work as a Resident Assistant (RA)?

8. How does being a Resident Assistant (RA) influence relationships (e.g. friendships, family, romantic) outside of the dorm?

9. What are some of your favorite aspects of the Resident Assistant (RA) position?

Demographic Survey to be filled out by the participant

What pseudonym would you like me to use for you? _____

How old are you? _____years old

How long have you been a Residence Assistant? _____years and _____months

What is your year in school? _____Freshman _____Sophomore _____Junior _____Senior

What race do you self-identify with? _____

How many credit hours are you taking this semester? _____credits

List all the activities you are involved in on campus other than your Resident Assistant position:

Appendix D

Sample e-mails sent out to prospective participants:

1.)

Hello, everyone!

My name is Dani Winters, and I am a K-State undergraduate working on my senior thesis project in Communication Studies. This project will look at the perceptions and experiences of working RAs, so you are all perfect candidates! My project is being done in conjunction with a larger project including Caylin Smith, who recommended that I contact you. If you are willing to participate in an interview for my research, please reply to this e-mail, and we can set up a time to meet!

Our interviews last between 30 minutes and an hour, and so far they have been a blast! Thank you so much for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon! :)

Dani

2.)

 Hello!

My name is Dani Winters, and I am a senior at K-State working on my senior thesis project. I am interviewing RAs for my study, and I am looking for participants! Interviews usually last between 30 minutes and an hour, and so far they have been a lot of fun! I am available to meet anywhere that is most convenient for you, so if you are interested in being a part of this study, please let me know so that we can set up a meeting time!

Thank you so much, and have a great week!

Dani

Effects of Information and Communication Technologies on the

Work-Life Balance of Resident Assistants

Dani Winters, Communication Studies Undergraduate Student

Kansas State University

email: wintersd@ksu.edu

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Application for Kansas State University Kirmser Undergraduate Research Award

Dani Winters, Communication Studies Undergraduate Student

Kansas State University email: wintersd@ksu.edu

Introduction

Over the course of my education in the Kansas State University Department of
Communication Studies, my understanding of library research has greatly improved. This
semester, my skills were put to the test, as I completed my research for my Senior Colloquium
(COMM 550) course project. I have been taught by many great educators within the
Communication Studies Department for several years -- in fact, it was in one of these classes that
I first learned how to use online library resources to find scholarly research.

Prior to this interactive learning process, I was quite unsure exactly what constituted a
"scholarly source", much less how to find one online. Today, I feel privileged to have access to
such an extensive resource, which is so readily available to me. I also feel grateful that my
teachers have made it their mission to teach me tactics with which to succeed in undergraduate
research. The process of completing my thesis project would have taken far longer and been
painstakingly frustrating had I not been able to use (and knowledgeable enough to navigate) the
online resources offered by the Kansas State library.

Research Topic

I conducted a research study on the perceptions of university resident assistants (RAs), as
they pertain to work-life boundaries. Specifically, I studied the ways in which these RAs use
information and communication technologies (ICTs) to manage their time and space effectively,
since they are virtually always on the clock. While working within my department, I began first
to work on a collaborative project on the broader question of work-life balance as it affects RAs.
Then, I decided to use my own data (on ICTs as RAs' work-life management tools) to complete
my Senior Colloquium project. I found ample literature on the topic of ICTs in the home and

workplace, but I wanted to expand that research to include those individuals who cannot "clock out" and leave the premises of the workplace at the end of the day.

Research Conducted

For this research project, I utilized the Kansas State online library extensively. Generally for my coursework, I tend to use the search engine *Communication and Mass Media Complete* to find peer-reviewed journal sources, due both to its excellence and relevance to my studies. For my Senior Colloquium project, however, finding literature pertaining to my topic required me to branch out even farther, utilizing different search engines within the realms of education, psychology, and others.

Although organized similarly to ones I had used in the past, I found myself slightly intimidated by these new search engines, if only for lack of experience using them. However, I soon got my bearings and realized that I already had the skills and knowledge to help me use them. In the end, I was glad I did, as my reference list began to grow! I also knew that I could "chat" online with a member of the library's staff if I had any questions, which lifted the burden of needing to know every aspect of the site. The user-friendly library page helped me to expand my research easily, which has served to allow for the creation of a well-rounded and highly informed paper.

Collaborative Sources

At times, I would come across an article in my quest which I couldn't seem to find, because I did not know under which subject it should be located, or, perhaps, I had access to a quote but not the article's title. At these times, I found it helpful to do a broader search using Google Scholar. Once I found the information needed, I was much better equipped to find the source within the K-State library and to locate a PDF version of the file. What I found most

exciting, was that, even if the library did not currently have the file I needed, they could find it and send it to me! This convenience is very much appreciated, because it further eliminates cost to students for memberships to other sites, which charge for access to scholarly journals.

By using multiple sources while conducting my research, I was able to find the articles most relevant to my topic, as well as to further increase my knowledge of how to most efficiently conduct a search, both within the online library services as well as on other sites. As they say, "Practice makes perfect", and I have definitely practiced academic research this semester, as I will continue to practice throughout the rest of my education. In addition, I knew that, while not all sites which claim to be "scholarly" actually are, the Kansas State library website and its search engines allow for search results to be filtered, so that those which have been peer-reviewed and published in academic journals can be found among the rest. This tool is especially helpful when searching for sources to quote in supporting an argument.

Personal Growth

As this project comes to a close, I feel far more confident in my ability to conduct respectable academic research, as well as to utilize the resources available to me in order to do so. I was able to utilize library resources, as well as other search engines, combined with articles passed along to my by my amazing professors and teachers, to compile a source list strong enough to lend legitimate credibility to my study and final paper. I can present my research with confidence, knowing that I have grown in my practice of library research and have done my best to produce a merit-worthy project.

Thank You

Thank you so much for your consideration of my project for the Kansas State University Kirmser Undergraduate Research Award. I am incredibly excited to be compared with some of

the best and brightest minds Kansas State has to offer, in undergraduate research across all

disciplines. Also, I am grateful for the chance to work toward the recognition of my work, as I

have become quite invested in it throughout the research process. I appreciate your time and

consideration greatly.