Compressed Workweeks, Expanded Workdays:
Campus Reactions to the Four-Day Workweek

- **Four-Day Work Week**
  - May-August // 2009 and 2010
  - Monday-Thursday
    - 7:00am – 6:00pm
    - 10 hours of work time + 1 hour for lunch
  - Offices that remained on the regular schedule: Campus Police, Facilities Management, University Library, First-Year Experience/ACCESS, and Summer Camps.

- **Norfolk State University**
  - Founded in 1935
  - Comprehensive university
  - Located in downtown Norfolk, VA
  - One of the largest Historically Black Universities in the U.S.
  - Approximately 7,000 culturally diverse undergraduate and graduate students
  - 270+ FT Teaching Faculty // 700 Administrators and Staff

- **Data Collection**
  - Participants:
    - Classified staff
    - Administrative and professional faculty
  - Online Survey Questionnaire (N=387, ~ 50% response rate)
  - Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews (N=18)

- **Data Analysis Steps**
  I. Descriptive analysis of responses to Likert-scale survey questions,
  II. Content analysis of responses to open-ended survey items (NVivo),
  III. Content analysis of interview transcripts (NVivo), and
  IV. Quantitative linguistic analysis of responses to open-ended survey items and interview transcripts (LIWC).

**Assumptions**

- Coordination of employees’ activities over time is a critical organizational task (Blount & Janicik, 2001).
- “People are purposive, knowledgeable, adaptive, and inventive actors who, while they are shaped by established temporal structures, can also choose (whether explicitly or implicitly) to (re)shape those temporal structures to accomplish their situated and dynamic ends” (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002, p. 688).
- “Multiplicity and interdependence of temporal structures in everyday life suggests that ... shifting temporal rhythms requires more than just rhetoric. ... It requires people enacting a different set of temporal structures, which in turn implies profound changes in the assumptions, expectations, norms, incentives, and practices of the organization and the family, as well as of the other communities” (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002, p. 697-8).
I. Overall campus reaction

II. What advantages and disadvantages of the compressed workweek were perceived by employees?

Do benefits of the four-day work week improve employees’ personal lives while costs impair work performance? (Bird, 2010; Hodge & Tellier, 1975).

- Advantages // “Three-Day Weekend”
  - Leisure/Family Time
    - “For me it was that my mother can no longer drive, so I determined that I would take the four day week, so I can take off Friday to drive her places and that worked fairly well.”
    - “I just kind of unwind on Friday …because doing the extra hours on Monday through Thursday…sleeping late on Fridays or any other special things. Personally, my wife is off during the summer months because she works in the school system, so that was an extra time that we had to spend together, family time.”
  - Professional Development Time During the Weekend
    - “I was able to use the Friday to work on articles and research proposals. I so enjoyed the schedule and hope that we can use it more often.”
    - “I do a lot of reviews, manuscript reviews. I knew that I could dedicate Fridays just for it.”
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- Dedicated Time for Running Errands and for Appointments
  - “I was able to do everything I needed during working hours on Friday…eliminating the need of asking for time off to take care of personal business.”
  - “The ability not to take time off to take care of business. It is difficult because if most of your businesses like the doctor’s office operate on a 9 to 5 basis then I would have to take time to make appointments for my regularly scheduled check-ups or any business that I had to take care of. Whereas Fridays, I can schedule things on Friday, that saved me from taking that extra time. And then, when I took my vacation, it was actually vacation time as opposed to catch-up to personal business or household business or whatever.”

- Commuting Cost Savings
  - “The four day work week helped out a lot with saving on gas and wear and tear on the car. Especially when you live on the other side of the water and one day out of the week you don’t have to be sitting in traffic going to and coming from work.”
  - “I came to appreciate it and didn’t want it to end. It meant that I didn’t have to fight the early morning tunnel traffic. Thus, the commute to work was much quicker and more stress free. That by itself is justification enough for me to favor continuing a four-day work schedule.”

- Improved Morale and Productivity
  - “On Fridays it was just like a holiday, I mean on Thursday afternoons. Everybody was in a better mood, especially in this building [administration]. You know people were looking forward to it.”
  - “Mine and all other employees productivity practically quadrupled, as not only did we have a more definitive timeline to get tasks completed but we also got more rest and relaxation, so that our bodies’ energy systems, both mentally and physically, had plenty of time to recuperate.”
  - “My scholarly research output was more productive since I work better at home without being constantly interrupted. . . . I believe a strong argument in favor of this 4-day workweek policy was the added research production as a whole.”

- Disadvantages // “10 Hour Work Day”
  - Child-Care Problems
    - “The hours of 7-6 made it difficult for drop-off and pick-up for children. Both of children’s schools open at 7am and close at 6pm. With the hours for the 4-day work week, it made it impossible for me to pick-up or drop-off either one of my children…and I was forced to take leave.”
    - “As a single mother, it was difficult to find sitters during that time and I rarely got to spend time with my family.”

  - Physical Fatigue
    - “A four day work week makes the average day too, too long. Although we were off on Fridays, the time was needed to catch up on the rest that was missed by having to rise early to be in the office.”
    - “10 hour days . . . leave zero time for family and general activities. Oh sure, it’s nice having Friday off – except that I spent most of the day recovering from the 4 10 hour days.”
• Decreased Productivity in the University Offices Opened on Fridays
  - “The thing that I’ve found most frustrating working the five-day week was, invariably, it’s kind of Murphy’s law, invariably, when you needed assistance from another department, it was Friday and nobody else was at work. And if someone picked up a phone and started to dial and then realized -- they are not there. That is very frustrating and very difficult to get used to.”
  - “During the 4 day work, employees were always in a rush with their work and not able to finish most of their work in 4 days.”

• Schedule Misalignment with Outside Businesses
  - “The public continued to attempt to contact us on Fridays and many became frustrated when they did not receive a return phone call until Monday.”
  - “Adjust the hours to be more in synch with the rest of the working world. We would arrive at 7 and have to wait an hour in order to conduct business with other institutions or commercial businesses.”

• Gaps in Student Services and Campus Information
  - “Overall, the 4-day work week is employee-centered rather than student-centered.”
  - “It’s not that there is a lot of visitation, but….We need to be accommodating and students, people, visiting the campus aren’t going to be able to see what we are about if there is nobody on the campus except the police and librarians and facilities management….And nothing else is opened. …No administrative offices, no departmental offices, none of that. There’s nobody in the department to answer questions if a student is interested in majoring in History or whatever; there is nobody there to answer questions. And I think it is a little problematic.”

• Bio Rhythms Adjustment
  - “I am personally not a morning person, so I’m not a fan of the 4-day schedule, plus it also affected my sleep pattern.”
  - “The negative impact was early, early days more so than the late afternoons. Trying to arrange everything from working late the day before, coming in and getting here on time earlier in the morning was problematic in terms of just adjusting to that schedule.”

III. What strategies and techniques did employees enact / suggest to adapt to the demands and opportunities of the compressed workweek?

“Individual actors will organize their activities around the prevailing temporal agenda, which reflects how the individual perceives and construes the temporal structure of the organization within his or her immediate setting” (Blount & Janicik, 2001).

• Enacted Strategies

o Self-Organization at Work
  - “You could organize your work such that you could complete it in four days. It would be a long day, working ten hours, but it gives you longer time to devote to the task and, again, it enhances organizational skills in doing that.”
  - “I made sure I left at the end of the day, at the end of the ten hour day because otherwise I wouldn’t been able to get everything done that I needed to get done at home with my family, so … making sure that I adhere to the work schedule was very important so it did not disrupt my family life.”
Adjustment in Family/Personal Routines
- “There was a gap and/or window in time when my children were home alone because my wife and I were at work. As a result, I had to list specific instructions or give chores to my child to keep them occupied until my wife returned from work.”
- “The only adjustment I needed to make was waking up a little earlier than usual, which sometimes meant going to bed a little bit earlier the night before.”

Deferred Gratification / Reward
- “I don’t mind working these hours in order to have off on Fridays.”
- “Just knowing that you have long weekends ahead. It really did a lot for morale. Especially, during these times when we know that we are not going to get raises. So it is an incentive in a way to keep people motivated and a real boost.”

Identification of One’s Strengths and Weaknesses
- “I found a 10 hour day very long. There’s a point at which my attention span gets shorter and because I do a lot of detailed work, I have to arrange what I do during the day, so that I take those things that require less attention in the end of the day when I am less sharp. … A lot of heavier work needed to be shifted to earlier in the morning. I am basically a morning person and after about four o’clock…my eyesight is not what it used to be and I would find out that my eyes would bother me more, so I’d have to focus on things that did not require the kind of attention to the computer screen that I am able to do easily in the morning so there are things that I can do in the afternoon, but it was that kind of shift accommodating to my growing older and working the longer day.”

Articulation of Specific Goals/Management by Objectives
- “We have our goals and projects for the summer. … I don’t think that working a 4-day workweek is going to impact what we normally do. I think we have the same amount of time, my staff has been very diligent because we do have goals and objectives, we decide what they are, we have a staff meeting before we kick-off the summer schedule and lay out what we want to achieve. We do this in a roundtable discussion.”

Suggested Strategies

Flexible Scheduling
- “Allow 30 minute flex at beginning and end of day for child care needs.”
- “I would change the hours to 7:30 to 6 with half hour lunch.”
- “Give each department the ability to stagger the times for employees to come to work each day if applicable.”

Closing all University Functions
- “Totally close down all of the administrative functions [on Fridays] as we do on Sunday.”
- “Enforce it across the board. Although we were informed of the possibility, if we’d been sure the work schedule would change, programs could’ve been altered so that the entire university would’ve been on the same schedule.”
Telecommuting

- “Have one day where you work from home instead of the four day work week.”
- “Allowing people to telecommute on the day that they aren’t in the office so that work is still getting done but less utilities are being used because are working from home.”

Monitoring

- “Monitoring system of employees arriving and departing the workplace should be implemented. Without such monitoring it is unfair to those employees that honestly worked the ten-hours a day work schedule when others, who did not, still had Fridays off.”
- “You want to make it fair to everybody. It is not fair when some people exploit the system and others adhere to it. Because if there is no penalty for it, . . .some people are just going to take advantage of it.”

IV. What psycho-social frames did employees apply to interpret and report their experiences with the compressed workweek?

“The words we use in daily life reflect who we are and the social relationships we are in. . . .The function and emotion words people use provide important psychological cues to their thought processes, emotional states, intentions, and motivations”(Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

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Six Ps to be Addressed for a Successful Work Schedule Change

1. People
   - Input and Impact
     - Internal stakeholders
     - External stakeholders

2. Purpose
   - Articulation
   - Justification

3. Policy
   - Dissemination
   - Monitoring / Enforcement
   - Alignment w/ HR Policies

4. Process
   - Explanation
   - Flexibility

5. Perceptions
   - Small-Scale Pilot Programs
   - Assessment
     - Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups, Observations

6. Performances
   - Evaluation
     - Productivity
     - Efficiency
     - HR statistics

(adapted from Facer & Wadsworth, 2010)
Bibliography


Software packages utilized:

- LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) -- http://www.liwc.net/

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