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Diversity in the work-life interface: Introduction to the Special Issue

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Diversity in the work-life interface: Introduction to the Special Issue

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DIVERSITY IN THE WORK-LIFE INTERFACE

Abstract

Purpose: This article serves as an introduction to six articles featured in a special issue on diversity in the work-life interface. This collection of papers contains research that contemplates the work-life interface in different geographical and cultural contexts, that explores the work-life experiences of minority, marginalized, and/or under-researched groups of workers, and that takes into account diverse arrangements made to fulfil both work and non-work responsibilities.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This introductory article first summarizes some of the emerging research in this area, introduces the papers in this Special Issue and links them to these themes, and ends with highlighting the importance of using an intersectional lens in future investigations of the work-life interface.

Findings: These six articles provide empirically based insights as well as new theoretical considerations for studying the interface between paid work and personal life roles. Compelling new research directions are identified.

Originality: Introducing the new articles in this Special Issue and reviewing recent research in this area brings together work-life interface scholarship and diversity management studies, and points to the necessity for future investigations to take an intersectional and contextualized approach to their subject matter.

Introduction

Research that explores the interface between paid work and personal life has been hugely prolific over the last two decades. Scholars have explored aspects such as the conceptualisation of relationships between work and family domains, such as conflict, enrichment, balance, and segmentation/integration (Carlson *et al.*, 2009; Gatrell *et al.*, 2013); antecedents and outcomes of these constructs (Derks *et al.*, 2016; French *et al.*, 2018); lived

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3 experiences of these phenomena in different occupations (Beigi *et al.*, 2017; Ford and
4 Collinson, 2011; Guillaume and Pochic, 2009); differences in work-family conflict and its
5 impact according to geographical region (Drummond *et al.*, 2017; Masuda *et al.*, 2019); tactics
6 for establishing and maintaining boundaries between work and family domains (Cruz and
7 Meisenbach, 2018); decision making about work-family issues (Lupu *et al.*, 2018); and
8 organizational and legislative policy and practices designed to help workers fulfil dual roles
9 (Cannizzo *et al.*, 2019; Kossek *et al.*, 2010). This body of research has generated important
10 empirical and theoretical insights suggesting that work-life negotiations largely remain a
11 struggle for individual workers, and also produced valuable and much-needed
12 recommendations for organisations and policy makers.
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27 There have been criticisms of the current body of literature, however, and chief among
28 these is its restricted sample base. In other words, much of the literature looking at the work-
29 life interface typically focuses on the experiences of white, heterosexual mothers of young
30 children, who are engaged in white collar work and living in nuclear family households in
31 Western societies (Özbilgin *et al.*, 2011). This ‘ideal work–life balancer’ that emerges from the
32 extant research informs the way in which work-life issues continue to be framed and studied.
33 This is not surprising because historically ‘the relationship between work and life first became
34 a focus of interest as growing numbers of women sought paid employment outside the home,
35 following the Second World War’ (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019, p. 99). As many women still had to
36 fulfil their role as mothers, wives and homemakers, the issue of balancing these responsibilities
37 with paid employment created the need to understand and interpret these experiences (Gatrell
38 *et al.*, 2013). We are not discounting the difficulties that mothers experience in balancing paid
39 and non-paid work and would argue that it is paramount to continue research in this area.
40 However, the sole focus on white heterosexual Western mothers of young children is
41 problematic in a number of ways.
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3 Firstly, this persistent focus on a specific group means that empirically, we still have
4 very little understanding of work-life issues among diverse employee groups, including
5 immigrant populations, ethnic and religious minorities, workers with disabilities, and
6 individuals with non-traditional family structures, such as members of the LGBT community.
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8 In Voydanoff's (2002) conceptual model of the work-life interface, adaptive strategies predict
9 work and personal life characteristics, which in turn predict work, personal life, and individual
10 outcomes. These outcomes are moderated by social categories and coping resources. Members
11 of diverse employee groups can thus be expected to have a diverse range of adaptive strategies
12 and resources that impact their experiences of the work-life interface. Understanding these
13 differences is crucial in order to move research and theorising around work-life interface
14 forward both empirically and theoretically. Moreover, recent research suggests that in order to
15 understand the complex and at times contradictory experiences of people in relation to their
16 ability to manage work and life demands, it is important to consider individuals' identities
17 (Hamidullah and Riccucci, 2017; Ray and Jackson, 2013).
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35 Secondly, and related to the above, work and family issues are also closely linked to
36 different cultural norms and values which are different from those of dominant groups in the
37 West (Mortazavi *et al.*, 2009). For example, cultural settings may determine household
38 arrangements that may be very different from nuclear households common in the West, for
39 instance multigenerational households and/or those containing extended family members
40 (Khokher and Beauregard, 2014; Knodel and Chayovan, 2012). Cultural contexts also impact
41 on the construction and meanings of gender roles and gender ideologies – an issue that is crucial
42 in understanding work-life balance issues such as the domestic division of labour (Kurowska,
43 2018). Finally, different cultural contexts have varying economic and social policies that
44 impact organizational interpretations and individual experiences of the work-life interface
45 (Klarsfeld *et al.*, 2014; Lewis and Beauregard, 2018). Minimal exploration of different cultural
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3 contexts means that many of the concepts and theories that draw on the ‘ideal work-life
4 balancer’ in the Western context as outlined above may not be (as) relevant or applicable to
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6 different cultural contexts. It also means that exploring these links between diversity and
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8 employees’ work-life strategies and resources represent a fruitful avenue of research for a field
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10 that is only beginning to expand beyond its white, middle-class, Western origins.
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15 Finally, the literature’s focus on a particular group of people may limit the extent to
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17 which this research can inform organisational and broader state policy. For instance, Kelliher
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19 *et al.*’s (2019) review suggests that blind spots remain in understanding the work-life balance
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21 of those without children, of those with other care responsibilities (such as eldercare), or of
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23 those with non-standard schedules of work or in non-traditional employment, for example those
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25 who are self-employed or on zero-hours or part-time contracts. Self-employment is particularly
26
27 interesting as we have witnessed an exponential growth in the gig economy and the growing
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29 precarity of employment arrangements in the last decade (Abraham *et al.*, 2018; Healy *et al.*,
30
31 2017). The non-standard employment context warrants greater exploration by work-life
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33 researchers as typical organisational and state-wide policies that address some work-life issues
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35 may not exist or be applicable in these kinds of settings.
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41 As is clear, despite prolific research on the work-life interface there still remain gaps
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43 and blind spots, particularly in regard to the inclusion of more diverse population samples. This
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45 Special Issue seeks to fill some of these gaps. In our call for papers, we were particularly
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47 interested in research that contemplates the work-life interface in different geographical and
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49 cultural contexts, that explores the work-life experiences of minority, marginalized, and/or
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51 under-researched groups of workers, and that takes into account diverse arrangements made to
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53 fulfil both work and non-work responsibilities. In the sections below we first summarize some
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55 of the emerging research on these themes before introducing the papers in this Special Issue
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57 and linking them to these themes. Finally, we highlight the importance of using an
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3 intersectional lens in future investigations of the work-life interface.
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5 **Research on the work-life interface in diverse geographical and cultural contexts**

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8 Moving away from the individual-level conceptualization of the work-life interface that
9
10 characterized early work in this area, a number of scholars over the past decade have
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12 contributed to theorizing the work-life interface as culturally bound. Cultural context is
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14 important in relation to the work-life interface for two main reasons. First, understandings of
15
16 the concepts of 'work' and 'personal life', and of how they intersect, vary considerably across
17
18 the globe. Secondly, policies addressing the issues inherent in balancing paid work and
19
20 personal life (such as support for personal or family commitments) differ significantly from
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22 country to country.
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26 With regard to differences in conceptualizing the work-life interface, Powell *et al.*
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28 (2009) focused on national culture and argued for the inclusion of cultural dimensions from
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30 Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' (2000) framework of cultural variation and House *et al.*'s
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32 (2004) Project GLOBE, such as collectivism, human orientation, gender egalitarianism and
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34 specificity/diffusion, in theories of how activities and resources from either work or personal
35
36 life may conflict with or enhance activities and resources from the other domain. Chandra
37
38 (2012) also highlighted that gendered ideologies are crucial to understanding the work-life
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40 interface in different countries. In nations where the majority of workplaces are male-
41
42 dominated and there are strongly prevailing patriarchal ideologies, the issues and discussions
43
44 around the work-life interface may be very different to those in Western contexts as
45
46 socialization plays a key role in determining how work-life issues are understood and
47
48 experienced. For instance, organizational work-life policies in many Asian countries tend to
49
50 focus on the issue of long working hours, while traditional gender norms go unquestioned and
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52 the gendered division of labour thus prevails both in the workplace and the household
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54 (Chandra, 2012). The work-life interface is therefore perceived as a matter to be handled by
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3 individuals and not an issue with which employers should be concerned. Building on these
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5 ideas, Lewis and Beauregard (2018) went on to theorize understandings of the work-life
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7 interface as shaped by intersecting layers of global, national, organizational, and temporal
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9 context, noting also that there is diversity within as well as across national contexts in terms of
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11 how concepts such as ‘work-life balance’ are interpreted.
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15 With regard to differences in work-life policy and practice, Ollier-Malaterre *et al.*
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17 (2017) considered the impact on the work-life interface not only of national culture, such as
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19 shared values, assumptions and beliefs among members of a particular nationality, but also that
20
21 of a country’s legal, economic and social structures, such as public policies, industrialization
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23 and gender equality. There is significant divergence between countries in terms of regulatory
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25 frameworks that support worker rights, particularly those of parents (Klarsfeld *et al.*, 2014).
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27 Hence country context helps to determine the kind of flexible work arrangements and ‘family-
28
29 friendly’ policies that are available to workers (Chung, 2018). For instance, policies to support
30
31 working parents are more likely to be introduced in countries higher in gender egalitarianism
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33 (Brandth and Kvande, 2015). The impact of national context on work-life supports was picked
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35 up by Beauregard *et al.* (2018), who theorized the influence of national context on the work-
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37 life benefits and flexible working practices that organizations provide to their employees. They
38
39 posited that when a shared national culture framework influences both a) individual values and
40
41 preferences for managing the work-life interface and b) the role demands of an organization
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43 set forth by its work-family culture and policies, the resulting alignment generates a coherent
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45 work-life role orientation for individuals that leads to positive outcomes in both the work and
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47 personal life domains. However, when there is misalignment, individuals experience a
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49 dissonant role orientation and the work-life interface is characterized more by conflict and
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51 compromise.
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3 There is also a growing amount of empirical research accounting for geographical
4 and/or cultural context in experiences of the work-life interface. This body of work shows
5 clearly how variation in national structures and cultural values leads to dissimilarities in how
6 individuals' work and personal lives intersect. For example, Chatrakul Na Ayudhya *et al.*'s
7 (2019) research showed how the long-lasting effects of the 2008 economic crisis and resulting
8 austerity measures implemented by the government in Greece have both eroded managers' and
9 professionals' sense of entitlement to a satisfactory work-life balance and weakened their
10 capabilities for achieving such a balance. In a context of high unemployment and job insecurity,
11 study participants spoke of working long hours and unpaid overtime and not taking up
12 legislated entitlements such as maternity leave out of fear of losing their jobs. Pay cuts for some
13 workers meant that they could no longer afford to travel to visit their children or their parents.
14 The overall effect was one of reduced quality of life for these employees.
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31 A similar lack of entitlement to work-life balance caused by different factors can be
32 seen in Xiao and Cooke's (2012) study of workers in China, which demonstrated how economy
33 marketization, rapid private sector growth and a national trend for work intensification results
34 in often severe conflict between work and personal responsibilities for these individuals. Long
35 work hours were acknowledged by employers as an issue relevant to Human Resource
36 Management (HRM) policies, but childcare commitments were viewed as beyond the purview
37 of organizational support. Work-life conflict thus became accepted as simply a 'fact of life' by
38 both workers and organizational leaders. However, Zhang *et al.* (2014) question the extent to
39 which Chinese workers perceive long work hours as conflicting with family responsibilities.
40 According to Zhang and colleagues, the values of obligation and interdependence inherent to
41 Chinese family arrangements obligate individuals to sacrifice their personal interests for the
42 sake of the family's welfare, meaning that long work hours are experienced not as work-life
43 conflict but as prioritization of work for family gain. Family members support those working
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3 long hours and the work-life interface is thus managed by the family and not by the employer
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5 or the individual.
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8 Research in India, meanwhile, illustrates how even when employers make efforts to
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10 facilitate their workers' management of the work-life interface, cultural differences may render
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12 these ineffective. Rajan-Rankin (2016) describes how the opportunity to work from home was
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14 abandoned by male information technology workers after two weeks in which they were
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16 assumed by neighbours to be unemployed, causing shame for the workers and their household
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18 members. This study showed clearly how work-life balance initiatives offered by multinational
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20 firms headquartered in Western countries may be incompatible with local cultural values and
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22 practices.
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26 Finally, research conducted among migrants reveals how cultural values from both the
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28 home and the host nations can intersect to influence decisions about and experiences of the
29
30 work-life interface. In Khokher and Beauregard's (2014) study, expatriate Pakistani
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32 professionals in the United Kingdom made decisions about their work and personal life roles
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34 that were influenced both by their own Muslim values and by local norms for combining
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36 motherhood and paid work. Interviewees spoke of resisting pressure from extended family
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38 members to have children immediately after marriage, choosing instead to delay childbearing
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40 in favour of prioritizing work-related goals such as the completion of educational qualifications
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42 and the establishment of careers. The importance of having family members caring for young
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44 children rather than relying on childminders or nurseries was emphasized by many participants,
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46 for whom this was largely a non-negotiable condition for their envisioned return to work after
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48 maternity leave. Other research has established that individuals from cultures where
49
50 intergenerational households are common, particularly in Asia, are more likely to have access
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52 to familial assistance with caregiving responsibilities (Knodel and Chayovan, 2012). For
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54 migrant working women, this assistance can be rendered by family members such as parents
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3 or siblings who have migrated alongside them. When migrating to a country where traditional
4 masculine gender norms are perceived as more relaxed, male partners may also spend more
5 time with the family and contribute to childcare and domestic work (Dyer *et al.*, 2018).
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9 10 **Research on the work-life interface of under-studied populations**

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12 There is some emerging work that explores how groups of people other than the ‘ideal’
13 work-life balancer – the white, middle-class, dual-career, heterosexual, cisgender, mother of
14 young children who performs white-collar work - experience the work-life interface. Shifting
15 the focus from women in white-collar jobs to men in blue-collar work, Hughes and Bozionelos
16 (2007) explored the work-life experiences of men working in a male-dominated occupation –
17 bus driving. For the study participants, a perceived imbalance between paid work and personal
18 life was not only a source of concern but their main source of dissatisfaction. The bus drivers
19 connected their problems with fulfilling both work and personal life commitments to work
20 withdrawal behaviours such as using sick leave for other purposes and contemplating quitting
21 their jobs.
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35 Moving away from ‘dual-career’ to ‘dual-earner’ families, Warren *et al.* (2009)
36 interviewed low-waged working mothers in England whose short, part-time hours of paid work
37 were necessitated by social policies offering limited support for working parents. Social
38 policies available to working parents elsewhere in Europe, such as universal systems of
39 childcare and shorter working weeks, were seen by these women and their low-waged partners
40 as enabling women’s employment, improving children’s quality of life, and empowering both
41 women and men to better share childcare responsibilities and lead more balanced lives. The
42 authors note that while the UK policy environment has moved from assumptions of a male
43 breadwinner model to dual-earner households as a default, in reality there exist severe
44 constraints on mothers’ labour market attachment that result in women’s lifetime earnings
45 being only half that of men’s. Warren builds on these findings in her 2015 paper to argue that
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3 while work-life balance has typically been viewed in the literature as a middle-class problem
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5 of not having enough time to fulfil both work and personal life demands, working class
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7 individuals' work-life interface is more likely to be characterized by having too few paid work
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9 hours to sustain a satisfactory personal or family life.
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12 Social class was also pertinent to Ray and Jackson's (2013) study examining the
13
14 cognitive processes of work-life decision making in terms of time pressures and perceived role
15
16 demands among racially diverse Americans. The authors found that marriage and
17
18 socioeconomic status provided individuals with greater social and economic capital with which
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20 to fulfil their work and family role obligations; those with more capital had more job flexibility
21
22 and control over work decisions, which enabled them to better manage their family lives. Their
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24 analysis showed that married, middle-class white Americans were thus better able to manage
25
26 conflicting work and family demands than either professional, Black single mothers or working
27
28 class Mexican Americans. This intersectional approach to assessing work-life capabilities
29
30 illustrates the combined impact of race and social class on workers' experiences of the
31
32 intersection of paid work and personal life, a theme also found in Dyer *et al.*'s (2011) study of
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34 migrant workers in the UK healthcare and hospitality sectors. While their service sector work
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36 facilitated others' work-life balance, these workers' own management of the work-life interface
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38 was characterized by complicated strategies and negotiations necessary to meet the demands
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40 of their jobs and their caregiving responsibilities.
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47 Another study with an intersectional lens is Kachchaf *et al.*'s (2015) exploration of how
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49 minority ethnic women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics academia
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51 experienced the work-life interface. The intersection of race and gender positioned these
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53 women outside the ideal worker norm, where pure dedication to scientific work left no room
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55 for personal responsibilities such as motherhood or eldercare. Career penalties arising from the
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57 tension between women's lived realities and the ideal worker norm demonstrated very clearly
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3 that these women's work-life experiences were noticeably different from those of colleagues
4 who more closely embodied the norm. Similarly, Hamidullah and Riccucci's (2017) study of
5 workers' satisfaction with employer work-life balance policies found that race, educational
6 attainment, and age all played a role in determining women's perceptions of fairness with
7 regard to the initiatives on offer. The researchers noted that because over half of African
8 American children live in single-parent households headed by women who often rely on family
9 and friends to assist with childcare, organizational policies designed to help workers manage
10 family responsibilities are particularly attractive to female African American employees.

21 **Research on diverse working arrangements impacting the work-life interface**

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24 'Work-life balance' or 'family-friendly' policies addressing the work-life interface
25 have become increasingly mainstreamed among employers. Even in the Western context where
26 these policies originated, however, not all categories of worker in all organizational types
27 benefit equitably from policies and neither are all organizations equally enlightened in offering
28 work-life initiatives. There are significant differences in policy availability based on
29 unionization, size of organization, degree of formality of HRM and labour market
30 substitutability of workers – and therefore the relative importance of retention as an incentive
31 for employers to offer support for the work-life interface (Van Wanrooy *et al.*, 2013). The
32 availability of, for example, telework arrangements could be assumed to be higher for a
33 professional on an open-ended, permanent contract of employment working in a large
34 organization with a formalized HRM function and union recognition agreement, than for a
35 seasonal worker on a fixed-term, freelance arrangement working in a small workplace in the
36 hospitality sector. Recent scholarship on non-standard working arrangements tackles familiar
37 initiatives such as telework and flexible hours but also looks at flexible working practices less
38 frequently studied in the context of the work-life interface, such as shift work and compressed
39 work weeks. There is also emerging research examining work-life experiences within newer
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3 working models, such as portfolio careers and gig work generated by the digital platform
4 economy, and in nonstandard workplaces, such as oil rigs and brothels.
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8 With the coronavirus pandemic ushering in heretofore unseen levels of working from
9 home in 2020, research on this particular practice is likely only to increase. Encouragingly,
10 Richardson and McKenna's (2014) study of Canadian high-tech employees who engaged in
11 frequent telework demonstrated how instead of their homes being 'invaded' by work,
12 individuals actively redefined and reorganized both their work and home spaces to meet their
13 changing needs as their work patterns evolved. The function and purpose of these spaces were
14 often reconstructed, with work being conducted at home and socializing becoming a key
15 rationale for visiting the office. For organizations where telework is deeply embedded,
16 unexpected challenges may arise. Full-time teleworkers in Beauregard *et al.*'s (2019) study
17 reported high levels of organizational commitment, with most intending to serve out their
18 working lives with their current employer, but the flip side of this loyalty was a deep-seated
19 reluctance to progress their careers if that might require working more often from the office
20 instead of at home. Even for workers with high levels of career ambition, weighing the lifestyle
21 implications of frequent commuting against the incentives of higher pay and more challenging
22 work offered by a promotion did not produce an acceptable cost-benefit ratio. Managers and
23 colleagues of full-time teleworkers noted that while beneficial for individual workers,
24 widespread take-up of this practice had negative implications for the organization in terms of
25 succession planning.
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49 For those who are self-employed rather than employees, working from home does not
50 always have a positive impact on lifestyle and time with family members. Kapasi and
51 Galloway's (2015) study of individuals operating home-based businesses shows that while an
52 improved work-life balance was the predominant motivating factor for most of the participants
53 to start their own businesses, and most were of the view that their work-life interface was easier
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3 to manage as an entrepreneur than in their former lives as employees, many struggled on an
4 ongoing basis with fulfilling competing work and personal life demands. The flexibility offered
5 by combining work and home space and time, and the autonomy afforded by self-employment,
6 were helpful resources in efforts to meet multiple role demands but required considerable
7 planning and self-discipline alongside. The researchers concluded that home-based business
8 ownership was not in itself a solution to work-life conflict. Rather, it can more realistically be
9 viewed as an alternative form of employment within which to develop strategies to manage the
10 work-life interface.
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21 Other non-standard working time arrangements have also been investigated in relation
22 to their impact on the work-life interface. For instance, Bambra *et al.*'s (2008) review of
23 compressed work weeks concluded that its usage could be beneficial to shift workers' work-
24 life balance with a low risk of adverse effects to individuals' health or to organizational
25 effectiveness. Shift work in general, however, has been found to exert a negative effect on
26 work-life balance, with evening work and Saturday work posing substantial constraints on
27 social and family participation, and evening work also leading to higher levels of work-related
28 health complaints (Greubel *et al.*, 2016). Unpaid overtime can have similar effects; Virick *et*
29 *al.*'s (2007) research found that survivors of layoffs in a high-tech firm were subject to
30 increased workloads that were experienced as role overload. The negative impacts on work-
31 life balance reduced workers' job and life satisfaction in turn, diminishing overall quality of
32 life for these individuals.
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49 Emerging research on non-standard work models paints a picture of wide variation in
50 experiences of the work-life interface, with worker agency over these experiences similarly
51 variable. In Teague *et al.*'s (2015) study of musicians who had developed portfolio careers,
52 made up of many different jobs, participants described how beneficial they found flexible,
53 entrepreneurial working to be for their work-life balance. Teaching, fixed-location musical
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3 theatre work and operating one's own company were seen as highly compatible with family
4 life and ability to meet demands from the domestic sphere. However, the most lucrative source
5 of revenue for most musicians was touring, which was also perceived as least suitable for
6 maintaining relationships and fulfilling caregiving responsibilities. Satisfactory management
7 of the work-life interface therefore necessitated financial trade-offs. Lehtonvirta's (2018)
8 research of gig platform workers also found evidence of trade-offs between work-life balance
9 and income. Autonomy over work scheduling was seen as a key benefit of gig work and
10 conducive to accommodating personal life commitments alongside work tasks. However,
11 control over scheduling was only possible when sufficient work tasks were available and
12 workers were not entirely dependent on these for their living. When the availability of
13 piecework tasks was limited, workers without access to complementary sources of income
14 found themselves constantly on call, in some cases sleeping only in short bursts in front of their
15 computers so as not to miss out on suitable work opportunities. In these cases, autonomy
16 disappeared and workers were forced into a binary choice between earning a living and having
17 time to spend in non-work pursuits.

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19 Finally, another focus of recent research has been on how individuals in non-standard
20 workplaces, where workers live on-site, experience work and personal life roles as segmented
21 (separate) versus integrated (combined). Blithe and Wolfe's (2016) study of Nevada's legal
22 brothel industry found that due to local regulations and discrimination from community service
23 providers, sex workers engaged in nearly complete segmentation of work and personal life
24 roles. Although sex workers are considered independent contractors and determine the length
25 of their own contracts, most brothels enforced policies that require workers to stay on-site
26 during their contract period, complemented by county regulations that often specified when or
27 if sex workers are allowed to be in town or have family members residing there. As failure to
28 observe these regulations could result in termination of working privileges, sex workers
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3 reported widespread compliance. On-site provision of healthcare, financial, and shopping
4 services often denied to them in the community helped workers cope with occupational stigma
5 and simultaneously strengthened boundaries between the domains of paid work and personal
6 life, with children and other family members living in other towns and frequently not seen for
7 weeks or months at a time.
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15 This extreme version of work-life segmentation is echoed in the offshore workers from
16 Basile and Beauregard's (2018) study of fit and misfit between worker preferences for
17 segmentation and organizational supply. Workers were subject to lengthy rotations away from
18 home followed by long periods away from work and had limited access to reliable
19 telecommunications between domains. For workers whose preferences were for greater
20 integration of work and personal life roles, this highly segmented work-life interface generated
21 conflict between the behaviours used in work and personal life roles and reduced the extent to
22 which work and personal life roles were perceived as enriching one another. Misfit also resulted
23 in lower levels of commitment to the organization, raising for employers the spectre of
24 withdrawal or turnover.
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37 **Articles in this Special Issue**

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40 The six articles presented in this special issue span the themes identified above. They
41 present, in themselves, a diversity of approaches to studying the work-life interface. With
42 regard to research on the work-life interface in diverse geographical and cultural contexts,
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47 *Comparing the situation- and person-based predictors of work-family conflict among married*
48 *working professionals in India* by Rupashree Baral helps to address the issue that despite India
49 being the world's second most populous nation and its economy fast-developing, its citizens
50 remain under-represented in work-life research. Baral tests the ability of core self-evaluations
51 (self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability and locus of control) to predict conflict between
52 work and family roles among professionals in India's manufacturing and services sector, and
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3 compares their impact to that of situational factors such as working hours, caregiving
4 responsibilities for young children, and social and organizational supports. Dispositional
5 factors accounted for greater variance in the study participants' family-to-work conflict,
6 whereas situational factors were stronger predictors of work-to-family conflict. These findings
7 reinforce the importance of employer efforts to assist workers' efforts to manage the work-life
8 interface, as the extent to which work responsibilities interfere with personal commitments
9 depends in larger part upon situational characteristics that in many cases will be responsive to
10 organizational interventions.
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21 Also accounting for geocultural diversity in the work-life interface is Irina Gewinner's
22 *Work-life balance for native and migrant scholars in German academia: Meanings and*
23 *practices*. Here, perceptions of the work-life interface for highly skilled migrant scholars from
24 the former Soviet Union are differentiated from those of native German academics by migrants'
25 cultural capital and the migration experience itself. Particularly distinctive were the culturally-
26 rooted differences between migrant and native academics in terms of attitudes toward family
27 formation as either a parallel or sequential priority in relation to career planning. While the
28 native German participants connected maturity with a permanent employment contract and a
29 solid financial underpinning from which to build a family, their Russian-speaking counterparts
30 associated adulthood with having children rather than with achieving financial stability and
31 were thus more likely to be younger parents. However, many of the migrant academics found
32 themselves reprioritizing work-life decisions once faced with competing cultural norms and
33 associated constraints in the German context, illustrating the significance of contextual factors
34 on the work-life interface.
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53 Addressing the work-life interface of under-studied populations, *Work-to-family and*
54 *family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany* by Mareike Reimann,
55 Charlotte Marx and Martin Diewald analyses the impact of job and family demands and
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3 resources on work-family conflict among single parents compared to parents in couple families.
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5 Contrary to expectations, single parents did not report more work-to-family conflict than
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7 parents in couple families, but they did report significantly more family-to-work conflict,
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9 particularly when they relied on formal childcare arrangements. This illustrates the inadequacy
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11 of public childcare provision in some regions in Germany, which can be difficult to access
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13 close to home or work and whose opening hours are often not as long as a standard working
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15 day. Notably, working from home increased work-to-family conflict for all parents in the study,
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17 regardless of household composition.
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22 Picking up on the topic of working practices that can facilitate or hinder efforts to
23
24 manage the work-life interface, *Improving work-life policy and practice with an*
25
26 *intersectionality lens* by Ann Marie Ryan and Caitlin Briggs examines the assumptions that lie
27
28 behind mainstream work-life balance policies in organizations and suggests ways to formulate
29
30 genuinely inclusive work-life practices. For example, they recommend organizational leaders
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32 adopting a stance of ‘tempered visibility’ in identifying the work-life needs of workers from
33
34 diverse backgrounds; this recognizes that either rendering intersectional aspects of identity
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36 invisible or stigmatizing individuals through hypervisibility both lead to a failure in
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38 recognizing the work-life needs that workers’ specific circumstances necessitate. Ryan and
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40 Briggs also highlight the importance of recognizing that issues of ‘authenticity’ in a context of
41
42 ‘impression management’ can be exercised in a way to allow each individual to be safe in the
43
44 workplace and be able to contribute without needing to demonstrate some form of cultural
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46 conformance. They acknowledge the tensions inherent in many of these areas, however, such
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48 as ensuring that the use of inclusive language to promote work-life policies not replicate
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50 previous ‘colour-blind’ efforts that deny systemic inequalities between groups of workers.
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56 With regard to diverse working arrangements that impact the work-life interface,
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58 *Supporting work-life balance with the use of coworking spaces* by Marko Orel presents a four-
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3 country study of the niche work environment of parent entrepreneurs' coworking spaces.
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5 Sharing work space with proximity to childcare facilities is perceived by study participants to
6
7 provide a far more optimal work-life balance than more conventional working arrangements,
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9 including working from home – which we have seen from research reviewed earlier in this
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11 article to present its own challenges as well as benefits. A more extreme working arrangement
12
13 is explored in *The work-life experiences of an invisible workforce: The case of live-in women*
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15 *migrant domestic workers in Malaysia* by Wee Chan Au, Uracha Chatrakul Na Ayudhya and
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17 Pervaiz Ahmed. This study of migrant domestic workers in Malaysia explores the impact on
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19 women's work-life interface of leaving their own family in the home country to care for their
20
21 employer's children – and live in their employer's home – in the host country. The facilitation
22
23 of professional Malaysians' pursuit of career and parenthood relies on imported labour from
24
25 lower-income neighbouring countries, and the ability of migrant domestic workers to
26
27 financially support their families comes at the expense of their ability to live with them. The
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29 work-life interface for these workers is thus heavily weighted toward work, with very little
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31 time or space available for personal commitment.
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37 **The importance of intersectionality in future work-life interface research**

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40 The divergence in experiences of the work-life interface based on national and
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42 organisational context is compounded by individual characteristics of workers along the
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44 equality and diversity attributes familiar to readers of this journal. This combines to mean that
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46 the experience of WLB needs to be understood in the context of intersectionality, the starting
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48 premise of which is that people have multiple identities based on demographic characteristics
49
50 such as gender, race, social class, religion, and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991). These
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52 identities are determined by history, geographical location, culture and social relations and
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54 combine to produce substantively distinct experiences for individuals (McCall, 2005). As can
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56 be seen by the literature reviewed earlier in this article and the new research featured in this
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3 Special Issue, an intersectional approach is instrumental in helping us capture the diversity of
4 workers' situations and how they negotiate the intersection between work and personal life
5 roles within the context of organizational and societal practices.
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10 An increasing amount of scholarship is tackling the gaps and blind spots in the work-
11 life literature by examining the experiences of under-studied groups of workers or by
12 situating its investigations in under-studied locations. An explicit intersectional lens has
13 recently been used to frame discussion on topics such as the work-life balance experiences of
14 Muslim migrant women and of Asian foreign-born female scholars in western contexts (Ali
15 *et al.*, 2017; Lee and Lenoir, 2016), the financial and cultural challenges faced by migrants
16 who have caregiving responsibilities in their countries of origin (Dyer *et al.*, 2018), and the
17 impact of family support on Moroccan women's entrepreneurship (Constantinidis *et al.*,
18 2018). For this necessary trend to continue, scholars must build intersectionality into their
19 research designs. Ignoring intersectionality risks excluding employee groups, such as
20 immigrant workers, those from ethnic and religious minorities, workers with disabilities, and
21 those with non-traditional family structures, from investigation. Conversely, understanding
22 their work-life experiences - how minority workers manage work and personal life roles, the
23 opportunities and obstacles they face, what arrangements are required to meet their needs -
24 can guide organizations in developing inclusive and equitable policies and improving
25 retention. For researchers, this means a valuable opportunity to "imagine other places to
26 which the theory might be taken" (Carbado *et al.*, 2013, p. 303), extending the boundaries of
27 current work-life interface research.
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