

THE WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE

Spillover, Complications, and
Challenges

Edited by Sampson Lee Blair
and Josip Obradović

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

VOLUME 13

**THE WORK–FAMILY INTERFACE:
SPILLOVER, COMPLICATIONS,
AND CHALLENGES**

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY
RESEARCH VOLUME 13

THE WORK–FAMILY INTERFACE: SPILLOVER, COMPLICATIONS, AND CHALLENGES

EDITED BY

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FOREWORD

Around the globe, one of the common threads in the fabric of life which all people share is the fact that they spend most of their days in two distinct environments – the family and work. In order to support their families, individuals devote much of their time to provide for the needs of their loved ones. These efforts require considerable dedication, as work is often quite demanding, stressful, and even risky for one’s well-being. Throughout human history, though, individuals have fulfilled these roles and have toiled long hours in order to ensure that their families’ needs are met. The notion of a “labor of love” is often used to describe these efforts, as the love and devotion to one’s family is often what motivates one to work.

This dyadic relationship between work and family, though, creates an often mutually conflicting situation, individuals are working to provide for their loved ones, yet their work creates various forms of separation from those very same loved ones. The characteristics of work, which can create such complications are many, frequently place workers in a dilemma of mammoth proportions. In their various family roles, as spouses, parents, or otherwise, they want to fulfill their familial responsibilities in manners consistent with the love and affection maintained therein. The affectional environment of the family truly creates an enmeshed relationship network where bonds are based upon love, devotion, and the desire to ensure the well-being of other family members. The work environment, on the other hand, retains the qualities of a secondary group, in which relationships are more formalized, roles are more specialized, and production and performance are the essence of relationships.

Researchers have long recognized the potential for conflict between these two distinct entities, the family and work. Across a variety of sciences, researchers have focused upon the complications created by the intertwined nature of family and work. In the mid-1900s, such studies often had a decidedly patriarchal bias, focusing upon such issues as how maternal employment might be negatively associated with children’s well-being. By the late twentieth century, though, as dual-earner couples became the norm, studies began to adopt a considerably more comprehensive understanding of the work–family interface. Researchers began to focus on the impact of work upon not only the working members of families, but also upon how work could affect all family members and all family relationships. At the same time, researchers recognized the potential for family roles and responsibilities to impact job performance and the larger work environment.

This broader understanding of the work–family interface has yielded considerable understanding, yet it must also be viewed within the historical context. Simply put, both families and work are dynamic, and their various structures and roles continue to change, as time moves forward. Family structures and family roles have undergone considerable shifts over the past several decades.

Fluctuations in such basic characteristics as marriage, divorce, and fertility have prompted substantial change in family structures and familial norms. At the same time, the nature of work continues to change. On the global scale, jobs within the service sector have increased, along with the need for greater educational and skills attainment by workers. Technological change, in particular, has served to redefine both how and where work is performed. Such changes in work will, understandably, have consequences for the work–family interface.

In this volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*, researchers focus upon the work–family interface. This is no easy task, given the dynamic natures of both work and family. The studies contained in this volume provide a very comprehensive examination of a wide range of issues within the work–family interface and offer considerable insight into the multiple facets of this uniquely interwoven pair of environments. As with previous volumes, a global perspective is also utilized herein, with research from around the world. This is particularly necessary in the study of work and family issues, as the perceptions, experiences, and even definitions of what constitutes a work–family matter varies from one culture to another.

Researchers who have focused upon the work–family interface have frequently directed their attention to the potential complications and consequences for the most vulnerable segment of families – the children. In “Stability in Mothers’ Work Hours in Early Childhood and Children’s Achievement in Kindergarten,” Kei Nomaguchi and Marshal Neal Fetto use data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to examine the relationship between maternal employment and children’s cognitive development. They find that both maternal employment patterns during early childrearing years and children’s cognitive outcomes in kindergarten are shaped by family contexts that mothers are embedded in. The understanding of the larger context of the work–family interface is further examined by Ewa Giermanowska and Mariola Raclaw in “Social and Cultural Context of Family Policy and the Employment of Mothers of Small Children. The example of Poland.” Their study focuses upon how the creation and implementation of policies concerning the work–family interface commonly overlook the broader social and cultural context in which such policies reside. Although policymakers may often have the best of intentions, the needs of children, along with the needs of working parents, cultural themes need to be recognized as part of the development and implementation of public policy strategies. Beyond the cultural context, the socio-political context of the work–family interface also needs to be considered. In “Lone Mothers’ Negotiation of Competing Employment and Parenting Demands in the Contemporary British Context of “Worker Citizenship”,” Nicola Carroll examines a sample of lone mothers from northern England, with a specific focus upon their struggles in coping with the various stigmas. While the population of lone mothers is increasing, there remains a stigmatization at the cultural level, wherein they are perceived as being dependent upon welfare services, despite the clear evidence of their substantial presence in the workplace.

Of course, the work–family interface will involve all members of the family. While the majority of research on parents has focused upon mothers, there remains the need to examine fathers, as well. In “Perceived Work–Family Balance

and Engagement Behaviors of Fathers of Infants,” Melissa Rector LaGraff and Heidi E. Stolz examine how perceptions of the work–family balance may affect fathers’ relationships with their infant children. Although such perceptions did not appear to affect the overall engagement of fathers with their infants, fathers’ perceptions of the work–family balance did influence how often they told stories to their children, as well as how frequently they dressed their infants. These findings demonstrate the complex nature of the work–family interface, which can also extend beyond the family, and into the schools. In “Parental Involvement and Educational Performance among Taiwanese Adolescents: Comparing Dual-Earner and Single-Earner Families,” Yi-Ping Shih, Fu Jen, Wen-Hsu Lin, and Chin-Chun Yi examine how parental involvement in their children’s schooling may vary as a function of parental employment. Using a sample from the Taiwan Youth Project, they find that parental school involvement significantly affects the performance of children from dual-earner families, but not for those from single-earner families. Distinct experiences are shown for daughters and sons, suggesting that the work–family interface may also vary depending upon the sex of children.

For many families, the nature of the work, itself, can affect the manners in which difficulties may arise from the work–family interface. In “A Longitudinal Examination of Work–Family Conflict among Working Mothers in the United States,” Hassan Raza, Bradley van Eeden-Moorefield, Joseph G. Grzywacz, Miriam R. Linver, and Soyoung Lee examine both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict among employed mothers. Building upon bioecological theory, they demonstrate the role of nonstandard work schedules and relationship quality in working mothers’ experiences. Our understanding of the work-to-family conflict is further extended in “Motivation for Night Work and Parents’ Work-to-Family Conflict and Life Satisfaction,” by Matthew Weinshenker. Through analysis of a sample of parents who work a non-standard schedule, he demonstrates the importance of motivations for working such schedules, as these vary considerably in terms of affecting work-to-family conflict. When fathers and mothers work such schedules, but not for personal reasons, the potential for risk can be substantial.

The potential complications of the work–family interface are often interwoven with the factors of sex and race/ethnicity. In “Strategies for Balance: Examining How Parents of Color Navigate Work and Life in the Academy,” Madeleine Novich and Janet Garcia-Hallet examine a sample of mothers and fathers of color, focusing upon how they cope with the challenges of both professional and familial responsibilities. They find that such parents often adapt to these challenges through social and professional isolation, which can improve their abilities to function as parents, yet at a cost to their professional performance. The potential consequences are shown to have a greater impact upon mothers, as compared to fathers. Given the nature of the work–family interface, gender issues often arise. In “Diabetes as a Consequence of Work–Family Conflicts and Gender Violence in México,” Lukasz Czarnecki and Delfino Vargas Chanes focus upon how work–family conflicts can influence the onset of diabetes. Work conditions are shown to have a deleterious impact upon workers’ well-being, and particularly so for women. By framing diabetes as a social phenomenon, their

study yields implications for policy throughout Latin America. This relationship between work–family conflict and well-being is examined by Tyler W. Myroniuk and Shannon N. Davis in “Multi-Faceted Household Dependency, Work-Family Conflict, and Self-Rated Health in Five High-Income Countries.” Analyzing samples from Austria, France, Iceland, Switzerland, and the United States, their study uses the demand–resources framework to examine how dependency and work factors affect health and well-being. Work-family conflict appears to deleteriously affect health across all samples, suggesting that the policy implications of these findings may have utility across nationalities.

Many of the dimensions of work have been associated with the challenges of the work–family interface, including the core component of the timing of work. In “For Better or For Worse: Nonstandard Work Schedules and Self-Rated Health across Marital Status,” Shannon Leigh Shen uses a sample from the National Study of the Changing Workforce to examine how non-standard work schedules may affect health and well-being. In her analyses, she demonstrates that non-standard work schedules do, indeed, have a negative influence upon health, but that these harmful associations are most consequential among women who are cohabiting, divorced, separated, or widowed. Some of the challenges linked with the work–family interface involve the issue of spillover, wherein family roles and work roles often become intertwined. Jamie J. Chapman examines this concern in “How Do Nurses Perceive Role-Taking and Emotional Labor Processes to Influence Work–Family Spillover?” Through a qualitative analysis, she uses a foundation of interactionist role theory to examine how nurses deal with the complicated nature of their jobs, and particularly the empathic role-taking and emotional labor they perform. The very nature of their work places nurses in a rather delicate position, wherein the potential for work–family spillover can be quite high.

In some instances, the work–family interface may be affected by job performance, particularly with regard to achievements within one’s career. In “Penalty for Success? Career Achievement and Gender Differences in Divorce,” H. Colleen Stuart, Sue H. Moon, and Tiziana Casciaro approach this issue from a rather unique perspective, by investigating how exceptional job performance may affect the risk of divorce. Using data compiled from the success and marital histories of Hollywood actors, they find that winning an Academy Award is associated with greater marital instability, and that this risk is especially complicated for actresses. The respective meanings of work and family are not only created by working partners and parents, but are also carried over generations within families. In “‘I Really Don’t Have a Career. I just Work and I Like Doing My Work.’ A Qualitative Study on the Meaning of Work for Low-Income Women from a Family Perspective,” Sarah A. Burcher and Kadie L. Ausherbauer examine how the meanings and values concerning work are transmitted through generations. They identify a variety of themes created and maintained by employed women, and provide a novel and useful understanding of how work, itself, is perceived.

With technological advancement and increasingly urban populations, a growing number of workers no longer need to travel to a centralized site to perform their jobs. In “Telework and Work–Family Conflict across Workplaces:

Investigating the Implications of Work–Family-Supportive and High-Demand Workplace Cultures,” Anja-Kristin Abendroth and Mareike Reimann explore how the implications of telework for strain-based and time-based work–family conflict depend upon work–family-supportive and high-demand workplace cultures. Using a sample of German workers, they find that telework often yields complications and conflicts which are similar to more traditional forms of paid employment. Aimee Hubbard examines how perceptions of the work–life balance vary over time in her study, “Evaluating Relational Factors as Possible Protective Factors for Work–Life Balance via a Linear Mixed Effects Model.” Using data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics, she finds that such perceptions tend to decline, on average, over time, yet may be affected by more intimate dimensions of relationships, such as sexual satisfaction. Her work again illustrates the complex nature of the work–family interface. Being a worker necessarily implies that one must approach the tasks with a particular frame of mind, as attitudes toward work will have great bearing upon the work–family interface. In “What I Think You Think about Family and Work: Pluralistic Ignorance and the Ideal Worker Norm,” Christin L. Munsch and Lindsey Trimble O’Connor examine how American workers accept ideal worker norms. In their analyses, they find that while women and men typically maintain that workers should dedicate themselves to their respective tasks, there remains a distinct dislike for work qualities which challenge or complicate their abilities to function within their familial roles.

Overall, these studies provide a very comprehensive and insightful understanding of the work–family interface. Beyond the present findings, the researchers also provide multiple suggestions for future research on this very important topic, as well as numerous recommendations for both practitioners and policymakers. We wish to offer them our most sincere appreciation for their efforts, and also express our thanks to the members of the editorial board, the external reviewers, and the wonderful staff at Emerald Publishing for their tremendous assistance.

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