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Out of Balance or Just Out of Bounds? Analysing the Relationship between Work and Life

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Introduction

The relationship between work and life, articulated as work-life balance, has become a key feature of much current government, practitioner and academic debate. The need for good work-life balance is the main message of this debate. The issue then becomes ensuring this balance so that workers can satisfactorily combine paid work with private life and, moreover, gain satisfaction in both. With the point of departure for labour process analysis in the 1970s being the degradation of work (Braverman 1974), that current debate is about enabling workers to gain satisfaction in and through their jobs has to be welcomed. However, the current work-life balance debate is dissatisfying for three reasons.

Firstly, research shows a gap between employers' work-life balance intentions and employees' work-life balance experience. This gap is most prominently illustrated in Hochschild's (1997) study of a Fortune 500 company in the US: offering work-life balance provisions does not automatically result in a positive work-life balance experience for employees. In Hochschild's study, a poor uptake of work-life balance provisions was due to (female) workers' flight to work, which offered opportunities for success and satisfaction. By contrast their private lives were a constant struggle with unmanageable demands and offered less personal achievement and reward. Several other studies have indicated how work-life balance provisions or family-friendly policies fail to provide balanced, positive and – most important for the employer – productive workers (for example Fangel and Aaløkke in this volume). Such research suggests that work-life 'balance' fails to adequately capture empirically key aspects of work and life. Secondly and relatedly, the current work-life balance articulation of

the relationship between work and life is conceptually limited because work and life are assumed to constitute distinct spheres. This assumption is relatively new, it was not until the industrial revolution and the shift from handicraft and domestic production to production in large-scale organisations that work and life emerged as distinct spheres separated by time and space (Türk et al. 2002; Thompson 1984). With the rise of paid employment outwith the household, the emergence of large-scale organisations and the imposition of middle class norms and values, work and non-work/life evolved as distinct spheres in Western countries during the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. It is not surprising therefore that work-life balance presumes that work and life constitute two distinguishable and separable spheres that can or should be 'balanced'. However, that work and life might not be distinct and neatly bounded is overlooked. Analyses within what was then termed 'industrial sociology' would suggest that such distinctions are, at best, questionable. This research showed how jazz musicians, policemen and even factory workers were part of communities within occupations in which work relations and practices extended into life outwith the workplace, and how for occupations within communities such as mining and fishing, community life impacted workplace relations and practices (for example Cain 1964; Cavendish 1982; Mayo 1946; Roy 1973; Salaman 1974). Such analyses disappeared with the decline of manufacturing and the demise of primary industries. Although too readily forgotten, the importance of this earlier body of research is that it challenges the conceptualisation of work and life as two distinct and detached spheres, and also reveals that interpenetration of the two can be beneficial to workers. Thirdly, the work-life balance debate also rests on particular readings of work and life in themselves (see also Eikhof et al. 2007). Work is regarded as a sphere of physical and mental demands that steals time and energy from employees' 'real' lives and thus has to be contained. Life, on the other hand, is mostly equated with caring responsibilities (see also MacInnes' and Ransome's contributions to this volume) and features as a haven of personal fulfilment, love and joy. Such myopic readings of life and work importantly overlook work as a source of satisfaction and life as encompassing more than just (child) care. In other words, not all work is perceived as bad and not all life revolves around children.

In short, the current work-life balance debate is limited both empirically and conceptually. As a consequence, it fails to provide an adequate understanding of work, life and the relationship between the two. The contributions to this volume aim to address this inadequacy. Drawing on a range of secondary literature, some from the authors, this opening chapter examines the relationship between work and life. The first three sections critique the work-life balance debate, analysing its central claims and drivers. Following from this critique, the fourth section evaluates an influential alternative articulation – that of the work-life boundary. The subsequent section develops this articulation by

outlining and illustrating analysis of work-life patterns. The concluding remarks signal how this new approach might inform future research on the relationship between work and life.

'In Business, Life Sucks': unpacking the claim for work-life balance

In *The Apprentice*, a popular BBC reality television show, a wannabe but distraught candidate is fired by her potential employer, the successful businessman and entrepreneur Sir Alan Sugar, and told to go back home to the child that she misses. The message to her is that she cannot expect to work for and be like Sugar *and* have a meaningful home life: 'In business, you get homesick. In business, you miss your children. In business, life sucks. It [home] should never, ever affect what you're doing [at work]', he says, 'Go home and see your daughter' (quoted in Banks-Smith 2007: 31). Such statements illustrate the concern at the core of the current work-life balance debate: too busy working lives are detrimental to private life, particularly family life.

A central assumption behind this concern is that there exists a pervasive and debilitating long working hours culture (IDS 2000). In Italy this concern with working time features in Basso's (2003) *Modern Times, Ancient Hours*, in the US in Schor's (1991) *The Overworked American* and in the UK in Bunting's (2004) *Willing Slaves*, in which it is claimed, playing on the latter book's subtitle, work is not just ruling but ruining our lives. In France campaigns for reducing working time have rallied around the phrase 'work less, live better' (cited in Fagnani and Letablier 2004). Some self-selecting survey data seems to indicate that there does exist a long working hours culture – in the UK at least – resulting in 'the intrusion of work into many workers' home lives' (French and Daniels 2005: 27). Moreover, just over half of French and Daniels' respondents claimed that they sometimes felt unable to cope with work demands and almost a third claimed to suffer from consequential health problems – an outcome that features heavily in the accounts of Bunting's respondents. As such, in work-life balance debate and practice it is the – more or less explicit – premise that work is bad and to be contained, with working time the point of intervention, creating a 'burgeoning demand for more flexible working lives' Bolchover (2005: 134) claims.

There are two flies, however, in the ointment of this argument about long working hours and employee demands to spend more time with their children. Firstly, it appears that the long working hours culture is a myth. It is true that UK working hours are *relatively* high in the EU and that significant numbers of men (29 per cent) and women (9 per cent) work longer than 45 hours per week. However, working hours for both men and women in the UK have steadily

fallen in the post-war years to below 40 hours per week (Mason et al. 2008; for other, similar European data see Roberts 2007). In a nuanced review of a range of statistical data, Roberts consequently asserts that ‘it is doubtless the case in all countries that some individuals, and probably particular occupational groups, have lengthened their hours of work. However, there is no country, not even the USA, in which there is uncontested evidence of an overall lengthening of work schedules in the late-twentieth century’ (p. 336). What have increased in many countries are female part-time paid working hours. Secondly, while there are some employees, 26 per cent for example in the UK, who want to work fewer hours, almost 70 per cent – that is, the vast majority – are content with their working hours, and women appear more content than men in this respect (Hooker et al. 2007). Moreover, for those employees who do wish to work fewer hours, theoretically that option is available to them, usually through part-time work; and employees’ ‘right to request’ (albeit on employers’ terms) is now a feature of UK employment law. Furthermore, and contrary to the rhetoric of the work-life balance debate, taking into account the range of options available (part-time, flexitime, school term-term etc. working), Hooker et al. found a high level of additional, informal flexible working such that most employees (56 per cent) across occupations were or had been working flexibly within the last 12 months. Similarly across Europe, it should be noted that even among *working women with dependent children*, 82 per cent report satisfaction with their working hours (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2007: 72–3; see also Pocock et al. in this volume for similar findings in Australia). To sum up, most employees do not want to work fewer hours and those who do want or have to work fewer hours, already have options to do so.

The labour market hates my babies, but I love my job ... well, sometimes

If long working hours are not the problem, what drives work-life balance debate and practice? The stock critique centres on employer and government concern with families. This concern limits the conceptualisation of ‘life’, narrowly equating it with childcare or caring in general, with subsequent practice nearly exclusively targeting working mothers (Eikhof et al. 2007; also MacInnes in this volume). The reason for this focus is not difficult to discern. Despite the rhetoric of job satisfaction, for both government and employers childcare *is the issue*. Government is concerned not with workers having better lives but with breeding new lives; more specifically the reproduction of the future labour force at a time when birth rates are in decline and most population increase occurs through migration rather than reproduction (EC 1999, 2004). In the UK

alarmist headlines scream of a 'baby crisis' and the 'potentially disastrous consequences as work pressures force young women to shelve plans for a family' (Hinsliff 2006: 1). If government is concerned with employees not having children, conversely the problem for employers is that employees (read female employees) do have children and, again, with a shrinking labour force, measures need to be taken to keep these mothers at work. Thus the 'foundations' of the work-life balance debate lay with employers and their perceived recruitment and retention problems caused by 'parents ... who have to fit their working lives around their childcare responsibilities' claims IDS (2000: 1). The solution is seen in the introduction of 'family-friendly' flexible employment, which, it should be noted, has to be compatible with superordinate business needs (IDS 2000), is introduced as employer financial circumstances allow (Schneider et al. 2006) and typically only meets statutory minimal provision set by government (Hyman and Summers 2007).

A second driver of the work-life balance debate relates to changes to the labour process, not just labour markets. In this respect, Roberts (2007) suggests that it is not the extension of work but the intensification of work that is causing problems. As organisations become lean and mean, employees are being required to do more with less, and lunch and other breaks are disappearing as employees play catch-up at their desks. As Roberts states: 'even if they are not working longer, people are likely to feel that their work is making greater demands on them and having a greater impact (for good or ill) on their overall quality of life' (p. 340). Of course, that work can be debilitating of life is not new. Debate about the hidden injuries of work occurred in the early 1970s. Studs Terkel's (1972) influential book *Working* starts thus: 'This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence – to the spirit as well as to the body. ... The scars, psychic as well as physical, brought home to the supper table and the TV set, may have touched, malignantly, the soul of our society' (p. xiii). By way of example, one of his respondents, a hotel clerk, notes how after busy work days, 'it takes me about an hour and a half to unwind. I just want to sit there and pick up a book or a paper or something. Just to get away from it all' (p. 333).

However, while it can be debilitating, work is not all bad, either now or in the recent past. Aside from its instrumental benefits, such as pay and consequently enabled consumption, paid work can be a source of satisfaction and self-fulfilment. Indeed, most workers seem to like their jobs. Although there will be variations amongst individuals, occupations, industries and countries, the *European Working Conditions Surveys* over 1995–2005 consistently reveal that over 80 per cent of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their work (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2007:77). Even Terkel's bottom-of-the-occupational-hierarchy hotel workers can experience their jobs positively, as Sherman (2007) reveals. She found workers 'engaged in their work and want[ing] to do it well' (p. 15) and

deriving – ‘borrowing’ (p. 159) in her words – prestige from the employing luxury hotels. Likewise, workers in intermediate occupations, such as those of the skilled trades, enjoyed and still enjoy a positive relationship with their jobs; they also derive social prestige as well as self-respect and personal and social identity from their work (see for example Pomlet 1969; Sennett 2004). The same can also be true for professional workers at the top of the occupational hierarchy such as lawyers and medical doctors for whom work is said, by Parsons (1951) to be a ‘calling’ with a defined ‘moral desirability’ (Becker 1970: 90) bridging work and life.¹ The point is that, as Isles (2004: 23) notes, ‘work can make a major contribution – for some *the* major contribution – to overall life satisfaction’.² Significantly, such satisfaction from work is independent of hours of work as Booth and van Ours (2005) find from analysis of the Household Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia Survey. Such data emphasize that work can offer rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and that the flight *from* work, assumed in the work-life balance articulation of work and life is too simplistic.

Where have all the good times gone? The chattering classes’ lament

If it is being driven by government and employers for reasons other than job satisfaction, and many workers are already satisfied with their working hours (and jobs), the obvious question to ask is why work-life balance discourse still resonates. The answer might lie in another important point raised but not subsequently explored by Roberts (2007) when he suggests that the current debate on work-life balance is being driven by the so-called ‘chattering classes’ and their current experience of paid work. This claim finds support in British social attitudes survey data, which reveals that senior management and professionals are the most likely to report that work interferes with their family life (Park et al., 2007). While Roberts notes that these better-educated male and female professionals and managers work the longest hours, the nature of their work also makes boundary management more difficult. Moreover, as the numbers of professionals and managers grow (Wilson et al. 2006),³ so too therefore does the number of workers for whom this boundary management is a problem. In addition, the nature of professional labour is also changing, with consequences for the anticipated relationship between work and life.

As predominantly white-collar workers high in the occupational hierarchy, the chattering classes are spatially and temporally more ‘available’ to work, as Bergman and Gardiner (2007) reveal in a comparative study of a paper and pulp mill, a bank and a university college in Sweden. In this study, the work of professionals in the college was found to be most ‘disconnected’ from the

workplace, often undertaken at home and involving business journeys away from home; for blue-collar manufacturing workers in the mill the boundaries between work and life were most 'intact'; the bank, where many workers were associate professionals and managers, was closer to that of the college than to the mill. Consequently, these authors conclude that 'availability patterns are strongly influenced by position in the occupational structure. The higher the position, the greater the associated availability for work, irrespective of gender and organisation' (p. 412). While Roberts (2007) argues that this availability is self-inflicted, Bergman and Gardiner's findings indicate that it also reflects the intangibility of some of the work of the chattering classes. Manufacturing workers cannot roll pulp into paper at home but professionals (and managers) can take their 'mental' labour home with them and many other tasks, such as administration and networking, can also be undertaken anywhere, any time. This spatial and temporal blurring of the work and life boundary is often, but not solely, ITC-enabled and neatly illustrated by the so-called 'CrackBerry' addiction. A survey by AOL and Opinion Research in the US found that 60 per cent of respondents use their BlackBerry to send emails while in bed and 83 per cent used their BlackBerry to check for emails while on holiday (Pilkington 2007).

In addition, we would argue that three particular occupational changes impact the chattering classes' work-life relationship. First, while the 'higher' or traditional professions such as lawyers, medical doctors and architects have expanded, these occupations have also fragmented intra-occupationally and, not unconnected, experienced greater (quasi-)market pressures – whether private sector or public sector based. For example, with there now being a mass education of lawyers through universities, Muzio (2004) notes there is an emergence of a new division of labour among solicitors, with polarisation of career opportunities, pay and tasks between two groups: partners and salaried solicitors, with the former economically exploiting the latter. Elsewhere medical doctors complain of 'feel[ing] under siege from a culture of controls', of being buried by bureaucracy and having reconfigured (and less comprehensive) training opportunities so that deprofessionalisation appears to loom large (Puttick 2007: 1). Architects too feel that the era of the 'gentlemanly architect' is coming to an end with increased competition and industry re-organisation (Fowler and Wilson 2004). Generally, UK skill surveys report consistent and continual declining job control and task discretion among professional occupations (Felstead et al. 2007). As a result, some traditional professionals are experiencing dissonance between their anticipated and actual work and associated lifestyles. Second, while the alleged source of economic and jobs growth, the 'new' creative industries professionals experience 'bulimic' or 'volatile' employment. This 'precariate' lurch between famine and feast: between having no work and having to work long hours. New York new media workers, for example, move

from project to project with different employers, with typical job tenure only six months (Batt et al. 2001). This project-based employment can create personal and familial financial insecurity and stress. In the UK, the de-regulation of the television industry has led to market uncertainty, production companies cutting costs, skeleton staff operating independent production companies and precarious employment among freelance creative production workers (Dex et al. 2000). Workers feel 'demoralised'. Almost half of one of Dex et al.'s samples required alternative sources of income outwith the industry and one worker reported that 'it is difficult to imagine a long-term involvement in the industry compatible with a healthy personal life' (p. 302). Third, while 'lower' or associate professions, such as nursing and other allied medical occupations, are also expanding, much of these occupations' 'professionalisation' is often little more than a labour market strategy involving a rebranding of training from further to higher education and categorisational relocation up the occupational hierarchy with the attainment of that 'degree' level education (see Anderson 2007; Warhurst and Thompson 2006). Not surprisingly, these workers do not have, to borrow Ferris' (2007) phrasing, traditional professionals' 'way-of-life work' but, instead, 'means-to-ends work'. In other words, such workers may have discarded the label of *vocational training* but have not acquired the *vocational calling* of the traditional professionals while they yet ape the latter's labour market strategy. As such it might be that this labour is more 'proletarianised' than professionalised; having an instrumental rather than moral engagement with work, and regarding work and life practices as not interpenetrating but demarcated.

Such developments indicate that the work-life balance debate is also fuelled by the chattering classes' dissatisfaction with their work and life, and that the cause of this dissatisfaction is not long working hours or unmet demands for flexible working hours but instead rooted in changes to the nature of professional labour. That a key public debate about jobs should be influenced by the chattering classes' experience is not unprecedented. Despite the more voluminous and vicious downsizing redundancies of the 1980s that decimated steel and auto towns, docklands and mining villages, it was not until the 1990s as bank managers, civil servants and media professionals became redundant through delayering that the 'death of the job' became a public issue (rather than industrial relations) – despite job tenure remaining remarkably stable (Auer and Cazes 2003).

Beyond indicating that the middle classes can mobilise their private crises as public concerns, the analysis of the intensification of work and the reconfiguration of professional labour reveals that what distorts workers' work-life experience is not a mere lack of balance that could be restored by family-friendly or flexible working. Negative work-life experiences are due to deeper changes in the relationship between work and life that relate to the nature of work and employment and the fit between labour and lifestyle. This complex configuration

thus suggests that work and life can be interpenetrating rather than distinct and balanceable.

Analysing the work-life boundary

The above discussion suggests that the relationship of work and life is not best articulated as one of balance (see also Pocock et al. in this volume) because interpenetration occurs between work and life. The forms, processes and outcomes of this interpenetration are salient again, as they once were in industrial sociology, because of a number of recent developments. The most obvious and most commonly cited are ITC-enabled temporal and spatial workplace changes (see for example Felstead et al. 2005). Precision is difficult but around 7–10 per cent of the UK's working population are regular home-located workers. The penetration of workplace technology into the home is 'fraught', claim Felstead et al., with a majority probably wanting spatial and temporal separation between home and work. However other developments are also having or have the potential to affect the boundary between work and life. There is, for example, speculation that employer attempts to prescribe clothing and appearance standards may well undermine or infringe employees' rights to freedom of expression. Currently it is unclear how the European Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA), which confers rights to respect for private life and freedom of expression, will impact on organisational dress codes and appearance standards. The same is true for new European directives on employment equality that include sexual and religious proclivities and which also have the potential to create clashes between workers' own identities and lifestyles and those prescribed by employing organisations. The wearing of tattoos, piercings and certain items of jewellery and clothing, and even corporate uniforms, are now potential or actual legal flashpoints as workers' human rights and self-expression are pitted against corporate strategies that require particular forms of employee public presentation (Hay and Middleman 2003; see also the British Airways case in Dinwoodie 2007). Relatedly, there is also growing appreciation that employers are now not only concerned with appropriating and transmuted workers' knowledge as a feature of the scientific management identified by Braverman (1974) but also workers' feelings, corporeality and even lifestyles, as the expanding academic literature on emotional, aesthetic and creative labour illustrates (see for example Hochschild 1983, Nickson et al. 2005 and Florida 2004 respectively). Indeed, as Hyman and Marks point out in this volume, the attraction of 'new economy' workplaces was precisely the offer to employees of better work-life balance, which for employers would offer the mutual gain of enhanced employee commitment. Similarly, Hebson et al. (2003) and Cunningham (2005) respectively argue that there exist distinct public sector and voluntary sector ethos as features

of individuals' *Weltanschauung* and which influence the job orientation of particular workers, so that a matching occurs between job types and individuals' values and beliefs. This list is not exhaustive but does emphasize that the relationship between work and life is more expansive than that offered in the work-life balance articulation. It also indicates a complex interplay of choices and constraints, as well as different, sometimes competing, interests, in how the relationship between work and life is shaped and experienced.

What is required therefore is another analytical framework for understanding the relationship between work and life. This task has been championed most prominently by Nippert-Eng (1996a, 1996b), who focuses on what she describes as 'boundary work'. Nippert-Eng's premise is that workers can be classified as 'segmentors' or 'integrators'. Boundary work is the active mental management and organisation of practices and artefacts so as to create the segmentation or integration of home and work. Integration occurs when "home" and "work" are one and the same, one giant category of social existence, for no conceptual boundary separates its contents of meaning' (1996a: 567). Segmentation occurs when the boundary between work and home is 'clear and impregnable ... everything belongs to "home" or "work"' (p. 568). In between the two classifications lies a continuum, though the trend over the past hundred years is towards segmentation. However, no matter where individuals are along this continuum, all are actively engaged in boundary work. Segmentors have two key rings for example, one for work keys, the other for house keys; integrators affix all keys to one key ring. For segmentors, changing into different clothes for work and home is crucial; integrators have an all-purpose home and work wardrobe. Segmentors keep two wall calendars, one at home, the other at work, with no overlapping contents; by contrast, integrators maintain just one pocket calendar.

Re-focusing the analysis, Nippert-Eng's articulation of the relationship between work and life in terms of 'boundary' represents a useful step forward. Nevertheless, four problems are immediately apparent with her particular conceptualisation of boundary work. First, although purporting to present an account of how boundaries are negotiated in everyday *life*, the analysis is again focused firmly on only one aspect of that life – the home. Life, however, involves more than just the home; it encompasses a myriad of activities including leisure, socialisation, and community and voluntary activities. Second, for Nippert-Eng, boundary work is infused with rational 'choices' in which 'detailed decisions' are made solely in the heads of individuals at points at which home and life meet (p. 579). That there might be external constraints or impositions upon boundary work is ignored. So, with regard to Nippert-Eng's example of money, US tax regulation may require a separation of work and home accounts and expenses for self-employed workers; not doing so would probably incur punishment so is not really a choice. Given that such rational decision-making requires information, the third and related problem – the lack

of context to boundary work – is puzzling. Beyond generalities, very little detail is offered by Nippert-Eng about her hypothetical cases' terms and conditions of employment or nature of work. Yet, as Felstead et al. (2005) point out, home-located workers are required to be more accountable to their employers than office based employees, and their invisibility to management can be detrimental to their career and pay prospects. As it is so often, the devil is in the detail. How boundaries are 'worked' requires appreciation of external constraints and impositions. Indeed much boundary work, in its broadest sense, involves a third party other than employees and employers – sometimes trade unions – as Mason et al. (2008) point out for the regulation of working time; most typically the state – as work-life balance initiatives demonstrate. These three conceptual problems, however, are made explicable by the fourth – that boundary work is regarded by Nippert-Eng as a personal, individualised endeavour. Drawing on the approach of Georg Simmel, who anticipated phenomenology (Frisby 1981), boundary work is essentially concerned with identity work and the project of the self; in Nippert-Eng's words, to 'evoke the sense of self' (p. 569). It is about 'creating and maintaining ... "territories of the self" amid "our physical, tangible surroundings"' (p. 569) – presumably those keys, wardrobes and calendars but not the managerial imposition, work intensification or acts of resistance that arise through the employment relationship and wage-effort bargain. This latter point is important. There are material conditions, most obviously associated with class, that shape not only individuals' experience of and opportunities at work but also life experience and opportunities, as well as the experience of and opportunities within the relationship between work and life. Within this interplay of interests, expectations and opportunities both choices and constraints exist. Opting for part-time paid work to enable more time for family and friends, leisure or voluntary work has opportunity costs, principally less pay and prospects. Sometimes these costs are worth paying; sometimes they outweigh the benefits. For this reason, downshifting is more topical than typical. As Roberts (2007: 344–5) notes:

The German time pioneers ... who had voluntarily chosen to downshift substantially and who had accepted commensurate drops in their earnings, remain very rare exceptions, and were regarded as peculiar by most of their German colleagues. The real constraint ... is that they would be unable to downshift while retaining their current jobs, status, salaries and career prospects. In other words, their situation is not one of 'no choice' but of preferring the balances of advantages and problems that accompany their current ... packages.

Boundaries are important therefore in the analysis of the relationship between work and life, and feature not just in Nippert-Eng but also in some contributions to this volume (for example Cohen, de Man et al., and Fangel and Aaløkke).

In this respect, the distinguishing between segregation and integration should not be abandoned because of Nippert-Eng's conceptual weaknesses. However understanding how boundaries are worked requires a more comprehensive account of the complex interplay of interests, expectations and opportunities through which personal choices and material constraints shape the relationship between work and life.

Work-life patterns: moving beyond balance and boundary

Simply locating workers on a continuum of separation and integration overlooks the fact that workers can occupy the same position on that continuum but experience that position differently – positively or negatively most obviously. A more nuanced approach is therefore needed. This approach is provided by Bourdieu's (1990) theory of individuals as producers of social practices, which, we suggest, constitute *work-life patterns*. These patterns comprise any practices that an individual produces: those related to job descriptions and contractual obligations, commuting, education and training, family activities and maintaining friendships, pursuing sports and leisure activities or political and religious interests. While work-life patterns can be externally observed, how they are experienced can vary for the individuals concerned.

Significantly, for Bourdieu, individual practice and experience have to be contextualised. For the analysis of work-life patterns, this approach has four implications. Firstly, the focus on practices prompts an analysis of work practices themselves and the effect they have on work-life patterns. Secondly, to understand work-life patterns, the structural constraints that shape them have to be examined. Such constraints are set by an individual's monetary, cultural and social resources (economic, cultural and symbolic capital) as well as by the structures within which individuals work and live (employment relationship, markets, industries, nations). Both resources and structures can enable and restrain individual practice and thus work-life patterns. Thirdly, individuals' practices are influenced by their lifestyles. Lifestyles include values, beliefs and perceptions related to work and employment and thus influence work-life patterns. Fourthly, Bourdieu points out that practices are produced following context-specific logics. While work centres on the paradigms of paid labour and working to earn one's living, life encompasses a multitude of logics, such as the reciprocity of friendships, unconditional love for family members or the hedonism of consumption. Analysing the different logics and potential tensions between them usefully advances understanding of work-life patterns and experiences. In the following section, we draw on our own and others' research to outline and illustrate these four influences on work-life patterns.

Work practices and the adaptation of work and life

Following Bourdieu's focus on practices, work itself influences work-life patterns. As noted before with Bergman and Gardiner (2007), if work practices are tangible and immobile, then the work-life pattern is likely to exhibit a distinction between work and life. Supporting these findings, Cohen's study of hair stylists (in this volume) demonstrates how hairdressing, as mobile work, leads to work-life patterns in which work and life mix heavily. As stylists work on friends' and family's hair after working hours and outwith the salon, the stylists' work-life boundaries blur with respect to space, time and social interaction. Such work practices tend to require an *adaptation* of work and life, as individuals actively (re-)configure work and life to meet the demands of the respective other. Household chores are slotted into work breaks, furniture and room layouts are adapted to work needs, home-located work is organised around family routines and while wearing a dressing-gown instead of shirt and tie (see for example Fangel and Aaløkke, and Kylin and Karlsson in this volume).

Research by de Man et al. (in this volume) shows how working outwith the standard workplace generally leads to work-life patterns in which work and life mix heavily. Consequently, adaptation to work-life patterns requires considerable personal micro-management of work and life, as done by Musson et al.'s (2006) worker who covered up her PC with a blanket on Friday to erase traces of work from her living room over the weekend. Some workers welcome mobile and intangible work as it enables flexible working and opportunities to coordinate the demands of work and life (Fangel and Aaløkke in this volume). However, workers' preferences are subordinate to the nature of the work to be undertaken. For example tele-workers who might prefer to segment work and life are unable to do so, according to de Man et al., and find themselves having to adapt either their life to their work or vice versa. As a consequence, adaptors do not experience work and life as separable, and work-life balance provisions premised on work-life separation are inappropriate for them.

Structural factors and the accommodation of work and life

The structural embedding of individual practices (Bourdieu 1990) also influences work-life patterns by providing the framework within which individuals accommodate work and life. While MacInnes (in this volume) argues that there are limits to the outsourcing of life practices, it is clear, firstly, that work-life patterns depend on the economic, social and cultural resources of an individual (see the difference between Gail and Rosa in Pocock et al.'s contribution to this volume). Economic capital, for instance, can buy additional time for work (for example by hiring a nanny) or for life (for example by enabling part-time employment). Likewise, individuals' cultural resources, such as educational

qualifications influence work-life patterns as they affect employment opportunities (Bourdieu et al. 1981). Lastly, social resources such as extended families or social networks shape work-life patterns and influence work-life experiences by, for example, meeting childcare needs (Williams 2007).

Secondly, the structural context of paid labour influences work-life patterns. Terms and conditions of employment such as flexible working or shift-working can create precarious work-life patterns and negative work-life experiences (see for example Henninger and Papouschek, and Hyman and Marks in this volume). In addition, as Henninger and Papouschek point out, it is those flexible workers commanding the least financial resources who feel most pressured. Work-life patterns are also crucially influenced by the availability or absence of work-life balance provisions, be it the more usual flexible working hours and part-time work or the less usual employer-provided laundry services or ‘mother and kid’ workplaces (Nuri 2006). However, work-life balance provisions depend not only on employers’ goodwill (Schneider et al. 2006) but also on the wider societal context of government policies (Burgess et al. 2007), union representation (Hyman and Summers 2007) and occupational specificity (Moore 2007).

No matter whether workers are segmentors or integrators, how they accommodate work and life depends on a number of structural factors. However, as outlined above, structural factors are largely absent from current work-life boundary debate. Analysing the influencing factors of work-life patterns rather than focusing on individual boundary work can systematically re-integrate these important variables. Importantly, as Ransome (in this volume) suggests, such analyses can illuminate how individuals’ choices and constraints occur within work-life patterns.

Lifestyles and the amalgamation of work and life

Lifestyles encompass an individual’s ‘ensemble of the partners, goods and practices an actor has chosen for himself’ (Bourdieu 1998: 21) as well as beliefs, norms and values – about, among other aspects, work. Research on the link between lifestyle and work-life patterns dates back to Weber (1930), who claimed that religious beliefs and values resulted in particular work-life patterns. More recent research has identified the Bohemian lifestyle of artists to promote what can be called *amalgamation* work-life patterns: work and life are blended to such an extent that singling out the respective practices would be a purely academic and analytical undertaking (Murger 1988). Driven by the aim to integrate work and life into one work of art, theatre artists, for example, regard work as life and life as work, providing self-fulfilment in the production of art for art’s sake. Friendships and (love) relationships remain within the occupational community; activities outside theatre are reduced to a minimum and geared towards work (Eikhof and Haunschild 2006). An adverse case of work-life amalgamation

occurs with Australian rugby league athletes. Initially 'living the dream', these athletes' work-life experience is dramatically changed for the worst as new doping regulations prescribe athletes' activities and behaviours, and enable physical invasion of their home life by the regulatory authorities, according to Khoshaba (in this volume).

As with adaptation work-life patterns, examples of work-life amalgamation indicate that work-life experiences cannot be understood with a simplistic model of work and life as separated spheres. For amalgamators whose lifestyles revolve around their work, work-life balance policies are neither appropriate nor desired; they would not know what to balance. However, while adaptors and amalgamators would both be classified as integrators by Nippert-Eng, their work-life experiences are different. Adaptors perceive work and life as different and often conflicting, whereas amalgamators tend to view the blurring of work and life as positive and beneficial – even rugby athletes initially. Such distinctions are crucial but invisible within the work-life boundary articulation of the relationship between life and work.

Logics of practice and work-life patterns between alternation and absorption

Social practices are driven by what Bourdieu terms field- or context-specific logics. Work practices are produced following the logics of paid labour and of earning one's living, embedded in the general logics of market exchange and return on investment prevalent in the economic field. Life, on the other hand, comprises a variety of logics such as altruism, love or hedonism. Depending on the work itself and its context, these logics of work and life can coexist without interference, allowing workers a fairly frictionless *alternation* between the two distinct spheres. The obvious example is Goldthorpe et al.'s (1968) Luton car workers, who had an instrumental orientation to their jobs; they disliked many aspects of their work but were 'satisfied' with that job because of the level of salary. This salary then provided opportunities in terms of consumption and lifestyle – the famous cars, washing machines and holidays – that had been denied to their parents. Work enabled the life that they wanted to lead.

In work-life patterns with mixed work and life practices, work and life logics can exist as alternatives for the same practices. If both logics advocate the same practices, as for instance in the case of amalgamation work-life patterns, these workers too will not experience conflict (Eikhof and Haunschild 2006). However, as Hochschild (in this volume) demonstrates, the logic of work can crowd out life logics and reconfigure life practices. In Hochschild's example, a management performance evaluation tool is now being incorporated into some US workers' home lives. The practices of being a father and a spouse then become governed by the logic of 'efficiency'. While other of her worker types

simply endured – putting relationships on hold for example – these ‘busy bees’ had a work-life pattern of *absorption* of life by work rather than the alternation between work and life of the Luton car workers. In the work-life boundary articulation, absorber work-life patterns would be classified as integration and the differences between absorption and other integrated patterns, such as adaptation and amalgamation, become indiscernible.

Incorporating the characteristics of work practices, structural constraints, lifestyles and logics into the analysis makes more comprehensible why individuals have certain work-life patterns and different work-life experiences. Employing a practice-theory approach to discern work-life patterns not only extends analysis of the boundaries between work and life but also reveals that there is more to the work-life relationship than either boundary or balance.

Concluding remarks

Whether a concern of workers, employers or government, work-life balance is intuitively a worthy cause. We would not deny that some workers are looking to devote more time to non-work activities and interests, including their families. However our critique reveals the work-life balance debate as empirically and conceptually flawed. Claims of a long hours culture and pent-up demands for more family time appear to be countered by evidence of decreasing working hours and an already common existing flexibility for workers in those hours. Moreover, many workers enjoy their work. Instead the work-life balance debate appears to have two drivers. On the one hand, there appears to be a convergence of government and employer interests centred on labour markets. On the other hand, for some workers there is work intensification rather than work ‘extendification’ but for others, professional labour, occupational changes are creating dissatisfaction with their work-life experience. The chattering classes’ lament also indicates that work and life are not necessarily distinct, balanceable spheres. Other conceptualisations of the relationship between work and life have attempted to focus on the boundary between work and life (Nippert-Eng 1996a, 1996b). This approach is useful though analytically limited. It fails to adequately appreciate that workers with the same degree of integration or segmentation between work and life often have very different work-life experiences. Drawing on Bourdieu (1990), we have suggested that these conceptual deficiencies can be overcome by articulating the relationship between work and life as work-life patterns. These patterns are shaped by the characteristics of work practices, structural constraints, lifestyles and logics.

This articulation stimulates new research agendas about the relationship between work and life. As a starting point, as some of the contributions to this volume make clear, work-life patterns can differ by occupation and industry.

More comparative research is therefore required, which, we would add, might also include comparisons between countries. The means of assessing similarities and differences are important here, as indeed they are for examining the work-life patterns offered in this chapter – adaptation, accommodation, amalgamation, alternation and absorption. It should also be recognised that much current analysis of the relationship between work and life, whether articulated as balance or boundary, has a ‘snap-shot’ approach, capturing only particular moments or at best short spans of workers work and life (usually that time when they have young children), ignoring the fact that work-life patterns can change as individuals’ work and life cycles progress. In order to understand work-life patterning more thoroughly, it would be beneficial to know why, how and when such changes occur. We consider Schmid’s (1995) modelling of transitional labour markets to be a useful starting point on which to build this research.

Such research agendas arise once the analytical limitations of the work-life balance articulation of the relationship between work and life are recognised and addressed. Starting with chapters that critique the work-life balance debate, the contributions to the remainder of the book seek to advance analysis and understanding of the relationship between work and life. They reveal that the relationship is not a zero-sum game, that to work less is not necessarily to live more.

Notes

1. Parking at this point debates about ‘professionalism’ being a labour market strategy (see for example Johnson (1972) but returning to it later in the chapter.
2. Emphasis in the original.
3. In the 20 years to 2004, most percentage occupational growth in the UK has involved professionals (3.4 per cent) and associate professional and technical workers (4.2 per cent; at the bottom, personal service occupations also grew by 3.4 per cent) (Wilson et al. 2006).

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