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1
Introduction. Work, Life and the Work-Life Issue

Betsy Blunsdon, Paul Blyton, Ken Reed and Ali Dastmalchian

The issue of work-life balance and the difficulties of integrating multiple and sometimes conflicting roles, attracts considerable interest in the media, public policy discussions and academic research. The simultaneous presence of, and interrelationship between organisational, labour market and societal change has ensured that debates on questions of work-life integration or work-life balance show no signs of slackening. A central aim of the present collection is to seek to broaden the focus of these debates and to present recent research findings to stimulate further theoretical development and empirical study.

Much of the research work and comment informing this area of public and personal concern has been characterised by single-country perspectives, so in response this collection offers a more international gaze, drawing data and discussion from countries located in Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia. Further, much previous research has focused on the challenges faced by working mothers and dual-income parents, in achieving work-life balance. Given the significance of women's rising economic activity levels, this is an important focus; but it is insufficient in itself to capture the breadth of the work-life agenda. The research presented in this volume introduces several perspectives that have not been prominent in previous work in the field, such as the voice of children, those working from home and the challenges facing those simultaneously working and studying. Consistent with the search for a greater breadth of discussion, the roles of employers, trade unions and the state are also considered, how different occupational groups develop work-life balancing strategies, and more generally how some seek balance by opting out or 'downshifting'.

In this introduction, we consider first the question 'What is work-life balance?' Second, we discuss how time allocation works, as one of the key issues in achieving balance is how we allot time to different activities. Third, we consider the emergence of work-life balance as a problem, particularly related to a number of trends in modern life. Fourth, we review possible solutions to these issues, and finally, we sketch a brief outline of the contributions to give a sense of how each contributes to the volume's broader aims.

What is work-life balance?

Before the 1970s the domains of 'work' and 'family' were treated as largely separate arenas (Campbell Clark, 2000). Since then, a growing recognition has been given to the interdependence of work and family spheres (see for example, Kanter, 1977) and the difficulties of maintaining a balanced life when faced with competing demands from these two spheres. The notion of 'work-life balance' denotes that an individual can manage both work and other aspects of their life, such as the domestic or family sphere, without a conflict or without the opposition of one domain to the other. Work-life balance implies that managing one's time is like balancing a scale – the more time one puts on one side of the scale the less will be available on the other. It does not mean equal time spent in different domains but rather, depending on individual circumstances and context, balance points to the ability to fulfil roles in each arena.

Work-life balance means that individuals have 'successfully' segmented or integrated 'life' and work so as to achieve a satisfying quality of life, overall satisfaction and less strain or stress around juggling conflicting role demands. Nippert-Eng (1996a, 1996b) points out that people deal with differences between, for example, the employment sphere and the domain of family along a continuum of segregation and integration. Segregation implies complete separation between the two spheres while integration implies no distinction between spheres. Campbell Clark argues that 'happy productive individuals, as well as people who describe their lives as less than ideal, can be found on all ranges of the spectrum' (2000: 755). Put differently, work-life balance denotes fulfilment of multiple roles while maintaining a positive quality of life.

Two consequences of the difficulty of balancing work and family are 'work-family conflict', defined as the inability to fulfil family responsibilities because of work pressure, and 'family-work conflict', which reflects the inability to fulfil work obligations due to family pressures (Fox and Dwyer, 1999; Frone, Yardley and Market 1997; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1986). The main focus of both of these conflicts is a lack of fit resulting in a tension or imbalance between the domains of work and family (Fox and Dwyer, 1999). Related concepts include 'work-family opposition' and 'work-family incompatibility' (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000) where the main problem is seen to be one of inter-role conflict, making it difficult to fulfil demands and obligations in both domains (also known as 'role interference' see Higgins, Duxbury and Lee, 1994; Gutek, Searle and Kelpa, 1991).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identify three main sources or manifestations of 'work-family' or 'family-work conflict': time-based conflict (time spent in one domain resulting in less time than needed in the other domain), strain-based conflict (strain in one domain making it difficult to

fulfil obligations in the other) and behaviour-based conflict (role behaviours required in one domain being inappropriate for role behaviours needed in another). So, for example, 'time-based conflict' can result from pressures to spend long hours at work, creating problems for fulfilling obligations at home. This has been variously termed a 'time squeeze' (Schor, 1991), 'time bind' (Hochschild, 1997), or 'time famine' (Googins, 1997) and implies that there is more to do and more roles to fulfil than there is time available. An example of strain-based conflict on the other hand could be stress at home resulting from illness or personal problems, creating problems in attempting to fulfil work obligations. Behaviour-based conflict may occur when individuals exhibit work-related behaviours in the home that are inappropriate in a domestic setting, thereby causing conflict between actors in the household.

An important way of understanding the consequences of a particular aspect of life (such as work) on other aspects of life, is through the notion of role conflict, that is the conflict experienced 'when pressures experienced in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role' (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985: 77). 'Work-family conflict' is one type of role conflict. However, the emphasis given to work-family conflict has tended to obscure the fact that people occupy multiple roles in addition to their roles as employee, parent and partner/spouse. Such recognition is important, as are the potential consequences of role conflict. Previous research has shown that role conflict in general, and work-life conflict in particular, can reduce satisfaction with life and with work (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998); increase life stress (Parasuraman et al, 1992); and can lead to 'overload', defined as a decreased ability to fulfil obligations required by the various roles (Frone et al, 1997; Glezer and Wolcott, 1999; Grzywacz et al, 2002; Probert et al, 2000; Russell and Bowman, 2000; Weston et al, 2002). For those combining work and study (the twin roles of 'student' and 'employee') role conflict has been found to be negatively related to class attendance, class preparation, and assignment work (Markel and Frone, 1998) as well as to lower satisfaction with the educational experience (Hammer et al, 1998).

The most conspicuous work-life conflict may be experienced when roles are rigidly bound as in the contrast between traditional work roles (for example, working a strict work day in a fixed location) and domestic and caring roles (for example, the need to be at home to care for young children, disabled or aged family members). Roles are rigid when they are spatially and temporally restricted and are highly inflexible; such role rigidity prevents the performance of one role while in the physical domain of another (Ashforth et al, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996a, 1996b). However, achieving 'work-life balance' may entail different configurations and different states of integration or segmentation of work and family for different groups (Campbell Clark, 2000). Further, Campbell and Charlesworth point

out that, 'For many workers, work and family "balance" is to do with taking charge of aspects of their lives that seem to be eluding their control' (2004: A1-2). It is important to recognise, however, that individuals vary considerably in their power and ability to take charge and control their daily lives.

The occurrence of role conflict in general, and work-life conflict in particular, depends on a number of internal and external factors, as does the ability to deal with this conflict. The more roles one occupies, for example, the greater the potential for conflict between those roles. Individuals vary in their ability to control or alter their situation in order to fulfil the requirements of multiple roles, including time allocation and accessing resources and support. Indeed, how individuals allocate their time across activities, and the role of resources and power in time allocation choices, represent important issues in understanding debates about work and family.

How do people allocate time?

The way people spend time is a very concrete expression of their lifestyle. The time available to an individual is fixed and the same for everyone. Time functions in some ways like money: spending time on one activity reduces available time for other activities. Unlike money, however, there are only twenty four hours in a day, there are no credit facilities and time cannot be saved up to use at a later date. Planning and time management may increase one's discretion over time allocation (the potential to increase free time and decrease 'wasted time'). Yet, while people can organise their activities in more or less efficient ways, 'investing time' does not actually produce additional time in the future. It is for this reason that time allocation has been identified as a 'zero sum game' (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

The ability to choose or determine time allocation depends on the extent to which people can either substitute some activities for others (leisure for work, for example) or use power, in its various forms, to increase discretionary time. For example, economic power provides the potential to purchase services in order to 'free up' time. To date, several studies have employed time use data to uncover the relationships between forms of power, especially gender, and the activities of daily life. For example, Bittman and Rice (2002) analyse the effects of gender, employment status and life-course stage on leisure time; Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) assess gender differences in free time; and Baxter (1997) compares gender differences in involvement in housework across five countries.

Time allocation is not wholly voluntary. First, it is a necessity to allocate time for some activities, such as sleep. The Australian Time Use Survey (1997) indicates that, on average, people older than 14 daily spend eight hours and twenty eight minutes sleeping, though with substantial differ-

ences by age (ranging from nine hours and twenty nine minutes for those aged 15 to 19 years, to eight hours and four minutes for those aged 45 to 49). Secondly, institutional pressures and social expectations (also termed 'normative constraints' by McRae, 2003) influence time allocation decisions: the requirement that children of a certain age attend school, for example, expectations that mothers should stay at home and care for their own young children; or values such as 'laziness is a vice' and 'diligence a virtue'. Belief systems, religious or otherwise, can underpin normative expectations and resulting role behaviours (see Reed and Blunsdon, in this volume). There are also various structural constraints on time allocation decisions, such as the availability of jobs and transport, the availability and cost of childcare, and organisational provisions around working conditions and leave provisions (McRae, 2003). Research has also shown that while power and privilege can increase discretionary time allocation, powerlessness will tend to reduce it (Gershuny and Robertson, 1994).

Time allocation therefore reflects a combination of personal preference, location in power structures, institutional and organisational arrangements and macro-level structural effects. Among other places, these influences have been identified through the debate between Hakim (2000), Crompton (2002) and others (see for example, McRae, 2003) concerning the extent to which the over-representation of mothers in part-time jobs reflects their preferences, or their powerlessness, in the face of normative and structural constraints. Understanding work-life balance or work-life conflict involves investigating time allocation across a range of activities within the context of individual lives and circumstances, taking into account normative and structural constraints. Warren (2004) for example, argues that identifying work-life balancing strategies requires an understanding of time allocation across activities such as paid employment, unpaid duties such as childcare and domestic work, social interactions, and leisure that take place within the context of an individual's economic and financial security.

Analysis of time allocation commonly draws on the concepts of 'necessary time', 'contracted time', 'committed time' and 'free or discretionary time' (Bittman and Rice, 2002; Golden, 1998; Robinson and Godbey, 1999). All individuals need to spend some time on necessary things, for example personal care, including sleeping. Contracted time comprises time in paid employment, while committed time includes time on unpaid domestic duties including childcare and voluntary activities. Free or discretionary time denotes time in which an individual has the potential to exercise choice over how time is spent. This potential is limited by the power and resources available to individuals and households. A number of contributions to this volume consider the nature and range of time allocated to particular activities, the extent to which individuals can exercise choice, and the importance of context – including structural and normative constraints – on work-life outcomes.

The emergence of work-life balance as a problem

It has been argued that the core of the problem of work-life conflict is the strain created for those trying to balance work and family responsibilities by employment systems that have evolved largely around the notion of a single 'breadwinner'. As Esping-Andersen (1999: 5) notes:

> Contemporary welfare states and labour market regulations have their origins in, and mirror, a society that no longer obtains: an economy dominated by industrial production with strong demand for low-skilled workers; a relatively homogenous and undifferentiated, predominantly male, labour force (the standard production worker); stable families with high fertility; and a female population primarily devoted to housewifery.

The origin of work-life balance as an area of research stems, for the most part, from the problems faced by the increasing number of working mothers responding to the demands of work and family (see Dex and Joshi, 1999; Gray and Stanton, 2002; Morehead, 2002). It also reflects a series of social and economic changes at the institutional, organisational, workplace and individual levels that began in the 1960s and accelerated through the 1970s and 80s. It has been argued that these changes reflect a fundamental or 'epochal' transformation of modern society (Beck, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 1999; Urry, 2000).

Changing workplaces

The choices that individuals make in time allocation must be understood in the context of labour market dynamics and, in particular, trends in working time (ACIRRT, 1999; Bittman and Pixley, 1997; Noon and Blyton, 2002). Since the 1950s there has been an erosion of the 'standard' working time model – the working time arrangement premised on an eight-hour day worked over a five-day work week during 11 months of the year over an approximately 45-year working life (Buchanan and Bearfield, 1997; Healy, 2000; Wooden, 2000). More generally, 'standard employment' has typically been construed in terms of continuous and full-time work, with regular employment arrangements, standard non-wage benefits and full employee status (Burgess and Mitchell, 2001).

An erosion in standard working arrangements has been evident in recent years, however, resulting from a variety of demand and supply factors, including organisational changes designed to secure greater labour flexibility and lower unit labour costs, which in turn have fuelled developments such as the growth in non-standard jobs (temporary contracts and use of agency staff, for example) and sub-contracting (see Blyton and Dastmalchian, in this volume). Extended opening and operating hours in various sectors of the economy have also occasioned a much wider range

of working hours arrangements, most notably a variety of part-time work patterns. At the same time, many employees in various sectors of the economy have experienced an increase in overall working hours. This increase in hours reflects, for many, an increased workload, in turn related to structural changes in organisations (include downsizing and delayering), increased hours of operation, and greater demands for work-related travel and mobility (Rutherford, 2001; Simpson, 1998). Thus, one consequence of organisational and labour market change has been a bifurcation of working time – very long hours being worked by some, and very short part-time schedules by others.

Changing roles

Analysis of time use data consistently underlines the extent of gender differences in time use, particularly gender differences in time spent in domestic duties and childcare (Bittman, 1999; Wajcman, 1996). Despite the substantial and continuing increase in female participation in paid employment, women still spend significantly more time than men in unpaid domestic work and childcare. However, there is some evidence that cultural pressures for men to take on more domestic responsibility, especially in relation to fatherhood, is resulting – following a significant time-lag – in some narrowing of the gaps in time use between men and women. Consistent with this, Bittman and Pixley (1997) report that the majority of men and women in Australia say that they believe childcare and domestic duties should be equally shared. However, Bittman (1999) highlights that behavioural changes do not necessarily reflect this change in values. Time diary analyses, for example, reveal that differences between the sexes narrows amongst professionals (Bedeian, Burke and Moffett, 1988; Hakim, 1991). This does not necessarily mean, however, that men are spending more time on domestic duties (in fact the evidence does not support this) but rather that the explanation lies more in the outsourcing of domestic labour. As Wajcman found in her study of senior managers, 'male managers are still serviced by their wives, women managers are serviced by housewife substitutes in the form of other women's labour.' (1996: 626) Yet, this opportunity is only available to those in positions of occupational and economic power.

Changing values and aspirations

Normative and cultural pressures create both incentives and disincentives for individuals to spend more or less time at work and more or less time at home. For example, in a seminal study of domestic work Vanek (1974, 1978) showed that the time spent on household maintenance and cleaning remained constant between 1925 and the mid-1970s, despite an increase in domestic labour-saving devices and household appliances. She argues that while improvements in domestic technology reduced the labour required

for any particular task, the number of tasks increased because of a growth in more stringent household standards including cleanliness.

Normative pressure also exerts influence on the time spent in paid employment. For example, 'presenteeism', where individuals stay at work after standard working hours to signal their commitment, arises partly because of work norms that give a positive value to long hours working (Perlow, 1999). Probert, Ewer and Whiting (2000) also argue that workers feel compelled to work longer hours without claiming entitlements because norms of what comprise 'normal hours' have gradually eroded over time.

Other social changes have also impacted on the values and expectations around time spent at work and in the home. Higher education levels for example, have been identified as an important influence on career expectations, particularly amongst women, and especially those pursuing professional and higher status occupations (Campbell Clark, 2000). This, coupled with economic changes such as the prevalence of dual-income households and greater pressure for increased consumption, have been linked to lower fertility rates and delaying the decision to have children.

Changing families and households

Families and households, like employing organisations, provide an important context to individual lives and decision-making. The type of household in which one lives has an impact on the roles that structure and constrain individual choice about time allocation. For many writers, maintaining work-life balance is a problem primarily for dual-income households with dependent children (Bittman and Rice, 2002). These households are in a stronger position to buffer labour market dynamics and organisational changes (such as pressures for greater flexibility) than sole income households but they may face greater challenges in managing conflicting roles. It is well documented that there has been a widespread increase in family instability, evidenced by an increase in the rates of divorce and separation (Crompton, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1999). This has resulted in an increase in single-parent households (and single-person households), creating particular challenges for 'work-family' balance. In addition, increased variety in the timing of key life events include: age at marriage, age at first birth, age of dependents leaving the family home and age at entering a career (Bedeian, Burke and Moffett, 1988). All of these changes have increased the heterogeneity of family and household structures and increased variation in the types of work-family challenges that individuals face.

Changing support structures

Social and economic changes that have occurred since the 1950s have also resulted in an erosion of the traditional caring capacity for both dependent children and aged family members in households (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

Increased geographic mobility has lessened social support networks such as extended families, as has the decline in the influence of the church and other community support systems, by reducing the people available to assist with family roles. Putnam (1995, 2000) characterises this in terms of an erosion of 'social capital', including people's involvement in community and civic organisations and affairs. For Putnam, social capital refers to 'the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (1995: 67). Social capital manifests itself as higher levels of civic participation, more time spent helping others and higher levels of trust. The identified decline in community support can create additional pressure on work-life balance, for individuals and households, as they deal with issues such as caring for sick children when parents need to work, aging parents, transport of dependents to appointments and before and after-school care of children.

Possible solutions

What solutions may be available to address the problems associated with work-life balance, including personal, collective and institutional solutions, remains an important social policy issue. Of the many levels where solutions may be sought, the personal level remains the primary focus for many. Thus, work-family conflict is often dealt with as a personal or household issue that requires individualised solutions. Hochschild (1997) for example, found that the 'time bind' she identified was most often dealt with as a purely personal problem. She cites, for example, the frequent attempts to free up time by outsourcing domestic and childcare responsibilities to professional services, relatives or neighbours. The negotiation of domestic responsibilities within households is also a common means to rectify issues, especially amongst dual-income parents. However, the equity between males and females in domestic work is improving more because women are spending less time in domestic duties than because men are spending more. Women are spending less time because they are spending more time in paid work (and as we noted earlier, time is a zero sum game). Thus, while work-life conflict is often dealt with either personally or in the household, these solutions have not substantially changed the social division of labour. There are no doubt many instances of innovative individual or household solutions but these have not been translated into major changes in society.

As discussed above, outsourcing domestic services might offer a solution to work-family conflict but is limited by the availability of such services and the ability to pay for the services. There is Australian evidence that the greatest growth in domestic outsourcing is in the care of children, whereas evidence of a rise in other types of domestic outsourcing is mixed (Bittman,

1999). Interestingly, Bittman also highlights that one area of non-childcare outsourcing that has increased is 'yard work' (gardening and related activities), a traditional masculine activity in the home; there is no evidence, however, that the outsourcing of 'cleaning' (a traditionally feminine household activity) has risen. Overall, however, despite little evidence to date that there has been a dramatic increase in the use of the market to solve work-life conflict, predictions continue that this will represent an increasingly popular solution in the future (Wheelock, 2001).

While some look for personal, short-term solutions to solve work-family issues, others look to longer-term solutions or lifestyle changes such as 'downshifting' or 'voluntary simplification' in one form or another. The fact that time stress is a major factor in work-life imbalance has created interest in the idea that voluntarily reducing working hours and other time stressors can help restore balance. 'Downshifting', the voluntary reduction of both working hours and income, is a longer-term lifestyle solution to work-life imbalance. Research in both the UK and Australia shows that between 20 and 25 per cent of adults have downshifted in one form or another over the last ten years (Hamilton and Mail, 2003a, 2003b). Goulding and Reed (in this volume) examine the role that normative constraints, by social networks and personal communities, play in lifestyle choice.

In terms of possible collective solutions to work-life balance problems, trade unions and other special interest groups attempt to address problems associated with work-life conflict by challenging organisations to effect policies and practices recognising more the presence of employees' non-work responsibilities (see Heery, in this volume). As Hochschild (1997: 245) argues, 'the truth of the matter is that many working parents lack time because the workplace has a prior claim on it'. If this is the case, solutions to problems associated with work-family balance relate to groups in society and therefore need to be addressed through collective as well as individual means. While a number of family-friendly issues have been taken up by trade unions, however, important broader issues such as excess workload, have yet to be given sufficient priority.

High levels of social capital can also assist in managing work-family conflict by constructing neighbourhood or community solutions to collective issues. Neighbourhood houses, community-based before and after-school programmes, community-based emergency care services and helping neighbours, are all examples of ways in which communities with high social capital can provide solutions to the problems associated with work-life conflict. This type of support could be especially helpful given the decline in the 'traditional' family unit. To date, however, not only the traditional family but also forms of social capital have been in decline, potentially heightening the extent of work-family pressures.

State policies are also important for providing an institutional framework and context for addressing the problems that arise from work-life conflict.

It has been argued that the social and economic disadvantage that women face, due to their unequal share of unpaid work, can be addressed in one of three ways: within households by renegotiating the division of labour; through the market; or through the state provision of key services (Bittman, 1999; Lewis, 1999; Walby, 2003). Esping-Andersen's (1999) typology of welfare states highlights the wide variation between states in the provision of services such as childcare, eldercare and statutory leave provisions. Overall, however, the state represents a vital vehicle for providing opportunities for individuals to exercise work-life choices and lifestyle preferences. Bittman's (1999) comparison of Finland and Australia suggests that public policy can make a significant difference in reducing the gender differences in time use.

> 'The Scandinavian experience shows that entitlements to generous parental leave, high quality childcare, and to family-friendly hours of paid work are all necessary components of an equitable solution to the difficulties of combining work and family in the twenty-first century' (Bittman, 1999: 40).

Much of the current discussion about public policy relates to what happens at work (the appropriate level of parental leave, or the right to request transferring to a part-time contract, for example) but an equally important policy area is what happens in households around domestic labour and childcare (see Blunsdon and McNeil, in this volume).

Outline of the collection

A number of the themes we have identified in this Introduction are examined in more detail in the remainder of this volume. In the first contribution, Blyton and Dastmalchian examine issues arising from the changing context of work, chronicling a series of labour market and organisational changes that have given work-life balance a higher profile within the media, public policy and academic debates.

Following this, and drawing on evidence from a variety of countries, a number of different stakeholder perspectives on work-life balance are considered, including those of employing organisations, trade unions and other advocacy groups, the state, particular occupational groups, household members (including parents and children) and those seeking to combine work and study. In the first of these, Maybery reviews work-life balance from an employer perspective and considers a number of issues including: the question of take-up of work-life balance policies; the role of managers in work-life balance; and the role of informal versus formal policies. Following this, Heery examines the development of UK trade union policy on work-life balance. Drawing on documentary, interview and

survey data, Heery considers the nature and significance of attempts by trade unions in the UK to restore balance between paid employment and other spheres of social life. In their analysis of public policy, Blunsdon and McNeil then review the changing role of state policy in relation to issues of work-life balance – change evident both within and between different national contexts.

Work-family conflict and family-work conflict are considered by Duxbury and Higgins, who draw on survey data from two large-scale Canadian studies undertaken in 1991 and 2001. They analyse the extent to which work demands have increased for all employee groups in Canada, with many employees reporting an inability to complete their work tasks during regular hours of employment. In his contribution, Trinczek focuses on the question of the extent to which new flexible working hours initiatives can advance work-life balance in Germany, and the significance of working time cultures in mediating the impact of those initiatives.

Using data from a set of international surveys, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2002, Reed and Blunsdon examine whether religion is a normative influence on beliefs about gender roles. In particular, they investigate the impact religion has on beliefs about the appropriateness of mothers participating in the labour market, and the effect of such norms on the employment status of women.

With working parents (particularly mothers in paid employment) acting as the main focus of discussion in much of the debate, children constitute a neglected stakeholder in issues of work-life balance. In her discussion of the Norwegian context, Bungum introduces the child's perspective on adult working life, arguing the case for children as an independent voice that needs to be included in debates about work-life balance. In a similar way that the voice of children has been little heard in work-life balance discussions, another such group are students in general, and those seeking to combine employment and study, in particular. Huang's study focuses on the demands of working students in Taiwan. Taiwan has one of the longest working hours cultures in the world and those combining full-time work and studying face considerable challenges in attempting to achieve a balanced life. Huang's study shows how support systems, particularly the family, are central to alleviating pressure from conflicting time demands.

Just as work-life balance means different things to different groups in society, different organisational and societal groups face different opportunities and constraints in their attempts to balance work and non-work life. In their contribution, Tietze, Musson and Scurry introduce a stakeholder view of work-life balance. Their in-depth case study of homeworking reveals the extent to which more powerful individuals, such as managers and professionals, can be better placed to achieve personal and organisational objectives around work-life balance. They reveal how, in their study,

less powerful individuals, although still affected by work-life issues, were less able to shape their organisational world to achieve personal aims.

Organisational-level changes and initiatives impact on the work-life balance of individuals working within those organisations. Developments in organisational flexibility in the 1980s and 1990s, for example, substantially changed the terms and conditions of employment for many workers. Steinke's contribution examines the relationship between organisational practices and the lives of healthcare providers in Canada. This case demonstrates the impact that organisational-level changes and the changing nature of work can have on the lives and lifestyles of employees.

Finally, the issue of lifestyle is explored by Goulding and Reed, who outline a theoretical model for understanding lifestyle choices. They provide a framework in which to understand better the influence of work-life conflict on lifestyle choice. Among other issues, Goulding and Reed consider the role of social networks and personal communities in shaping the norms, values and beliefs that influence the lifestyle choices that individuals make. The authors also consider the question of why people choose to construct lives that are less than fully satisfying and what influences people to make major changes to their lives, such as the decision to 'downshift'.

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