



Introduction to Virtual Issue on the Work-Family Interface

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This Virtual Issue of the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (JOOP) contains ten papers which have been published on the work-family interface in this journal in the past eight years. Several other articles on this topic have also been published in this period in JOOP, but because these comprised a special issue of the journal (2008, 81, 3) they are not included in this Virtual Issue.

The link between work and family roles has been recognized for at least 30 years now as being highly important and relevant to people's lives, as well as to organizations. In recent years, however, this relationship has become even more salient as the global work environment and technological changes (such as iPads and Smartphones), along with an array of other factors, have led to an increasing 'blurring' of boundaries between the work and off-the-job (e.g. family) roles. There is evidence that more and more people are experiencing difficulties balancing the competing demands and responsibilities of their job or career with their family involvement. Hence a considerable amount of research has been conducted on factors which influence the relationship between work and (in particular) family and the mechanisms used by individuals and organizations to reduce the potential conflict between these domains.

The ten papers in this special issue address various aspects of the work-family interface. The majority of them consider conflict or interference between work commitments and family responsibilities, which continues to be an issue of considerable relevance and interest. Some papers (e.g. Hall et al., 2010; Luk & Shaffer, 2005) examine work environment variables as predictors of work-family conflict (in both directions). Other articles (such as Mitchelson, 2009; Promislo et al, 2010) explore dispositional (personality) predictors which are also pertinent. Wang et al. (2011) examine the relative value of family-friendly organizational policies, particularly childcare-related policies. Mauno et al. (2005) describe the potential impact of an organisation's culture relating to work-family support, while Payne et al. (2012) investigate childcare satisfaction as a critical factor. Watkins and her colleagues (2012) examine the perceptions of significant others on the person's life, and how these perceptions relate to a person's work-family conflict. Finally, Kinnunen et al. (2010) present longitudinal data on the spillover between work and family, as well as crossover between dual-earner couples' work-family conflict and well-being. As is evident from this brief summary, the papers cover a very broad range of issues.

All of the above present empirical data to illustrate relevant themes. The paper by Grzywacz and his colleagues (2007), however, differs markedly from the others in two respects: (a) it focuses on work-family facilitation, rather than work-family conflict, and (b) it provides a conceptual model of the importance of facilitation and the processes underlying its functioning. This model has become a platform for more recent research on the positive interactions between work and family roles.

Together the ten papers offer a very broad overview of relevant issues on this complex and important topic, and they highlight theoretical and practical implications for researchers and for organizational managers. Despite the plethora of research in this area, we are still some distance away from developing effective and relevant strategies for assisting people to achieve between work-life balance, and these papers make valuable contributions to this debate. They exemplify the commitment which JOOP has to understanding the multi-faceted nature of people's lives, especially the interplay between working life and other life areas.

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