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# **Work-life balance and social class**

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## **Abstract**

This chapter challenges middle-class bias in work-life literature by examining work-life balance dynamics through a social class perspective. It reveals class-based disparities in physical, temporal, and psychological outcomes, including the role of economic capital in work-life balance and the challenges encountered by the socially mobile in achieving psychological balance. It emphasizes the need to acknowledge social class implications for work-life balance and urges organisations to address class-based inconsistencies and inequalities in their practices.

## **Keywords**

Work life balance, social class, borders, class travel, social mobility, temporal, physical, psychological

## **Introduction**

It has long been acknowledged that how individuals manage the relationship between their work and non-work lives is important with a need for balance and minimal conflict as precursors for success and well-being (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Despite a growing interest in the interplay between work and non-work life its many blind spots have led to growing criticisms that existing research, theory and policy is not fully representative of reality (Powell et al, 2019). Instead, a narrow frame has been adopted focused principally on the work-family interface and nominally concerned with dual working heterosexual parents. This has been largely at the exclusion of other demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, age, sexuality, marital status, and social class (Kelliher et al., 2019; Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Correspondingly, concerns have been raised about a preoccupation in the literature with the ‘ideal-typical’ work-life balance employee, such as managerial/professional workers, including

middle-class mothers. In turn, working-class lives have been overlooked in work-life research because existing research focuses mainly on relatively privileged middle-class employees often working in large organisations (Gatrell et al., 2013). As a result, current policies are overly focused on issues of long working hours and time poverty as key triggers of work-life conflict (Warren 2021) and the psychological bleed of work into life primarily experienced by knowledge workers (Wolfram and Gratton, 2014). Furthermore, the concept of ‘life’ used in research and organisational policy is often based on a narrow definition comprising family, caring and domestic responsibilities rather than other components of life such as friendships, hobbies, and community life (Wilkinson et al, 2017). Consequently, our knowledge of work-life balance is somewhat limited with minimal attention given to the diversity of employees and work roles that exist alongside a very narrow conceptualisation of ‘life’.

To challenge the middle-class bias in the work-life literature, this chapter explores the dynamics of work-life balance through the lens of social class to draw attention to the tensions social class can bring to the interplay between work and home. To date, only minimal attention has been given to the relationship between social class and work-life balance despite emerging evidence that social class has significant implications for work-life balance (Evans and Wyatt, 2022; Warren, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2021).

### **Social Class & Work-Life Balance**

The relationship between work and non-work life has long been the subject of attention often presented in terms of work-life balance and categorised along a continuum from conflict through to enrichment (Kelliher et al., 2019). Definitions of work-life balance have largely focused on time and role enactment foregrounding middle class managerial and professional workers in work-life research and policy. However, work-life balance can have very different drivers, such as inadequate pay, and outcomes for different types of workers (Warren, 2016). Drawing on the plethora of definitions used in the literature, we define work-life balance as congruence between work and non-work where an individual has satisfaction and good functioning in their work-life interplay with minimal conflict or interference between the two. The notion of balance can be further broken down into different categories such as temporal (time), locational (physical) and psychological balance.

This chapter explores the relationship between social class and work-life balance outcomes. In doing so, it draws on Bourdieu (1984) to define social class as systematic differences in capitals (resources) reflected in an individual's position of relative advantage or disadvantage within the field (e.g., workplaces, local communities, educational institutions, neighbourhoods, religious communities). Bourdieu presents four forms of capital: economic capital (wealth and income); cultural capital (informational assets such as educational credentials and the possession of legitimate knowledge, skills, and tastes); social capital (valuable social connections and friendships) and symbolic capital (the prestige and legitimacy associated with different types of capital: Bourdieu 1987). Class differences are maintained by the interplay between relative capital and habitus within the socialised norms of the field. From a work-life perspective, this can be helpful in exploring the power imbalances relevant to work-life dynamics to challenge the middle-class dominance in existing research (Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Importantly, we know little about how an individual's social class (and relative capitals) affects their work-life balance. Even where working-class employees have been given attention, the focus has remained predominately on gender – namely working mothers - and a narrow definition of 'life' equating to 'family' (e.g., Crompton and Lyonette, 2010). Tracey Warren's work has been pivotal in addressing this and highlighting the importance of economic capital and financial strain to work-life imbalance outcomes for the working-class (e.g., Warren, 2021), while Wilkinson et al. (2017) drew attention to the concerns of less financially comfortable middle-class and working-class workers. Our own research (Evans and Wyatt, 2022) found that lower-class and socially mobile workers are at greater risk of psychological work-life conflict due to relative differences in cultural, social, and symbolic capitals, suggesting that social class origin and social mobility are important factors in work-life balance outcomes.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in the UK with social class differences in work-life outcomes in terms of time, finances, and well-being. For example, a lack of opportunity to work from home for the working-class increased their chances of contracting the virus during the pandemic due to their propensity to occupy keyworker, front-line occupations (ONS, 2021). Therefore, those with the highest forms of capital disproportionately maintained their social advantages during the pandemic exacerbating social class difference in work-life balance outcomes.

To summarise, evidence is growing to support the argument that social class is an important factor in work-life balance experiences and outcomes. Yet, the resolute focus on temporal and locational balance privileges middle-class concerns despite economic capital being an important driver of work-life balance for working-class employees. In addition, individuals who have class travelled through work, or have experienced social mobility, experience greater psychological conflict moving between their work and non-work lives. Therefore, this chapter will shine a classed lens on the mainstream work-life balance agenda by challenging the typically narrow treatment of the work-life concept and exploring the impact of social class on physical, temporal, and psychological balance.

### **Social Class & Work-life Balance Outcomes: Physical (locational) Balance**

Physical balance refers to managing the spatial differences where work and non-work are located (Clarke, 2000). Since the industrial revolution, the separation between work and home has been facilitated by walls that physically limit spillover between the two. In recent years, these physical borders have become more porous for many occupations with the increase in working from home. The move to homeworking has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic with the proportion of employees engaged in hybrid roles (where they work from home, or remotely, for all or some of the week) rising from 12.4% in 2019 to 24% in 2022 (ONS, 2022).

However, working from home remains the purview of the privileged - jobs that can easily switch to hybrid working are typically office-based professional roles dominated by the middle class. Figures from 2021 suggest that knowledge work, such as information communication roles and financial and insurance roles had 91% and 84% of their workforces working from home respectively, compared to much lower levels in frontline and physical work dominated by working-class employees, such as health and social care (39%) or manufacturing (30%: Mutebi and Hobbs, 2022). This meant that only 10% of working-class women and 4% of working-class men worked from home in January 2021 in contrast to 48% of managerial/professional women workers and 54% of managerial/ professional male workers (Warren et al, 2021). Consequently, middle-class employees have better access than working-class employees to the work-life benefits associated with hybrid working, such as increased leisure and family time, reduced travel time and costs, and increased wellbeing (Shirmohammadi et al, 2022).

There are, however, benefits to maintaining physical borders between work and non-work with evidence that homeworking can have a negative impact on productivity, sociability, and employees' career development (Teevan et al., 2022). Locating work and non-work in distinct physical spaces means employees are less likely to experience spillover from either domain (McDonald et al., 2022). This is particularly salient given emerging evidence that working from home can increase an employee's likelihood of experiencing work intensity, technostress, isolation and less access to important political information required for career development (Schirmohammadi et al., 2022; Wyatt, 2022). The benefits of a more distinct segmentation between work and home are more likely to benefit the working-class whose jobs are less likely to be offered on a hybrid or working from home basis.

However, and crucially, hybrid workers are typically allowed *flexibility* over their physical location of work, a choice which is highly prized: A recent news story of knowledge worker, Felicia, who quit her six-figure salary when her employer mandated a return to the office, demonstrates the importance of such choice (Insider, 2023). In contrast, the same flexibility to enact work-life border preferences is often not afforded to working-class employees because many working-class occupations, such as retail, physically prevent employees integrating their home and work lives (Mustafa and Gold, 2013). This means middle class employees have access to a far greater range of work-life strategies and more agency over their work-life balance than working class employees, who are more likely to be restricted by physical location.

When working-class occupations *do* facilitate working from home, employees may not reap the same level of work-life benefits as middle-class employees. Working-class employees are more likely to live in smaller homes that lack the space for a dedicated home office (Warren et al., 2020). Demonstrating the role of economic capital in work-life balance, in our interviews with remote workers, middle-class employees often had large home offices, specialised equipment, such as double screens, while working-class participants were often using laptops, working on dining tables or sofas and for working-class women, in gendered spaces, such as the kitchen or children's bedrooms (Wyatt, 2022). This means that work is more likely to spill into life for the working-class, or less financially comfortable middle-class, as they are less able to physically delineate work, ensure privacy or a sense of being 'in the office' (Adisa et al., 2022; Allen et al., 2021; Mustafa and Gold, 2013).

This blurring of spatial borders also results in life spilling into work, where markers of social class in employees' homes, such as furnishings or décor, give colleagues and managers an insight into their cultural and economic capital when attending virtual meetings (Ollier-Malaterre et al, 2019). Research by Loignon et al. (2022) in the US shows that these spatial differences are likely to result in a lower sense of personal control and self-reported job performance for remote workers from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. The presence of others in the home is also challenging for working-class remote workers (Allen et al., 2021). Sharing and reorganising space around others in the home is likely to increase spillover from life to work, as family members may appear unexpectedly in video calls (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019). Likewise, with work being 'beamed in' to people's homes, others in the home may find it challenging to share their spaces with unknown colleagues and resent being exposed to office banter or confidential work discussions. In our research we found intersections between class and ethnicity suggesting that these challenges are exacerbated in the multi-generational homes of Asian hybrid workers (Wyatt, 2022). The lack of consideration for these challenges highlights the template held by organisations of the 'ideal worker' in remote work arrangements is white, male, and middle class, with the ability to work unencumbered by family and spatial constraints (Acker, 2006).

To manage the physical borders between work and non-work, working-class employees may have to adopt a wider range of detachment strategies than middle-class workers. Individuals with higher economic capital allowing them to live in larger homes with more space may be able to adopt equipment (i.e., hiding computing equipment away), activity (i.e., ensuring work activity remains in a single space in the home), or ambiance (i.e., using different décor to delineate work from home) border strategies (Felstead et al, 2005). Working-class employees may instead need to adopt encampment work-life strategies, working from cafes, libraries or shared public spaces to avoid work-life spillover to reduce stress, emotional exhaustion, and diminished job satisfaction (McDaniel and Coyne 2016). Working-class employees may also engage in 'class work' (Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013) to conceal the class markers of their home environment. For example, they may turn their camera off during online meetings, although such strategies run the risk of being perceived by colleagues as disinterested and disengaged (Itzhakov and Grau, 2022), demonstrating why the office has been labelled a 'great equaliser' (Kraus et al., 2012).

Finally, although research has typically focused on the blurring between physical work and non-workspaces, the management of digital borders is also challenging for working-class

employees. Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2019) argue that successfully navigating the permeability of work-life borders in contemporary work requires 'digital cultural capital'. Like Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital, digital capital is accrued via socialisation and education, where individuals learn how to communicate appropriately online, the risks of disclosing personal or sensitive information, maintaining a professional 'online footprint' and the importance of switching off (Madden, 2017). Ollier-Malaterre et al (2019) propose that working-class employees are less likely to develop such capital, have lower 'digital coping skills', less awareness of privacy and weaker impression management strategies. Consequently, they may find navigating work (e.g., email) and non-work (e.g., WhatsApp) platforms requires more effortful 'code-switching' than for middle-class workers.

In summary, working class employees experience fewer opportunities to capitalise from the benefits of working from home meaning that the physical borders of their work and life are less flexible. However, while greater integration between the physical borders between work and non-work life can support work-life balance, it can also impact work-life spillover. This will be explored in the next two sections where we discuss temporal and psychological balance.

### **Temporal Balance**

Much attention in the work-life literature has been paid to the notion of temporal balance encompassing the number of hours worked, when the hours are worked, work-time intensity and working time agency (Anttila et al., 2015). Studies have shown that together with long working hours, unsocial hours of work, and a high working-time tempo tend to have a negative effect on employees' perceptions of their work-life balance, whereas working-time autonomy has positive effects (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Fagan et al., 2012). Notwithstanding, the focus of work-life research remains resolutely on labour market time, and too much of it, as a major cause of work-life conflict resulting in temporal balance dominating the conceptualisation and measurements used in work-life studies (Pereira and Coelho, 2012).

The precedence awarded to long working hours has led to "relatively affluent professional and white-collar workers" (Lewis et al., 2007: 361) being the core group of employees studied in work-life research. As such, work-life discourse and supporting policies at both political and organisational levels focus more on issues of time that are reported by financially secure middle-class workers, neglecting other capitals, such as economic capital as a cause of work-life imbalance. While time-squeeze is a vital concept in work-life balance, this only provides a



partial understanding with research and policy solutions subsequently rarely acknowledging the work–life priorities of working-class employees.

Class-based inequalities result in distinct differences in the drivers of work-life imbalance and outcomes. Although workers in manual roles also work long hours, research shows that they often rationalise this differently, citing financial reasons rather than the career reasons commonly cited by middle class employees (Warren, 2015). In contrast to temporal imbalance caused by too many working hours, working-class employees are greater risk of not having enough paid work (work-time underemployment) and are more fearful of working too few hours (Warren, 2016, 2017; Lyness et al., 2012). This underemployment concern is replicated across countries. For example, in Australia 30% of Australians work part time, but 9% of part-timers are reported to be underemployed (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). This shows that while part-time work constitutes flexibility and improved work-life balance for some workers, for others it represents insecurity and a reduction in living standards.

These class-based temporal dimensions of work-life balance show the critical importance of economic capital for many working-class employees (Warren, 2015, 2021). They are more likely to talk about financial concerns when asked about work-life balance, than those in middle-class jobs who are more likely to cite time-squeeze (Fagan, et al, 2008). Even when asked specifically about temporal challenges, individuals in working-class roles have been found to repeatedly revert to monetary work–life balance challenges (Warren et al., 2009). The low pay often experienced by the working-class means that when long working hours threaten their work-life balance, they often cannot afford to reduce their working hours through flexible working policies (Warren, 2015). These temporal challenges of work-time underemployment and associated low pay, more commonly experienced by the working-class, have been largely neglected in work-life research and policy resulting in a class-blind narrow understanding of work–life balance.

The timing of work and unsocial work is commonly associated with shift work with working-class employees over-concentrated in jobs that are marked by unsocial worktime (Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel, 2020). The association of shift work with health risks (such as disturbed sleep and insomnia, occupational injuries, and the chronic diseases including cardiovascular diseases and cancer) has long been established (Anttila et al., 2021). Unsocial hours of work have also been found to have a negative effect on work-life balance outcomes and higher levels

of work-life conflict (Schneider and Harknett, 2019). Unsocial working hours, particularly when shifts rotate, or are unpredictable, limit the time that can be spent on 'life'. This means less leisure time with friends and family and fewer opportunities to engage in the community or pursue hobbies impacting work-life conflict and well-being (Sonnentag et al., 2022). This is more likely to impact working-class employees because of their higher propensity to work in industries and roles requiring them to work shifts, often with unsociable working hours, such as evenings, weekends, and split shifts (Williams, 2010).

Additional temporal challenges to work-life balance include the tempo of work and work-time autonomy. Working class employees typically have less work-time autonomy than their middle-class counterparts and are more likely to operate to high speed and tight deadlines, particularly women (Loudoun and McDonald, 2014; Warren, 2016; Felstead et al., 2020). Likewise, gig work, which is dominated by those from working class and migrant backgrounds, purports to offer flexibility and autonomy but varies wildly in predictability and intensity and lacks the financial safety net of comparable middle-class roles (Warren, 2021). However, it should be noted that when managers and professionals take up flexible working opportunities, they have been found to experience work intensification in the form of longer hours and greater work effort. They also report professional isolation, fewer networking opportunities, being perceived as less committed to the organization, increased work-family conflict, and reduced prospects for career advancement (Beauregard, 2011; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). Managerial and professional middle-class occupations also tend to involve longer commuting times to workplaces, which eats into time for 'life' and can add to work-life conflict incurred because of a negative relationship between commuting time, commitment, and well-being (Emre and De Spiegeleare, 2019). This shows the impact of social class in differential temporal work-life balance outcomes and the challenges this presents for policy making and organisational practice.

As discussed in the previous section, hybrid working can improve work-life balance by alleviating the long commuting times of managerial and professional workers. However, the blurring of work-life borders brought about by homeworking can also negatively impact temporal work-life balance. Chung's (2022) work on the "flexibility paradox" found that flexible working can lead to employees working longer and more intensely, resulting in temporal work-life conflict through work encroaching on home life. However, this manifests differently for different types of workers with women being exploited further when working

from home by increasing time spent on childcare and housework. This highlights the complexities and social class dimensions of temporal balance, and the inherent risk in assuming that flexible working practices are a panacea for work-life conflict.

### **Psychological Balance**

Unlike physical or temporal borders, psychological borders are associated with the thoughts and emotions that individuals experience in each field and how they carry these across different fields (Allen et al., 2014). Psychological borders are created when individuals set rules that dictate thinking and behaviour patterns (*habitus*) which they consider to be appropriate for one setting (e.g., the workplace), but not for not another (e.g., with family: Clark, 2000). Research in this field has studied the relationship between how people manage their psychological borders with levels of stress and wellbeing. For example, psychologically detaching from work and ‘switching off’ when at home by not thinking about job-related concerns is associated with increased wellbeing and performance and reduced exhaustion and fatigue (Karabinski et al., 2021). Conversely, psychological borders can be more permeable with a spillover of emotions and behaviours between work and non-work life. These can have both positive and negative outcomes, highlighting the challenge of finding an ‘ideal’ balanced approach to managing psychological borders (Clark, 2000).

Research has examined the behavioural patterns associated with different fields and specifically how people manage the identities they form through the roles they hold in their professional and private lives. Drawing on social class as a relational concept, based on the volume and composition of capitals together with associated *habitus*, is helpful in understanding the role social class plays in psychological work-life borders and balance. It is argued that individuals carry their social class between ‘situation to situation’ (Côté, 2011:49) and compare their capitals vis-à-vis others applying a ‘learned set of preferences or dispositions’ and system of ‘cognitive 'schemata’ (*habitus*: Bourdieu, 2002: 27) to orient themselves to the world in which they operate. The stigma associated with a lack of symbolic capital in either work or non-work domains can lead to feelings of psychological displacement and imbalance (Bourdieu, 2007). This has been found to impact working class and the socially mobile more acutely (Friedman, 2012; Evans and Wyatt, 2022).

Some research draws on identity management to explore diversity characteristics as individuals seek to understand ‘who am I’ and navigate the behavioural norms of different domains (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). This is relevant for social class because it examines how individuals with different backgrounds to their colleagues, who may be stigmatised as a result, engage in ‘identity work’ to construct and negotiate their identities at work and in other social contexts (Ashforth et al., 2000;). Gray and Kish-Gephart (2013) proposed a form of identity work, specific to social class differences at work. Calling it ‘class work’, they defined it as “interpretive processes and interaction rituals” (p. 871) that are enacted individually and collectively at work, including cognitions, behavioural practices, and embedded routines that individuals undertake to conform to class rules. Individuals engage in such identity work to enhance belongingness and fit at work, satisfy their needs (e.g., for autonomy or achievement), enhance their sense of self and reduce the anxiety experienced as a member of a stigmatised group (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). An increased sense of belongingness and fit in both work and non-work settings is argued to lead to improved levels of psychological balance.

According to Ashforth et al (2000), where work and non-work domains have greater contrast, more identity management work is required to ensure individuals’ identity and associated behaviours are akin to that field. From a social class perspective, individuals who have experienced social mobility and work in ‘class discrepant’ roles (where their social class origins are incongruent to those of their colleagues) are more likely to experience greater contrasts between work and non-work (Evans and Wyatt, 2022). The socialised norms (i.e., cultural capital) they have developed in their home lives might be in stark contrast to those in their workplace, necessitating greater psychological effort to fit and move between their work and non-work lives. For example, someone who grew up in a working-class housing estate in Crewe but now works in a top law firm in London may feel that to fit in at work they need to adjust their accent, topics of conversations, humour, and mannerisms.

According to Ashforth et al. (2000), work-life balance is determined by how stressful individuals find their role transitions between work and life and how much conflict these transitions trigger. Support through relationships outside of work such as friends and family and colleagues has been found to buffer stresses at work (Chan, Kalliath, Chan and Kalliath, 2020). Crucially for work-life balance, our own research found that individuals who have experienced social mobility are likely to experience stressful work-life transitions because they engage in class work not only at work, but also in their non-work lives. For example, some of

our interviewees adjusted their accents when with family, hid their new-found ‘middle-class’ hobbies from childhood friends, and even switched the beverages they drank at home (e.g., beer) and work (e.g., wine) when socialising. This often led to lower levels of support from family and friends in non-work domains, increasing the stress of role transitions between work and life. Accordingly, we found some of our participants who worked in class discrepant roles, withdrew from family relationships because they felt they now had little in common with their roots and found it challenging to switch identities across fields. Those who had the most negative work-life outcomes were those who lacked support from domain members at home and/or at work.

Ultimately, individuals who class travel and achieve social mobility via their occupation, are likely to experience constant pressure to engage in ‘class work’ across all fields. This ‘shifting’ of identity and inability to demonstrate authenticity in any sphere of life means that the social support required to enhance wellbeing and buffer work stresses and exhaustion may not be apparent for such individuals. Additionally, the psychological strain of a perpetual engagement in class work may lead to feelings of anxiety, increased stress and feelings of isolation. Indeed, our participants spoke about being ‘in no man’s land’ and ‘acting all the time’. Yet, despite the challenges these identity switches can pose, this constant class work may equip individuals with important cultural tools to help them navigate a wide range of social contexts and become skilled class chameleons (Martin and Côté, 2019).

Emerging research shows that social class plays a role in psychological work-life balance outcomes. However, while it can pose significant challenges for some, others find that the work-life role transitioning driven by their social class status adds to their workplace skill set and provides a more positive experience. This highlights the importance of social class to psychological work-life balance and the complexities of this process.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explores the dynamics of work-life balance through the lens of social class to draw attention to the challenges social class can bring to the interplay between work and home. While there is a growing awareness of the classed impact on work-life balance, this remains a largely neglected aspect of work-life research and policy. The term work-life balance has been commonly used to define individual experience (usually with a focus on time-squeezed white-

collar, often middle-class workers), or to describe workplace and public policies designed to support individual work-life balance (e.g. flexible work arrangements, parental leave). Both these approaches tend to ignore the diverse components of work, life, and balance, which has contributed to a neglect of class-based differences. For example, evidence shows that the work-life balance needs of working-class employees tend to be less likely to be accommodated by employers (Danziger and Waters Booth, 2008) often due to systematic differences in capitals (Bourdieu, 1984) resulting in a power imbalance in the employment relationship (Lewis et al, 2007) and a middle-class domination of work-life balance research and policy (Warren 2015). In this chapter, we have sought to address the criticism that existing research and organisational approaches supporting work-life balance are class-blind.

In exploring the relationship between social class and work-life balance we have shown how class-based differences manifest in different outcomes across physical, temporal, and psychological borders. For example, the interplay between economic capital and work-life balance for the working-class and less financially comfortable middle-class workers (Wilkinson et al., 2017; Warren, 2017) is slowly being recognised for its critical role in work-life balance, particularly temporal and physical outcomes. Such financial constraints on work-life balance have only deepened with the COVID-19 pandemic (Warren et al, 2021). Meanwhile, differences in cultural, social, and symbolic capitals attributable to social class, have been found to influence an individual's ability to achieve a psychological work-life balance, particularly for the socially mobile (Evans and Wyatt, 2022). Indeed, even prior to the pandemic, access to work-life balance practices in organisations was criticised for inconsistency and fuelling employee perceptions of unfairness owing to their focus on managerial and professional workers (Beauregard, 2014). The pandemic has only compounded these discrepancies. Both academic research and policy making needs to acknowledge and address these inconsistencies to avoid increasing the inherent inequalities in work-life balance outcomes.

In highlighting these class-based dimensions of work-life balance, we argue future research and supporting policies needs to recognise that work-life is a multi-dimensional space. In doing so, the discourse around work-life needs to acknowledge that the nuances of 'life' extend beyond 'family', and that the diversity of employees extends beyond the 'ideal-typical' worker. We must, therefore, consider the full scope of 'life' and diversity of workers to improve our understanding of the interplay between work and non-work life for different types of workers.

In terms of supporting work-life balance for all employees, we argue that organisations need to:

- Acknowledge the role played by social class in differential work-life needs and work-life balance outcomes.
- Recognise social class as a key demographic and driver of inequality by measuring the social class and social class origin of employees and including social class in related EDI audits.
- Review existing work-life balance policies and support for any class-based biased and revise accordingly.
- Work towards a class-fluent culture by talking about social class more, asking senior leaders to be open about their class backgrounds, and being honest about the class-based barriers that their organisations may (re)produce
- Train managers in the work-life balance challenges experienced by the socially mobile to enhance the provision of supportive domain members for those in class-discrepant roles.

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