Chapter 8
Workplace Changes and Its Implications for Work–Family Conflict and Gender Asymmetries in South Africa

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Introduction

From an ecological perspective, the family and work are two key social systems that coalesce and converge, and are crucial for individual well-being (Werbel and Walter 2002). Despite momentous demographic, social and economic changes occurring around the world, the family continues to fulfil important functions in terms of physical maintenance, adaptation and change; procreation, socialisation and communication; education and protection of children; control of social and sexual behaviour; social support and maintenance of its members' morale; and motivation of members to perform roles inside and outside the family (Sherriff et al. 2010; United Nations 2012). Work, on the other hand, matters in a market-based economy because it allows individuals to sell their capacity to labour as a means of survival while providing opportunities for self-esteem, self-actualisation, dignity and respect. Despite family and work being fundamental requirements for fulfilment of our sense of humanity, the intersections between family and work can also be sites of conflict, collision and contestation (Bolton and Houlihan 2009). This has been the case since the second half of the twentieth century due to the significant increase in women entering the labour market, an increase in dual-earner families, and an erosion of the male breadwinner model whereby men work

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outside the home to earn a wage and provide for their families while wives stay at home to do domestic work and care for family members (Pascall and Lewis 2004). All in all people's time and energy have been diverted away from their families as employment has become increasingly demanding. This has led to increased awareness of the challenges workers face in their attempts to combine domestic and family tasks with their work responsibilities. In developing countries these problems are amplified due to poverty and high unemployment rates (Paddey and Rousseau 2011).

While there is a plethora of literature on the impact of a changing workplace on the family, minimal attention would appear to have been focussed on gender asymmetries, contradictions and ambiguities in the form of employed women versus unemployed male partners; females occupying high status and high income positions relative to their males partners holding lower status and lower income jobs; as well as the impact of such asymmetries and inequitable power relationships on men—particularly in traditionally patriarchal societies. With a particular focus on South Africa, this chapter endeavours to address these issues by interrogating traditional notions of work and its multiple meanings; the changing contemporary workplace, gender roles and gender segregation; and the impact of these changes on the family.

The Meaning of Work

Work occupies a central role in people's lives touching upon economic, social and psychological aspects of their existence. As Ardichvili and Kuchinke (2009:155) explain, "work is central to human existence, it provides the necessities for life, sources of identity, opportunities for achievement and determines standing within the larger community". These authors maintain that from a constructivist frame of reference, the meanings and experiences that one attributes to work define one's choice of career, educational path, job satisfaction, work motivation and work performance. It is therefore important to briefly explore the significance and importance of work in one's life.

Almost 60 years ago Friedmann and Havighurst (1954) researched the different meanings of work for people in different occupations, and found that these included the ability to maintain a minimum level of existence; having something to do; being a source of self-respect, status and recognition; providing relationships with peers, subordinates and superiors; providing a purpose to life; an opportunity for service to others; and providing a platform for creative expression. Despite this research being almost 60 years old, it still has relevance today for understanding the role and meaning of work in a person's life. In essence what Friedmann and Havighurst showed is that work not only provides an income, but it also gives the worker identification, some status, and association. It also helps to provide structure, a way of expending time and energy, and a source of meaning in one's life. This is consistent with Karl Marx's notion that work is a primary human

activity that has the potential to either fulfil people's potential or to destroy and distort not only their nature but also their relationship with others. Marx believed that if people were unable to find satisfaction or fulfilment in their labour or the products of their labour, they would become alienated and become strangers to themselves. To this end, work can be viewed as an avenue for people to not only fulfil their basic needs but also to ensure their humanity (Haralambos and Heald 1985).

Work is also one of the most important means to build one's self-concept and self-identity, both of which are developed through the influence of a complex interplay of internal and external factors, such as local customs, cultural norms of an ethnic group, religious beliefs and organisational cultures. These factors contribute to a positive or negative self-image and help to shape what is considered acceptable work and what work should be avoided (Ardichvili and Kuchinke 2009). The personal values of the worker are other variables that have been shown to be significant in the meaning of work. Whilst traditionally financial reimbursement and promotional opportunities were the strongest influences on job choice decisions, other work values such as achievement and concern for others have been found to have great influence (Cox 2004). For example, the Trobriand Islanders found in the Western Pacific have a cashless economy, and the social obligation to the community is the only key reason that these islanders engage in work activities (Malinowski 1984, cited in Grint 2005). The implication is that the meaning of work is subject to change as people's values may change over time and so might the kind of work that they find meaningful.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the most important aspect of research on the meaning and value of work is possibly the fact that it draws attention to the phenomenon of unemployment when individuals deprived of the regular activity afforded by employment plus all the material and psychological benefits of work are at risk of suffering severe psychological and financial distress. Indeed, "unemployed people have consistently been found to experience higher levels of depression, anxiety and general distress, together with lower self-esteem and confidence" (Fielden and Davidson 1999:86).

The research also draws attention to the issue of work–family conflict which "arises when demands and pressures from the work impede employees' participation in their family role" and can, as discussed elsewhere in this book, negatively affect the well-being of workers and their families, and exert a negative impact on the workplace and society in general (International Labour Organisation 2007; Ilies et al. 2012). To this end it is important to acknowledge that work not only brings benefits and positive experiences but can also be a source of stress. In the words of Bolton and Houlihan (2009:2):

> work matters because it is rarely only that; it is about esteem and disrespect, status and subordination, opportunity and cost, commitment and alienation…work and workplaces are fields of struggle where interests can both coincide and clash, and personhood is both attacked and maintained.

Changes in Contemporary Workplaces

Changes in Women's Work Roles

As stated earlier, in the traditional male breadwinner model, a woman's work focused upon the home and on rearing children. However, the industrial revolution brought about a marked shift in women's employment as many women went to work outside of the home, particularly in factories. In fact factory workers would often prefer to employ women and children as they could pay them less than they would pay men (Walby 1986). The employment of women outside the home became particularly widespread during the Second World War due to labour shortages which arose when men went off to fight in the war and women became an invaluable and available pool of labour needed to boost economies. This trend has persisted over the years and according to the International Labour Organisation (2007), despite regional variations, women's participation in income-earning activities outside the home has been increasing conspicuously and significantly in almost all countries and "there have never before been so many economically active women (International Labour Organisation 2007:2).

Furthermore, unlike in the past when women often relinquished their careers and become the 'trailing spouse' in order to accommodate their husband's career moves, there has in recent years been a significant change from the historical view of men as the main breadwinners. Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2005), for example, conducted an exploratory qualitative study among dual-career couples in the United States with the aim to discover whose career took precedence. Most (58 %) of the women in the study felt that both careers held equal precedence, 22 % felt that their husband's career took precedence, whilst only 19 % felt that their careers had precedence—something they attributed predominantly to financial factors.

Despite the shift in the view that men are the primary breadwinners, and the increased engagement of women in paid work outside the home, women continue to fulfil the roles of homemakers, wives and mothers. In consequence, women worldwide generally work longer hours than men, when one considers all work, paid and unpaid, that women still do. In South Africa data from the 2000 Time Use Survey Africa (the only such study to have been done in the country) showed that each day women in the country spend more than double the time men spend on household maintenance and care of persons, but much less time than men on learning, social and cultural activities, and mass media use (Fig. 8.1). Although the Figure does not refer specifically to employed men and women, Valodia and Devey (2005) showed that the pattern is similar among the employed population.

Analysis of data from the 2000 Time Use Survey data also revealed that where both members of the household are employed in the formal sector, men on average spend 18 units of time in paid work compared to women's 15 (Table 8.1). The table also shows that when a female member of the household is employed in the informal economy, unpaid household work increases to 12.2 time units while time

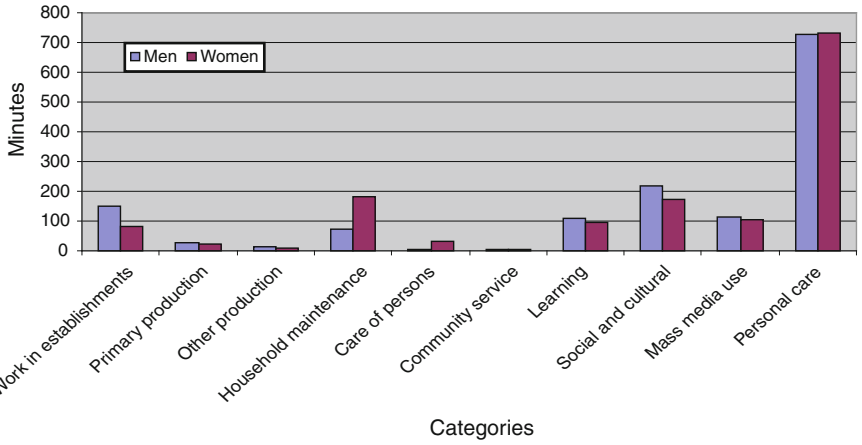

Fig. 8.1 Mean number of min per day spent on activities by type of activity and gender, *Source* Budlender et al. (2001)

Table 8.1 Time use patterns by gender and employment (30 min time units), South Africa 2000

Employment combination	Paid work		Unpaid work		Leisure and personal	
Male: Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Formal : Formal	18.0	15.3	2.4	7.9	34.3	32.9
Formal : Informal	17.3	8.8	2.3	12.2	34.2	34.5
Informal : Formal	16.8	14.0	2.9	7.2	34.8	32.8
Informal : Informal	10.8	9.1	2.9	12.5	40.0	34.2

Source Adapted from Valodia and Devey (2005)

spent on paid work falls. This combination contrasts sharply with the opposite work combination where the male member is in informal work and the female member in formal work. In the last combination, where both the male and female household members are employed in the informal economy female members spend significantly higher proportions of time on unpaid work while their male counterparts, on average, spend more time on leisure and personal activities (Valodia and Devey 2005).

Among other things, the females' time use patterns can result in what Budig and England (2001) describe as 'the wage penalty of motherhood', that is, mothers (and indeed other women with caring responsibilities) are likely to earn less than what they could actually earn because they spend more time at home attending to their caring responsibilities, and interrupting their job experience or, at least, interrupting fulltime employment (Budig and England 2001). To the extent that experience and seniority have positive returns because they involve on-the-job training that makes workers more productive (Becker 1964), the time use patterns of working women in South Africa imply that the women will continue to earn less (see Muller 2008) because they spend more time in attending to domestic tasks, and less time on productive activities.

Gender Segregation in Occupations

Gender segregation in occupations relates to "the tendency for men and women to be employed in different occupations across the entire spectrum of jobs" (EU-OSHA 2013:1). It is caused by gender bias based on stereotypical, biological and social differences between men and women, and as such can be viewed as a consequence of men and women's patterns of socialisation and the identification of tasks traditionally seen as 'women's work' or 'men's work'.

Occupational gender segregation has two specific dimensions: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal segregation is where the workforce of a specific industry or sector is mostly made up of one particular gender. Examples include construction, engineering and medical fields where men are more dominant, and the administration, nursing, teaching and social work fields which are dominated by women (EU-OSHA 2013). Vertical segregation on the other hand is where opportunities for career progression within a company or sector for a particular gender are narrowed such as where more senior or managerial positions tend to be occupied by men while lower, more junior positions are generally occupied by women (Glover and Kirton 2006; EU-OSHA 2013).

Gender segregation in occupations can sometime arise when women consciously choose "mother friendly" jobs that are easier to combine with parenting and care work, the most common of these being part-time work (Budig and England 2001). These jobs, however, often have negative consequences for women in terms of pay and promotional opportunities. For example, women working part-time have been found to typically earn significantly less than men in terms of both average hourly and monthly wages as well as much less than their counterparts who work full-time (see Muller 2008). The literature has also shown that working women may also earn lower wages because their caring responsibilities leave them exhausted or distracted at work, making them less productive (Budig and England 2001). As a result, these women may be penalised because the image persists that they are not committed to their jobs and careers. For these same reasons, managers may also hesitate to hire women for certain types of jobs, often those with better career prospects, and/or to invest on their training (International Labour Organisation 2004; Heymann et al. 2007).

Recent studies (for example, Muller 2008; Mutedi 2003) suggest that this might already be happening in South Africa. Muller (2008) for example, posits that more than 20 % of South African women's increase in wage employment between 1995 and 2006 can be attributed to the growth in part-time wage employment. Table 8.2 below also shows that the proportion of those employed part-time who are women increased notably from 51.4 % in 1995 to 65.4 % in 2006. Conversely, men's employment in part-time work accounted for only about six percent of the total increase in male employment over the period.

Although this pattern of part-time work cannot be assumed to be directly related to work–family conflict, analysis of various national surveys shows that female part-time workers in South Africa are more likely to live in households under

Table 8.2 Part-time wage employment (000s) by gender, South Africa 1995–2006

	1995	1999	2001	2006
Women				
Total wage employment	2,829	3,632	3,795	4,323
Part-time wage employment	279	552	573	583
Proportion of part-time wage employed who are women	51.5	58.1	60.1	65.4
Proportion of employed women who work part-time	9.9	15.2	15.1	13.6
Men				
Total wage employment	5,325	4,986	5,310	6,016
Part-time wage employment	263	397	380	309
Proportion who work part-time	4.9	8.0	7.2	5.2

Sources Muller (2008:21)

Table 8.3 Conditions of employment, part-time and full-time workers by gender, South Africa, 2001–2006

Proportion of all wage employed	Part-time				Full-time			
	2001		2006		2001		2006	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Written contract	0.35	0.31	0.45	0.43	0.58	0.49	0.74	0.71*
Temporary or casual work	0.49	0.51	0.55	0.51	0.14	0.16	0.20	0.21
Pension fund contribution	0.32	0.20*	0.22	0.15	0.56	0.47*	0.55	0.50*
Medical insurance	0.16	0.12*	0.11	0.07*	0.32	0.28*	0.26	0.25
Paid leave	0.33	0.29	0.25	0.29	0.63	0.59*	0.63	0.61
UIF contribution	0.37	0.30*	0.99	0.99	0.62	0.54*	0.99	0.99
Trade union member	0.25	0.13	0.13	0.07*	0.39	0.31*	0.33	0.29*

Sources Muller (2008:22)

which children (those aged 0–14 years) also live (Muller 2008), thus suggesting that work–family conflict may be a major factor.

From the perspective of equity, it is evident that women doing part-time-work face inferior conditions in comparison to men and women working fulltime (Table 8.3). For example, in 2006, only seven percent of women working part-time reported that they were receiving medical aid contributions from their employer, compared to 11 % of their male counterparts. Women working part-time were also less likely to have pension fund contributions and paid leave than women working full-time.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As in other parts of the world, South Africa has undergone various changes in the workplace that have, in a way, increased the burden of care faced by working women as they try to balance the demands of their work and domestic roles. In

response to these changes, many working families have had, over the years, to reallocate and redistribute family responsibilities in order to address the needs of their children. Possibly the most significant adaptation that has taken place is the increased role that fathers now have in looking after their children (Gottfried and Gottfried 2008 as cited by Paddey and Rousseau 2011). With the emergence of these so-called 'new' or 'modern' fathers, many fathers are "no longer mere breadwinners … but are increasingly aware of, and concerned about what they do as fathers and how they do it" (Richter et al. 2011:65). Swartz and Bhana (2009), for example, found that despite the myriad of challenges they face as they attempt to be involved in their children's lives, many young fathers in South Africa "do want to make the effort to remain involved as loving and present parents" (Swartz and Bhana 2009:18). Even in traditional patriarchal societies, the increasing role of the father and his involvement in child rearing activities has become common as noted in a study of husbands' perceptions of their changing roles in the dual-earner economy among South African white Afrikaans males (Smit 2000). The study found that there were significant shifts towards equality in the marriage as well as pronounced changes in Afrikaans men's involvement with rearing their children.

For the most part however, many South African men, particularly from the Black African racial group, are not actively involved in their children's upbringing. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations (Holborn and Eddy 2011), the proportion of fathers in South Africa who are "absent and living" increased from 42 % in 1996 to 48 % in 2009. Conversely, the proportion of those fathers who are present decreased from 49 % to 36 % in the same time period. When the data are disaggregated by race "African children under 15 years had the lowest proportion of present fathers in 2009 at 30 %, compared to 53 % for coloured children, and 85 % for Indians and 83 % for Whites" (Holborn and Eddy 2011:4). Drawing from other previous research on the subject, Holborn and Eddy argue that this "absent father' phenomenon can largely be attributed to poverty and high rates of unemployment in South Africa as a large number of fathers are financially unable to take responsibility for their children … The burden of failure as primary providers becomes particularly "intolerable for those who lack the capacity to generate enough income as uneducated and unskilled labourers" (Holborn and Eddy 2011:5). Regardless of the reasons, this situation means that a large number of mothers in South Africa are the sole careers and economic providers for their children.

The overall conclusion, therefore, is that work–family conflict is an aspect of the South Africa social and economic landscape that needs to be considered and addressed by both employees and employers. Given the fact that gainful employment is regarded as the single most important factor in combating poverty, policies designed to support parental employment and facilitate work–family balance play a key role in development. Moreover, since poverty rates have been found to be lower in dual-earner households, policies responsive to the realities of dual-earner families are needed to reduce poverty and make it easier for both parents to reconcile their work and family responsibilities (United Nations 2012). "Lack of attention to work–family reconciliation strategies negatively affects not

only the job quality, health and productivity of workers, but also their families and children" (United Nations 2012:17). It is therefore imperative to acknowledge the critical need for care in South Africa and to put in place to mechanisms to reduce gender asymmetries and help employees balance their roles as parents and employees. As Dancaster (2008) pointed out:

> We need to recognise the role of employees as caregivers through legislative provisions encompassing a range of leave circumstances, with the right to request flexible working arrangements. These measures are a means of valuing women as the main providers of this vital societal function and are necessary considerations if there is to be true equality of opportunity in the workplace

Although the rights of employees in South Africa are significantly acknowledged and advocated for with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act of 1997, work–family–work spill-over or conflict is not adequately addressed in current South African legislation. Paternity leave is not legislated and fathers are entitled to only three days family responsibility leave upon the birth of their child. Documents such as the Green Paper on Families (Department of Social Development 2011) are starting to acknowledge the critical role that families have in the development and mentoring of future employees and citizens. Nonetheless, the need for accessible, supportive and flexible work environments for employees with family commitments remains critical in ensuring the development of an equitable and just South African society for future generations.

Flexible leave provisions are based on the recognition that "the direct, short-term cost of granting leave to working parents is outweighed by economic and social gains in employment retention and human capital development" (United Nations 2012:7). In order to increase the chances of such policies being successful, Paddey and Rousseau (2011) emphasise the need to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate work–family policies based on a process of collaboration and consultation with employees about their individual needs regarding the balance between their work and family lives. The post-Fordism model of 'negotiated flexibility' which allows for active union participation, flexibility to meet employee needs and a wider worker involvement is worthy of consideration in this regard. Adopted by countries such as Holland and Sweden, this model allows for far greater incorporation of employee and family needs. This is in contrast to the post-Fordism model of 'capital orientated flexibility' which is market-driven, promotes privatisation, and in which unions have limited power and there is increased financial inequality between rich and poor and insecure employment Koch (as cited in Smith 2006).

Other recommendations include time management to allow employees to deal with work demands in a better and more timely manner; job crafting which involves changing the boundaries of the job to better fit the needs of the job incumbent (Ilies et al. 2012) and telecommuting (United Nations 2012). Barling (1990:236) also emphasises the value of adequate maternity and parental leave, child allowances, care for sick children and family members and assistance with transportation and housing. In order to address family-work conflict and the impact

of gender asymmetries, there is a need for alternative work schedules with the three kinds of flexibility advocated by Schneider and Waite (2005), namely: flexibility in scheduling, flexibility in the amount of time that individuals spend in working, and career flexibility with effective entry and exit points including leave, sabbaticals, and time out.

In closing, we hope that this chapter will stimulate further research on the role of gender asymmetries in work–family conflict and help advance the literature on this topic. Fox et al. (2011:716) describe work and family as 'greedy institutions', where changing demands, gender roles and identities require sufficient time and energy and accommodating workplaces. We have probably asked more questions about gender asymmetries than provided answers but hopefully through creating greater understanding of these challenges practical insights will evolve for assisting men and women to cope more effectively with gender demands and stresses that interfere with their family lives. Equal career precedence should be more strongly advocated for, whilst acknowledging that this scenario may require tradeoffs and sacrifices from both partners and even assess their commitment not only to their careers but also to their families. Whilst precedence may be predominantly economically driven, the influencing factors such as logistics, early socialisation, or personal ego needs cannot be underestimated (Gordon and Whelan-Berry 2005). Finally, we wish to highlight the importance of introducing policies that reduce the negative impact of patriarchal beliefs and practices and provide support for more egalitarian, gender congruent work and family roles for men and women.

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