

Worklife Balance

The Agency & Capabilities Gap

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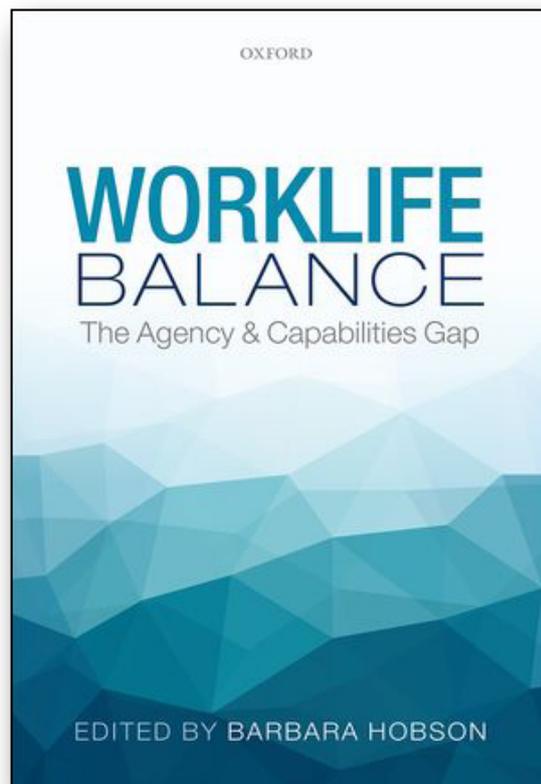
New rights and policies for worklife balance have emerged across welfare states, including rights to reduce hours, entitlements for care leaves and flexibility in working times and place. The agency and capabilities gap in worklife balance confronts why working parents do not claim these rights and use policy options: How do institutional settings influence the sense of entitlement to make claims for worklife balance? Which institutional contexts promote or weaken the potentialities for worklife balance and quality of life? What are the gendered dimensions in capabilities for worklife balance? Looking across Eastern and Western European societies and Japan and within work organizations, this book examines the tensions between rising expectations and norms for men and women to become earners and carers and the intensification of work demands alongside the insecurity in jobs and precarious work situations. Inspired by Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, we bring a dynamic framework to worklife balance research that asks not just what individuals do, but their scope of alternatives to make other choices. Employing comparative analysis and a range of methodologies, including large scale surveys, focus groups and semi-structured interviews designed for the capabilities approach, the authors in this book apply the capabilities framework in innovative ways: By incorporating the firm as a site for enhancing or weakening capabilities and by exploring the cognitive experiential aspects of worklife balance, we reveal how institutional/normative settings expand or contract individual agency for worklife balance and perceptions of the possibilities for change.

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