

Diversities at Work: a Life Course Perspective

Stream proposers:

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This stream will explore increasingly complex and intertwined diversities at work from a life course perspective. As social, cultural, and historical contexts transform over time, individual lives have become more fluid, challenging the standard life course trajectory. Women and men come in and out of work at different times and transitions and turning points in people's lives take on new meanings. By recognizing that the individual life course is structured by social influences along with the life choices individuals make in constrained situations, a life course lens emphasizes the bidirectional interaction between individual and social change over time. A key feature of this approach is its positioning of individuals as "people with biographies in the making" (Moen & Sweet, 2006), while also attending to the socially embedded nature of human agency and individual choice. As lives unfold over time, an individual's multiple life course trajectories (e.g. employment, family, care, and education trajectories) can and do occur in tandem at any given point in time and place. Thus we can not assume that workers hold similar aspirations or expectations from employment or careers over time. This increased complexity poses a new set of challenges in the workplace. A life course perspective is therefore important for understanding, diverse employment trajectories, the significance of different transitions and turning points in people's lives across time, and more broadly the dynamic nature of diversity. This stream invites papers that examine a number of possible interrelated themes addressing life course issues, including (but not restricted to):

- Transitions in and out of work (e.g. diverse forms of parenthood, care, education, illness, disability, retirement and redundancy)
- The challenges and experiences of a multi-generation workforce
- Impact of government and organizational policies to support life course transitions (e.g. flexi-security)
- Time, biographies, and identities across the life course
- Life course and human capital (e.g. highly skilled workers; vulnerable workers)
- Gender, leadership and diversity management across the life course

Questions addressed by this stream include, for example:

- How can the life course best be conceptualised within research and debates on diversity at work?
- How do the challenges to diversity, equality and inclusion change as workers move through the life course?
- How do diverse groups experience life course transitions and turning points?
- What are workplace assumptions about diversity and the life course?
- How does the recession impact on diverse groups at various life course phases
- Can leadership be flexible enough to support life course transitions and take account of biographies in the making?

Keywords: Life course, biographies, transitions, social change, generation

Publication plans: There will be a special issue titled “Community, Work and Family across the Life Course” in the international journal *Community, Work and Family* and a proposal for a further special issue in another journal.