**Stream # -**

**The work-life interface for workers with diverse and intersecting identities**

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Research on the interface between paid work and personal life is frequently criticized for its restricted sample base, with most of the literature focusing on the experiences of white, heterosexual mothers of young children, who are engaged in white collar work and living in nuclear family households in Western societies (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Bell, & Tatli, 2011). While organizational assumptions about the ‘ideal worker’ persist in forming the basis for the majority of working practices across the developed world (Lewis & Cooper, 2005), this ‘ideal work–life balancer’ characterized by extant research informs the way in which work–life issues are framed and studied. Work and family issues are also closely linked to different cultural norms and values which are different from dominant groups in the West (Mortazavi, Pedhiwala, Shafiro, & Hammer, 2009). The research methods usually employed in this field therefore contribute very little to our understanding of work-life issues among diverse employee groups, including immigrant populations, ethnic and religious minorities, workers with disabilities, and individuals with non-traditional family structures, such as members of the LGBT community.

In Voydanoff’s (2002) conceptual model of the work-life interface, adaptive strategies predict work and personal life characteristics, which in turn predict work, personal life, and individual outcomes. These outcomes are moderated by social categories and coping resources. Members of diverse employee groups can thus be expected to have a diverse range of adaptive strategies and resources that impact their experiences of the work-life interface. For example, Khokher and Beauregard’s (2014) study found that Pakistani expatriates in the United Kingdom made changes to their work and personal roles by resisting pressure from extended family members to have children, delaying childbearing, and reprioritizing life goals such as the completion of educational qualifications and the establishment of careers. Other research has established that individuals from cultures where intergenerational households are common are more likely to have access to familial assistance with caregiving responsibilities (Knodel & Chayovan, 2012). Linkages such as these between strands of diversity and employees’ work-life strategies and resources represent a fruitful avenue of research for a field that is only beginning to expand beyond its white, middle-class, Western origins.

In this stream, we are particularly interested in research that takes intersecting strands of diversity into account and explores the work-life experiences of minority, marginalized, and/or under-researched groups of workers. These may include transgender individuals, other members of the LGBT community, ethnic or religious minority employees, workers with disabilities, and men. We encourage new insights, new possibilities, and new reflections, inspired by interdisciplinary approaches. Both empirical and theoretical approaches focused on diverse cultural and international settings are welcome.

Potential research topics may include (but are not limited to):

* Co-worker or supervisor attitudes toward employees whose personal life commitments extend beyond caregiving responsibilities for dependent children. For example, are commitments to extended family members, religion, or community perceived by majority group members as less legitimate non-work activities and less deserving of access to organizational work-life balance practices?
* Fairness perceptions of access to and outcomes of organizational work-life balance practices. For example, research shows that men perceive a stigma at work associated with being an involved career at home (Rudman & Mescher, 2013) and that their use of organizational family-friendly initiatives can be seen as subject to question or less than legitimate (Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, & Spikes, 2012). To what extent do organizational practices respond to the work-life needs of a diverse workforce? Who benefits the most from available practices, and what are the repercussions for organizational members who do not benefit?
* Boundary management strategies used by individuals who try to keep their work identities distinct from their non-work identities. For example, workers with 'invisible' disabilities or members of the LGBT community may not disclose these aspects of their identity in the workplace in order to avoid discrimination or changed perceptions of their capability and professionalism. How do they manage the segmentation of work and non-work activities, and what are some of the outcomes of this segmentation?
* Work-life balance or enrichment experiences of employees who belong to minority groups. For example, minority status is usually considered a negative factor that can potentially generate work-life conflict via increased work demands such as discrimination and stereotyped expectations of others. In addition to these increased work demands, are there additional resources associated with minority identities that can contribute to performance at work or in one’s personal life?
* Social and organizational policies necessary to address the “triple agenda”: enhancing employee work-life balance, sustaining organizational effectiveness, and ensuring social justice. For example, what are best practices in this area? How can we enact a shift in focus from the responsibility of the individual to maintain work-life balance, to the responsibility of the organization? How can we most effectively challenge assumptions about merit and the “ideal worker” that underpin attitudes toward employees with non-work commitments and those using flexible working practices?

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