

SELF Project Line 4: Family Roles and Work-Life Balance

A crucial factor for gender equality, health and subjective well-being is how well people manage to balance and integrate **work and family domains** in their lives. Work and family are interdependent domains or roles with "permeable" and increasingly blurred boundaries (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). Balancing and integrating work and family domains has been studied predominantly as an issue of personal agency in the context of given resources and demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Tan et al., 2018). It has been shown that the experience of work-family conflict is context dependent and that societal context, public policies, norms and values are intersecting with organizational cultures and daily practices, indicating a high degree of interdependence of the self (Drobníč & Guillén, 2011; Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014). A number of scholars, however, argue that individuals' strategies in terms of role integration vs. segmentation, personal qualities and enactment of identities (independent self) adjudicate upon how successfully employees manage and negotiate conflicting work and family activities in order to attain work-life balance and subjective well-being (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). Furthermore, role salience also seems to have an effect on work-family interface and well-being (Noor, 2004).

However, the impact of broader societal contexts on the emergence and on **differential salience of family- and work-roles** has been largely unexplored empirically in intercultural contexts. The salience of the role as a mother, father, spouse, or employee might change through direct interaction (role sending and role receiving) in the family or work life, but also through other social interactions, the impact of social policy or cultural conventions (Zschucke et al., 2016). In a dynamic perspective over time, there is likely to be an interrelation and a mutual impact between the salience of role identification and work-family conflict. A crucial underlying determinant for individual changes in role salience through interaction is the degree of interdependent or independent self-construal of the individual. Projects in this research area aim at linking various theoretical approaches (e.g., CCAM, Lippke, 2014) at different levels across disciplines (sociology, psychology, gerontology, management studies), and at contributing to fully integrative and comprehensive theoretical accounts that can guide work-family research.

Dissertation topics in this research area also challenge methodological approaches in the work-life research field. Existing qualitative studies often do not reach the institutional level and are rarely comparative. Quantitative measures are only indirect measures of agency and survey data often lack the required information. A novel framework could be implemented in an **agent-based model**, where individuals forming a society would be assigned heterogeneous characteristics, matching demographic data with regard to, e.g., gender and age. The model could show how small individual differences in the individual modes of adjusting role salience can lead to substantial differences on the macro-level, and identify driving forces behind differences in role salience among population groups.

Possible dissertation projects on family roles and work-life balance:

- Do blurred boundaries between work and private life matter? Role identification and perceptions of work-family conflict in transition.

- How do differences in work and family role salience emerge in social interaction and work-family conflict?
- Self-regulation in terms of work/non-work balance: Are individuals and groups affected differently across countries and under new social policies?

Potential supervisors:

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