

# Families, Work and Community in a 24/7 Society: An HBSE Module

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**Brief Abstract:** This poster presents resources for an HBSE module addressing Work-family Studies content. We provide a rationale for including work-family theory and research in HBSE courses, cover major theoretical frameworks, outline the empirical base, consider the limitations of current work-life knowledge, and provide work-family teaching resources for instructors.

## WHY INCLUDE WORK-LIFE IN HBSE CURRICULA?

- Understanding of the micro and macro linkages between the workplace and the family will allow social workers to gain insight into the barriers their clients face in integrating paid work and family caregiving responsibilities.
- Knowledge of work-family theory and practice will better prepare social workers to serve adults, children, and families by allowing them to better negotiate the work-life boundaries affecting their clients' lives.
- Awareness of work-family theory will prepare social workers to engage with various community-based stakeholders such as the workplace, human resource organizations, schools, mental health providers, child care providers, and social service organizations to gain needed resources for clients.

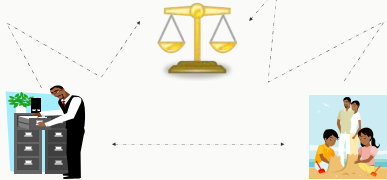
## THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Three major theoretical approaches that explain work-family interactions are presented in the module:

**CONFLICT AND SPILLOVER THEORIES** examine influences of work and family domains on each other exploring concepts such as inter-role conflict, positive and negative effects of spillover from one domain to the other (Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Kirchmeyer, 1993).

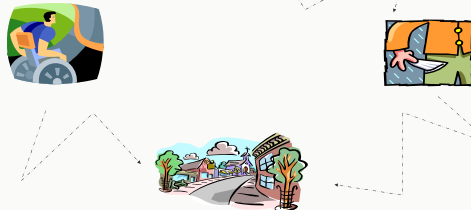
**BORDER AND BOUNDARY THEORIES** establish the permeability of boundaries between work and other life domains paying particular attention to ways that these are negotiated (Clarke, 2000; Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000).

**FIT AND INTEGRATION THEORIES** consider the adaptive strategies people use to achieve a successful blending of work and family life (Barnett, 1998; Lewis, Rappoport & Gables, 2003).



## EMPIRICAL BASE

- Multidisciplinary body of research spanning over 25 years stimulated by the influx of women in unprecedented numbers into the paid labor force during the 1970's and 1980's (Smolensky & Gootman, 2003).
- Work-life scholars have investigated demographic, social-cultural and economic changes in both the home and the workplace.
- Numerous studies have examined the intersection between paid work and non-work opportunities, roles and responsibilities within the family (Pitt-Catsoupes et al., 2006).
- Most recently, the domain of the community has been included as a context that both the workplace and family draw on for resources (Voydanoff, 2004).
- Current qualitative research has captured the lived experiences of the employed caregiver, who seeks support from community resources (Bookman, 2004).
- Major findings have demonstrated that strategies used by both employers and family members can produce a better fit between work and family responsibilities which improve work-life integration.



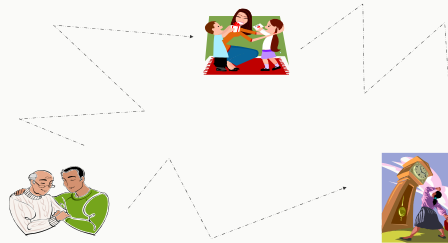
## LIMITATIONS

- Initial work-family studies have focused almost exclusively on understanding how middle-class dual-earner couples responded to shifting gender roles in the home and workplace.
- Research about the experiences and needs of unemployed, underemployed, and working poor parents has been slower to emerge (Bromet, Dew & Parkinson, 1990; Swanberg, Pitt-Catsoupes & Drescher-Burke, 2005)
- Issues of diversity in work-life integration have not yet become a research and practice priority and this needs to be addressed with the increasing ethnically-diverse workforce (Roehling, Jarvis & Swope, 2005), and employees with caregiving responsibilities for those with disabilities (Rosenzweig, Brennan, & Ogilvie, 2002).

## WORK-LIFE HBSE MODULE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the HBSE Work-life module students will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the three major theoretical approaches explaining the intersections of work and family domains, and be able to apply these theories to vulnerable populations
2. Discuss key research findings on work-life integration regarding:
  - a. trends in labor force participation of persons with family caregiving responsibilities.
  - b. the intersection between work and family opportunities, roles, and responsibilities.
  - c. the importance of community resources for employed caregivers.
  - d. the strategies that employers and family members use to better integrate work and family responsibilities.
3. Describe limitations of work-life empirical investigations, including:
  - a. the lack of representation of the experiences of the underemployed, unemployed, and working poor.
  - b. the absence of attention to the work-life experiences of persons from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
  - c. the scarcity of studies regarding workers with disabilities or employed caregivers of persons with disabilities.
4. Apply work-life theory and research findings to social work practice in a variety of settings including:
  - a. health,
  - b. mental health,
  - c. child and family services,
  - d. services to older adults, and
  - e. disability services.



## TEACHING RESOURCES

1. **Work and Families Institute**  
A non profit center for research that provides data to inform decision-making on the changing workforce, family and community  
  
Publications and resources addressing work-life, fatherhood, families and communities, development of young children, parenting and education can be found at:  
<http://www.familiesandwork.org/index.html>  
  
\*Available for purchase: Sweet S., Pitt-Catsoupes, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Teaching Work and Family: Strategies, activities and Syllabi*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association
2. **Sloan Work and Family Research Network**  
A network designed to support research and teaching, promote best practices at the workplace and inform state policy on issues that affect the lives of working families  
<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu>  
  
\*Check out the Sloan Encyclopedia for relevant concepts and research
3. **Center for Work-life Law**  
A national research and advocacy center at UC Hastings College of Law with a mission to eliminate discrimination against employees due to their status as caregivers, and using the legal system to prevent discrimination.  
<http://www.uchastings.edu/?pid=36C4>  
  
\*Check out the publications and reports for up to date research and case law on caregiver discrimination
4. **Labor Project for Working Families**  
A national, non-profit advocacy and policy organization providing technical assistance, resources, and education to unions and union members on family issues in the workplace including: child care, elder care, family leave, work hours, quality of life  
<http://www.working-families.org/>
5. **Family Support America**  
A national organization that provides materials and assistance, advocacy for family policies and system changes to develop parent leadership in communities and state nationwide  
<http://www.familysupportamerica.org>
6. **Research & Training Center on Family Support & Children's Mental Health**  
Family focused children's mental health research, resources and publications relevant for parents, service-providers, researchers and policy-makers  
<http://www.rtc.pdx.edu>  
  
• Check out the Work-life Project for information about working caregivers with children who have mental health disabilities

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