Building Thriving Workforces from the Top Down: A Call and Research Agenda for Human Resource Management to Proactively Support Employee Well-Being

Allison S. Gabriel
University of Arizona

David F. Arena Jr.
University of Texas at Arlington

Charles Calderwood
Virginia Tech

Joanna Tochman Campbell
University of Cincinnati

Nitya Chawla
Texas A&M University

Emily S. Corwin
Bentley University

Maira E. Ezerins
University of Arkansas

Kristen P. Jones
University of Memphis

Anthony C. Klotz
University College London

Jeffrey D. Larson
University of Arizona

Angelica Leigh
Duke University

Rebecca L. MacGowan
University of Arkansas

Christina M. Moran
MarshBerry

Devalina Nag
University of San Diego

Kristie M. Rogers
Marquette University

Christopher C. Rosen
University of Arkansas

Katina B. Sawyer
University of Arizona

Kristen M. Shockley
University of Georgia

Lauren S. Simon
University of Arkansas

Kate P. Zipay
Purdue University

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Correspondence should be addressed to Allison S. Gabriel, Department of Management and Organizations, Eller College of Management, University of Arizona; asgabriel@arizona.edu.

Author Biographies
(In Alphabetical Order)

David F. Arena Jr. is an Assistant Professor of Management in the University of Texas at Arlington Business School. He received his Ph.D. in Management from the University of Memphis. His research interests center on workplace diversity and inclusion, dynamically stigmatized identities, and identity management at work.

Charles Calderwood is an Assistant Professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Virginia Tech. He received his Ph.D. in Psychology from the Georgia Institute of Technology. His research focuses on job stress and work recovery, with a recent emphasis on commuting experiences and employee health behaviors.

Joanna Tochman Campbell is an Associate Professor of Management at the Carl H. Lindner College of Business at the University of Cincinnati. She holds a Ph.D. in Strategic Management from Texas A&M University. Joanna's research focuses on top executive characteristics, stakeholder strategy, and configurational theorizing and methods of analysis.

Nitya Chawla is an Assistant Professor of Management at Texas A&M University. She received her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Arizona. Her research interests include issues tied to gender in the workplace, the work non-work interface, and job search experiences.

Emily S. Corwin is an Assistant Professor of Management at Bentley University. She received her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Arkansas. Her research focuses on workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion (including social class and gender), interpersonal interactions, and emotions at work.

Maira E. Ezerins is a doctoral student in the Department of Management at the University of Arkansas. She received her M.A. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management and M.B.A. from Appalachian State University. Her research focuses on diversity and inclusion, disability, occupational health, and deviance.

Allison S. Gabriel is the McClelland Professor of Management and Organizations and University Distinguished Scholar in the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management. She received her Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron. Her research focuses on emotions, interpersonal processes, and well-being at work and home.

Kristen P. Jones is an Associate Professor of Management in the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis. She earned her Ph.D. from George Mason University after completing her B.A. at the University of Virginia. Her research focuses on biases that unfairly disadvantage socially marginalized employees.

Anthony C. Klotz is an Associate Professor in the School of Management at University College London. His research focuses on the nature, causes, and consequences of employee resignation styles, why and when employees balance their good and bad deeds at work, and how contact with the natural world affects employees.

Jeffrey D. Larson is a Management and Organizations Ph.D. student at the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management. His research interests include workplace compassion, sensemaking, and organizational routines.

Angelica Leigh is an Assistant Professor of Management and Organizations at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School. Her research sits at the intersection of diversity and emotions in organizations.

Rebecca L. MacGowan is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas. She received her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Arizona. Her research program addresses recovery and well-being, the work-family interface, and job search experiences.

Christina M. Moran is a licensed Industrial/Organizational Psychologist and works for the international financial consulting firm, MarshBerry. Her career has spanned consulting, business leadership, academia, performance domains, and nonprofit direction. She obtained her Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from the University of Akron and her B.S. from John Carroll University.

Devalina Nag is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Knauss School of Business at the University of San Diego. She obtained her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Memphis. Her research focuses on the manifestation and implications of contemporary social disadvantage for employees with stigmatized identities.

Kristie M. Rogers is an Associate Professor of Management in the College of Business Administration at Marquette University. She received her Ph.D. in organizational behavior from Arizona State University. Kristie's research focuses on identity processes at work, and the factors that potentially facilitate (e.g., respect) and challenge (e.g., ambivalence) identity growth and transformation.

Christopher C. Rosen is a Professor and John H. Tyson Chair in Business Management in the Department of Management at the University of Arkansas' Sam M. Walton College of Business. His research interests include employee well-being, motivation, and workplace politics.

Katina B. Sawyer is an Associate Professor of Management and Organizations in the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management. She holds a dual-Ph.D. in Psychology and Women's Studies from Pennsylvania State University. Katina studies diversity and inclusion at work, and positive organizational solutions for achieving healthier, more equitable organizations.

Kristen M. Shockley is an Associate Professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology at the University of Georgia. Her main area of research focuses on understanding the intersection of employees' work and family lives, with an emphasis on organizational initiatives, dual-earner couples, and health implications.

Lauren S. Simon is a Professor of Management in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas. She received her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Florida. Her research focuses on leader-employee relationships, well-being, diversity and inclusion, and career success.

Kate P. Zipay is an assistant professor in the Krannert School of Management at Purdue University. She received her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Georgia. Her research interests include the leisure and the work–life interface, complex emotions at work, and contemporary issues of organizational justice.

Abstract

Organizational researchers studying well-being—as well as organizations themselves—often place much of the burden on employees to manage and preserve their own well-being. Missing from this discussion is how—from a human resources management (HRM) perspective—organizations and managers can directly and positively shape the well-being of their employees. We use this review to paint a picture of what organizations *could* be like if they valued people holistically and embraced the full experience of employees' lives to promote well-being at work. In so doing, we tackle five challenges that managers may have to help their employees navigate, but to date have received more limited empirical and theoretical attention from an HRM perspective: (1) recovery at work; (2) women's health; (3) concealable stigmas; (4) caregiving; and (5) coping with socio-environmental jolts. In each section, we highlight how past research has treated managerial or organizational support on these topics, and pave the way for where research needs to advance from an HRM perspective. We conclude with ideas for tackling these issues methodologically and analytically, highlighting ways to recruit and support more vulnerable samples that are encapsulated within these topics, as well as analytic approaches to study employee experiences more holistically. In sum, our review represents a call for organizations to now—more than ever—build thriving organizations.

Keywords: well-being; recovery; women's health; stigmas; caregiving; social shocks

What does it mean to study and promote well-being at work? From a theoretical standpoint, common models used to explore this very question often look to employees' immediate work environments, identifying the various job demands or stressors within work contexts that employees are exposed to with some regularity (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Crawford et al., 2010; Karasek Jr., 1979). Other frameworks have also focused on how demands from employees' home lives may spill into the work environment (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), suggesting that employees need to segment home-related stressors from the work environment in an effort to not hinder work-related well-being. In the event that work and home stressors cannot be kept separate, research has emphasized that employees should take breaks (e.g., Trougakos et al., 2008) or try to recover at home after working hours (e.g., Sonnentag, 2001; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007), highlighting the idea that employees should be the ones primarily responsible for their well-being experiences.

We do not necessarily disagree with the idea that employees *should* feel control and autonomy over how they promote their well-being, and craft their work and nonwork lives in ways to maximize positive outcomes. Yet, we also recognize that this puts a significant burden on employees to be the primary stewards of their well-being at work. And it is likely impossible that some of the current recommendations for what employees should do to manage their well-being will actually manifest into reality. It is not possible, for instance, for employees to remove all job demands that are hindering or goal-thwarting from their environments, nor is it possible—particularly in a world in which work and nonwork domains are more blended than ever in an era of remote work—to completely stop demands from one domain from spilling into the other (i.e., work-to-nonwork or nonwork-to-work). As such, even when employees want to maintain and improve their well-being, they may find themselves in scenarios where it simply is not possible.

In our view, such a dilemma that employees likely experience highlights the invaluable role that organizations—both managers and organizational leaders, as well as human resources (HR) policies and practices that are created—can play in *proactively*, rather than reactively, managing employee well-being. But, to be truly proactive, it is not just helping employees manage the day-to-day job demands they experience or making sure that breaks are provided on the clock to preserve well-being. Rather, in the era of “The Great Resignation” (Klotz, 2021) induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and employees truly thinking about what they seek from work, we suggest that organizations need to better consider the complex challenges employees are facing when it comes to their well-being both inside *and* outside the boundaries of the organization. In viewing employees holistically across work and nonwork role domains, we make the case that there are five key areas that organizations can respond to in making work better—(1) recovery at work; (2) women’s health; (3) concealable stigmas (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or questioning identities [LGBTQ+]; autism; social class); (4) caregiving (e.g., childcare, adult care, eldercare); and (5) coping with socio-environmental jolts. Each of these areas likely span role domains, making their effects particularly pronounced. Further, they likely carry “hidden” challenges for employees that may fall under the radar for organizations. For example, employees may not want to disclose that they have worked well beyond the point of burnout inhibiting their recovery; women may hide challenges with menstruation, motherhood, and menopause; employees with concealable stigmas may fear disclosure; caregivers may not want to disclose their burdens out of fear of being viewed as a less committed (e.g., Acker, 1990); and employees coping with socio-environmental jolts may not know who to turn to in an effort to disclose their fears about broader societal situations.

Of note, organizations are recognizing that to promote employee well-being means to

support these challenges from the top down. In the area of women's health and caregiving, the technology firm UKG (UKG, n.d.) stands out. In a survey evaluating opportunities, schedule and flexibility, enrichment (through learning and mentoring programs), family-friendly policies, and workplace culture, UKG employees rated the organization high across these areas. Bank of America represents another standout organization (The Best Place for Kids, 2020)—at a time where the supply of for-hire caregivers has experienced a shortage just like many other areas of the labor market (Kamenetz, 2021), Bank of America has strived to keep a focus on the criticality of caregiving support in a way that is manageable and can remove the "double-duty" expectations put on employees who also have caregiving obligations (i.e., having a "work shift" and a "home shift"). And, in the area of helping employees with concealable stigmas, Slack—a technology organization that enables virtual interactions—has taken steps to ensure its policies are not just inclusive but also welcoming to employees of various identities (Schiavo, 2021). Specifically, Slack has developed programs for individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or questioning (LGBTQ+), formerly incarcerated people, and other groups of individuals who are often marginalized (Careers at Slack, n.d.), supporting the philosophies that authenticity, productivity, and happiness at work are overlapping (Fosselin & Duffy, 2019).

Assuming—and hoping—that more organizations see the need to tackle these challenges that can affect employee well-being, in this review, we present our ideas for what HRM scholars and organizations can do to advance a wave of HRM practices focused on proactively managing employee well-being. To do so, we have joined together scholars specializing in each domain, capturing leading voices associated with each topic to pave paths forward. This includes Gabriel, MacGowan, and Zipay[1] discussing the need to expand recovery at work to include a focus on

[1] Authors are listed alphabetically for each section, signifying equal contributions and highlighting the expertise of each member of the author team. Importantly, we view each section in this piece as representing distinct voices.

boundaries, breaks, and rest; Gabriel, Jones, and Nag talking about the ways we need to capture all elements of women's health—particularly those that are more extreme and taboo (e.g., endometriosis; conception; postpartum mental health; menopause); Arena Jr., Corwin, Ezerins, and Simon calling for organizations to better support the "unseen" in their employees at work who may be managing concealable stigmas; Calderwood, Larson, Rosen, and Shockley highlighting the manifestations of caregiving demands that can go beyond childcare; and Chawla, Klotz, Leigh, and Rogers presenting a framework that explicates how organizations must consider socio-environmental jolts *and* employees' social identities at work. Throughout, we provide organizational examples, including those listed in the introduction here, to illustrate how organizations are already tackling these challenges (Moran). To conclude, we present considerations for HRM scholars wishing to study these topics—from how to best access and support vulnerable populations who may be studied (Sawyer) to ways that scholars can holistically assess experiences in a person-centered manner (Campbell, Gabriel). In sum, it is our intention for this review to raise more questions than answers to advance needed scholarship and push practitioners to better explore how they can help employees thrive in organizations.

Recovery at Work: A Call to Enforce Boundaries, Breaks, and a Focus on Rest

Now more than ever, organizations are increasingly aware of the necessity of recovery from work. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was well-established that employees face a myriad of daily job demands that can fuel burnout, disengagement, and ill-being (Bennett et al., 2018; Sonnentag, 2001; Sonnentag et al., 2017). Seminal work by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) explains that employees need to have one of several recovery experiences to restore lost mental and physical resources—*psychological detachment* (i.e., mental and physical separation from work-related thoughts), *relaxation* (i.e., low physical and/or mental activation after work),

mastery (i.e., learning new skills and/or engaging in challenging experiences), and *control* (i.e., having decision latitude over how post-work time is spent). Building on these ideas, scholars have predominately focused on ways that employees can enact recovery—typically after work hours (e.g., Bennett et al., 2016; Chawla et al., 2020; Sonnentag et al., 2010, 2012) or during work breaks (e.g., Bennett et al., 2020; Trougakos et al., 2008, 2014)—assuming that employees who recover are better equipped to return to work refreshed and ready to reattach to their tasks.

Like many topics in the organizational sciences, recovery researchers have primarily focused on what employees themselves can do to enhance recovery from work (Bennett et al., 2020; Chawla et al., 2020; Sonnentag, 2001, 2003; Sonnentag et al., 2012). Take, for instance, the following practical implications from Chawla et al. (2020), who found that daily profiles of high levels of all four recovery experiences—and particularly mastery experiences—were best for well-being: "Our results therefore imply that employees should seek opportunities to promote mastery after hours… Not only will this aid employees in their well-being the next day at work (e.g., lower emotional exhaustion, higher engagement), but it will yield increased levels of proactivity and helping behaviors" (p. 34). Such sentiments are quite common in recovery scholarship, offering suggestions for what employees may do after hours to preserve their well-being and replenish resources that were lost (e.g., Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Yet, Chawla et al. (2020) also offered the following guidance to organizations: "Interestingly, it may be possible for organizations to help facilitate mastery; Google and Intel offer community gardens that give employees an opportunity to engage in mastery activities (Muldoon, 2010), which could be encouraged postwork" (p. 34). Indeed, despite the dominant focus on employees as the agent of recovery, it seems organizations can—and should—create and support greater opportunities for recovery. This idea nudges us to consider *who is responsible for employee recovery?* And, *what*

would it look like if we shifted greater responsibility to managers and organizations?

To date, there has been a rather limited view of how managers and organizational HRM practices contribute to or hinder employee recovery. Recognizing this, Bennett et al. (2016) noted that "[t]he role of supervisors in the recovery process has been largely ignored despite the significant role they can play in creating demands that workers face" (p. 1644). Because of this, Bennett et al. (2016) developed a measure of supervisor support for recovery (SSR), capturing the extent to which supervisors establish norms and expectations surrounding the acceptability of recovery at the conclusion of the workday. When SSR is higher, employees should feel comfortable engaging in recovery; in contrast, when SSR is low, employees may believe that excessive working is expected and socially normative. Just as supervisors can foster healthy recovery, supervisors can also foster unhealthy habits after work, particularly in the age of electronic communication (e.g., emails, texts). Barber and Santuzzi (2015), for example, coined the idea of workplace telepressure—the extent to which employees feel strong urges to respond to emails or texts after hours—with telepressure relating positively to ill-being and absenteeism at work (see also: Butts et al., 2015; Giurge & Bohns, 2021). Beyond the effects of supervisors, there has been empirical work surrounding vacations, an important recovery-oriented benefit that may or may not be provided by organizations (e.g., Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Kühnel & Sonnentag, 2011). Focusing, in part, on organizational interference during vacations, Fritz and Sonnentag (2006) found that organizations sometimes undermine recovery, with work hassles during vacation contributing to higher levels of employee exhaustion post-vacation. Similarly, higher levels of post-vacation workload also contributed to exhaustion upon return and two weeks later. Kühnel and Sonnentag (2011) also found that the "fade out" of vacation recovery on both burnout and work engagement sped up for those with more job demands post-vacation.

While the focus on managers and organizational HRM practices on recovery remains scant, we see this not as a signal that these questions are unimportant but rather, that this is an area in dire need of attention. This need is amplified by the new complexities instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, COVID-19 has put more employees into remote or hybrid work arrangements (e.g., Shockley et al., 2021). Yet, existing recovery research largely relies on theoretical ideas that separate work and nonwork (Bennett et al., 2018). Stated differently, it is generally assumed that most employees can detach from their work *physically*, with this physical separation helping facilitate the mental detachment from work-related demands (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). As such, scholars need to reconsider what recovery looks like when workdays are no longer demarcated by clear physical and/or temporal boundaries. And, more generally, answer the question of what organizations can do to more effectively and intentionally facilitate recovery—particularly in the era of "The Great Resignation" and burnout (Klotz, 2021).

The Role of Organizations and Managers in Enacting Boundaries

An initial step in answering these questions involves scholars and organizations recognizing both the accesses and barriers to effective recovery. When employees end their workday, organizations should not assume that employees can immediately and effectively engage in healthy recovery. Described as the "second shift" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989), post work hours often require individuals to manage domestic demands (e.g., running errands, childcare). Further, individuals who experience a high level of demands at work and attend to similarly high level of demands at home are likely to experience work-family conflict as demands from each domain interfere with the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Yang et al., 2000). When work-family conflict is high, time devoted to one domain interferes with the ability to devote time to the other domain. Thus, an individual who has an exceptional load may

dedicate non-work time to completing work tasks, thereby further cutting into time that might otherwise be used to recover from work and vice versa (Jansen et al., 2003).

Importantly, in addition to limiting recovery from workplace strain, high levels of demands from the work and home domains highlights the potential need for *domain specific* recovery (e.g., MacGowan et al., *in press*). As noted above, even under ideal conditions with limited conflict, employees are expected to manage multiple demands that may disrupt their ability to engage in recovery. These effects may be exacerbated by working from home, as work and family become blended together, generating daily time, strain, and behavioral conflicts. Given the adverse impact of the presence of demands from work and family on recovery, organizations play an instrumental role in helping or hindering employees' recovery. As organizations continue to build policies and practices to support employee recovery, they should focus not only on ensuring recovery in general, but also on facilitating domain specific recovery (e.g., recover from work *and* home demands independently), particularly given that demands in one domain can hamper effective recovery in the other domain (e.g., Nohe et al., 2015).

To this end, organizations that acknowledge the complexities and difficulties of recovery will be better positioned to develop policies and practices that remove these barriers, enable employees to successfully recover from work and, in turn, improve employee well-being and performance. Organizations may facilitate recovery across domains by limiting the extent to which they cannibalize employees' time and focus during off-work hours. Organizations and supervisors often (perhaps unintentionally) undermine and inhibit recovery by creating pressure to work (such as via after hours emails; e.g., Barber & Santuzzi, 2015) or reminders to get "things done" before the next workday (e.g., Perlow, 1998). In response, several countries have begun to pass legislation related to the "right to disconnect" (Corrigan, 2021). Notably, this is not

a common practice in many parts of the world. Still, many organizations would benefit from adopting a similar policy given that reducing work communication after working hours has meaningful positive benefits for employee well-being (Perlow, 2012).

Establishing a "right to disconnect" would also likely stimulate recovery from work *and* from domestic demands. Employees who have the option to (not) respond to work demands after hours should have enhanced perceptions of SSR, as well as perceptions of control over work and domestic affairs that can enhance recovery experiences (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Further, avoiding work-related communication during non-work hours could facilitate all four recovery experiences, as individuals are able to psychologically detach and relax while assuming a sense of control over their down time, enabling them to engage in mastery activities. Supporting this notion, research by Calderwood et al. (2021) found that sole working mothers who perceived themselves as having control over their time were more likely to engage in exercise. Taken together, organizations should build policies and practices that ensure that employees do not receive workplace communication outside of working hours to further promote recovery.

The Role of Organizations and Managers in Enacting Breaks

Beyond removing barriers that prevent employees from fully recovering from work, organizations can provide access to healthy recovery *during* the workday. Recent research has begun to explore the benefits of microbreaks at work—brief, autonomous (i.e., non-sanctioned) breaks taken by employees between tasks (Fritz et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2017). Microbreaks can facilitate psychological detachment and relaxation (Bennett et al., 2020), mitigate end-of-day negative affective (Kim et al., 2017), and promote daily performance via increased positive affect (Kim et al., 2018). Moreover, microbreaks may also mitigate the negative effects of "second shift" demands by giving employees an opportunity to recover during the workday so

that they leave work more refreshed and ready to tackle their post-work obligations. Microbreaks may also be particularly helpful for employees who are working from home as they are likely to experience greater work-to-family and family-to-work conflict (Eddelston & Muli, 2015) that is linked to higher levels of strain and distress (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Noeh et al., 2015).

In order to facilitate microbreaks at work, organizations and organizational leaders should encourage employees to take breaks between tasks during the workday. This approach allows employees to retain their autonomy in deciding when and how to take microbreaks—a critical factor for microbreak effectiveness (Trougakos et al., 2014). By sanctioning and supporting microbreaks, organizations and organizational leaders increase employees' propensity to do so (e.g., Bennet et al., 2016) signaling that such behavior is healthy and beneficial (rather than being perceived as slacking; Kim et al., 2018). Organizations can further support recovery by providing resources that encourage microbreaks. For example, modern offices are now being designed to include community spaces for coworkers to socialize, fitness centers, and gardens, among other amenities, that may help encourage employees to take microbreaks (Levere, 2021). Organizations that do not have the luxury of new facilities may want to consider the adjustment of their physical space to accommodate and facilitate microbreaks by incorporating areas for employees to step away from their desk and psychologically detach for a few minutes. For employees working from home, organizations should consider the provision of applications for short self-guided meditations or short at-home mastery and physical activity classes.

Another way organizations may facilitate access to recovery is via the use of flexible hours or by implementing a condensed work week. Flexible working hours permits employees to exhibit autonomy regarding when to begin and end working hours (Golembiewski & Proehl, 1978). Importantly, flexible working hours are useful for reducing work-to-family conflict and

unpaid overtime (Hornung et al., 2008) and may facilitate work-to-family enrichment, that in turn increases job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions (McNall et al., 2010). Similar effects are found for the compressed, four-day work week (Baltes et al., 1999). Given these effects, flexible work schedules are likely to facilitate employee recovery by giving individuals greater control over the organization of their schedules and allowing them to successfully manage work demands and opportunities for recovery. Interestingly, although flexible and compressed working arrangements have continued to increase over the past several decades, these arrangements are predominantly informal, and are often negotiated by individual employees with their managers or HR department (Hornung et al., 2008; Woods, 2020).

In order to enable employee recovery from work and home domains, organizations should take steps to formalize flexible work arrangements and/or compressed work weeks. The onset of COVID-19 has increased the pace at which these types of work arrangements have been adopted (Zeidner, 2020). However, it would be beneficial for organizations to create clear guidelines for these policies to enhance equity and facilitate recovery opportunities. Both the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have put together guides discussing how organizations can facilitate the transition to flexible and compressed schedules (ILO, 2021; SHRM, 2021a). Further, SHRM has developed templates for formal policies related to flexible schedules and compressed workweeks that are available online for companies to adopt (SHRM, 2021b, 2021c). Importantly, both organizations highlight the benefits of flexible and compressed schedules for working parents, noting that flexible and compressed work arrangements aid schedule management (ILO, 2021; SHRM, 2021a). By adopting these policies, organizations empower employees in balancing their work and home demands facilitating the opportunity for recovery by reducing work-to-family conflict.

Future Directions in HRM Promoting Employee Thriving and Rest

Importantly, the above recommendations are built on the assumption that work inherently necessitates recovery. This is a reasonable assumption, as work requires effort to accomplish tasks and expending effort uses up resources that eventually need to be restored to continue optimal functioning (Demerouti et al., 2009). Yet, although most jobs involve depleting conditions and demands (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), they can be structured to mitigate these costs and simultaneously provide opportunities for learning, growth, and sustained energy within the bounds of the work (Spreitzer et al., 2012). For example, work by Spreitzer et al. (2012) highlights the value of employees designing and implementing routines to renew themselves within their work, build intermittent rests into work, and maintain a practice of learning as three tools to enhance thriving and mitigate the need for after-work recovery. Their research suggests that work itself can be designed in a way that employees do not always *need* significant recovery after working hours—specifically, if daily tasks are approached in a way that prioritizes thriving.

This idea reenforces the value of autonomy and flexibility in how and where work gets done, meaningfully shifting employees' need for recovery (Trougakos et al., 2014). Not only would this allow for recovery within the workday as previously highlighted, but this would also allow for employees to engage in job crafting—actively changing formal job designs to better fit employees' unique needs and passions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For example, an employee that finds collaborating with others energizing might engage in job crafting to reconfigure tasks to coordinate with others to generate—rather than deplete—psychological resources. Further, not only can employees and their leaders craft energizing tasks into their jobs, but they can also redesign work to craft depleting tasks—those that generate the greatest need for recovery—*out* of their work. In turn, employees would not require as much recovery during non-

work hours. HRM policies should build on this notion to support curating jobs that challenge the assumption that work needs recovery, and instead, prioritize designing energizing work.

Along these lines, future research should consider how work environments guided by HRM policies and organizational leaders can fuel energy that establishes a steady source of replenishment. For example, small interpersonal dynamics—such as opportunities to build high quality connections (Stephens et al., 2012) or simply engage in small talk (Methot et al., 2021)—has been shown to uplift employees and replenish psychological resources. Inversely, it would be beneficial to understand how HRM policies and practices can be established to structurally limit exposure to unnecessary emotional burdens that deplete energy. For example, new trends in the popular press advise managers to create incentives for taking long lunches to connect with others, propose ideas of establishing norms for self-care within the workday, and build healthy lifestyle habits (Kohll, 2018). More research is needed to understand how such HRM practices can facilitate work-day recovery and limit the need for non-work recovery.

Finally, it is important to note that the focus on replenishing of resources via recovery often centers around practices that require employees and managers to "do something." In other words, greater emphasis is put on an *active* recovery process to restore resources such as exercise, socializing, mastery activities, and so forth (Sonnentag, 2001). Largely absent from this conversation is consideration of practices that emphasize the unique benefits of opting to "do nothing"—or more precisely, *rest*. Rest—inactivity marked by the interruption of physical and mental activity (Nurit & Michal, 2003)—is a type of passive recovery that generates relaxation via fully disconnecting not only from work, but also domestic demands, leisure pursuits, social obligations, and other forms of self-care. Although modern culture has slowly begun to adopt a greater appreciation for leisure as part of daily life, rest continues to carry a negative connotation

about time use, particularly in contrast to work (Nurit & Michal, 2003). Yet, the value of rest as well as its distinction from other types of recovery is well recognized in other fields—namely health and therapy (Crist, 2000)—as a distinct source of wellbeing. As HRM researchers and organizations better understand and support recovery from work, we believe rest is a missing and critical piece of the puzzle needed to better cultivate healthy and thriving workplaces. This is particularly the case for some of the other challenges we review, including women's health wherein women experience recurrent physical challenges over the entirety of their careers.

Women's Health at Work: A Call to Focus on Hidden Experiences of Womanhood

Based on data from The World Bank (2021), women comprise roughly 47.3% of the global workforce, earning 57% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees, and 52% of doctoral degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In fact, over the past decade, evidence has accumulated showing that greater numbers of women in organizations and greater representation of women in leadership positions tend to enhance organizational functioning and performance (Catalyst, 2011; Herring, 2009). Yet, it is our view that research lags in generating a bold, timely discussion of women's health at work, encompassing issues pertaining to "the three Ms" per Grandey and colleagues (2020)—menstruation, motherhood, and menopause.

In evaluating research on the three Ms, motherhood has continued to garner the most attention research, with scholars studying how women navigate disclosures associated with pregnancy (e.g., Jones, 2017; Little et al., 2015), organizational support (or lack thereof in the case of pregnancy stigma and discrimination) during pregnancy and reentry after parental leave (e.g., Hackney et al., 2021; Little & Masterson, 2021; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2019), the impact of interpersonal dynamics at work during pregnancy on postpartum health- and work-related outcomes (Jones et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021), and the experiences of new mothers

striving to balance work and breastfeeding (Gabriel et al., 2020). While important, it falls short in addressing the experiences of the many working women who are actively trying to conceive a child but have not yet experienced a healthy live birth. This includes women undergoing fertility treatments, as well as women who have become pregnant but suffered (sometimes repeated) miscarriages, often in silence while working. Further, since Grandey et al.'s (2020) review, we still lack organizational research associated with menstruation (as an exception, see: Motro et al., 2019), despite increased awareness about the necessity to reduce period/menstrual stigma and discrimination in the workplace (e.g., Martin, 2017; Savage, 2019). Likewise, we continue to know little about the effects of menopause at work, despite ideas presented by Grandey et al. (2020) that menopause can be particularly consequential for women later in their careers.

The Intersection of HRM and Motherhood

Beginning with ***motherhood***—the most studied of the three Ms—the good news is that it is possible for managers and organizations alike to positively influence the experiences of women during their pregnancies. On the whole, research has suggested that working mothers reap a variety of benefits from positive relationships with supervisors (Cheung, 2019; Little et al., 2017; Mäkelä, 2005; 2008; 2009). For instance, Cheung (2019) showed that having high-quality relationships with supervisors enhanced pregnant women's beliefs that their supervisors perceived them as competent, committed, and flexible. Similarly, Little et al. (2017) showed that the way a supervisor reacted to an employee disclosing her pregnancy had a lasting impact on the woman's perception of support from her supervisor. Specifically, expressions of excitement from supervisors immediately following pregnancy disclosure predicted an increase in women's perceptions of support from supervisors one-year post-disclosure. And, recent work further suggests that pregnant employees might be able to draw from the *simultaneous* receipt of

supervisor *and* coworker support to help them cope during pregnancy (Jones et al., 2021). Specifically, Jones and colleagues (2021) found that pregnant employees who felt supported by both coworkers *and* supervisors benefitted from the largest reductions in prenatal stress, which ultimately led to lower incidences of postpartum depression and shorter recovery times from birth-related injuries. Notably, women who felt supported by *either* coworkers *or* supervisors did not realize the same prenatal stress-reduction or postpartum health benefits. Therefore, at a minimum, this area of research suggests that supportive coworkers in combination with supportive supervisors may be critical for maximizing perinatal and antenatal maternal health.

That being said, recent evidence also provides an important caveat to the findings above by highlighting that all types of support are not uniformly positive in their impact on working mothers, and it is critical to consider how support is conveyed in order to ensure its effectiveness. Jones et al. (2020) found that pregnant women received different types of help or support from their coworkers: *work-enabling help*—support that equipped them with tools and resources to continue completing work tasks as they normally would, and *work-interfering help*—patronizing types of help that restricted a woman's ability to complete her tasks (i.e., a woman being removed from a high-profile assignment so that she could go home and rest). Interestingly, work-interfering help led to reduced work role self-efficacy, and in turn positively related to elevated intentions to quit the workforce nine months postpartum. Thus, some gestures of support, despite good intentions, may lead to negative consequences for new mothers and organizations. To avoid such consequences, managers should avoid making assumptions about what pregnant workers want or need, ask women directly how they would like to be supported, avoid making changes to women's roles in the absence of a conversation, and maintain an open dialogue about how managers can be flexible and adaptive to the needs of their pregnant employees (Clair et al.,

2016; see also discussions of benevolent sexism from Chawla et al., 2019).

Beyond supportive supervisors and coworkers, research suggests that perceiving one's organization as supportive can improve women's experiences during pregnancy. Indeed, Jones et al. (2016) found that pregnant employees who worked in more positive work-family climates reported less frequent physical health symptoms throughout their pregnancies. Further, Little et al. (2018) showed that pregnant women who worked in organizations that were more supportive of families reported lower work-family conflict, lower work stress, and higher levels of work engagement during pregnancy as compared to pregnant women working in family-unsupportive organizations. This is consistent with other research demonstrating a link between perceptions of organizational support during pregnancy and a variety of positive outcomes for women (i.e., reduced stress, higher positive affect, lower negative affect, higher job satisfaction, reduced work-family conflict, lower turnover intentions; Ladge et al., 2017; Ross, 2017). And, research has continued to find that organizational support continues to help women (and their partners) as they begin the reentry process after parental leave (Ladge & Masterson, 2021).

While research on the interface between work and motherhood has provided a strong foundation from which to understand many working women's transitions to motherhood, as noted above, the literature to date has paid less attention to understudied aspects of maternity such as the journey leading up to conception, challenges related to infertility, and the common but rarely discussed experience of miscarriage. Importantly, women today are waiting longer to start families because they are prioritizing their careers (Gregory, 2012; Mathews & Hamilton, 2016); we even see this in academia, as women are consistently given advice to delay having children until they are post-tenure (Armenti, 2004). However, the risk of infertility and miscarriage increases with age (Klein & Sauer, 2001), meaning that employees who struggle

with infertility are likely career-focused women who represent the organization's top talent (Shreffler, 2017). Given the importance of retaining top female talent, this presents a pressing need for organizations to implement best practices and policies that effectively support women through infertility to maximize their well-being, enhance job attitudes, and increase retention.

Infertility, or the inability to get pregnant after one year of trying, is incredibly common, affecting one-in-eight women of reproductive age in the United States (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). This makes infertility more prevalent than diabetes, breast cancer, or Alzheimer's disease. Further, the number of couples affected by infertility is expected to increase to ten million by the year 2025 (Premier Health, 2016). Unfortunately, even if some women are able to get pregnant, it does not guarantee a live birth, as it is estimated that about 25% of pregnancies will end in miscarriage (Wilcox et al., 1988). Given the prevalence of infertility and miscarriage, in vitro fertilization (IVF) has become a common treatment that many women turn to in order to maximize their chances of a healthy live birth. Indeed, over a million babies have been born in the U.S. through IVF since 2014 (CoFertility, 2021).

Despite many women's reliance on fertility treatments to grow their families, over half of employed women in the U.S. indicate their employers provide zero health coverage for infertility-related medical expenses. This can create significant burdens for women—emotionally and financially—with the average cost of a successful IVF cycle at around $51,000 (FertilityIQ, 2018). Generally speaking, in the U.S., infertility treatments are not designated an "Essential Health Benefit" powered by the Affordable Care Act (Curtis, 2018). While each state has the authority to decide on whether to mandate insurance coverage for fertility-related medical expenses, most do not (Curtis, 2018; Greil et al., 2011). As a consequence, approximately 70% of Americans who seek infertility treatment end up in debt (Curtis, 2018), meaning that it is

possible for women to not only work for managers who are unsupportive of pregnancy in general (Hackney et al., 2021), but also to work for organizations who do not financially assist them through the challenges of motherhood. Of course, it is important to note that workplaces covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the U.S. are legally required to provide reasonable accommodations (e.g., allowing time-off to seek infertility treatment; Sato, 2001) because infertility has been identified as a disability under the ADA (*Bragdon vs. Abbott*, 1998). Yet, it is still legally permissible for organizations to not cover infertility treatments in health care plans (Sato, 2001). We would argue that supporting this element of motherhood—one that may be more taboo and unseen than pregnancy—would be incredibly valuable to organizations. Indeed, a recent survey suggested that working women undergoing IVF worry about its potential harmful work-related consequences, as 50% of survey respondents did not disclose their IVF status to their employers for fear they would be taken less seriously, and 40% did not disclose because they feared it would harm their career prospects (FertilityNetworkUK, 2016; Sohrab & Basir, 2020). But, early evidence suggests that women who worked for employers who provided IVF coverage reported more positive work attitudes and stayed with their companies for a longer time versus women whose employers failed to provide IVF coverage (FertilityIQ, 2018).

Beyond fertility-related health coverage and disclosure dilemmas, research has yet to examine what workplaces can do to help employees cope with juggling the physical, emotional, and time-related demands of fertility-related challenges such as IVF or miscarriage with the demands of work. Infertility represents a deviation from the "normal" motherhood trajectory and may accordingly cause painful emotions of inadequacy, guilt, sadness, or shame (Haica, 2013). At the same time, if disclosed to others, infertility may invite pregnancy discrimination before one is even pregnant (i.e., the "maybe baby" effect; Gloor et al., 2018). Finally, infertility

treatments can be incredibly time-consuming, requiring rigid and frequent scheduling of doctors' appointments, persistent injections of hormones, and invasive, sometimes painful, medical procedures (Goldstein, 2019). Thus, it is possible that—without organizational support and the privilege of flexible scheduling—women could be inaccurately viewed as being less engaged.

As a starting point to tackling this issue, managers looking to provide support could make efforts to engage in "infertility-informed leadership" (Sohrab & Basir, 2020) wherein they normalize conversations related to infertility, create infertility-informed policies (e.g., allowing for time off pre-conception, reduced hours and duties, financial support, counseling), educate leaders about the physical, financial, and emotional effects of infertility treatment, and offer flexibility in career planning. Additionally, organizations like Kellogg have begun implementing progressive policies that provide extra paid leave to women who are undergoing fertility treatment or experiencing pregnancy loss (BBC News, 2021). Another example of an organization implementing progressive policies is Starbucks which covers up to $20,000 for IVF and any treatment expenditure for both its full-time and part-time employees (Khoo, 2017).

Further, once women have had children, there is little support offered in the postpartum period outside of the leave structures that exist within the organization. Indeed, after women take parental leave, it is assumed that women will be able to return to the workforce as they were prior to having children, despite the significant life transition this represents (Ladge et al., 2012). However, there can be traumas associated with the birth and mental health conditions—from the mild "baby blues" to postpartum psychosis (Sit et al., 2006) that women may be grappling with as they return to work—that organizations have the opportunity to help proactively support. Of these possibilities, experiences with postpartum depression (PPD) should be on the radars of managers and organizations, as approximately 15% of mothers are diagnosed with PPD, making

it “the most common complication of childcare” (Post & Leuner, 2019, p. 417). Although organizational research has shown that the types of support during pregnancy can help mitigate PPD symptoms (Hackney et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2021), we continue to know little about what organizations and managers are doing to keep tabs on women and ensure that they are taken care of and supported in an effort to proactively—rather than reactively—support their mental health. Much like work by Hideg et al. (2018) suggesting that “keep in touch” programs during parental leave can help women maintain work-related agency, of value would be determining what forms of contact from organizations can help women mentally, emotionally, and physically postpartum.

The Intersection of HRM and Menstruation and Menopause

As can be seen from this portion of our review, the attention paid to women’s health has resoundingly focused on issues related to motherhood. In contrast, we continue to know little about menstruation and menopause, even though organizations are starting to tackle this issue themselves without evidence-based guidance. As an example of how this can go awry applied to menstruation, as reviewed by Gabriel (2020), a department store in Japan tested the idea of having female employees wear badges when they were menstruating. Although the aim was intended to elicit empathy and support for women on days during their menstrual cycle, the plan quickly ended as concerns about women wearing the badges being harassed escalated. On the other end of the spectrum, Zomato—one of the largest food delivery companies in India—made waves in 2020 as they introduced menstrual leave. The goal of the leave was to foster “a culture of trust, truth and acceptance,” which meant reducing the stigma of menstruation and the need to have days to rest and recover (Hollingsworth & Gupta, 2020). All employees who menstruated—both women and those who identified as transgender and had a menstrual cycle—were eligible to take up to 10 days of “period leave” per calendar year. And, as argued by Wuench (2020), there

is an economic and moral case for companies to support such leaves, particularly for women who have debilitating menstrual symptoms associated with endometriosis. As noted by Motro et al. (2019), recognizing that women menstruate, and developing structures that support menstruation, can allow organizations to work *with* women's bodies as opposed to against them. Highlighting a new way that HRM can support menstruation, in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, menstrual hygiene products such as menstrual cups, tampons, and sanitary pads now qualify as medical expenses; communicating via HR managers that employees can use health savings account (HSA), flexible spending account (FSA), or health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) to purchase these products can be a clear way that HRM can signal support.

For menopause, the research in this area again continues to be nascent despite evidence presented by Grandey et al. (2020) that menopause could affect women's leader emergence at the pinnacles of their careers. Perhaps one reason we continue to see limited work on this topic is the structure of the data needed—understanding leader emergence and the role of menopausal symptoms and/or onset would require collecting data across women's entire careers, or at least through women's later stages of their careers. Most women experience menopause naturally at approximately 50 years of age; in the U.S., the average age of top leaders at work is 54 (Grandey et al., 2020; Korn Ferry Institute, 2016). Understanding how women's experiences—and the types of support offered by organizations—from ages 40 onward would likely capture the symptoms and official onset, yet still be quite the challenge to collect. Nonetheless, like menstruation, this continues to be an area where paid leave for menopause is beginning—but largely outside of the U.S. For example, ASOS, which is largely based in the U.K., recently created a "health-related life events" paid leave/flexible work policy to help employees who were experiencing menopause, but also additional issues we have already reviewed such as

fertility treatments, miscarriage, abortion, and gender reassignment surgery (Gontcharova, 2021). As such, we see HRM scholars as needing to be part of this discussion swiftly if there is hope to not only understand the effects of menopause at work, but to enact meaningful, practical change.

Future Directions for HRM and Women's Health

Although we hope the information reviewed above presents a compelling case for added scholarship on these topics, we cannot stress enough the number of women in the workplace who are going through these phases and deserve to be supported from an HRM and managerial perspective. Indeed, roughly 800 million people are menstruating worldwide (Barron, 2017). We also know that, eventually, all menstruators will stop menstruating through the natural process of menopause (with exceptions, such as hysterectomy). Further, we also know that about 1.9% of the population of women across the world experience primary infertility and 10.5% experience secondary infertility (Mascarenhas et al., 2012). Needless to say, all of these experiences are relevant to a women's health outcomes both at home and at work given that managing these health-related stressors and challenges are likely to transcend role domains (Gabriel et al., 2020; Grandey et al., 2020). Thus, as HRM scholars, it is high time that we begin to objectively assess and measure the ways in which organizations can take proactive steps that empower women to regain control of their health and their bodies in ways that reduce stigma and shame.

We also wish to highlight that there are myriad theoretical perspectives that HRM scholars can draw from when studying these effects, as we know a challenge that is often faced by scholars is these ideas being too phenomenon-driven versus theory-driven (though, we would argue that the former is entirely acceptable for this topic). Intuitively, the topic of a female employee's health may seem to fall under the umbrella of occupational health, but we would also argue that the understanding of taboos and stigmas from models of disclosure and discrimination

(e.g., Clair et al., 2005) could also be used to explore the topic of women's health at work. Further, theoretical models on work-family conflict (Allen & Martin, 2017) are fairly relevant to the topic of women's health when it comes to acknowledging the permeability of the boundary that separates their professional and personal lives (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2020). Thus, a model that illustrates how seeking treatment for health-related issues that women face interferes—or, in the case of feeling supported, enriches—their work experience would help pave the way for organizations to identify specific measures that empower and support women's health. Models of disability in the workplace may also be applicable and may posit treatment as a factor that limits an employee's capacity to participate in a work environment that is not meaningfully designed for them given the failure to account for common health issues that they experience (e.g., the predictable nature of menstruation for most women monthly; Motro et al., 2019).

Beyond these theoretical perspectives, work on job demands and job design could also be increasingly important for HRM scholars. For example, infertility rates tend to be higher for women who work overnight shifts, long hours, and/or work in more physically demanding jobs (Mínguez-Alarcóna et al., 2017; Stocker et al., 2014). Likewise, navigating blended work-family demands such as breastfeeding and/or pumping breastmilk at work tends to be easier for women who are potentially of higher status in white-collar jobs where private offices, or more carefully designed spaces, are available (Gabriel et al., 2020). And, given that work-related stress can exacerbate mental health conditions (Kensbock et al., 2021), it is possible that understanding how various job demands influence mental health could not only help organizations proactively manage women's PPD, but also help manage stress during their journey to conception.

Finally, one clear thing is that support needs to come from multiple sources (Jones et al., 2021), and it is of critical importance to delineate (a) *what* these specific sources of support are

(beyond general perceptions; Little & Masterson, 2021), and (b) *how* these sources of support combine, and if certain combinations are more or less optimal. We consider this latter point in greater detail in our methodological and empirical considerations section, but recognize here that studies taking this route may help shed light on causal pathways that explain how specific organizational sources of support influence outcomes for women and work and at home equally. And, such ideas of configurations of support are not just important for women's health, but for employees who may be managing an array of concealable stigmas within the workplace.

Concealable Stigmas at Work: A Call for Organizations to Support the "Unseen"

How much of ourselves should we reveal at work? While, for most people, answering this question is hardly simple, it can be particularly complicated for those with a concealable stigma—a stigmatized identity not immediately detectible in a social interaction (e.g., criminal background; Quinn, 2006). People with concealable stigmas face unique interpersonal and intrapsychic stressors (Bosson et al., 2012). Among the most important issues for people with concealable stigmas is navigating when, how, and to whom to disclose their stigma (Goffman, 1963)—a concept known as identity management. Identity management is prevalent in the workplace, where people are particularly concerned about interpersonal impressions (Roberts, 2005), and where impressions have implications for high stakes outcomes such as performance evaluations, promotions, and compensation (Jones & King, 2014). Significant risk also accompanies revealing stigmatized identities. Highlighting this, in a recent survey of LGBTQ+ adults, 45.5% of participants reported experiencing unfair workplace treatment such as harassment, being fired, or not hired due to their sexual or gender orientation (Sears et al., 2021).

Identity management is not a single decision for an individual, but an ongoing and iterative process, often involving many distinct relationships, each of which may be managed

differently (Jones & King, 2014). In fact, deciding whether and how to disclose or conceal a stigmatized identity entails a cost-benefit analysis (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008) in which people assess whether the potential costs of revealing a stigmatized identity (e.g., discrimination, harassment) outweigh possible benefits (e.g., accommodations, social support, psychological need fulfillment). People also face concerns about their concealed stigma being “discovered” (Quinn, 2006). Once someone else in the workplace becomes aware of the stigma, or the stigma inadvertently manifests itself, one no longer has full control of the identity management process. The reality is that having a stigmatized identity and engaging in identity management can mean regularly navigating a complex social labyrinth—a byproduct of which is harboring an additional cognitive and emotional load that can harm well-being and performance (Jones & King, 2014).

Interestingly, much of the research in the concealable stigma space adopts a focus on the individual who holds the stigmatized identity, examining factors influencing an individual’s identity management decisions and outcomes. This, of course, is valuable—by understanding how to “strategically” disclose one’s stigmatized identity to the “right” people, and conceal it from the “wrong” people, intrapsychic and interpersonal outcomes should be more favorable. However, the onus should not fall solely on people with stigmatized identities to optimize their well-being by making the “right” identity management decisions. Thus, this begs the question: *how can managers and organizations lessen this burden and better support the “unseen?”*

Below, we discuss research on managerial and organizational practices and initiatives that provide insight into answering this question and identify areas for future research. Although there are a multitude of stigmas, here we focus on three concealable stigmas—autism, LGBTQ+ status, and social class background. Importantly, while each is concealable to some extent, they differ in important ways (Summers et al., 2018). For example, unlike autism, social class

background is not legally protected, and LGBTQ+ status has only recently enjoyed legal protection in the U.S.. Further, social class background and autism are not controllable (i.e., not a personal choice or the result of one's behavior), whereas opinions differ on the controllability of LGBTQ+ status (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008), despite research indicating sexual orientation is not a choice (Balthazart & Court, 2017). Additionally, compared to people from lower social class backgrounds or who identify as LGBTQ+, people with autism may face more barriers associated with the hiring process, which has implications for the timing of identity management decisions (e.g., disclosures in earlier stages of recruitment versus once on the job). Finally, the stereotypes associated with these stigmas also vary (Fiske et al., 2002; Summers et al., 2018). Thus, while we do not discuss all concealable stigmas, these exemplars differ on important dimensions, making our discussion relevant to a wide array of concealable stigmas.

The Intersection of HRM Practices, Concealable Stigmas, and Employee Well-Being

Autism

Although access to employment is a key determinant of well-being (Creed & Macintyre, 2001), research suggests that unemployment rates are much higher for people with autism than for those with other disabilities (Solomon, 2020). People with autism often face difficulties with social interaction, communication, and restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior, making the hiring process especially difficult (Baldwin et al., 2014). As such, it may be important for autistic individuals to disclose early in the employment process to receive accommodations that alleviate these disadvantages, along with those that may arise once on the job. Evidence on the outcomes of disclosure for people with autism, however, is mixed (Flower et al., 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021). Unfortunately, despite legal protection provided to people with autism, employers sometimes choose not to hire those who disclose this condition due to

erroneous perceptions of incompetence or to avoid the "burden" of accommodation (Richards, 2012). Successful accommodation and support require conscious effort from managers, who must work with the autistic individual to understand how to maximize their potential within the workplace. At the same time, managers must also work with the wider department the individual works within to spread awareness of the purpose of the accommodations and reduce negative reactions towards the person requesting the accommodation (Richards et al., 2019).

Critically, research suggests employers can limit biases that result from disclosure by using more objective and fair selection tests that reduce adverse impact due to incompatibility of current selection tools (e.g., interviews) and the social difficulties attributed to autism. For example, breaking long questions into more discrete sections and providing physical copies of questions are helpful in this regard (Maras et al., 2021). Additionally, training that increases awareness of autism among interviewers can also limit bias against autistic applicants (McMahon et al., 2021; Whelpley et al., 2021). Finally, research has shown that managers who develop an atmosphere of trust and togetherness create more accessible workplaces (Hayward et al., 2019; Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2021). Indeed, manager behaviors such as showing personal concern for autistic employees (Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2019) and providing ongoing support and encouragement towards work goals (Scott et al., 2015) have a large impact on well-being (Parr & Hunter, 2014). Importantly, high-level organizational policies that push accommodation, while intended to be beneficial, can be seen as stereotyping or stigmatizing (Johnson & Joshi, 2016); a better approach is for managers to develop inclusive norms within teams and individual support plans specific to those who request them, as autism traits range across a wide spectrum. Altogether, successful implementation of the aforementioned practices and techniques, paired with a tailored approach for each autistic employee and their needs, increases the likelihood that

people with autism will gain access to appropriate accommodations and fulfilling employment—factors which should reduce the burden of identity management and increase well-being.

LGBTQ+ Status

Sexual orientation minorities—those who do not identify as heterosexual—incur stigmatization largely due to perceptions of immorality and negative attitudes toward gender nonconformity (Herek & Norton, 2013; Ragins, 2008). Irrespective of recent legal victories, LGBTQ+ employees continue to experience mistreatment at work (Sears et al., 2021). In concert with research on allaying this mistreatment, some scholars have begun to examine how coworkers and organizations can play a role in improving work-related experiences and well-being of LGBTQ+ employees (Webster et al., 2018). For example, research expounds on the positive consequences associated with the presence of supportive others or allies at work (Huffman et al., 2008; Ragins, 2008; Ruggs et al., 2015; Salter & Migliaccio, 2019). Generally, perceived support is likely to empower LGBTQ+ employees and lead to positive outcomes that might be nuanced based on the perceived level of power ascribed to the supportive other (e.g., coworkers, supervisors, or organizational support; Huffman et al., 2008). Organizational support, for instance, is related to increased outness at work; supervisor support is related to job satisfaction; and coworker support is related to life satisfaction (Huffman et al., 2008).

Further, contemporary organizational policy-making has been found to have a positive impact on LGBTQ+ employees (Button, 2001; Compton, 2016; King et al., 2017; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Organizational policy centered on, but not limited to, anti-discrimination, same-sex benefits coverage, diversity training, or advocacy is likely to be received as a valuable statement from organizations in their support of the LGBTQ+ community. However, in their support of this community, it is imperative that organizations not only "talk the talk," but also

"walk the walk." A proxy for following through on written policy lies in perceptions of organizational climate (James & Jones, 1974). Plainly, if LGBTQ+ employees feel that their organization's climate is psychologically safe or supportive, this might offset some of the burden associated with concealing aspects of their identity and might encourage disclosure (Reed & Leuty, 2016; Tatum et al., 2017; Wax et al., 2018). Together, this suggests that organizations can lessen the burden of managing an LGBTQ+ identity by implementing intentional and advocacy-focused policy, following through on this policy so that employees can feel safe at work, and being ready and willing to act as an ally to this still marginalized community of employees.

Social Class Background

With respect to social class background—the class context in which one was raised and socialized (Stephens et al., 2014)—people from lower social class origins face a stigma due to a societal consensus that there is something *wrong* with being poor or working-class (Sayer, 2002). Research has shown that the stigma and negative stereotypes associated with lower social class origins "come to work" with employees, even after experiencing upward mobility (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2019). After decades of social class being treated as a control variable in HRM research, research has largely turned to understanding how social class background impacts work-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (e.g., Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Martin et al., 2016). When it comes to managing a stigmatized class identity, people engage in various identity management strategies to attempt to pass as "higher class," including avoiding interactions, displaying "middle class" behaviors, or hiding one's social class (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013; Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2019; Swencionis et al., 2017).

Even more nascent is research that has moved toward considering what employers can do to *enhance* the work experiences and well-being of employees from lower social class

backgrounds. People from lower social class backgrounds face discrimination, discomfort, and higher levels of stress due to a cultural mismatch with managers and organizations (Stephens et al., 2019; Townsend & Truong, 2017). However, when organizational cultures reflect an appreciation for working-class values (e.g., interdependence, communality), these employees experience increased well-being (e.g., better fit and higher intentions to stay; Dittmann et al., 2020a). Moreover, people from lower social class backgrounds are more likely to engage in effective teamwork and excel at working with others, suggesting that organizations that foster cooperative environments will not only increase sense of belonging for these employees, but that there are performance benefits as well (Dittmann et al., 2020b). To reap these benefits, managers and organizations should train employees to work interdependently (e.g., coordinate), ensure that team processes truly reflect interdependence, and value interdependence by evaluating employees on this metric (Dittmann et al., 2021). Finally, teaching how class-based differences stem from socialization within particular class contexts—referred to as *difference-education*—has been shown to increase comfort with people from different social class backgrounds over the long-term, regardless of their own class origins (Stephens et al., 2019; Townsend et al., 2021).

Beyond the aforementioned issues, one of the primary concerns for people from lower social class backgrounds is that they come from families with fewer resources, which may mean that they are disproportionately burdened with debt, caregiving responsibilities, and interpersonal family demands, all of which can impact well-being at work (Chen et al., 2022; Pitesa & Pillutla, 2019; Sinclair & Cheung, 2016). Accordingly, preliminary research on work-life benefits has argued that the working class would benefit from the implementation of policies that address financial strain (Warren, 2015) and excessive caretaking responsibilities (Warren et al., 2009). More extensive discussion of caregiving demands and the role of HRM is discussed below.

Future Directions for HRM, Concealable Stigmas, and Well-Being

The abovementioned research on HRM practices and interventions targeted toward employees with autism, LGBTQ+ status, and social class background suggests that colleagues and organizations can play a substantial role in positively impacting the work experiences and well-being of people with concealable stigmas. Yet, although extant research offers some promising avenues for enhancing work well-being for people with concealable stigmatized identities, stigmatization remains prevalent in organizations and society at large. This is not surprising; destigmatization takes time—and often, a great deal of time. To be sure, organizations may be in the best position to lead this charge given their political power, reach, and the amount of time people spend at work. But, we also need more immediate ways for organizations—and the HRM policies and practices they may implement and support—to effect change for employees with concealable stigmatized identities. The positive news is that our review suggests several encouraging future research areas to help propel such efforts forward.

First and foremost, we challenge practitioners and organizations aiming to support and unburden employees with concealable stigma to follow through. At the organizational-level, when HRM policy or protocol is not reinforced and consistently updated, it falls victim to being perceived as an "empty promise" (Clair et al., 2005; p. 84). Recent work provides excellent suggestions for increasing follow through, such as modernizing diversity training, encouraging leader buy-in, and crafting policy with inclusive nomenclature (Nagele-Piazza, 2019)—suggestions we encourage future scholars to test in their efficacy, and improve in their implementation. At the individual-level, more work is needed on allyship that is not merely "performative" (Kalina, 2020). The crux of being an ally is professing support in a way that is *asked for* and is *actionable*. Future research should take steps to unpack successful allyship and

to give guidance to well-meaning individuals on how to “walk the walk” for their peers.

Another important avenue for future research involves examining how to best leverage technology to enhance the well-being of people with concealable stigmas. Broadly speaking, recent evidence indicates that remote work reduces the experience of microaggressions for marginalized employees (Miller, 2021). With respect to autism, a more specific benefit is that preliminary research shows that apps and other assistive devices (e.g., iPads) can reduce the need for coaching from others (e.g., managers and peers; Khalifa et al., 2020), which should increase independence. Additional early evidence suggests that remote work environments may be advantageous for autistic employees because they limit distractions and social interactions (Samuel, 2021; Szulc et al., 2021). The advantages of remote environments likely extend to the interview process as well, as virtual interviews provide autistic applicants with control over their sensory environment, reducing anxiety and enhancing performance. In addition to autistic applicants, virtual interviews could also benefit applicants with other concealable stigmas. For example, virtual interviews may reduce the “cultural fit” bias activated by social class signals apparent face-to-face (i.e., dress; Ridgeway & Fisk, 2012), potentially increasing comfort for people from lower class backgrounds and allowing hiring professionals to focus on candidates’ true qualifications. While ample benefits of technology are emerging and future research is sure to yield exciting discoveries in this area, we caution that scholars must not ignore studying possible adverse, unintended consequences of these technologies, such as further stigmatization or social exclusion for those reliant on these tools, so as to mitigate any potential downsides.

A third interesting area of future research might consider how inclusive benefit packages can lessen workplace stigmatization and improve well-being. While many people have family-related demands, a lack of familial resources might make the situation look a bit different for

employees from lower social class backgrounds (Pitesa & Pillutla, 2019). Asking for schedule flexibility to care for an aging parent who cannot afford professional care, for example, could leave them feeling as if they are communicating class-based differences that will "out" them. Similarly, autistic employees may attempt to avoid calling attention to their stigmatized characteristics (i.e., masking or camouflaging) and avoid asking for recovery time even when facing "autistic burnout"—long-term exhaustion, loss of function, and reduced tolerance to stimulus (Raymaker et al., 2020). Accommodating the need for flexibility without specific requirements (e.g., childcare) should reduce the identity management burden in such instances. Future research might also examine how benefits like student loan repayment or tuition reimbursement impact employees with concealable stigmatized identities. For example, college graduates from lower class backgrounds are more likely to have student loans (Fry, 2021), which are related to financial stress (Froidevaux et al., 2020) and lower physical and psychological well-being (Montpetit et al., 2015). We encourage inquiry into how debt disproportionately affects work experiences and identity management processes for employees from lower social class backgrounds, and how benefit programs that lift this financial weight can be of benefit.

A final area of future research involves examining how work is organized and how slack resources impact the well-being of employees with stigmatized identities. Lean business practices mean employees are often spread very thin. While efficiency is paramount in today's competitive business landscape, how lean is too lean? Empathizing and learning about others and how to support them requires mental energy (Cameron et al., 2019; Richards et al., 2019). Overworked and burned out employees will be less likely to have the psychological bandwidth to invest in deeply understanding colleagues' unique identities and circumstances, regardless of how well-intentioned they may be. If organizations truly want to enact change for people with

concealable (and conspicuous) stigmatized identities, they may need to reconfigure staffing levels, workload assignments, and “traditional” job duties in ways that better equip employees with the energy needed to do the *work* necessary for fostering inclusive workplaces. As such, research might examine the effects of slack resources, staffing, and job demands on the efficacy of initiatives designed to cultivate inclusive organizational climates and enhance the well-being of marginalized groups. Such sentiments fit with the commentary above about ensuring that work allows employees sufficient opportunity to recover. Although a challenging goal, astute leaders will see work-related changes brought on by COVID-19 as a chance for organizational renewal —one in which, among other improvements, we can design workplaces to be more inclusive and accepting of people with concealable stigmatized identities, and people who may be coping with other complex demands such as caregiving and social shocks as reviewed below.

Caregiving and Work: A Call to Expand our Organizational Supports for Caregivers

Over the past two decades, employee caregiving has emerged as a topic of conversation in the popular press (e.g., Covert, 2021; Gupta, 2021), practitioner-focused outlets (e.g., Fondas, 2015; Miller, 2021), and the academic business literature (e.g., Bainbridge & Townsend, 2020; Kossek et al., 2001). Caregiving refers to the informal (i.e., unpaid) provision of care to a family member or dependent (Bainbridge & Broady, 2017; Buffardi et al., 1999). Approximately 20% to 45% of adults in the U.S. are caregivers (NACAARP, 2020; Sammer, 2020), with the majority of caregivers also being employed (Bainbridge & Townsend, 2020; NACAARP, 2015). Recent estimates further indicate that approximately 6% of adults in the U.S. provide *childcare* (i.e., caring for one or more children who are under the age of 18), 3% provide *adultcare* (i.e., caring for one or more adults who are between the ages of 18 and 49), and 17% provide *eldercare* (i.e., caring for one or more adults who are 50 or older). There is also evidence that caregiving

demands are increasing for working-aged adults (NACAARP 2015; 2020), and there is growing research which indicates that caregiving has a deleterious impact on the careers of caregivers, impacting (a) decisions about workforce participation, (b) work attitudes, (c) well-being, and (d) performance-related behaviors, among other outcomes (e.g., Bainbridge & Broady, 2017; Buffardi et al., 1999; Kossek et al., 2001). This has led scholars and practitioners to recognize that balancing caregiving with work represents a grand challenge for modern work (Bainbridge & Townsend, 2020; Duxbury & Higgins, 2017; NACAARP, 2020; Sammer, 2022).

Historically, research on the intersection of work and caregiving has appeared under the umbrella of work-family conflict research (for reviews, see Allen, 2012; Amstad et al., 2011; Mitchel et al., 2011) and has focused primarily on childcare as a main caregiving demand. Much of this research is rooted in role theory (Bainbridge & Townsend, 2020) and suggests that caregiving roles may conflict with work roles, resulting in forms of role strain, including role overload and role interference (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Role strain, in turn, is associated with a variety of undesirable outcomes, such as absenteeism and other forms of time lost from work, including being late for work and being interrupted while working (Amstad et al., 2011; Boise & Neal, 1996). Research has also provided evidence that employees incur professional costs when they prioritize childcare over work, even over brief timeframes (Sanzari et al., 2021).

In recent years, research on employee caretaking has expanded to include taking care of elderly family members and those with disabilities (Bainbridge & Townsend, 2020; Burch et al., 2019; Calvano, 2015; Las Heras et al., 2017), with Bainbridge et al. (2021) noting that this "is the focus of increasing attention given ageing populations and the associated increasing prevalence of care" (p. 659). Though this is an emerging stream of research, it has generated insight around how caregiving for elderly or disabled adult family members can impact

employees. Consistent with research on childcare (e.g., Buffadi et al., 1999), adultcare and eldercare represent significant demands that can be a source of role conflict, impacting the caretakers' well-being and effectiveness at work (Dugan et al., 2020). Also consistent with the childcare literature, there is evidence that a majority of caregiving work is being performed by women (NCAAPR, 2015), a point that should not be overlooked given the mental and physical demands that are associated with providing care to others (Bainbridge et al., 2021).

In sum, caregiving has been identified as an off-the-job demand that represents a significant source of strain (e.g., Duxbury et al., 2011; Halinkski et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2001; Zacher & Schulz, 2015), often leading employees to either reduce the time and energy that they direct towards their work *or* leave the workforce in order to provide care to family members. Accumulating research further indicates that women are more negatively impacted by caregiving obligations than men (Clancy et al., 2020; MetLife, 2011), with the COVID-19 pandemic serving to increase the asymmetrical effects of caregiving on women's career outcomes (Shockley et al., 2021; Staglin, 2021). Another noteworthy finding is that relative to childcare, adultcare and eldercare are potentially more demanding (at least in the long-term) and may, therefore, exert a greater toll on the well-being and career outcomes of employed caregivers (Halinski et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2001; Larsen, 2010). Given this insight, as well as the aging population in the U.S., it is important to consider what organizations are currently doing to support employees who are also caregivers, a topic that we consider in the section that follows.

The Current State of Organizational Support for Caregivers

In the U.S., federal and state laws require employers to allow flexibility for employees experiencing significant caregiving-related challenges, such as caring for children with special needs. For example, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) states that some

organizations (e.g., those with over 50 employees) must provide employees who worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during the 12-months prior up to 12 weeks of protected, *unpaid* leave during a 12-month period for providing care (U.S. Department of Labor, 2021). Yet, because of the potentially detrimental impact that caregiving responsibilities have on employee well-being and job performance (Larson, 2022), many organizations offer additional caregiving-related programs for employees that go beyond legal requirements (Murray, 2021). Caregiving support services frequently offered to employees include flexible work arrangements, health and well-being programs, and direct caregiving-related assistance (Fuller et al., 2019).

Flexible work arrangements, which can take many forms, are one of the most common accommodations that employers provide to employees who are also caregivers, particularly when employees are experiencing extreme caregiving challenges. For example, 64% of 300 human resource officers surveyed in a 2017 *Survey of US Employers on Caregiving* indicated that their companies offered schedule flexibility for employees experiencing caregiving challenges (Fuller et al., 2019). Schedule flexibility can manifest in different ways. For example, large employers such as Amazon and Raytheon have been known to allow some employees to determine their own working hours (Amazon Staff, 2021; Binford, 2012). Likewise, Wal-Mart and Amazon allow employees to negotiate work shift swaps with coworkers to accommodate caregiving needs (Amazon Staff, 2021; Souza, 2019). In addition, some companies have enacted work-absence policies to avoid penalizing employees who miss work due to unexpected caregiving demands. Wal-Mart, for example, created a protected paid time off (PTO) program, allowing employees to accrue PTO hours to be used for immediate or short-term absences without being disciplined for missing work (Souza, 2019). Research suggests that schedule flexibility is helpful for the well-being of employees balancing work-caregiving conflict (Jang, 2009; Nijp et al., 2012). However,

schedule flexibility on its own is not sufficient in solving the challenges associated with providing intense caregiving such as eldercare or special needs childcare (Allen et al., 2013).

Beyond flexible work arrangements, many employers also offer health and well-being programs that provide indirect support (i.e., employees are expected to accrue benefits from utilizing these programs) to employees who are also caregivers. These programs typically focus on peer networking experiences, mental or financial well-being, and educational assistance for employees facing caregiving-related challenges. Microsoft, for example, encourages employees to connect and network through its Employee Resource Group program, which is a support group that provides assistance to parents of children with special needs (Microsoft New England Staff, 2019). Raytheon offers access to financial planners with expertise in areas including creating special needs estate trusts (Binford, 2012) and Amazon is one of many companies using technology to provide both on-line mental health counseling for parents of special needs children and educational webinars on topics such as how to better communicate with school district special education departments (Amazon Staff, 2021; Pyrillis, 2016). As evidenced in the academic literature (French & Shockley, 2020; Kossek et al., 2011), the indirect support offered to employees through these formal and informal employer-provided programs can positively impact employees experiencing high demands related to providing child, adult, or elder care.

Finally, some employers provide direct caregiving assistance. For instance, 19% of respondents to the 2017 *Survey of US Employers on Caregiving* indicated that their employer offered subsidies for childcare; 8% reported that their employer offered subsidies for eldercare (Fuller et al., 2019). Companies also provide caregiving support by assisting employees with finding accessible, low-cost caregiving. For example, engineering firm Northrop Grumman (2021) offers short term emergency childcare for employees temporarily without childcare, while

Bank of America and Virginia Commonwealth University offer caregiver referral services and maintain lists of childcare and eldercare providers for employees to access (Binford, 2012).

In sum, employers are beginning to respond to the unique needs of employees who experience significant caregiving challenges by offering programs and services designed to provide support and assistance. To date, this support and assistance has been directed more towards supporting childcare, though organizations have begun to recognize that the aging population has resulted in an increase in the number of employees who provide care to adults and elders. Nonetheless, the opportunity remains for organizations to better support this group of employees, ultimately benefiting both employees and their employers. In the section that follows, we provide an overview of four key dimensions (i.e., *chronicness*, *unpredictability*, *outsourceability*, *intensity*) of caregiving demands that we argue are being insufficiently accounted for in many organizational policies as well as solutions to aid in caregiving demands. While not an exhaustive list, our approach in this section is to illustrate critical aspects of caregiving in need of greater attention from organizational scholars and practitioners.

The Need for HRM Scholarship to Address Shortcomings of Support to Caregiving

Although existing law and select organizational policies have made some strides towards supporting caregivers, we contend that there are four key caregiving dynamics that organizations often fail to sufficiently consider when crafting solutions to assist employees, and urge HRM scholars to consider these issues in their research. More specifically, we argue that it is critical to consider the *chronicness*, *unpredictability*, *outsourceability*, and *intensity* of caregiving demands when designing—and testing the efficacy—of organizational policies and resources surrounding caregiving. In Table 1, and as detailed below, we provide a brief description of each of these dynamics, and examples of caregiving situations that align with each to generate new questions.

---- INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ----

Chronicness

Demands that individuals face differ in the extent to which they are acute (i.e., transitory, fleeting) or chronic (i.e., regular, recurring; Almeida, 2005; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This dimension of *chronicness* is applicable to caregiving demands, as some employees may face more short-term caregiving demands (e.g., caring for a child with a cold or flu), while others may encounter longer-term caregiving demands (e.g., caring for an adult with Alzheimer's disease). All else being equal, the ongoing nature of chronic caregiving demands implies that employees facing these demands will require greater and more consistent organizational support, relative to employees facing more acute caregiving demands. This targeting of organizational solutions to dealing with more chronic demands is also likely to be justified from a practical perspective, as chronic demand exposure tends to trigger consequences that are more diffuse and longer lasting (e.g., physical and mental health problems) in comparison to acute demand exposure (e.g., short-term emotional reactions, somatic complaints; Ganster & Rosen, 2013).

Unpredictability

Caregiving demands may also differ in the extent to which they are predictable (i.e., easily anticipated) or unpredictable (i.e., unexpected). This dimension has been largely studied outside of the organizational sciences in the context of the experiences of caregivers of elderly or chronically ill adult relatives (e.g., Altomonte, 2016; Blindheim et al., 2013). However, there is also emerging literature exploring the harmful impacts of unpredictable childcare demands during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as school closures, on caregivers (e.g., Seguin et al., 2021). These lines of evidence converge to suggest that unpredictable caregiving demands are a significant source of strain on caregivers, suggesting that the need for organizational support is

greater when facing more unexpected demands, relative to more predictable demands.

Outsourceability

It has also been recognized that the financial means and ability to outsource caregiving demands to others can assist employees in balancing work and caregiving (Hochschild, 1997). All else being equal, there is the potential for greater conflict with work responsibilities and a stronger need for organizational support when employees face caregiving demands that cannot be outsourced. However, there are myriad reasons why some caregiving demands may not be outsourceable, encompassing factors that are financial/economic (e.g., inability to afford daycare or long-term residential care; see discussions above about social class and its effects on caregiving), biological (e.g., breastfeeding an infant), interpersonal (e.g., special needs children who may only respond to certain caretakers), and public health and safety (e.g., worries about sending children to school during COVID-19). Addressing non-outsourceable childcare demands may be particularly important from an organizational inclusion perspective, as financial and economic considerations surrounding outsourceability may be particularly likely to contribute to work-life inequities within organizations and the broader workforce (Kossek et al., 2018).

Intensity

A final primary dimension relevant to the need for organizational support in response to caregiving reflects the intensity of the caregiving demands, which represents the degree to which the demands are physically, mentally, and/or emotionally taxing. Consistent with broader occupational health perspectives to demands (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Karasek, 1979), employees will require more organizational support when they face more intense caregiving demands. For example, physically and emotionally taxing caregiving for a critically ill elderly relative would be considered *more intense* than taking a generally healthy elderly relative to a

routine doctor's appointment, all else being equal. We would also note that, consistent with broader perspectives that emphasize the criticality of employees' subjective appraisals to stress (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), employees' subjective evaluations of the intensity of their caregiving demands may be more relevant to the influence of caregiving demand intensity on downstream criteria than specific objective features that define the intensity of the caregiving demands (e.g., hours spent in caregiving, number of caregiving tasks performed).

Actionable Considerations in Crafting Organizational Support Solutions

We advocate that there are seven considerations in organizational support that may better take into account one or multiple of the aforementioned key caregiving dimensions when crafting organizational solutions to support caregiving. First, the *amount and nature of flexibility* allowed within flexible work arrangements is a critical consideration. For example, some policies allow employees to work a set number of hours each week remotely (e.g., 10 hours), whereas others, such as the Results Only Work Environment model (ROWE; Ressler & Thompson, 2008) give employees total flexibility in where and when work is completed. We advocate, when feasible, that organizations implement flexible work arrangements that offer a high vs. low degree of flexibility (i.e., total flexibility in where and when work is completed versus allowing occasional remote work), as this will best cater to those falling on the more challenging spectrum of all four of our dimensions: chronic, unpredictable, intense, and non-outsourceable needs. Historically, there has been a great deal of resistance to allowing total flexibility, specifically flexibility in location (e.g., Manochehri & Pinkerton, 2003); however, forced flexibility sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic has created a mindset shift for many employees about the feasibility and benefits of remote work in particular. Recent research suggests that even in the midst of a pandemic, many employees maintained or increased their performance (Maurer, 2020; Shockley

et al., 2020). Thus, organizations should approach flexibility with an open mindset, attempting to make policies generous and stepping back only if the arrangements are demonstrated to fail. Of course, it is important to note that flexible work arrangements do come with potential drawbacks, including negative career repercussions as well as risk of social isolation (cf., Shockley, 2015). However, the benefits gained in role management may outweigh these costs for many caregivers.

Second, the *formality of flexible work arrangements* is meaningful. Sometimes flexibility is granted through idiosyncratic deals with managers (Rosen et al., 2013), whereas in other cases it is a formal part of organizational contracts. We advocate that organizations create formalized flexibility policies, meaning that a clear written contract regarding the policy and its associated parameters is communicated and acknowledged by the employer and employee. Such formalization benefits employees in that it ensures greater fairness and clearly specifies expectations associated with such flexibility use (e.g., Allen et al., 2015). This formality may specifically help employees who have intense or chronic caregiving demands and may not wish to disclose these demands for privacy purposes or for fear of career penalization due to anticipated time away from work or stigma by association (Goffman, 1963; Stewart & Charles, 2021). That is, when a policy is offered to everyone in a consistent manner, it removes the need to engage in careful negotiation with leaders, which often requires disclosure of personal information. Best practices advocate offering formal flexible policies to all employees where the nature of the job allows, although some contingencies, such as tenure in the organization may need to be specified when creating such policies (e.g., Ryan & Kossek, 2008).

Third, we advocate that organizations *consider flexibility more broadly in terms of careers as a whole*. Caregivers facing demands that are particularly intense or not able to be outsourced may need to exit the workforce for a period of time that is longer than the 12 weeks

mandated by federal law. In this case, organizations can support caregivers by offering other accommodations, including “off-ramping” and “on-ramping” paths where employees who exit the workforce are given a pathway to re-enter when ready and able, without having to start at a substantially lower level or explain career gaps in their resumes.

Fourth and relatedly, in addition to facilitating complete workforce exit and subsequent reentry, *offering more part-time roles or job sharing* would be helpful to those who are facing the challenging extremes of all four of the caregiving dimensions outlined in Table 1. Providing such accommodations would provide employees with more time to attend to caregiving while still maintaining the positive financial, emotional, and identity-related benefits of employment. Unfortunately, in the U.S., there is currently a dearth of part-time work, especially outside of entry level jobs, unskilled labor, or contract work (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Furthermore, when part-time work is available, it often comes with lower hourly pay and without healthcare benefits (e.g., Golden, 2020). Given the extremely high healthcare costs associated with certain types of caregiving, adjusting organizational policies so that healthcare benefits and adequate pay can be obtained when working part-time seems critical.

Fifth, in order to address the specific dimension of unpredictability, we advocate for increased offering of *emergency care services,* such as child/eldercare services that can fill in when typical child/eldercare is unavailable or a child is sick and unable to attend typical childcare centers. Although this is offered by some organizations, it is still quite rare and is only offered by approximately 5% of organizations (National Study of Employers, 2016). When unpredictable situations emerge without such back-up services, employees often have to spend a great deal of time trying to secure help or miss time at work. Providing services that have vetted caregivers could be of great assistance for these short-term situations. These programs often

quickly pay for themselves by reducing absenteeism and turnover (Shellenback, 2004).

Sixth, also addressing the unpredictability dimension, we advocate for organizations to both *allow for shift-swapping and to leverage technology* to facilitate this process in segments of the workforce where this is applicable. As noted above, some organizations do allow shift switching without formal approval; however, organizations vary in the degree to which they facilitate employees being able to find someone to switch shifts. Some offer no formal system to do so, whereas others offer discussion boards or online forums. The most advanced systems include software that allow employees to both post shifts and indicate when they are looking to pick up a shift and automatically generate matches (e.g., Bell, 2020). This saves employees time and stress, and makes it more likely that they will find someone to cover a shift when there is a need. Similar to what we noted above about formal flexible work arrangements, having a standardized policy creates a greater sense of justice and equal access among employees.

Lastly, we address the dimension of outsourcing. Although there are circumstances where caregiving cannot be outsourced, organizations can support employees by *aiding with or subsidizing the outsourcing of other forms of household labor*. Organizations could provide ready-made meals or offer referrals/subsidies for cleaning services to help with meal preparation and necessary cleaning tasks, respectively. Research suggests that use of outsourcing is indeed associated with additional free time (van der Lippe et al., 2004) and promotes women's economic activity (e.g., Barone & Mocetti, 2011; Chan, 2006; Cortès & Tessada, 2011).

To conclude, employee caregiving has received increased attention from organizational scholars in recent years. This growing body of research suggests that, regardless of its form (i.e., childcare, adultcare, or eldercare), caregiving represents a significant demand for employees that has the potential to impact their effectiveness and inclusion in the workforce. Fortunately,

organizations have begun to recognize how employees may be impacted by caregiving demands and have started to offer various forms of support for caregivers, though there remains a significant gap between the needs of caregivers and what is provided by organizations. To address this, we identified different dimensions of caregiving that are likely to impact caregiving demands, and we discussed the ways in which these dimensions should be considered by employers when crafting programs that are aimed at providing support to caregiving employees. But of course, caregiving is just one "jolt" that employees may experience across their careers, and—as discussed below—support are needed for additional shocks that may occur.

Jolts to the System: A Call to Support Employees Following Socio-Environmental Jolts

"Now it's been nearly two years since the beginning of the pandemic—a time that has also encompassed an attempted coup, innumerable extreme weather events likely tied to climate change, and ongoing police violence against Black Americans—and we've been expected to show up to work through all of it." (North, 2021)

Over the past five years, employees have lived through a pandemic that has taken the lives of over 5.5 million individuals (World Health Organization, 2022), increasingly destructive natural disasters (e.g., floods, wildfires; Coronese et al., 2019), sociopolitical unrest (e.g., Capitol Hill insurrection; political unrest in Hong Kong), racial and ethnic discrimination and vitriol (e.g., police brutality against Black citizens; anti-Asian stigma), mass shootings (e.g., Las Vegas music festival shooting; Oxford school shooting), and a reckoning on sexual harassment at work (Wortham et al., n.d.). These socio-environmental 'jolts' sometimes cause visible, direct harm to employees—a point that organizational leaders recognize. As Disney CEO Bob Iger (2019) noted, "We have well over two hundred thousand employees around the world, so if something catastrophic happens, the odds aren't insignificant that one of our people have been touched by it" (p. xiii). In many cases, when employees are harmed by such events, organizations respond by providing support to those affected (Couser et al., 2020; Paul & Thompson, 2008). However,

many socio-environmental jolts that cause harm also cause *indirect* hardship to others, an issue not as readily recognized by organizations. For instance, a natural disaster that threatens an employee's loved ones a continent away can cause immense strain for that employee. Moreover, some jolts cause little damage that is readily visible, but nonetheless have important implications for employees. As an example, the trauma caused by seeing the Capitol of one's government being stormed may be severe, despite being seemingly invisible to organizations.

Although socio-environmental jolts can affect employees in ways that are indirect and/or unseen, their impact has often been overlooked by organizations and HRM scholars relative to jolts that have more direct effects or are more visible. As a result, employees who are affected by these jolts are often expected to cope while continuously remaining engaged, committed, and productive with no additional support. Critically, regardless of whether such events are directly or indirectly self-relevant, they can profoundly impact employees' sense of self, affect, cognitions, and work behaviors (Leigh & Melwani, 2019). Considering this, the limited attention that organizational scholarship generally, and HRM scholarship more specifically, has devoted to understanding the spillover effects of socio-environmental jolts on employees' experiences and behaviors in organizations is alarming, particularly given that many of these jolts carry significant trauma (e.g., Abdalla et al., 2021; Lowe & Galea, 2015; McCluney et al., 2017). Here, we aim to address this shortcoming and provide a foundation to encourage organizational scholars and practitioners to comprehensively understand the effect of these jolts on employees. To organize these ideas, we present a framework (see Figure 1) of socio-environmental jolts and review past work that has begun exploring the psychological and physiological impact of these therein. We then highlight the connection between socio-environmental jolts and the concept of 'shocks' in the HR literature to shed light on the downstream effects of jolts on work withdrawal

and turnover. Finally, we turn our attention to the role that HRM can play in helping employees navigate these jolts, before describing ways in which scholars can extend our understanding of how socio-environmental jolts intersect with employees' experiences and workplace outcomes.

---- INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE ----

Understanding Socio-Environmental Jolts

Organizational scholarship has long acknowledged the impact that events—discrete, discontinuous, observable, non-routine episodes that occur within *or* outside of an organization's environment (Morgeson et al., 2015)—have on employees (e.g., labor strike), teams (e.g., abrupt change in team leadership), and firms (e.g., mergers and acquisitions; Leigh & Melwani, 2019). Although events vary in their disruptiveness (Morgeson et al., 2015), socio-environmental jolts tend to be external "transient perturbations whose occurrences are difficult to foresee and whose impacts on organizations are disruptive and potentially inimical" (Meyer, 1982, p. 515). In other words, these events often cause disruptions to how employees carry out their work-related responsibilities. Importantly, in addition to potentially disrupting organizational work structures and routines, socio-environmental jolts can also have important effects on employees' social identities (i.e., self-definitions that arise as a result of social group membership [Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985]). Societal occurrences that involve threats, attacks, or violence directed towards individuals who are members of historically marginalized identity groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals as discussed above; racial ethnic minorities) can have critical effects on employees once they enter work (Leigh & Melwani, 2019; McCluney et al. 2017).

Socio-environmental jolts vary both (a) in terms of the effect they have on employees' abilities to do their jobs and, (b) in terms of the extent to which they are relevant to employees' social identities. By combining these two factors, an organizing framework emerges (see Figure

1) that encompasses both the extent to which a jolt disrupts work (low versus high) and the extent to which a jolt is relevant to a valued social identity (low versus high). In the sections that follow, we adopt this framework to review existing work on the effects of socio-environmental jolts on individuals' psychological and physiological experiences at work. As a critical note, we focus specifically on jolts that are high on *either* their disruption to work and/or their relevance to employees' social identities, as these are most likely to impact organizations and employees.

High Disruption to Work, Low Relevance to Social Identity

Socio-environmental jolts that highly disrupt work, but have relatively little impact on employees' social identities, tend to reflect external events that significantly impact work structures, routines, or an employee's ability to effectively carry out their work responsibilities. For instance, both natural disasters and widespread political unrest disrupt work through associated economic fallouts, damages to critical infrastructure, and the disruption of daily routines. Historically, scholars have focused on and studied such socio-environmental jolts as reflecting acute 'extraorganizational stressors' that are short-term factors outside of work that take a significant toll on individuals' emotional and physical health and well-being (Byron & Peterson, 2002). As an example, Biggs et al.'s (2002) research on the impact of natural disasters indicates that experiences of personal property damage and/or loss were associated with greater psychological strain via the negative effects on perceived work culture support. Other work has specifically studied work-related stress stemming from socio-environmental jolts. Studying the impact of the hurricanes in Florida from 2004-2006, Hochwarter et al. (2008) found that employees' experiences of hurricane-induced job stress related positively to job tension.

Low Disruption to Work, High Relevance to Social Identity

In contrast to the socio-environmental jolts reviewed in the previous section, some jolts

have little impact on formal organizational work structures, but still have important implications for organizations because of their relevance to employees' social identities. Conceptualized by Leigh and Melwani (2019) as mega-threats, these socio-environmental jolts are "negative, large-scale, diversity-related episodes that receive significant media attention" (p. 569). In recent years, employees have experienced a variety of mega-threats characterized by individuals of varying identity groups having been attacked, threatened, or killed because of their identity—such as the highly publicized instances of police brutality enacted against Black Americans (e.g., police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor), the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting that targeted LGBTQ+ individuals, the U.S. Muslim immigration ban that targeted Muslims and immigrants, and highly publicized instances of sexual assault that targeted women and sparked the creation of the #MeToo social movement (see Table 1 in Leigh and Melwani [2019] for a more comprehensive review). Because these socio-environmental jolts highlight the devaluation and inherent harm that accompanies membership in particular identity groups, these events are germane occurrences for individuals who share identity group membership with victims of these events (Leigh & Melwani, 2021). Similar to socio-environmental jolts that are highly disruptive to work, mega-threats act as extraorganizational stressors that have deleterious effects on employees' cognitions (e.g., increased cognitive rumination, identity threat), affect (e.g., increased anxiety, anger), and work behaviors (e.g., increased work withdrawal, decreased engagement; Leigh & Melwani, 2019; Leigh & Melwani, 2021; McCluney et al., 2017).

High Disruption to Work, High Relevance to Social Identity

Finally, certain socio-environmental jolts cause both a significant disruption to work structures *and* are highly relevant to employees' valued social identities. Perhaps the most poignant example of this over the past century is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has globally

disrupted work in an unprecedented manner and led to extensive implications for employees' health and well-being. For those who have been at the frontlines of this crisis (e.g., healthcare workers), researchers have found that employees are experiencing greater emotional exhaustion, depression, and reduced work engagement as a result of caring for COVID-19 patients (Caldas et al., 2021; Liu et al 2021). Similarly, Bacharach and Bamberger (2007) found that firefighters on the frontlines of the September 11, 2001 attacks experienced heightened post-traumatic distress, anxiety, and depression. For other employees, greater exposure to the attack (defined in this case as the extent to which the individual was more personally affected by the attack; e.g., relationship to victims of the attack) corresponded to greater levels of strain, ultimately leading to greater levels of absenteeism in the weeks following the attack (Byron & Peterson, 2002).

Research tied to understanding the psychological and physiological strain of the pandemic has similarly noted the impact of exposure—albeit considering it from a broader perspective. Indeed, Fu et al. (2021) found that employees' daily anxiety levels were directly influenced by (a) the confirmed number of cases in their state, (b) the velocity, and (c) acceleration of change in the number of cases over the preceding five-day period. Similarly, McCarthy et al. (2021) noted that both the duration of the pandemic (i.e., days since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic) and the number of cumulative pandemic deaths in the individual's location were associated with exhaustion stemming from the pandemic. Research on exposure to news and information about the pandemic suggests that employees' feelings of anxiety are—at least in part—due to the mortality cues triggered from such jolts, making individuals conscious about their mortality (Hu et al., 2020; Shao et al., 2021). And, anxiety tied to the pandemic has detriments for employees' goal progress, engagement, and task performance (Andel et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2021; Reinwald et al., 2021; Trougakos et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, such socio-environmental jolts can also become identity relevant as they trigger heightened hostility and stigmatization toward specific identity groups (e.g., towards Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslims after the September 11th 2001 attacks). Thus, in addition to grappling with the negative consequences stemming from disruption to work, some employees may grapple with negative cognitions and emotions that arise as a result of the heightened violence and aggression toward their identity group. Gardner et al. (2021) found that 22.5% of Asians residing within the U.S. reported personal encounters of pandemic-related discrimination, and that individuals' identification with the U.S. predicted COVID-19 blame attributions toward China and, in turn, anticipated hiring bias and increased physical distancing of Asians at work. For Asian employees, the impact of leaders' use of stigmatizing COVID-19 labels (e.g., Chinese virus, Kung Flu) has been detrimental to their perceptions of interpersonal justice and has led to increased emotional exhaustion and decreased work engagement (Jun & Wu, 2021). Similarly, work following the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements suggest that there was considerable backlash, with men reporting reduced likelihoods of hiring women and increased intentions to avoid and exclude women from interactions (Atwater et al., 2019).

These varied streams of research demonstrate that although socio-environmental jolts largely occur outside the bounds of organizations, these occurrences can be highly disruptive to work and/or highly relevant to employees' social identities, which also has important effects for employees' attitudes and behaviors. Yet, managers and organizations often ignore these jolts, particularly those high in social identity relevance and low in their disruption to work (e.g., mega-threats; Leigh & Melwani, 2019), with ineffective responses having critical implications.

The Role of HRM in Employee Turnover Following Socio-Environmental Jolts

The consequences of organizations not responding to socio-environmental jolts in a

supportive, empathetic, and positive manner are substantial, given that these jolts are external events that can prompt individuals to reflect on their overall work lives. Viewed through the lens of the HRM literature, jolts can be considered an example of social shocks that relate to *turnover shock*, a concept introduced over two decades ago by Lee and Mitchell (1994). A shock is "a very distinguishable event that jars employees toward deliberate judgments about their jobs" (Lee & Mitchell, 1994, p. 60). The conceptual domain of turnover shocks is broad (Holtom et al., 2005), ranging from very positive (e.g., expecting a first child) to very negative (e.g., the death of a loved one); they can also be internal (e.g., passed over for a promotion) or external one's organization (e.g., an unsolicited job offer), and they may relate to one's professional or personal life, or some combination (Maertz & Kmitta, 2012). Regardless of the source of the shock, the effect is clear—it triggers an evaluation process in which employees weigh whether to remain in their jobs or resign (Lee et al., 1999). We expect this to also occur for socio-environmental jolts.

Shocks are often surprising to employees, thereby explaining why otherwise satisfied employees leave their jobs (Kulik et al., 2012). In many cases, shocks cause happy employees to re-evaluate their work situation, consider job alternatives, and ultimately quit (Lee et al., 1996). For employees who may already be disgruntled, this process is sometimes truncated. That is, shocks can lead employees to immediately walk away from their jobs, in what has been called "impulsive quitting" (Maertz & Campion, 2004, p. 568). Indeed, in their inductive study of resignations, Klotz and Bolino (2016) found that impulsive quitting often occurred in response to particularly abusive or unfair treatment from a supervisor. Of course, shocks do not always lead to turnover. In some cases, shocks may cause employees to *want to* leave their jobs, but due to the absence of acceptable job alternatives or an unwillingness or inability to give up the benefits associated with a given job, these individuals become disengaged, reluctant stayers (Li et al.,

2016). And, for employees who hold strong, positive feelings towards their managers, shocks may actually lead to stronger commitment to one's job (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002).

To illustrate the consequences of socio-environmental jolts on employee turnover, as the research on shock would predict, it is instructive to return to the highly work disruptive and highly identity relevant COVID-19 pandemic. As described earlier, the pandemic represents perhaps the most global turnover shock to have occurred since World War II, because of its universality and because it contained multiple components with the potential to jar employees into reflecting on their work lives (Klotz, 2021). Just as Lee and Mitchell's (1994) theory predicts, the pandemic—as a socio-environmental jolt—has contributed to a wave of resignations in the U.S. in 2021 (Beilfuss, 2021). Coined "The Great Resignation" (Cohen, 2021), the turnover impact of the pandemic has created a very challenging labor situation for many organizations and has thrust the importance of understanding how the socio-environmental jolts and how employees view their jobs to the forefront of organizational leaders' minds.

The Role of HRM in Helping Employees Navigate Socio-Environmental Jolts

"We have a broken care infrastructure. Support for mental health is insufficient. And so many of us are entangled in demanding and inflexible workplace cultures that create burnout… I'm encouraged to see that companies are responding." (Allen, 2021)

Considering the framework of socio-environmental jolts paired with their impact on employees begs the question: how can organizations leverage their HRM to respond in ways that help employees navigate these experiences? Supervisor- and organizational-related factors can play a role in buffering *both* the experience and the negative effects of jolts. In alignment with the dimensions of our framework, we focus on HRM buffering factors as they relate to work disruption, and then shift to potential buffering factors as they relate to identity relevance.

HRM Impact on Buffering the Work Disruption Impact of Jolts

Existing research and evidence from practice suggest numerous HRM practices that can buffer the *work disruptions* accompanying socio-environmental jolts. First, research suggests that mitigating the impact of socio-environmental jolts' disruption to work may be best accomplished by a direct supervisor given that, in general, employees see their supervisors' actions as a personification of the employer (Ashforth & Rogers, 2012; Ashforth et al., 2020), and employees' sense of dependence on their supervisor may increase in the aftermath of socio-environmental jolts—as has been the case in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Wee & Fehr, 2021). Highlighting the important role of supervisors in the aftermath of socio-environmental jolts, Reinwald et al. (2021) found that employees with lower leader consideration had lower levels of work engagement stemming from the daily number of local COVID-19 cases compared with employees with higher leader consideration. Similarly, the negative impact of state anxiety—due to COVID-19 triggered mortality salience—on work engagement was buffered for employees with higher levels of perceived servant leadership (Hu et al., 2021); in fact, state anxiety was associated with *increased* prosocial behavior for these employees. Research on other socio-environmental jolts, such as the September 11, 2001 attacks, suggest similar positive effects of supervisory support, with Bacharach and Bamberger (2007) finding that the positive relationship between intensity of involvement with the attack and posttraumatic distress was weakened for firefighters with greater unit-level supervisory support climate.

Of note, organizations' instrumental responses to socio-environmental jolts can also be critical in shaping employees' experiences of work disruption. For direct victims, tangible support (e.g., emergency supplies, financial assistance) in particular can be crucial in reducing health-related strains (Sanchez et al., 1995) and work disruption. Further, findings across multiple studies examining different forms of socio-environmental jolts (e.g., terrorist attacks,

natural disasters) indicate that organizations' investments in corporate social responsibility can help employees perceive greater meaningfulness in their job and signal support for employee health and well-being, particularly when the displayed compassion and provided support is targeted toward *them* (e.g., Byron & Peterson, 2002; Carnahan et al., 2017; Watkins et al., 2015). Additionally, adapting work structure and practices (e.g., work scheduling, location autonomy) can also be important, mitigating employees' feelings of job insecurity in response to event novelty and criticality, thereby protecting employees from subsequent emotional exhaustion, financial saving behaviors, and engagement in organizational deviance (Lin et al., 2021).

HRM Impact on Buffering the Identity-Focused Impact of Jolts

We characterize a second set of HRM practices as focused on buffering the impact of the *identity relevance* dimension of socio-environmental jolts. These practices center around support and respect for employees across work and non-work identities, indicating genuine interest to obviate employees' feeling undervalued and forgotten during socio-environmental jolts (Cohen & Roeske-Zummer, 2021). Research on workplace respect—the worth accorded to an individual by one or more others in their work environment (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017; Speers et al., 2006)—suggests that respect is a highly identity-relevant social cue as it provides employees with assurance that they are valued for who they are, provides social validation that they are secure and safe in their identities, and satisfies psychological needs for belonging and status (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017; Rogers et al., 2017). Given this, attention to the structures, policies, and practices that convey respect following social identity-relevant socio-environmental jolts are critical for managers and HR leaders to consider. For example, when employees see respectful structural support from their organization for multiple identities that they are enacting, it enables them to engage more fully in both their work and non-work roles (Kossek et al., 2021).

McCluney et al. (2017) provide a case of validating identities through their articulation of organizational resourcing and social identity resourcing for employees experiencing racial trauma from mega-threat events; here, the authors assert that social, cognitive, and material resources related to employees' identities facilitate identity safety and psychological safety that is otherwise tenuous during social identity-relevant socio-environmental jolts. Organizations, and HRM leaders specifically, can therefore create spaces and scripts that provide opportunities for co-workers to express respect to one another, such as standing meetings devoted to recognition and respectful engagement (Lee et al., 2020) and encouraging team compassion behaviors (Wee & Fehr, 2021). Yet, organizational norms often discourage discussion or even acknowledgement of forms of oppression (e.g., racism), making it difficult for organizations to create respectful and safe spaces for employees who belong to historically marginalized identity groups (Apfelbaum et al., 2012; McCluney et al. 2017). Thus, we encourage organizational scholars and practitioners to understand *how* organizations can create structures that encourage identity safety for employees most affected by social identity-relevant socio-environmental jolts (Leigh & Melwani, 2019).

Future Considerations for Organizational Scholarship on Socio-Environmental Jolts

With organizational research on the consequences of socio-environmental jolts being at its infancy, there is an opportunity for our knowledge in this area to be greatly expanded because socio-environmental jolts lend themselves to be studied using powerful inductive, abductive, and deductive research designs (a point we discuss in greater detail below in our methodological considerations). Regarding induction, socio-environmental jolts are likely to facilitate rare or extreme contexts that are fruitful for building theory, particularly when social phenomena of interest become transparently observable (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010) and salient in ways that informants can readily articulate their experiences. Regarding abduction, because no two socio-

environmental jolts are alike, each can be studied for anomalies with the researcher observing the ways in which it aligns with, or diverges from, current theoretical and empirical understanding of similar jolts (Bamberger, 2018; Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021). Finally, although not always the case, some socio-environmental jolts can be anticipated by researchers (e.g., the verdict in a trial, an election outcome). These situations present opportunities for testing hypotheses about such jolts via quasi-experimentation (Grant & Wall, 2009) and natural experimentation (Withers & Li, 2021). Regarding quasi-experiments, researchers can partner with organizations to implement an intervention hypothesized to help employees cope with the effects of socio-environmental jolts, and examine the influence of the intervention relative to employees in a control group. Regarding natural experiments, because socio-environmental jolts can be geographically isolated or may only affect a certain group of employees, researchers can better understand the effects of anticipated jolts by measuring variables related to employee well-being before *and* after a given jolt, and then comparing the effects of the jolt on those "closest to" versus "removed from" it.

Finally, although the reviewed research and examples throughout emphasize that socio-environmental jolts have deleterious implications for employees, it is important to consider that Lee and Mitchell's (1994) broader conceptualization of 'shocks' also include *positive* experiences (despite their potential impact on prompting employee turnover). Integrating this with the ideas presented here would suggest that positive shocks that occur in the broader socio-environmental context may be especially of interest in terms of their reach to employees. For example, Leigh and Melwani (2019) note that a "positive mega-event" (p. 583), such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, is likely to be experienced favorably for those employees to whom the event is identity relevant (e.g., members of the LGBTQ+ community) or are allies to the relevant social identity group. However, that same event may be experienced unfavorably for

employees who strongly with religious organizations that have conflicting values, causing the shock to be threatening. Existing research on the negative experiences of socio-environmental jolts would likely explain the work-related implications of this event for the latter group, but offers less about the former. As such, future research may explore the role of HRM in helping employees navigate positive social shocks in ways that potentially affirm their social identity, offering validation and identity security (Rogers et al., 2017) that could drive positive work outcomes such as favorable job attitudes and embeddedness (Holton & Inderrieden, 2006).

Methodological Considerations to Advance Employee Well-Being at Work

The above sections present several novel ideas that are critical to study in the pursuit of organizational thriving, but pose challenges methodologically. We see these as encompassing two interwoven issues: (1) how to access and respectfully study, support, and understand vulnerable populations, and (2) how to measure and analyze employees' experiences in a more holistic manner that captures their lived experiences. Like most topics, we encourage scholars to think about these issues *prior* to the beginning of participant recruitment, as it is important to clearly delineate these issues at the start of studying any of the five topics listed above.

Respectfully Studying Vulnerable Populations

Based on this review, we hope it is clear that future research on how HRM practices can support the well-being of women, those with concealable and stigmatized identities, parents and other caregivers, and those who have experienced potentially traumatizing societal jolts is much-needed. Yet, to do so means that scholars may have to work closely with vulnerable populations in organizations. Thus, while we encourage researchers to take up the mantle outlined above, we urge them to do so with some caution. Namely, it is important to ensure that research produced as a result of this review both protects vulnerable individuals from further exploitation through

the research process, while also allowing for their full autonomy in choosing whether and how to participate (Smith, 2007; Ulrich et al., 2002). There are always key decision points that scholars must deliberate on as they move projects through the research lifecycle. Study design, participant recruitment, data collection and storage, and the presentation and dissemination of research findings and implications all present their own challenges—and must be thought about even more carefully when working with populations that have historically been marginalized at work. Below, we provide some guidance for how to ensure each of these phases of the research lifecycle is conducted in an ethical manner. Of course, there are many other best practices that researchers might also leverage, in addition to what is presented here. As such, future research which outlines best practices for conducting studies with vulnerable populations is encouraged.

Study Design

First, when designing studies that are to be conducted within vulnerable populations, it is important to engage in perspective taking. In order to do so, researchers should become well-educated about the challenges that individuals within the study population face at work, so that *study materials are designed in the most inclusive manner possible.* Indeed, it is crucial that all members of the research team are well-educated about the challenges faced by study populations, to ensure each step of the process is infused with as much care and respect as possible (Sutton et al., 2003). Further, perspective taking signals to participants that they can more readily trust researchers (Moree, 2018), and helps maintain positive relations between participants and the research team. To that end, pretesting materials with members of the target population for the sole purpose of gathering feedback can be a useful for approach (Andrews et al., 2003). With regard to the populations highlighted in this review, ensuring that demographic questions about gender are comprehensive and up-to-date can send positive signals to participants that the

research team understands the complexities of gender identity (e.g., including non-binary as an option; asking if participants are transgender in a separate question, such that trans people might have the option to identify themselves as “male” or “female” instead of as “trans male” or “trans female”). Further, ensuring that materials are not making gendered or heterosexist assumptions is also key in studies examining women and/or caretakers. For example, in a qualitative study of women caretakers, asking a participant the question “How much housework does your husband complete per day?” without knowing their sexual orientation may create extreme discomfort and decrease perceptions of researcher professionalism. Without understanding the nuances inherent in participants’ lived experiences, participants may doubt the validity of the research process.

Second, researchers should *keep in mind demand characteristics of surveys or interview processes*. In quantitative work, it may be challenging for those who are struggling with many competing demands, or who lack financial resources, to take time to complete long surveys. For example, asking working parents to take an hour out of their day to complete a survey may introduce new burdens into their working lives, even if the research itself aims to eliminate them (for similar arguments regarding research with refugee women, see: Goodkind & Deacon, 2004). Further, it is imperative to pay a living wage for survey completion. Those who are living in poverty or close to the poverty line should not fall further into financial precarity because of their participation in a research study. Additionally, conducting surveys online may be helpful in allowing participants to complete surveys in a space that feels safe and affirming to their identity (McInroy, 2016), and also minimizes travel costs or burdens. Thus, conducting surveys off-site instead of on-site may be preferable. Finally, particularly with qualitative work, it is important to recognize the emotional burdens that interview or focus group settings may place on participants (Sawyer, 2021), particularly when recalling instances of bias, discrimination, or mistreatment.

Starting protocols with less emotionally burdensome questions, such that participants might have time to gain comfort and confidence in the research process (Sanders & Munford, 2017), can build rapport with participants by the time they tackle more intense, challenging questions.

Recruitment

When recruiting participants from vulnerable populations, it is important to *ensure their anonymity in the recruitment process* and *to avoid making assumptions about their identities*. First, while it is perfectly appropriate to recruit participants using social media or other online forums, participants should not have to identify themselves to others in order to take part in a study. For example, a researcher might post a call for participants who identify as LGBTQ+ to a personal social media page. Yet, they should also make sure to note that, in order to enroll in the study, participants need to directly message their interest to the research team, as opposed to stating their interest in the comments section of the post. When participants have to "out" themselves and their participation via social media, they become more identifiable. A good option for overcoming these challenges is to place ads online containing researchers' contact information (Russomanno et al., 2019). Further, it is crucial to monitor comments that are posted to the ads so that potential participants are not exposed to triggering content. Similarly, when conducting field research in organizations, it is important that employees' participation is unknown to others at work. This means that, even if researchers obtain lists of employee names and email addresses from HR, that they never release information about which employees participated to any members of the organization (e.g. HR, organizational leadership). Allowing members of the organization to keep track of or manage participation can make employee responses more identifiable, potentially increasing vulnerability for employees who are already marginalized. Therefore, researchers should track participation themselves whenever possible.

Next, researchers should avoid making assumptions about employees' identities. As participants are being recruited, researchers might feel the urge to directly contact those who they believe may fit the participant profile they are looking for. However, it is not appropriate to contact potential participants directly to inquire about their study participation if researchers are not certain that they are members of the target group. Instead, all participants should self-identify as being qualified for studies (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). For example, emailing young women to ask if they would like to participate in studies about motherhood without knowing if they have children or have even struggled with issues pertaining to conception (e.g., miscarriage, IVF), or direct messaging individuals who are only presumed to be members of the LGBTQ+ community about studies examining concealable identities, can place participants in a very awkward and precarious position. Best practices involve posting ads,or marketing to broader social media groups or listservs, and allowing potential participants to self-select into a study instead.

Data Collection and Storage

When studying vulnerable populations, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is critical. Researchers studying marginalized populations have the power to "out" participants in their studies by maintaining unnecessary identifiers in their data. In order to ensure that opportunities for further marginalization are not reproduced as a byproduct of the research process (Thomas-Hughes, 2018), sensitive information should be handled carefully. When possible, researchers should try not to collect any identifying information at all (e.g., email addresses, names; Salaam & Brown, 2013). If scholars cannot avoid collecting it, they should try when possible to *detach identifying information from the data itself.* If researchers need personal information, such as a name or email address in order to pay participants for their completion of an online survey, they can create a primary survey and a survey that solely serves the purpose of collecting names and

email addresses. When participants finish the primary survey, it can automatically redirect to the separate survey asking for identifiers. This allows data about employees' workplace experiences or attitudes to be stored anonymously, while still allowing participants to be compensated for their time. If this is not possible, and identifying information must be linked to sensitive employee data, researches can try stripping data of all unnecessary identifiers and/or storing information that is not critical for testing study hypotheses in a separate demographics file. In qualitative work, removing all identifying information from transcriptions of interviews or focus groups immediately and deleting files that contain identifiable information (e.g., audio files, transcripts that contain identifiable info) is preferable. Further, when conducting interviews or focus groups, it is common to audio record sessions. Keeping a separate file of demographic information, which is not linked to audio files associated with their participation, can also help.

Regardless of methodology, being transparent about how data will be stored and disposed of during the informed consent process is key to ensuring participants are aware of—and agree with—how their data is being handled (Lake et al., 2018). Related to this point, ensuring that data are stored securely and are as anonymized as possible is also key. For this reason, sending identifiable data files, audio files, or identifiable transcripts to co-authors via email is not advised. Finally, it is important to ensure that methods for handling data are not overly paternalistic in nature—participants may decide that they want details of their stories shared in ways that might enhance identifiability (Nordentoft & Kappel, 2011). In such cases, researchers need to be fully transparent about the risks inherent in doing so, but should not make unilateral decisions about how much information to retain or discard about participants' lived experiences.

Presenting Findings and Implications

Finally, researchers have a grave responsibility to best represent the lived experiences of

all participants—especially those who have fallen victim to unequal power dynamics (i.e., those between researchers and the “researched”) in the past (e.g,, Harding, 1987; Meara & Schmidt, 1991). Researchers hold power as they study vulnerable populations, and their stories about such groups matter. For this reason, it is important for researchers to make sure the stories they tell are accurate. To do so, researchers might engage in *member or community checking* (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This involves researchers checking with participants themselves, or with other members of the sample population, to ensure that findings have face validity. Such checks can be useful for ensuring that terminology is accurate, that findings are presented in the most inclusive way possible, and that practical implications resonate with community members. By ensuring that findings are viewed as legitimate by members of the target population, researchers ensure their work has a positive impact on those it intends to serve.

Finally, while producing academic research is certainly a worthy goal, what we do with such research matters immensely. When researchers dedicate themselves to *applying what they have learned through their research*, the impact of their participants’ time and energy is maximized. When participants from marginalized populations spend time with members of the research community sharing their insights, we can only do these insights justice if we use them to promote justice ourselves. Leveraging research methodologies that actively gather participant input about possible practical implications are ideal (e.g., participatory action research; Baum et al., 2006). As Smith (2012) wrote in their book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, researchers need to avoid studying marginalized populations in ways that “[tell] us things already known, suggest things that would not work, and ma[k]e careers for people who already ha[ve] jobs” (p. 3). Thus, researchers should ensure that they find ways to apply their research in real world organizations, with the aim of supporting the well-being of vulnerable employees around the world.

Analytic Considerations for Mixed Methods and Person-Centered Work

Analytically, there are also some considerations worth discussing. To begin, and as discussed in our section of socio-environmental jolts, many of the topics being discussed are ripe for inductive scholarship, particularly research that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For example, in their work on breastfeeding and pumping breastmilk during the workday, Gabriel et al. (2020) began with qualitative interviews of women who were navigating this blended work-family experience, identifying not only the nomological network stemming from this experience (e.g., positive and negative affective experiences; work and breastfeeding goal progress; work-family balance satisfaction), but also the daily time course with which this phenomenon unfolded. Doing so informed two multi-time-point experience sampling designs aimed at unpacking these daily relationships. A similar structure was used by Little et al. (2015) who first, through interviews, identified the image management tactics that women used at work to manage identity-related concerns during their pregnancies; these tactics were then developed into a measure and tested in survey-based research. Particularly for some of the topics discussed here that are anchored in critical, practical issues affecting employees, starting with informants who have gone through the experience(s) can contribute to rich theoretical and empirical work.

Beyond mixed methods, many of the topics discussed above suggest a need for analytic approaches that move beyond our typical use of variable-centered methods to a person-centered methodological lens (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2018). Variable-centered lenses are not inherently problematic—the most common form of a variable-centered approach is regression in which a series of variables are entered as simultaneous predictors of a criterion of interest. Such an analysis allows researchers to understand how variables significantly account for meaningful levels of variance in a criterion above and beyond each other. As an example, thinking of the

various forms of support discussed above for caregivers, researchers interested in understanding which forms of support "matter" could identify several theoretically and practically relevant supports (e.g., flextime, job sharing, emergency caregiving services) and enter them as simultaneous predictors of outcomes like burnout, job engagement, and work-family conflict. While such an analysis is likely to provide useful insights, it still would not account for the unique ways in which various forms of support naturally co-occur or combine. To consider such combinations of employee experiences would necessitate a switch to a person-centered approach. As noted by Gabriel et al. (2018): "the goal of a person-centered approach is to identify individuals who express certain profiles, or constellations, of characteristics and ascertain whether and how antecedents and outcomes diverge across these different clusters of individuals (Wang & Hanges, 2011)" (p. 878). Such an approach assumes that employees may simultaneously experience a set of constructs of interest, forming subpopulations within the data. As such, adopting a person-centered view allows researchers to understand the experiences of people as a whole, rather than separate types of experiences in isolation (De Fruyt, 2002).

Analytically, there are two person-centered approaches that would be informative for the topics covered here—latent profile analysis (LPA) or fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). As reviewed by Gabriel et al. (2018), LPA tends to be used predominately by micro organizational scholars, with macro organizational scholars relying more heavily on fsQCA. However, both approaches can be applied to micro and macro topics, and both can be used to address the five challenges reviewed here. Starting with LPA, this approach assumes that there is naturally occurring heterogeneity within a given sample as opposed to a sample being purely homogenous. When such heterogeneity is modeled for a set of profile indicators (e.g., indicators of caregiving or maternal health support; indicators of socio-environmental jolts), profiles—or

subpopulations—that naturally exist within the data emerge. The resultant profiles help illustrate theoretically and practically how certain experiences co-exist, with scholars then being able to model antecedents of profile membership (i.e., how higher levels of an antecedent contribute to individuals being more or less likely to belong to a given profile), as well as outcomes (i.e., whether mean differences on an outcome exist due to belonging to a certain profile).

To date, there are an increasing number of organizational topics that have used LPA to glean theoretical and practical insights (see Gabriel et al., 2018), with scholars even starting to tackle one of the challenges we reviewed here—recovery after work (e.g., Bennett et al., 2016; Chawla et al., 2020; Gabriel et al., 2019). Indeed, Bennett et al.'s (2016) LPA study, beyond establishing the SSR construct reviewed above, helped establish that employees can indeed experience multiple forms of recovery simultaneously. With profiles comprised of psychological detachment, relaxation, control, and mastery, as well as problem-solving pondering (i.e., a proactive form of rumination in which employees actively plan and goal set for subsequent workdays), Bennett et al. (2016) illustrated that some employees do in fact report consistently high levels of all four classic recovery experiences—a profile they coined as "leaving work behind." Other employees, however, took a more mastery-oriented approach to their recovery, having higher levels of mastery, control, and problem-solving pondering paired with lower levels of psychological detachment and relaxation, a group they labeled as "recovering ponderers." Of note, higher levels of SSR contributed to employees being more likely to belong to the leaving work behind profile than the recovering ponderer profile, illustrating the criticality of supervisors in setting clear norms that value recovery. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, recovering ponderers had higher levels of well-being (e.g., higher engagement, lower emotional exhaustion, lower somatic complaints) compared to other profiles, suggesting that more proactive, growth-oriented forms of

recovery can be fruitful. Such sentiments fit with daily LPA work (or multilevel LPA [MLPA]) by Chawla et al. (2020) who found that mastery is a necessary component of profile membership to promote maximal levels of well-being for employees from one day to the next. Such work helps support the notion that "[e]mployees do not use recovery experiences in isolation, and variable-focused studies of recovery experiences are likely to miss the rich ways that these experiences combine within people" (Bennett et al., 2016, p. 1650).

As an additional example to consider beyond recovery at work, in the case of supporting caregivers, research on work-family policy bundles by Perry-Smith and Blum (2000) focused on combinations of supportive policies that varied in their level of comprehensiveness. Drawing from the strategic HR literature (e.g., Becker & Gerhart, 1996), the authors used cluster analysis—an analytic technique that actually spurred the use of LPA—to study work-family policies and their effects on firm-level performance. Here, the authors recognized that each policy does not happen alone, and that policy combinations are often "complementary, highly related and, in some cases, overlapping human resource policies that may help employees manage nonwork roles" (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000, p. 1107). Three groupings of policies were used in their person-centered work: (1) leave policies (e.g., leave, unpaid parental leave, paid parental leave); (2) traditional dependent care (e.g., daycare, flexible scheduling; child care information provision); and (3) less traditional dependent care (e.g., monetary assistance/support for daycare and eldercare). Four clusters (analogous to profiles) emerged: firms with lower levels of all three; firms with leaves and less traditional dependent care; firms with leaves and traditional dependent care; and firms with higher levels of all three. Results further supported a "more is better" approach, such that firms in the cluster comprised of higher levels of all three types of support rendered the best benefits. Of course, these results only focused on formal

supports, and an expanded focus could consider informal supports as well.

As an alternative person-centered approach, fsQCA (Ragin, 2000; see Misangyi et al. [2017] for a review) emerged from the case study tradition and is rooted in set theory from mathematics and Boolean algebra (i.e., AND, OR, NOT operators). fsQCA relies on necessity and sufficiency analyses to uncover multiple configurations of constructs that underlie outcomes of interest. This research approach accommodates three principles: (1) conjunction—meaning that elements (e.g., types of experience) cannot be understood in isolation and are considered as a whole; (2) equifinality—meaning that there may be multiple equally effective paths or "recipes" leading to the same outcome; and (3) causal asymmetry—meaning that 'success' and 'failure' (e.g., presence vs. absence of a desirable outcome, such as employee satisfaction) may have very different causes, and "variables found to be causally related in one configuration may be unrelated or even inversely related in another" (Meyer et al., 1993: 1178). Because maintaining researcher connection to the cases (e.g., individuals or organizations) under study during analyses is highly encouraged, fsQCA represents an attractive middle ground conceptually between quantitative and qualitative methods (Ragin, 2008), allowing for systematic analyses combined with inductive reasoning. Unlike regression and variable-centered analyses, high correlations between variables are not problematic, and indeed, can be expected. The core assumption behind using a configurational method like fsQCA is that causal conditions likely operate jointly to produce an outcome—in other words, they co-occur and are interdependent.

While the use of fsQCA in micro scholarship is conspicuously absent, scholars are beginning to utilize this approach to tackle complex, configurational problems and research questions. For instance Ong and Johnson (2021) recently used fsQCA to study how various configurations of resources and concomitant job demands affect a number of strain-related

related outcomes—exhaustion, job engagement, turnover intentions, and physical symptoms. The authors uncovered three configurations sufficient to produce exhaustion across three studies, highlighting the promise of fsQCA as a person-centered analytic technique.

Staying with our organizational challenge of promoting and supporting recovery at work, an example of another related question that fsQCA can address in this topic is how different combinations of the four recovery experiences—psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control, along with problem-solving pondering—form various recipes that are sufficient for resource restoration (i.e., achieving maximal engagement and lower burnout or emotional exhaustion). In addition, this method can help identify if any of the recovery experiences are in fact empirically necessary (i.e., requisite components of all the successful recipes). Alternatively, it is possible that none of them are necessary on their own, with employees instead able to rely on various combinations that are sufficient for promoting engagement and lowering burnout. This is an interesting take for promoting recovery at work—because all combinations identified as sufficient via fsQCA are effective, this would mean that employees can optimize their time and focus on combinations that they find personally appealing. Importantly to our topic, since we are calling for a shift of responsibility for recovery from the employee to the organization, this would mean that organizations would have flexibility in supporting employees in various ways, due to the equifinal nature of the recipes. This also has important implications for the role of managers and organizational HRM in contributing to or inhibiting employee recovery.

Highlighting the practical contributions of fsQCA further for the study of recovery, as discussed earlier in this review, SSR, vacation time, limiting after-hours e-mails, encouraging microbreaks at work, flexible working hours, and a compressed work week represent important tools that organizations have at their disposal to combat employee burnout. All of these elements

are interdependent and some of these tools may be more or less effective depending on the entire configuration of recovery-support tools deployed by the organization. For instance, flexible working hours and a compressed work week may not be effective in the absence of the “right to disconnect” after hours. Moreover, similar to the example above, it is likely that there are multiple, equifinal (i.e., equally effective) recipes that organizations can use to tailor to their specific industry and work context. Flexible working hours may not be possible in many client- or customer-facing occupations and in healthcare settings, for example. However, organizations may be able to use alternative effective combinations of recovery support tools. Regardless of whether fsQCA or LPA is used (see Gabriel et al. [2018] for example questions to be asked with each method), we see person-centered approaches as a fruitful analytic approach to solving what can be complex, and highly interrelated, organizational challenges detailed here.

Conclusion

For decades, many organizational scholars and practitioners alike have strived to make employee well-being a higher priority for organizations. With more complex challenges facing employees and organizations than ever, we have stressed in this review that these challenges need to be tackled proactively by organizations, and that using organizational research with an HRM lens in particular can be a powerful way to generate the strongest solutions. Whether it is promoting employee recovery and rest, supporting women’s health and the health and needs of caregivers, navigating complex concealable stigmas, or coping with socio-environmental jolts, there are countless ways that HRM scholars can help organizations maximize their responses and proactively craft thriving organizations. After all, as we are slowly beginning to realize in the wake of the Great Resignation, without thriving people, there is no thriving business.

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Table 1

Key Caregiving Dynamics to Consider when Crafting Organizational Efforts to Support Employee Caregivers

Caregiving Dynamic	Definition	Representative Caregiving Circumstances	Stronger Need for Organizational Support
Chronicness	The degree to which caregiving demands are transitory and fleeting (i.e., acute) vs. regular and recurring (i.e., chronic)	Caring for a partner after a brief minor medical procedure. illness/cold (**Acute**) vs. in response to an ongoing chronic medical condition (**Chronic**)	Chronic Demands
Unpredictability	The degree to which caregiving demands are easily anticipated (i.e., predictable) vs. unexpected (i.e., unpredictable)	Caring for a child during a planned teacher workday (**Predictable**) vs. an unexpected school closure in response to COVID-19 (**Unpredictable**)	Unpredictable Demands
Outsourceability	The degree to which caregiving demands can (i.e., outsourceable) vs. cannot (i.e., non-outsourceable) be performed by others	Preparing meals for an older child (**Outsourceable**) vs. breastfeeding a newborn (**Non-Outsourceable**)	Non-Outsourceable Demands
Intensity	The degree to which caregiving demands are physically, mentally, and/or emotionally taxing	Caring for a generally healthy older adult relative (**Lower Intensity**) vs. an older adult relative suffering from dementia (**Higher Intensity**)	More Intense Demands

Figure 1

A Framework of Socio-Environmental Jolts

Relevance to Social Identity	**Disruption to Work:** Low	**Disruption to Work:** High
High	• Mega-threats (e.g., George Floyd death, Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting) • Capitol Hill insurrection • Presidential elections	• COVID-19 pandemic • September 11, 2001 attack
Low	• Mass shootings not driven by socio-political objectives (e.g., Las Vegas shooting, Aurora theater shooting) • Amazon rainforest fires	• Local natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes) • Political unrest (e.g., Hong Kong protests) • Financial crises