COM 803-12: Hermeneutics and Communication

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Professor

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Assignment #3 - Essay on a case study

Write a 5-page paper on a specific event or phenomenon (e.g., a historical event, cultural practice, a legal decision), and interpret it from a hermeneutic perspective. This would involve understanding the event within its context and recognizing the role of your prejudices in shaping your interpretation.

The student should direct developmental readings from Assignment #2 on the hermeneutic issue for this assignment.

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**The Work-Life Conflict Phenomenon, its intersection with Gender Ideologies and Implications for Youth Transitioning to adulthood**

The discourse and realities around work life dichotomy (paid work and unpaid care and domestic work) are complex and multifaceted, from debates around the gender revolution in the industrialised world, changes in the profile of populations due to longer life expectancy and delayed childbearing, changes in the breadwinner homemaker model, sexual division of labour, proliferation of technology, the permeable nature of private and public lives, productivity, wellness and other factors (Buchanan & Baker, 2020; Charmes, J. (2019). In this paper, challenges around work life definition and conflict, gendered considerations of this conflict and implications for building youth agency to transition to adulthood will be explored.

Let us begin by clarifying the hermeneutics of work, non-work, paid and unpaid work and life. Some authors make reference to work and non-work as a means of separating paid work and unpaid work/non-work. However, for my own sensibilities as a social scientist and as a woman not all unpaid work constitutes non-work, non work is leisure. A large percentage of unpaid work is care and domestic work which should never be associated with or classified as non-work. This dichotomy of paid and unpaid work is central to the work life conflict dyad. Beyond this is leisure and all that encapsulates life. Therefore understanding work life conflict is built upon a knowledge of paid work, unpaid work (care and voluntary work) and leisure. The discourse however, often refers to work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict and role conflict. Consequently, there are three types of work life conflict ideologies; time based conflict, role based conflict and behaviour based conflict. From these hermeneutical discussions the conflict within the discourse of work begins to emerge. Work is an essential part of social development and our daily lives, it moulds our understanding of self and consciousness and the world in which we live (Tausig, 2013). The nature of work and the meaning it illicit forms the centrality of human existence. Work is divided into productive, reproductive (care) and voluntary work (Mohammed 2017, Bailey and Ricketts 2003, Carwell, 2016) all of which adds value to our lives (monetary and non-monetary) and gives a sense of identity and purpose (Resnikoff, 2018)

Critical to this paper is the continued legitimatization of this core responsibility and the inordinate challenges faced by women in paid work outside the home and unpaid care work in their own home and others. The definition, construction and organization of work and labour are often understood and conceptualized through a pervasive hidden system of hegemonic patriarchy often excluding the important female role in the economic and social production of work and an important role in development (Feldman, 2013). ‘Woman’ is problematized in the work life dichotomy. This promotes the social and economic unrecognition, devaluing and/or undervaluing of ‘women’s work’ both in the private and public spheres. These factors continue to promote challenges of work life balance, lack of reliable and affordable care for elderly, children, and the disabled. This modus operandi fuels gender inequality for women and work and a persistence of normative gender roles that perpetuate the male provider and female caregiver model. Some have posited a defamilialization and/or demotherization of care work to transfer some aspects of care work to the state, grandparents, their partners or paid caregiver in order to create a balance and in order for women to more actively participate in the workforce (Quesnel-Vallée and Clouston, 2012; Mathieu, 2016; Breitkreuz and Cohen, 2018). The discourse around work and division of labour ought to be grounded in an understanding of class, race, culture and gender, given that differences and intersectionality in society promote a lack of homogeneity among women. Understanding labour force participation within a gendered context is not only important for research but for policy planning and development, education and practice. Moser (1993) provides a basis for our understanding of gender roles where women carry out three main roles, reproductive (unpaid care role), productive (paid work which is shared with men) and community roles. There are gendered considerations in relation to time spent in work (paid and unpaid), the economic value of men and women’s labour, positionality and level of workforce participation, factors related to staying away from paid work temporarily or permanently and other interceding factors. Globally women work more hours than men (paid and unpaid hours) though men contribute more hours to paid work and women more to unpaid care work (UNDP, 2015). This situation of multiple continuous roles (role overload) creates a burden for the woman (Mohammed, 2003; Bailey & Ricketts, 2003). The challenge is not just about who is doing more work and how many hours but how societies continue to define, organize and structure productive work [without consideration for care work and appreciation of various intersectional vulnerabilities] that creates, perpetuates and promotes systems of inequality and inequity.

The work life balance challenge has impacted the lives of workers with family and other responsibilities and is the top challenge for working women today (Gallup and ILO, 2017). Women have been at the forefront of these discussions since their introduction to paid work. There are gendered considerations in relation to time spent in work (paid and unpaid), the economic value of men and women’s labour, positionality and level of workforce participation, factors related to staying away from paid work temporarily or permanently and other interceding factors. The global corona virus pandemic has intensified and brought into closer focus this phenomena that have pervaded women’s lives globally. This is not to preclude the numerous other groups of single childless women and men who also experience major challenges with work and life balance given the priorities within and outside the household and other competing demands of paid work and other complexities inclusive of study, career advancement, community involvement and volunteerism and care of others, including pets and other life domains and demands. Notwithstanding this, the notion of the working mother is tantamount given that she continues to carry these responsibilities and the demand of childcare and rearing responsibilities which is essential and legitimized in society and within the work sphere due to the connection with the continuation of future workforce and the human race as we know it.

A study conducted by Hofacker, D., & Konig, S. (2013), found that “both genders, irregularity and unpredictability of working hours negatively impact on work-life conflict beyond the mere amount of working hours. Yet, higher autonomy in choosing one’s work time is used very differently: While women tend to use their control over working hours to achieve a better work-life-balance, men tend to use these arrangements to increase their work commitment, thereby enhancing their perceived work-family conflict. The authors argue that this gender-specific use of flexible work arrangements might still reflect the traditional gender roles and gender-segregated labour market structures p. 613.In a study conducted by Brue (2018), women tended to feel more time based conflict rather than strain based conflict. 49% indicated that they did not have clear boundaries between work and family roles and that work often interfered with family time rather than family impeding work.

Stemming from this understanding it is important to prepare young women for transition to adult roles. Emerging adulthood and major transitions in social roles are associated with high levels of stress including psychological stress (Matud, Díaz, Bethencourt, & Ibáñez, 2020). Building agency in young people to be able to transition into work, family and other life plans with knowledge about work and life balance and gender role identity is a key part of life planning.

Althammer, Reis, Beek, Beck & Michel’s (2021), findings suggest that“mindfulness-based

self-training intervention can foster detachment, reduce psychological work–life conflict, and

improve satisfaction with work–life balance.” p. 302. They propose a cognitive-emotional segmentation strategy, segmentation preferences, boundary theory and boundary management skills, mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions to help young people transition.

In conclusion, work life conflict presents challenges to workers and in particular role based conflict for women. Helping young people to understand these challenges, teaching them decision making skills and promoting mindfulness for better work life balance can help young people transition to adulthood.

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