Extant literature has shed light on a multitude of career and work issues and how they affect workers and organizations. Thus, we have a fairly well-developed knowledge of career and job choice, work/nonwork role conflict, adjustment to work, work and career attitudes, organizational support policies and perceptions, and employee career development. Despite this, most of what we know in these research domains is based on studies using fairly homogenous samples. Accordingly, many important groups and employee types have been noticeably absent from the literature. These groups include, but are not limited to ethnic and racial minority workers, GLBT workers, workers from countries outside of North America, workers from religious minority groups, low-wage workers and workers in non-professional positions. Within the research on work and nonwork literature specifically, samples have focused on the traditional nuclear family (i.e., spouse and children), neglecting single parents as well as single workers without dependent children. Similarly, studies on workplace flexibility—an emerging organizational practice used to help employees manage work and non work responsibilities—almost solely focuses on professional workers.

These oversights are important because the workers that comprise these understudied and diverse groups often form a substantial portion of labor market, and may confront career and work issues that are unique to their demographic group. For instance, the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005 Occupational Employment Survey reports nearly one in three jobs in the United States pays lower wages (Boushey, Fremstad, Gragg & Waller, 2007) and such jobs often necessitate non-traditional working hours including evenings, nights, and rotating shifts, unpredictable scheduling requirements, and minimal control over work hours. Moreover, these jobs are generally considered dead-end jobs that offer minimal career mobility (Lower-Basch, 2007). Understanding work and career issues of culturally diverse groups is also important as globalization has created the need for multinational companies to adapt to the cultures of countries where they operate, and within the US, racial and ethnic minority groups are expected to continue to grow as a percentage of our workforce, and other forms of diversity such as religious diversity have become increasingly salient. Yet, because much of what we know about employee career and work issues is based on Anglo American employees working within their own cultural context, findings may not generalize to environments with distinct legal and cultural contexts.

Thus, because research conducted on white, Anglo, managerial and professional employees working in the United States may not generalize to other populations that have been studied less often, scholars may recommend addressing employee career and work concerns armed with knowledge most salient to the majority groups rather than with knowledge about diverse employee populations. Accordingly, the purpose of this special issue is to bring together empirical work that expands the literature on career and work concerns by focusing on employee populations which have been underrepresented in past literature. Submissions that will be considered are empirical studies or meta-analytic reviews (conceptual papers are not appropriate) that explore any employee work or career topic using a sample or samples that are distinct from those explored in past studies, and thus, contribute a perspective to the literature from the vantage point of that employee type.

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