RESEARCH STATEMENT — STÉPHANE P. FRANCIOLI

My work builds on theories of social cognition, intergroup relations, and conflict management to examine how major demographic changes (e.g., an aging labor force, female workers' growing contribution to their household's income) shape people's work experience, attitudes, and outcomes. To explore these issues, I look at the micro-level consequences of these macro-level transformations. So far, I have developed two research streams. In one stream, I examine collective views of younger workers in a rapidly aging workforce. I show how, contrary to common beliefs, younger workers face *more* prejudices than older workers, and that these prejudices influence intergenerational conflict and young people's attitudes and experience in the workplace. In another line of work, I study gender dynamics in dual-earner couples, the predominant household structure of contemporary societies. For instance, I find that making division of domestic labor more transparent between dual-earner partners pushes men to do more at home, which reduces family interferences with work duties for female professionals.

I explore these questions using a wide range of methods including experiments, quasi-experiments, archival data, automated text analyses, nationally representative surveys, academic forecasting studies, and field interventions. Through this research, I aim to not only advance our understanding of a rapidly changing workforce but also develop practical solutions to address the challenges that these changes raise for workers, business leaders, and organizations.

YOUNGER WORKERS IN AN AGING WORKFORCE

The rapid aging of the labor force is compelling organizations worldwide to adapt in order to keep an increasingly age-diverse workforce engaged, cohesive, and productive. To help leaders navigate this transition, management scholars have emphasized the necessity to understand the singular needs, experiences, and contributions of older workers, the growing segment of the workforce. Yet, building an age-inclusive workplace also requires addressing the challenges faced by today's *younger* workers. Following two major economic crises, the rise of the gig economy, degree inflation, and the delayed retirement of older employees, younger workers have been facing heightened job insecurity, lower incomes, grimmer career prospects, and fewer opportunities at wealth accumulation compared to previous generations at the same age. Reflective of their dissatisfaction with the psychological contract contemporary organizations are offering them, younger workers have largely contributed to the recent trend of *quiet quitting*, increasingly trading poor career prospects for more family and personal time. Hence, as organizations contend with the rapid aging of the labor force, understanding—and finding solutions to address—the predicaments of younger workers will be key to fostering a cohesive and productive multi-generational workplace.

My research contributes to this goal by shedding light on micro-level factors that shape both the work experience of younger workers and the degree of intergenerational conflict in the workplace. One such factor is age bias, which employee surveys regularly identify as the most prevalent form of

prejudice in the workplace, surpassing sexism and racism. In tackling ageism in the workplace, researchers have mainly assumed that experience of age bias increases throughout the lifespan, such that young adults experience it the least, and older adults experience it the most. My work challenges this assumption. For instance, my co-author and I find that people tend to harbor ambivalent sentiments toward young adults, that these sentiments are less favorable than those toward older adults, and that they do influence concrete outcomes, such as the endorsement of student debt relief programs, which have the potential to improve the standard of living of many young workers impacted by degree inflation and rising costs of higher education (Francioli & North, *JEP-G,* 2021).

Taking into account negative sentiments toward the young offers a more comprehensive picture of modern intergenerational conflicts (Francioli et al.; *PSPB,* 2023). Building on intergroup threat theory, we find that tensions between generations are driven by asymmetric concerns. On the one hand, younger generations fear that older cohorts' delayed transmission of power hampers their life prospects (i.e., realistic concerns). On the other hand, older generations fear that young people's ethos threaten the traditional values they hold dear (i.e., symbolic concerns). This pattern is ever more visible in the contemporary workplace, where young professionals fear that older workers' delayed retirements curb their shot at career progression and wealth accumulation, while older workers fear that younger workers' work ethics threaten the corporate culture they cherish. In addition, our findings show that generational labels—now widely used in the business world—exacerbate intergenerational tensions by nurturing a sense of "us-versus-them" between younger and older cohorts. In contrast, emphasizing the universal experience of age, whereby today's young are tomorrow's old, and today's old are yesterday's young, increases cohesion across cohorts.

My work also helps explain why ageism against young adults has been historically absent from research agendas, with significant metascientific implications (Francioli et al., *PNAS* 2024). In a series of forecasting surveys, we find that lay people and academics with little ageism expertise were quite accurate at predicting society's sentiments toward young, middle-aged, and older adults. In contrast, academics with ageism expertise greatly underestimated positive sentiments toward older adults and negative sentiments toward young adults. This constitutes a rare case where academic expertise hinders researchers' ability to apprehend basic facts about the very phenomenon they study. It also brings to light some of the methodological biases and echo chamber effects that scientific communities can fall prey to.

In my on-going work, I zoom in on intergenerational conflicts in the *workplace*. For instance, in two complementary papers, I combine inductive and deductive studies to build a more comprehensive map of ageism in the workplace, from the perspective of both the perpetrators and the victims (Francioli, in prep 1 & 2; target: *Organization Science*). My work on perpetrators shows that, contrasting with biases against older workers, which feed off preconceived ideas about old adulthood as a life stage, biases against younger workers build off a misguided narrative of generational decline (i.e., the notion that today's young fall short of the standards set by previous generations at the same age; in prep 1). Beliefs in generational decline can, in turn, influence the performance evaluation, respect, mentoring, and support for career advancement that managers grant to their own junior employees. My work on victims of ageism seeks to build a broader understanding of the diverse *experiences* of age biases in the workplace (in prep 2). From this in-depth investigation emerges a three-factor model of

ageism: While older workers report more *marginalization* than do younger and middle-aged workers (e.g., exclusion from social life and career development), younger workers report by far the most *derogation* (e.g., disparagement, micro-aggression, micro-management) and *exploitation* (e.g., unpaid overtime, busy work, systematic assignments of difficult shifts). These findings shed light on the recent rise in *quiet quitting* among younger workers: Many report feeling both undervalued (derogation) and taken advantage of (exploitation) by their employer, prompting them to disengage from work. Overall, this multi-faceted cartography of ageism in the workplace provides valuable insights to help leaders develop future targeted initiatives that can address age-related prejudices and keep employees more united, committed, and productive.

Most of my existing work on age has been dedicated to updating our understanding of ageism by bringing to light the prejudices experienced by the young. In future projects, I intend to identify solutions to *address* the intergenerational conflicts exacerbated by the aging of the labor force: How can leaders tailor career advancement systems to secure both younger and older workers' commitment to their organization? How can generativity-oriented messages push older workers to take more mentoring roles with younger colleagues? How can hazing prevention strategies be adapted to organizational settings to mitigate ageist behaviors toward junior recruits? Overall, as the global labor force ages rapidly, my research seeks to expand both academic and practitioner appreciations of the challenges and solutions needed to build the productive, age-diverse workforce of tomorrow.

GENDERED DYNAMICS IN DUAL-EARNER HOUSEHOLDS

Another major demographic shift that has shaped the modern labor force is the rise of women's participation in the workplace since the 1960s, leading to a surge in dual-earner households, which now constitutes the prevailing household structure of post-industrial economies. In these households, female partners increasingly earn as much or even more than their male counterparts—in the United States, close to half of them do. Yet, most dual earner couples still follow a neotraditional division of labor, whereby female partners perform the majority of the homemaking activities, regardless of their contributions to their household's income. These extra home / family demands, in turn, interfere with women's professional duties, impede their career achievements, and hinder their ability to secure—or even seek—leadership positions, significantly contributing to contemporary gender disparities in career outcomes.

My work on the topic seeks to better understand but also address these issues. For instance, in a recent paper (Francioli et al., [JOB MARKET PAPER] under review: *JAP*), my co-authors and I draw from the literature on social dilemmas to theorize that the disproportionate domestic contribution of female partners in dual-earner households is akin to a normatively tolerated form of *free riding,* whereby men enjoy the benefits of a collective endeavor (e.g., a clean house, healthy meals, well-raised children) without necessarily contributing their fair share. We then combine this framework with conservation of resources theory to devise a novel intervention aimed at increasing egalitarian division of labor and reduce female workers' experiences of home/family interferences with work duties. In a two-week, pre-/post-, daily time-use intervention study, we find evidence that making individual contributions at home more transparent between partners reduces the gender gap in time dedicated

to domestic labor by half and curbs female partners' daily experiences of family-to-work conflict when their work demands are incompatible with high expectations at home. Contrasting with prior interventions focusing on employer-based social support to address work-family conflict, our theory and findings show that simple nudges to increase partner support in the household can prove effective in alleviating the disparities in home/family demands that hinder women's careers.

Along with Nancy Rothbard and Catalina Enestrom (Francioli et al., *in progress*), we have developed a customized time-use app to deploy this intervention to a large pool of dual earner couples, dive into the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of this intervention and examine its implications on a broader range of work-related outcomes. In another early-stage project, I am exploring how framing home/family duties in an agentic rather than communal way influences male partners' willingness to shoulder more domestic responsibilities. As accumulating evidence highlights both the stalling of progress toward gender equality in the workplace and the key role that supply-side processes such as home/family demands play in shaping this outcome, my work seeks to offer theory-driven interventions that address the gender dynamics at *home* that hinder women's prospects at *work*.

CONCLUSION

My work looks at the micro-level consequences of large demographic changes such as the rapid aging of the labor force and women's growing contribution to their household's income. In doing so, I seek to advance our understanding of the consequences of a rapidly changing workforce on individuals' work experience and provide practical solutions to tackle the challenges they raise for workers, business leaders, and organizations. Given the opportunity, I would love to pursue this academic work at your institution.