



Gender, Work & Organization Conference

28-30 June 2023 | Stellenbosch | South Africa

GENDER, WORK & ORGANIZATION



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Gender, Work and Organization

13th International Interdisciplinary Conference

28-30 June 2023, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Conference theme

Marginalized gender identities - how can intellectual activism transform work and organization?

CALL FOR COLLABORATIVE EVENTS

COLLABORATIVE EVENT TITLE:

Affecting racialized and gendered bodies in discomfort

COLLABORATIVE EVENT COLLABORATORS:

Shona Hunter, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom

Katalin Halász, Brunel University, United Kingdom

Faten Khazaei, Northumbria University, United Kingdom

Deirdre Pretorius, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Gaspard Rey, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Lwando Scott, University of The Western Cape, South Africa

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The Blush Machine, video still, Katalin Halász and Polly Card, 2014

Event purpose/goals and objectives

Using visuals and sound that draw upon our research on whiteness as global and national colonial formation enacted at the interpersonal and structural levels, the video installation '*Bodies in discomfort*' explores the production and ramifications of heteropatriarchy, violence, gendered exclusions and marginalization in white organizational spaces, and the embodiment of differently racialized and gendered identities crossed through with discomfort. It builds on the arts-based research practice of Halász (2017, 2021) such as the performance installations 'The Blush Machine' (Bolivia, 2013, in the still image above), 'Chamber of White' (Denmark, 2014) and 'Freeing Up Shame' (Brazil, 2012) and the exhibition 'Visualising Affect' (UK, 2013) [1] and Hunter's (2015, 2017, 2021) feminist psychosocial work on the affective production of institutional life as fundamental to the enactment of broader national and global coloniality which sustains whiteness as a neoliberal institutional ideal. Both expose the role of bodies and affects in the lived enactment of whiteness as a way of tracing and interrupting the rational-emotional split fundamental to the cis-heteropatriarchal reproduction of coloniality (Lugones 2010, Wynter 2003). Together they are developing 'imaginactivism' (Haran 2017) as an interference into white institutionally and public life. This collaborative event, the panel discussion and the installation it engages constitute the aim of producing one such imaginactivist intervention.

Join us as we engage in a South - North dialogue around the issues of global coloniality and whiteness as part of a broader racial formation and its material, affective and discursive dimensions in the context of international migration and increasing gender inequality in the face of health, economic and employment crises (Casale and Posel 2021). We understand whiteness "as elaborated in global coloniality through epistemology, ideology, and governmentality at the intersections with heteropatriarchy and capitalism" (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen 2021). We consider the state and systems of power explicitly in the context of increasing ethno-populism and attacks on 'gender-ideology' globally (Phipps 2020) and pay attention to white supremacy and the investments of people racialized as white and gendered within the structures of heteronormativity in contemporary and historical forms of domination.

With the video installation we zoom in on gender politics and racial justice and feminist struggles "as intellectual and political force[s] for freedom" (Mama 2020, p. 362). We extend the provocation of George Yancy's question of "How Does it Feel to Be a White Problem?" (2015) with a specific focus on the production of normative and marginalized gender identities in organizations

and on the affect of discomfort. The video installation examines Yancy's question both at the interpersonal and systemic levels, but instead of responding to this question, the artwork opens aesthetic and conceptual spaces to think through how whiteness is known in the body in discomfort, and the epistemological and methodological potentials that 'staying with' (Haraway 2016) discomfort holds. Following Chadwick (2021), the works explore how the relationally produced 'affective intensity' and 'epistemic resource' of discomfort can open up or close down inquiry on whiteness because of the dis/orientation it induces in differently gendered and racialized people experiencing it. Whereas much of the consideration of white discomfort views it as property of white people (Diangelo 2018), our approach challenges this via a relational understanding of discomfort as an event produced through/in gendered and racialized bodies entering in relation in white organizational spaces. The video installation examines the psychosocially embodied experience of discomfort as collectively produced in everyday organisational practice and holding open a dynamic space for a relation of depth rooted in dis-ease which has the potential to disrupt the power of whiteness. We explore affects as methodological, conceptual, and artistic tools to fracture global colonial whiteness and the gendered exclusions it is dependent on.

Organisation of panel discussion and installation

Part of the decolonial contention underpinning this event is that we are all differently and complicatedly entangled in global colonial whiteness (Erasmus 2017, Rodríguez, 2016, la paperson 2017). There are no claims to innocence from within our current global coloniality. The multiple positionings in coloniality of the event collaborators, moderator, artist researchers and panel as Black, brown, queer, indigenous, off-white and white mitigate against the privileging Whiteness. However, we recognise the contentious and potentially retraumatizing nature of situating whiteness at the heart of race resistant activism, including the risks in bolstering white innocence through the critical interrogation of whiteness (Ahmed, 2004). Therefore, the panel discussion and framing will be conducted with care and according to principles of intersectional safety and respect rooted in a combination of learning in practice with and from a range of Black, brown, queer, feminist decolonial and anti-racist activist spaces [2]. Given the focus of our installation on the violence of whiteness we prioritise attention to the safety of those positioned as marginalised in/through whiteness.

The benefit of attending this event

As per the deliberately open-ended nature of forms of imaginactivism and arts engagement, the individual benefits of attending this event cannot be assumed in advance and they will be multiple depending on the positioning of people experiencing it. The anticipated benefits relate to the collective "process relationship between imagining and acting to make change in the world, and the ways in which it depends on working actively and collaboratively with a shared vision" (Haran 2017, p. 11). We hope that participants will take away the energetic benefits of participating in imaginactivism as a mode of organising as well as increased knowledge around the potential for and confidence in working with discomfort as an intervention into the unequal politics of institutional life. We also hope the energetic benefits nourish future collaborative activity as an extended network of academic-intellectual-artistic-activist community of care.

Notes

[1] See <https://www.katalinhalasz.com/> for details of these and other works.

[2] See <https://www.whitespaces.org.uk/post/process> for details

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