



Gender, Work & Organization Conference

28-30 June 2023 | Stellenbosch | South Africa

GENDER, WORK & ORGANIZATION



Stellenbosch Business School

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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:

The compassionate feminist classroom

COLLABORATIVE EVENT COLLABORATORS:

Regine Bendl, WU Vienna/Austria
Nancy Goldman, New York University/USA

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Abstract:

Feminist and Gender Scholarship in the context of Organization Studies works for unveiling discrimination, inequality and exclusion based on heteronormative macro, meso, and micro theories (e.g. Calás, 1993; Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Benschop & Doorewaard 1998a and 1998b; Bendl, 2008; Raaijmakers, Bleijenbergh, Fokkinga, & Visser, 2018). This theoretical knowledge serves to reflect on how discrimination, inequality and exclusion is (re)produced in different contexts. It also offers windows into how these intellectual perspectives can transform work and organizations (e.g. Calás & Smircich, 2006; Rumens, 2017). Clearly, this transformation has to take place contextually. More importantly, it has to be considered that the theoretical knowledge is mostly built on experiences of lives in the global North and on middle-class, white-collar employees, and that intersectional perspectives which consider geopolitics in knowledge production have the power to alter existing macro, meso, and micro theories (Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Nkomo, 2018; Connell, 2019).

No doubt at all, new knowledge for reflection is out there, if new intersectional and geopolitical perspectives are integrated into existing theories. But do these new perspectives then automatically transform organizations, just because they are adopted into existing knowledge? We would say no. In this context, we ask the following crucial question: how can educators prepare students for this transformation in practice and empower them to 'be the change' and to induce/make change? In other words, how can we teach students to 'walk the talk' and not only to 'talk the talk.' This is especially important as theoretical knowledge does not automatically transform into practice. For example, the discourse on 'greenwashing' and 'diversity washing' shows that organizations adopt the rhetoric of change but do not create/make the change in their everyday practices (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Vern, 2022).

We proceed from the assumption that an additional perspective to enliven change is needed. That is to involve the heart which allows seeing the suffering of those who are subject to discrimination, inequality, and exclusion. Then, we would say, individuals are more prepared to be the change and work to change and transform discriminative, unequal, and exclusive processes and structures with regard to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and race, religious belief, bodily and cognitive ability, class, age, etc.

Therefore, our collaborative group session focuses on compassion in the feminist classroom. Compassion as a discrete and evolved experience refers to a state of concern for the suffering or unmet need of another, coupled with the desire to alleviate that suffering (Goetze et al. 2010). The aim of this group session is to make the participants familiar with the concept of compassion (Seppälä et al., 2017) and how to bring compassion into the classroom to prepare students to 'being the change' and not only 'talk the talk' (Ekman and Ekman 2017). We will introduce the concept of compassion, focus on self-awareness, and present some tools for using compassion (e.g. Worline and Dutton 2017, Hougard and Carter 2022, Stanford University 2022) in the classroom. As the group session will be set up interactively, all participants will contribute to the result of the group session. In the final round, we will focus on the participants' learnings and take-aways.

After the session the participants:

- Understand the different perspectives ('ingredients') of compassion,
- Differentiate between compassion, mindfulness, resilience and spirituality
- Identify and initiate the first steps of compassion in the classroom

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