



# 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?*

(Read more about the conference theme on the conference website).

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/PAPER SUBMISSIONS

### STREAM TITLE:

Silence, sexism and gender washing in academia and beyond

### STREAM LEADERS:

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It is increasingly difficult to pretend that our personal and professional lives are not pervaded by sexism. Frequently normalised and collectively vicious yet camouflaged in our close and working relationships, sexism is experienced at institutional, organisational and personal levels.

It has been demonstrated that gendered institutional structures enact systemic barriers to professional advancement that disproportionately disadvantage women (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2009; Bird, 2011; Vershinina et al., 2020). These barriers are maintained since paid work in bureaucratic, market-driven organisations assumes the body and life of a man (Acker, 1990). Women are still underrepresented in decision-making roles, primarily responsible for undervalued care work, paid less than men and disproportionately subjected to violence (Acker, 1990; McLaughlin et al., 2017; Castelao-Huerta, 2022), despite the legal frameworks to prevent discrimination and promote equality in the workplace.

In academia, one of the sectors directly involved in championing gender equality, the widespread gender pay gap and ostensible lack of women in leadership positions demonstrate the persistence of traditional gender politics and normative regimes built around them (Husu & Koskinen 2010; White & Bagilhole, 2013; see also Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Knights & Richards, 2003; Fotaki, 2013; Jones et al., 2019).

In recent years, the marketisation of academic work contexts, and particularly business schools, has led to several structural changes (Jones et al., 2019), including the commodification and transformation of the public image of higher education fostered by the growth of managerialism (Sappey, 2005). These shifts have included changes in governance, structures and processes marked by work intensification, surveillance and control (Broadbent et al., 2013; Teelken & Deem, 2013; Sang et al., 2015).

Alongside these transformations, the destructive effects of academic sexism have also been extensively noted (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Mountz, 2016). Even in contexts that are considered leading in terms of gender equality (e.g. the educational sector in Finland) and despite efforts to challenge sexist practices (Husu, 2001), universities are still characterised by the everyday sexism of role divisions, symbols and interactions.

Furthermore, we witness an escalation of the so-called 'gender-washing' phenomenon whereby institutions display efforts to achieve more diversity equality and inclusion by sticking to and appropriating the EDI narrative whilst simultaneously masking the real issues such as same salary for the same job and equal opportunities for promotion. One poignant illustration is displaying the gender parity in the number of recruited and promoted faculty but hiding the salary gap and the unequal opportunities for career progression.

Furthermore, there is a significant literature in business and management studies critiquing the so-called 'greenwashing' in which corporations use corporate social responsibility programmes and related marketing strategies to present themselves as environmentally friendly and to deflect criticism from harmful environmental practices (see e.g. Ozkazanc-Pan, 2019). Critiques of gender washing are much scarcer (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020; Walters, 2021). Silence surrounding sexism in academia is thus roaring (Teixeira et al., 2018). Insidious and subtle mechanisms of silencing sexism render it difficult to mobilise collective action to combat it.

Investigation of discourses and higher-level narratives particularly in relation to EDI issues can reveal the power struggles at play between various actors and the attempts by those in dominant positions to assert the legitimacy of their narratives and meaning construction regarding how organisations should work, who gets to make decisions and what (un)equal experiences should individuals have. In such a context, women represent the voiceless group, oftentimes disempowered from challenging the stripping off their agency, and, therefore, it is critical that scholarship investigates the possibility of how the dominant discourses and the dissonant ones as well as the dominant voices and the marginalised ones are enacted to produce sexism in organisations.

A recent study revealed that women academics in the United Kingdom felt unable to speak up about their experiences due to institutional structures that failed to acknowledge the harmful consequences of daily microaggressions (Savigny, 2019). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the intricacies of sexism make its study a complex and controversial task, further hindered by the reluctance of individuals to call out (i.e. speak and name) specific experiences or practices as sexist (Dick, 2013). It is hence impossible to give a comprehensive account of sexism without looking into silence and silencing as a persistent organisational reality that defines and perpetuates it.

In this stream, we invite texts, accounts, alternative narratives, autobiographies, collective accounts and other forms of contemplation on issues surrounding silence, sexism and gender washing in academia and beyond. We particularly encourage feminist and interdisciplinary approaches with a multifaceted take on the topic. Work submitted to the stream can have a large scope and can include but is not restricted to the following issues:

- What is the praxis of sexism and gender washing in today's academic and other sectors of the knowledge economy?
- How are sexism and gender washing articulated in specific global, socio-economic or cultural contexts?
- How are sexism and gender washing prevalent across hierarchies, disciplinary differences and categories of workers?
- How are sexism and gender washing experienced at the intersection of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and/or gender?
- How can sexism and gender washing be responded to, and how can social change be achieved?
- What is the role of allies, networks and mentoring in the action against sexism and gender washing?
- What does it mean to be sexist for men and women in today's organisational and academic context?
- Why do people who experience and perceive sexism remain silent?
- What are the mechanisms that render it difficult to mobilise a collective action against sexist practices?

Abstracts should be emailed to [cquential@audencia.com](mailto:cquential@audencia.com), [yshymko@audencia.com](mailto:yshymko@audencia.com) and [nvershinina@audencia.com](mailto:nvershinina@audencia.com)

Abstracts of approximately 500 words should be submitted directly to the GWO2023 conference website in a ONE-page (A4-size, single-spaced, excluding references, with no headers, footers or track changes) Word document, NOT PDF. Abstracts are invited by the end of day 7 November 2022 (Central Africa Time - CAT), with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders by December 2022. Prospective contributions will be independently refereed. Abstracts should include full contact details, including your name, institutional affiliation, mailing address and e-mail address. We are hoping to circulate abstracts prior to the 2023 GWO conference to those attending the conference.

Subject to full peer review, this stream may select suitable full papers for a special issue of the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal post the conference. If your abstract is accepted for this stream, you are encouraged to submit a full paper (5 000 to 7 000 words excluding references) by 28 February 2023, which may be considered for such a GWO journal special edition.

**More information about the conference can be found at:**

[https://www.usb.ac.za/usb\\_events/gender-work-organization/](https://www.usb.ac.za/usb_events/gender-work-organization/)

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**More information about the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal can be found here:**

*Gender, Work and Organization* is a scholarly journal published by Wiley and edited by Alison Pullen and Banu Ozkazanc-Pan. The journal has an Impact Factor of 5.428 (2021) ISI Journal Citation Reports and a ranking of 2/44 (Women's Studies); 95/226 (Management).

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