



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:

Challenges and opportunities: DEI regression(s) and the new world of work

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This stream focuses on apparent emerging trends and patterns of regressions in recent advances in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within the new world of work. In March 2020, the world of work changed overnight (World Health Organization, 2020). In many countries, what was supposed to be a few weeks of working from home turned into months, which then turned into a debate on whether or not we needed to return to the office at all (Barnes & Sax, 2020; Cross & Gray, 2021; Kelly, 2021; Streitfeld, 2020). With a boom in technology designed to bridge the gap between ‘what was’, ‘what is’ and, most importantly, ‘what could be’, the temporary informal practice of ‘working from home’ became a new paradigm for understanding work, characterised by concepts such as ‘remote first’ (Lund et al., 2020), ‘unlimited leave’ (O’Dwyer, 2022), ‘menstrual leave’ (Haupt, 2022), ‘the four-day work week’ (Cooban, 2022) and ‘sustainability’ (Mattera et al., 2021) entering mainstream discourse. Contemporary advancements in how we conceptualise and organise work, however, appear to also have problematic and exclusionary dimensions that merit further exploration and critique. If not now, then when?

“New global research shows that despite companies’ recent efforts, diverse employees need more. Businesses should ask themselves new questions for a changed workplace” (Ellingrud et al., 2020).

In addition to popular discourse paying attention to an apparent emergence of a regression in DEI efforts in the new world of work, a growing body of scholarly work also addresses and explores this issue. Most notably, post the pandemic, the burden of domestic and childcare responsibilities shows trends of defaulting back to women (Frize et al., 2021; Gatti et al., 2021). Some of this research suggests that due to women’s disproportionate caregiving roles and societal expectations, gendered differences in life satisfaction and psychological distress that existed prior to the pandemic have become more pronounced (Zoch et al., 2021), thus serving to further entrench and exacerbate (intersectional) inequalities. Evidence of these feelings of dissatisfaction with life and psychological distress spilling over into women’s experience of work is becoming increasingly commonplace in a range of contexts (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021).

Industry-specific research, such as that pertaining to higher education, indicates that during the pandemic, women’s well-being and career advancement were and continue to be threatened by disparate, obscured service burdens both at work and at home (Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021). With disruptions in outsourced childcare services, recent studies show that in heterosexual couples where both partners do paid work, the lower-earning job, which due to the gender pay gap tends to be that of the woman, is sacrificed (Collins et al., 2021; Gatti et al., 2021). It is therefore not surprising that fundamental shifts in how we organise and understand work have resulted in many individuals from marginalised groups reporting and experiencing existential crises regarding their professional and personal identities (Wright et al., 2021). As a result, there is an increased appetite and demand for more flexible and inclusive ways of working.

While this stream welcomes submissions exploring how paradigm shifts in the postpandemic world of work are exacerbating the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups, we are also particularly interested in receiving works exploring opportunities for the advancement of DEI scholarship and practice necessitated by these apparent regressions. Here, we adopt the position that shifts in the world of work have the capacity to change views of diversity management from being an organisational luxury to being a central component of postpandemic recovery (CDADI, 2020; Dhanani et al., 2021). Some emerging subthemes that we would welcome further exploration on include gendered trends in remote and flexible work preferences and opportunities (Abendroth et al., 2022), variations in gendered attitudes in response to changes in work situations (Vandecasteele et al., 2022), the role of fathers in buffering against reduced labour force participation among mothers (Petts et al., 2021), challenges that disproportionately affect employees who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or gender nonbinary (Ellingrud et al., 2020) and the decentring of masculine career cycle patterns (Bowyer et al., 2022).

We wish to use occurrences of DEI regression in organisations as an entry point to explore new approaches to dealing with DEI issues at work, in a range of contexts, from individual, organisational and regulatory perspectives. What are the lived experiences of women and other marginalised groups within the new world of work, and how may we learn from these experiences to theorise DEI for a changing context? How can lapses in organisations' ensuring of DEI post the pandemic serve as a lens for identifying gaps in how we theorise DEI? What insights from the organisational context might inform public policy recommendations across different industries and sectors? In this stream, we also wish to challenge the status quo of access to high-quality DEI knowledge being limited to those within the academy. How might academia address barriers experienced by the wider population in accessing DEI scholarship? How might new collaborations between academia, industry and civil society be facilitated in order to apply new ideas and research insights towards effecting real social change through intellectual activism?

We seek to debate these questions and more, using diverse approaches, and we are particularly interested in works that use multilevel (Layder, 1993), intersectional (Crenshaw, 2012; McCall, 2005) and interdisciplinary (Aboelela et al., 2007) methodologies, as well as works that consider algorithmic decision making (Vassilopoulou et al., 2022) and its role in potential DEI regressions.

Questions that might be addressed by papers in this stream, albeit by no means exhaustive, include the following:

- Which benchmarks no longer serve the advancement of DEI in organisations?
- How do shifts in the organisation of work affect the way that intersectional power systems influence the participation of marginalised groups in the labour market?
- What new organisational examples of ensuring DEI are emerging? How can we inclusively and sustainably build on organisational examples of best practice?
- How can we counter 'woke capitalism' (Rhodes, 2022) to drive authentic, legitimate organisational change in the future of work?
- What new models of leadership are critical for shaping effective DEI efforts in the new world of work?
- How does the intersection of multiple identities affect experiences of the new world of work?
- How does the geographic location of an organisation influence DEI in organisations in the new world of work?
- What technological advancements (such as blockchain technology, artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision making) may be leveraged to curtail DEI regression or advance DEI in the new world of work?
- What new or different opportunities or threats may arise for DEI in light of increasing algorithmic decision making in organisations?
- What can be done to ensure that DEI scholarship is not restricted to academic spaces but is translated into real-world applications within the new world of work?
- How might public intellectuals and academics further create synergies between theory and intellectual activism in the global context?

For stream enquiries, please contact Clif P Lewis on clif@lbvc.co.za.

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/

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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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