

Call for Papers on a Special Issue on
Social diversity and Precarious Organizations

Guest Editors

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The key goal of this Special Issue is to bring together scholarship that sheds new light on the gendered and diversity-based challenges that the varied forms of precarious organizations create, impel, catalyse and/or prevent/obviate.

Since the global financial crisis, precarious forms of organization have obtained greater prominence and critical scrutiny (International Labour Organization, 2016). A fluctuating, uncertain economy, rapid technological advancements, macro-structural reforms in welfare states and the deregulation of the labour market have resulted in altering traditional organizational structures and employer-employee relationships, typically leading to greater numerical flexibility and uncertainty in work (Rubery, 2015). In the context of increasing worker vulnerabilities, Fudge and Owens (2006) have critically observed that a lack of control in the labour process, and questionable wages and conditions at the organizational level underlie deeply embedded social structures and asymmetrical power relations that explain and legitimate inequality (Scully, 2002). However, with limited notable exceptions (Vincent, 2016; Durbin, et al. 2017; Choi, 2018), few studies have theorised and explored the interplay of precarity in organizations, gender and intersecting diversity characteristics.

Precarity is defined as ‘the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death’ (Butler, 2009: 25). A range of related terminologies have tended to be subsumed in the concept of the ‘precarious organization’, including atypical, irregular or non-standard work, casualization, homeworking, contracting-in, contracting-out and outworking, flexibilization, contingent employment, zero-hours contracts, dependent self-employment, and working in the gig economy (Hewison, 2016; see also Arnold and Bongiovi, 2013: 289). Notably, feminist theorizing has demonstrated that organizational fragmentation has profound effects on marginalised and vulnerable demographic groups (Acker, 2006). Women, youth, migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities, older men and women and people with disabilities, among others, are more likely to experience the consequences of precarity in organizations.

Precarious organizational structures typically emerge from demand-based or employer-driven forms of flexibility, in which business concerns are prioritised in decisions rather than worker needs and interests. This is grounded in the 20th- century move from the “dependency culture” of the welfare state to an “enterprise culture” (du Gay, 1996) which emphasizes individualism and freedom, requiring workers to take initiative and responsibility for their own social, economic and welfare needs while guided by the ‘free hand’ of the market. Central to this shift has been the promotion of entrepreneurial activity through self-employment or new venture

creation, as a panacea for reducing unemployment and a means to maximize personal potential for innovation and wealth creation, free from state constraints. Critics however have highlighted how the resource-dependant nature of entrepreneurship turns it into another form of precarity that is highly gendered, class-based and racialised (Ogbor, 2000). Arguably this “radical responsabilization” (Fleming, 2017) of employment ignores deeply embedded social structures and asymmetrical power relations that produce, reproduce and legitimize social inequality (Ahl & Marlow, 2019).

In the absence of countervailing social forces, such as protective regulation, and/or the collective solidarity of trade unions and professional associations for instance, precarious forms of organization can result in uncertainty, unpredictability, insecurity, low pay, insufficient and variable hours, and limited application of employment rights (Alberti et al, 2018; Vallas, 2015; Kalleberg, 2011). Vosko (2010:2) adds that precarious work ‘is shaped by the relationship between employment status (e.g. self – or paid employment), form of employment (e.g. part-time or full-time), and dimensions of labour market insecurity, as well as social context (e.g. occupation, industry and geography) and social location (or the interaction between social relations), such as gender, or legal and political categories, such as citizenship’. Given the multidimensional and complex context in which precariousness plays out, there is a pressing need to explain how this context shapes and is shaped by various diversity dimensions.

At the level of the worker, unequal exposure to risk and injury dehumanizes precarious workers as “ungrievable” (Butler, 2009). Precarious working conditions are ripe with dignity injuries and taint (Mahalingam, Jagannathan and Patturaja, 2019). The dignity injuries and the invisibility of the suffering of precarious workers undermines their sense of belonging, connectedness and well-being. The phenomenology of precarity is a largely unexplored area of research in organizations, and we encourage innovative contributions to this area. Various intersections of race, class, caste, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, age, immigrant or refugee status shape the production and perpetuation of precarity in organizations. Precarious workers embody, resist or react to precarity in a myriad of ways. Precarious working conditions also reify and/or reinforce and reproduce class boundaries undermining possibilities for coalition building and solidarity work. These issues are not sufficiently explored in organizational research on precarity. Our special issue aims to address these concerns.

Accordingly we invite research and theory-building that sheds light on the experiential, practical and ideational contours that shape the diversity-based antecedents to and consequences of precarity in organizations. We call on organizational scholars to contribute to this area through theoretically novel and empirically sophisticated research about how gender and diversity issues emerge in the heterogeneous context of precarious work and precarious organizations. We expect articles to explore diverse organizational, societal, and international forms and contexts, and to provide nuanced and novel theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge in this area.

In-depth understanding of these challenges is important for a number of debates. First, it may contribute to the broader literature on precarious work by focusing our attention on how intersecting categories of ex/inclusion such as gender, ethnicity/race, class, indigeneity, sexual orientation, and age, as well as issues of migration and life course trajectories, emerge within and relate to precarious forms of organizations. As such, it may also help us to prescribe policy and regulatory frameworks to tackle the consequences of the precarity in organizations. Second, it may make an important contribution to the literature on various aspects of diversity dimensions as it helps understand the various forms of precarious organizations with which

marginalised and vulnerable groups engage and experience. Finally, it may resonate for scholars across a number of specialist literatures, such as business ethics, corporate social responsibility, public sector management, employment relations, and banking and finance where aspects of precarity are located and are played out.

To address the current void in our understanding of diversity dimensions and precarious organizations, we invite contributions to address these issues from one or more of the following themes:

1. Institutional, organizational and inter-organizational mechanisms, practices and processes for negotiating gendered and diversity-based forms of precarity.

We see significant potential for researchers to build on and develop our understanding of institutional, organizational and inter-organizational mechanisms and processes that perpetuate or prevent forms of precarity, and how inequalities surrounding various marginalised groups (eg. women, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities and older men and women) may be exacerbated or normalised in precarious organizations. A variety of tensions and challenges may be accentuated by precarious organizations, resulting in new forms of inequality, including for example, intimate labour (Hancock et al, 2015). Studies may also consider how, inter-alia, policies of regulation and deregulation of work (Moisander et al, 2018), enterprise culture (Vallas and Cummins, 2015), temporality and technology (Introna, 2018), HR policies and practices (Cai and Kliener, 2004) and/or the role of employment agents and agencies (Pijpers, 2010) may intensify or counteract the impacts of precarious organizations for marginalised men and women workers.

2. Processes and practices of organization and employee agency in and resistance to precarious work.

We suggest that exploring precarious organizations from a gender and diversity lens may require a deeper understanding of how, for some groups, precarious organizations are the only means of securing work. In understanding the implications of the interwoven nature of gender, diversity and precarious organizations, questions remain as to how vulnerable and/or marginalised groups experience and seek to overcome discrimination, disempowerment or exclusion but also how they are able to access different opportunities for agency and resistance (Samdanis and Ozbilgin, 2019). We encourage scholars to investigate cases addressing where and how individuals, groups, and organization have mobilized and activated in attempts to overcome the vagaries of precarious organizations. Studies for example, have demonstrated how in crisis economies, women have resisted a gender regime shift from public to domestic work (Lombardo, 2017) by engaging in precarious work (Meliou, 2019). Given the limited opportunities for conventional forms of employment, precarious work, including through digital labour platforms (Gandini, 2018) may provide earning opportunities, allowing vulnerable groups to transcend the barriers to local labour markets and secure employment in what Fleming (2017) terms the gig economy. Curiously, in terms of research to date, there has been little, if any insight into why some workers choose to engage with, while others resist work in this economy in spite of limited options. Australian research, for instance, shows that most workers continue to engage in standard forms of work (even in terms of 'precarious' work) while resisting

employment in the digital platform space (Williams, McDonald and Mayes, 2019). More research is needed to understand the motivations for engaging with or resisting work in the gig economy as precarious form of organization and work.

Finally, we are particularly interested in papers that provoke new ways of thinking about questions such as, but not limited to:

- How are gender inequalities (or inequalities surrounding particular marginalised groups) exacerbated or normalised in precarious organizations?
- How are social and individual identities disrupted by temporal and special uncertainties?
- How do diverse men and women workers negotiate diversity-based challenges in precarious organizations?
- How can intersectional approaches shed light on experiences of precarious work, including zero-hour contracts and work in the gig economy?
- What does precarity look like in different occupational contexts, including precarity in professional service firms and other professional work (e.g. precarity in academia) through a gender and intersectional lens?
- What is the gendered and diversity related impact of regulation and deregulation of global and international organizations on precarity across national borders?
- How can we make sense of the coping strategies diverse groups develop when confronted with precarity at work across different work settings, including global value chains, and what form do these strategies take?
- What are the institutional mechanisms for negotiating gendered and other forms of precarity at work, how do they work and how useful are they?
- What are the processes within organizational and inter-organizational arrangements that enable forms of precarity and what implications do they have for specific genders, or other markers of social diversity?
- Which forms of activism, individual and collective resistance are most effective in local struggles for emancipation from precarious organizations?

Papers may be conceptual, theoretical and/or empirical in nature. We encourage interdisciplinary contributions that enhance one's ability to contribute to innovative ways of understanding social diversity and precarious organizations. While qualitative research may be most appropriate for supporting new theoretical directions and critical perspectives, quantitative research is also welcome. The scope of papers is intentionally broad, but papers should have a bearing on 'organizational' phenomena, as per the overall purpose and general guidelines of *Organization Studies*.

Submitting your paper

Please submit your manuscript through the journal's online submission system (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>). You will need to create a user account if you do not already have one, and you must select the appropriate Special Issue at the "Manuscript Type" option. The Special Issue Editors handle all manuscripts in accordance with the journal's policies and procedures; they expect authors to follow the journal's submission guidelines (<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/oss>). You can submit your manuscript for this Special Issue **between February 15th and February 28th 2021.**

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Guest Editors

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