Social Diversity and Precarious Organizations: An intersectional feminist perspective

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Abstract

The rise of precarious organizations exacerbated by neoliberal work arrangements underscores the need for a comprehensive exploration of their intersection with social diversity challenges. Historically, precarity has been examined with a focus on the uncertain organizational structures and processes, neglecting the diversity of the worker. To address this gap, we elaborate on the contributions in our themed section to offer an intersectional feminist perspective. An intersectional feminist perspective sheds light on

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the multi-layered experiences of the precarity of life for diverse groups so that organization studies might contribute more effectively to addressing the complexities posed by precarious organizations. We present conceptual and empirical insights that advance organization studies by deepening our understanding of the relational and situated dimensions of precarity, thereby contributing to theoretical and practical advancements.

Introduction

At a time marked by a confluence of intersecting global challenges presented by economic inequality, a growing climate crisis, an escalating number of war zones, and an ever-expanding movement of stateless and vulnerable people, the prevalence of precarious organizations has become increasingly pronounced (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Garcia-Lorenzo, Sell-Trujillo, & Donnelly, 2022; Graham & Papadopoulos, 2023; Greer, Samaluk, & Umney, 2019). A range of related terminologies has tended to be subsumed in the concept of 'precarious organization', including atypical, irregular or non-standard work, homeworking, contracting-in, contracting-out and outworking, dependent self-employment, and working in the gig economy (Hewison, 2016; see also Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013, p. 289). As a result, many workers find themselves labouring under work conditions that differ from full-time regular employment and are typically characterized by greater flexibility for the employer and uncertainty for the employee (Fleming, 2015, 2017; Jessop, 2002; Kalleberg, 2009; Vallas & Cummins, 2015).

This persistent absence of secure employment in many economies and the erosion of control over the labour process expose asymmetrical power relations that elucidate and justify prevailing inequalities (Fudge & Owens, 2006). Indeed, historical divisions on the grounds of gender, class and race/ethnicity remain and have been exposed by precarious organizations (Acker, 1995). Evidence from various disciplines indicates that precarious organizations exacerbate inequalities for women, the poor, younger generations and marginalized groups in both developed and developing countries (Fotaki & Pullen, 2024; Lehndorff, 2012; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010).

Yet, research on precarious organizations in management and organization studies has primarily focused on the structures, systems and processes that generate and shape vulnerability and exploitation, insecurity and powerlessness. Invariably, the literature focuses on those who are engaged in organization-less and boundary-less careers characterized by casual and flexible work arrangements, low-skilled and low-paid work, and what are considered dirty, dangerous and deviant work areas, that is, employment in the peripheral labour market (e.g. Alacovska & Kärreman, 2023; Bristow, Robinson, & Ratle, 2017; Gill, 2014; Gonzalez & Pérez-Floriano, 2015; Kern, 2012; Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson, & Waite, 2015; Vosko & Clark, 2009). These workplaces and organizational arrangements offer objective criteria and insights into precarity in organizations (Worth, 2016). This objective notion, with an emphasis on the organizational characteristics rather than the worker's characteristics, suggests that there is a universal truth to precarity in organizations. As we see it, this position limits theorizing around the complex and contextually embedded, historically, socially, politically and economically constructed underpinnings of precarity in organizations (Afshar & Maynard, 1994; Al-Amoudi, 2019; Hultin, Introna, Göransson, & Mähring, 2022; Kamenou, 2007). Furthermore, the interrelationships within and between workers, the site of interdependence where 'feeling precarious' (or not) occurs, is also neglected (Ettlinger, 2007). As Worth (2016, p. 603) notes, 'while highly valuable, these objective uses of precarity do not tell the

whole story as affective experiences of insecurity have a significant impact on a worker's choices and experiences of the labour market'. There is an interplay between affective and objective experiences of precarity. It is fair to say that feeling precarious becomes a material reality through calculative practices such as time efficiency measures, transaction costs economics, and operational surveillance, as well as digital and industrial disruptions through outsourcing and the sidestepping of regulatory arrangements. To enrich our multi-layered understanding of the precarity of life, we called for insightful pieces that highlight the diversity-based challenges that the varied forms of precarious organizations create, impel, catalyse or prevent.

Capturing how 'the objective insecurity gives rise to generalized subjective insecurity' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 83) is critical. Feminist scholars (see for instance Butler, 2004; Federici, 2012; Waite, 2009) have long emphasized the subjective dimensions of precarious organizations, which remain hidden in the crosshairs of the objective and, as such, visible criteria for marginalized groups. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the fractured and unequal social system across geographies, industries and organizations, shared among divisive fault lines of colonial relations, wealthy and poor, men and women (Meliou, Vassilopoulou, & Özbilgin, 2024; Özkazanç-Pan & Pullen, 2020; Peredo et al., 2022). While some workers have been able to adapt to the 'new normal', others have experienced amplified suffering that undermines their sense of belonging, connectedness and well-being (Butler, 2009a) and exposes the lack of attention to the politics of location and vulnerability across dimensions of oppression such as gender, race/ethnicity and class (Groutsis, Kaabel, & Wright, 2024).

The idea of intersectionality may help us explore how multiple categories of social diversity afford different experiences to individuals across social fault lines. Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality illustrates that African American women's experiences in the United States cannot be reduced to a singular focus on either gender or race. In taking a historical feminist approach, Betti (2018) notes that the dominant literature focuses on a Western European and North American model of precarity in organizations. To address this, it is argued that a 'global gendered approach is crucial to understanding how precarious work [has] affected male, female, and child labour differently across time and space, thereby challenging the idea of precarious work as a new, recent phenomenon' (Betti, 2018, p. 275). This underscores how precarity is a part of gendered intersectionality within a capitalist system (see also Mitropoulos, 2005; Vosko, 2000). Özbilgin (2024) elaborates that an intersectional analysis often focuses on the experience of the individual and identity politics that come with multiple forms of disadvantage, which pays attention to the level of the individual. Instead, he explains that studying intersections of institutions and individuals at the point of their encounters could assist us in framing a focus on the responsibility of institutions to reform their discriminatory engagement with marginalized and minoritized groups. These key themes are at the heart of the theories, concepts and interpretations provided in this themed section.

We put forward an intersectional, feminist perspective to explore the situated nature of precarity through the intricate interplay of social, historical and political contexts that combine variously to govern the economic organization. As such we elucidate the experiences of the precarity of social and economic life and the struggles to express oneself and achieve recognition by others. Extending analyses in work and organization studies, the papers in this themed section directly address how objective measures of insecurity affect subjective experiences of insecurity. By focusing on the characteristics of the worker and positioning the actors in their complex contexts they challenge generalized views of precarity, demonstrating how historically entrenched systems of inequality variously shape and recalibrate the precarity of life.

Our themed section comprises three contributions, all of which resonate with ongoing debates about precarious organizations and social diversity: subalternity and the experiences of women

beneficiaries of a social enterprise in an institutionally unstable, pre-revolutionary and postcolonial setting in Tunisia (Benali & Villesèche, 2024), caste, occupational precarity and social capital in India (Soundararajan, Sharma, & Bapuji, 2024) and algorithmic system, labour precarization and the unmaking of diversity in Poland (Zanoni & Miszczyński, 2024). By shining a light on the subaltern worker, the lower caste worker and the undifferentiated worker, these contributions emphasize the need for a multi-layered understanding of precarious organizations that acknowledges the complex and intersectional reality of life.

In what follows, we briefly present a historical overview of the concept of precarity in social theory and organization studies. Elaborating on the contributions of our themed section, we then present an intersectional feminist view of precarious organizations that allows us to take a broader and deeper conceptualization of precarity. We conclude with implications for future research in this critical area.

Historical Overview: Precarity and Precariat in Social Theory

Although the concept of precarity is not new and has featured across theories of industrialization and its aftermath, as emphasized in discussions on dual markets, segmented labour markets and Marxist/reserve army theories (Vidal, Adler, & Delbridge, 2015), precarity in our contemporary discussions owes much to the works of Guy Standing (2011). Standing's (2011) formulation of the precariat characterizes it as a unique class that suffers from conditions of instability and insecurity across different domains of life. Standing pressed policy reforms for Universal Basic Income in the United Kingdom to address the problem of precarity, adding to our repertoires of social policy for social security. Standing (2018) refocused his attention on the transformative potential of the precarious class, calling for an awakening among the precarious class to renegotiate its terms in the labour market. Standings's foundational theorization was later critiqued for its limited engagement with theories and history of class relations and a fundamental failure to engage with local differences for the sake of attributing precarity to globalization (Scully, 2016). Moreover, criticisms have been mounted on what is viewed as a porous definition of the precariat as a class that suffers precarity. Standing's fundamental assumptions about solidarity between individuals who suffer precarity are also questioned due to the disconnected and heterogeneous nature of these groups. His work is not focused on social diversity.

Historically, Polanyi's (1944/2001) work from as early as 1944 highlighted the detrimental consequences of marketization and financialization as the root cause of growing precarity in both the private and public domains of life. Although Polanyi has not explicitly referred to precarity, his work on the detrimental consequences of marketization has been widely influential. For example, in line with this theorization, Vincent, Lopes, Meliou, and Özbilgin (2024) argued that in a neoliberal and advanced capitalist system such as the United Kingdom, individuals are solely responsible for their own safety and security. Within this context, the state and associated institutions withdraw their support of social welfare systems, leading to precarity for diverse populations. This withdrawal and the mounting precarity, according to Stiglitz (1989), is inconsistent across different capitalist regimes. While some capitalist systems have responsibilized their institutions for human rights and social welfare, others have experienced untamed forms of capitalism, where workers and individuals are left to fend for themselves, experiencing yet more profound forms of precarity. Studies on untamed capitalist systems illustrate that diversity concerns are often ignored or disregarded in organizations (Küskü, Aracı, & Özbilgin, 2021; Küskü, Araci, Tanriverdi, & Özbilgin, 2022).

The scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu (1998), and Loic Wacquant (2014) who follows in the Bourdieusian tradition, as well as scholars from divergent disciplines of the social sciences and

humanities, including Judith Butler (2009a, 2009b), has been pivotal. Isabell Lorey (2015), and Arjun Appadurai (1990), have extended the theory of precarity in their domains of philosophy, political science and the humanities. Bourdieu's concepts show how power and resources are allocated across fields of relations, including those of class relations. Although Bourdieu himself has not focused on precarity, his conceptual endeavours have been instrumental in extending the theory of precarity by highlighting the mechanisms through which precarity is reproduced (Masquelier, 2019; Millar, 2017). Similarly insightful scholarship has been the work of Bourdieu's co-author, Wacquant, who has recently critiqued the notion of precarity for its lack of contextual sophistication and dynamism. In his study of the prison system in the US, Wacquant (2014) illustrated how precarity is embedded in social diversity, where marginalized communities are disproportionately subjected to criminalization and precarity.

Building on Foucault's (1982) poststructuralist approach, Judith Butler's theorization on precarity helps us frame the geography of precarity internationally, which is distributed unevenly because of different forms of recognition and vulnerability. Butler's work points to the significance of social norms in shaping conditions of safety and security for certain groups in society while stripping others of such recognition and protection (Butler, 2009, 2012; Sawicki, 2016). Scholarly work in this area has mobilized Foucauldian notions of biopower and governmentality to explore neoliberalism as a self-organizing narrative that blurs precarious work (Fleming, 2022; Moisander, Groß, & Eräranta, 2018). The specific contribution of postmodern scholars to the study of precarity has revealed the performative power of discourses in shaping and framing conditions of precarity. Isabell Lorey (2015) goes beyond an economic understanding of precarity to explain how contemporary forms of labour and governmentality generate a state of constant insecurity for individuals, contributing to the production of precarious subjects. Arjun Appadurai's (1990) notion of scapes has inspired works on precarity at the level of globalization, across different domains. This theorization dynamically contextualizes precarity, rather than fixing it or reducing it to a specific state in one domain of work and life. Scapes relate to domains of work and life such as mediascapes, ethnoscapes and ideoscapes, helping frame precarity as an emergent, complex and dynamically evolving and changing phenomenon within and across these fields, showing how global flows shape the interplay of emergence between the context, diversity and precarity.

In the following sections, we extend this foundational theorization of precarity in social theory with a focus on diversity, notably through an intersectional feminist view that illustrates how precarity is not experienced in a homogeneous way across strands of diversity.

An Intersectional Feminist Critique of Precarious Organizations

Drawing on an intersectional feminist lens allows us to consider precarity at multiple levels and as such weave together a more complex understanding of precarity in organizations as experienced by marginalized groups. At a micro level, individuals may experience socio-psychological exclusion, invisibility and harm (Butler, 2004, 2009); at the meso level, organizational systems, structures and processes may result in precarity in organizations as the relationship entered into is undesirable and exploitative (Sennett, 1998, 2006); at the macro level, societal belonging and community engagement is fragile and questionable, oscillating between exclusion and citizenship, fragmented and fraught within a neoliberal/capitalist context (Betti, 2018; Choonara, Murgia, & Carmo, 2022; Lorey, 2015). The interdependency between and within these levels and across categories of social diversity, such as gender, race, class, migration status, disability and sexuality, shines a light on how the precarity of life is reinforced and reproduced.

Such a conceptualization requires methodological approaches that invite us and assist us to explain and understand the impact of precarity to capture insights into experiences, practices and

emotions, painting an image of precarity that is neglected by examining objective criteria alone. Methodologically, an intersectional feminist approach calls for qualitative and case study explorations, an analysis of the discourse surrounding interpretations of one's precarity, and a desire to discover the sensemaking of marginalized individuals who experience, feel and are affected by precarity in organizations. These methodological tools offer insights into the relational and subjective characteristics of precarity, decisions and choices, and power dynamics whereby 'precariousness is an ontological and existential category that describes the common, but unevenly distributed, fragility of human corporeal existence' (Symeonaki, Stamatopoulou, & Parsanoglou, 2023, p. 67; see also Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). It is in the affective and relational sphere that we discover how precarity is experienced and how one interprets precarity, and by association this allows us to critique and shed light on perceptions of agency, autonomy, resistance and power (see, for instance, Browne & Misra, 2003; Varman, Al-Amoudi, & Skålén, 2023; Worth, 2016).

The subaltern worker

Benali and Villesèche (2024) in their paper titled 'Revisiting Entrepreneurship as Emancipation: Learning from subalternized women in post-revolutionary Tunisia', deploy the extended case method (Burawoy, 1998, 2009) in an ecotourism social enterprise in post-revolutionary and post-colonial Tunisia. By linking the micro-level experiences of the women beneficiaries working within exploitative organizational processes to the macro-level socio-economic, political and historical contexts that influence them, the authors demonstrate women's emancipatory actions. Although Tunisia is a liberal Islamic state, entrenched culture-specific patriarchal values regulate various aspects of these women's lives. To frame the experiences of women beneficiaries, Benali and Villesèche (2024) engage with the concepts of subalternity (Spivak, 1988), a social category assigned to people considered by dominant social groups as devoid of agency. Through their findings, the authors challenge the representation of 'subalterns' as a homogeneous and passive category by showing women's pathways to emancipation and the intersectional differences that affect them.

Advancing research on precarious organizations, Benali and Villesèche (2024) make a notable contribution by going beyond heroic, leader-centred conceptualizations of emancipatory entrepreneurship. This is important because economic agents that depart from the model of the successful entrepreneurial actor (Ogbor, 2000; Welter, Baker, & Wirsching, 2019) are often viewed as deficient agents. They are perceived to lack the supposedly unique qualities necessary to drive innovation and growth (Ramoglou, 2013; Ramoglou, Zyglidopoulos, & Papadopoulou, 2023). Benali and Villesèche (2024), on the contrary, position subaltern women beneficiaries as agents of change, demonstrating women's aspiration for more than just emancipation from precarious livelihoods. Rather, these women seek emancipation to shape a different future that diverges from existing norms. Through an intersectional analysis of resistance and emancipation, Benali and Villesèche (2024) extend our understanding of mundane and everyday practices of resistance in organization studies (Courpasson, 2017; Fernández, Martí, & Farchi, 2017; Goss, Jones, Betta, & Latham, 2011; Marsh & Śliwa, 2021; Mumby, Thomas, Martí, & Seidl, 2017). For intersectional feminist scholars, precarity is not a gender-neutral phenomenon but is deeply rooted in and focuses on marginalized groups with gender inequalities featuring as an important component of different, social fault lines. Benali and Villesèche (2024) highlight the importance of considering how intersectional differences such as religiosity, age, or class affect the agentic possibilities of subalternalized women, beyond the intersection of gender and post-colonial settings alone, and call for future research into the interaction between the economic, social and political dimensions affecting emancipation to further unpack the experiences of subalternized people.

The lower caste worker

Soundararajan et al.'s (2024) paper 'Caste, Social Capital and Precarity of Labour Market Intermediaries: The case of Dalit labour contractors in India' further sheds light on the contextual, relational and experiential nuances of precarity. It examines culture-specific forms of precarity that are reinforced and reproduced in a context where social and occupational hierarchies collide. Based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with workers in the garment industry in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, India, field observations and documents, Soundararajan et al. (2024) examine institutional practices that perpetuate caste-based discrimination in the Dalit contractors' access to social capital and mobility within the same occupation. Bapuji and Chrispal (2020) have argued that the caste hierarchy is an integral part of the caste system, which can also be mapped into a hierarchy in access to social capital and the power to create values that reproduce social inequality and precarious working conditions (also see Bapuji, Ertug, & Shaw, 2020; Mahalingam, Jegannathan, & Patturaj, 2019). Drawing on a Bourdieusian (Bourdieu, 1986) perspective on social capital, Soundararajan et al. (2024) show that occupational precarity varies among social groups. Caste classification affects the unequal distribution of social capital, which in turn limits social mobility and growth opportunities for the unprivileged Dalit contractors in comparison with upper caste contractors.

For Choonara et al. (2022), the subjectivity of precarity illuminates the unfair imposition of individuals' responsibility where they become 'entrepreneurs of their own "social capital"' while shouldering the risk of the relational aspects of precarity (Choonara et al., 2022, p. 3). Rooted in neoliberalism, research on social capital echoes modern labour economic arguments (Becker, 1993), according to which people are induced to enhance their social capital (e.g. Adler & Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988) and become responsible for their social and economic fate (Fleming, 2017). It is assumed that agency has a greater impact than social structure in shaping individual behaviour to the extent that inequalities in labour market outcomes can result from choices made. Such practices vary by context and are often embedded in an intractable and legitimized cultural logic that provides the ideological import for their endurance. Bourdieu's work elucidates how social membership facilitates or restricts access to social favours which enable access to economic, cultural and symbolic resources. Access to social favours further depends on the reproduction of norms, such as mutual obligations, that are policed by group members (see Elder-Vass, 2010). Social rules then combine to form rule-based systems that define the dominant and subordinate positions within social contexts, as people struggle to access and benefit from contextual resources.

Following this logic, the findings of Soundararajan et al. (2024) shed new light on the intersectional nature of occupational precarity and the field-specific nature of social capital. Their study highlights how caste-based inequalities challenge the individualistic and agentic understanding of social capital as there were few resources available for lower caste contractors within the same occupational role. The differential access to social capital amplifies the existing social hierarchy between caste groups. Soundararajan et al. (2024) call for future research that elucidates how caste dynamics manifest in occupational and network hierarchies.

The undifferentiated worker

Finally, extending our understanding of the multilayered nature of precarity, Zanoni and Miszczyński's (2024) paper titled 'Post-Diversity, Precarious Work for All: Unmaking borders to govern labour in the Amazon warehouses' illuminates the normalization of precarity within organizational structures. The paper demonstrates how socio-demographic categories traditionally utilized for structuring work (such as gender, age and ability) are dismissed, thereby fostering a state of perpetual precarity. Informed by critical theory of borders (Lazzarato, 2009; Mezzadra &

Neilson, 2013; Neilson, 2012), and grounded in an empirical investigation conducted in Amazon warehouses in Poland, Zanoni and Miszczyński (2024) show how labour governmentality is influenced by a number of organizational practices, including managing deskilled labour through an algorithmic system, non-selective hiring of workers, enforcing social norms that valorize interpersonal respect, equality and diversity, and naturalizing a universal system of casual employment. Thus, using a combination of coercion and consent, the organizational practices at the warehouse produce and sustain a labour force that is undifferentiated and replaceable.

Zanoni and Miszczyński's (2024) findings make important contributions to research on precarious organizations. Traditionally research on social diversity in organizations has demonstrated how meritocratic discourses reproduce normative expectations based on the 'ideal-worker' (Acker, 1990) enabling the most powerful to secure the most advantageous position in the field (e.g. Lewis & Simpson, 2010; Meliou & Özbilgin, 2024). Instead, Zanoni and Miszczyński's (2024) research shows how through the use of several organizational mechanisms the socio-demographic characteristics of the workers are dismissed, mobilizing the principle of equality for all. In this sense, the experiences of disadvantaged workers are neglected while at the same time the skills and privileges of advantaged workers are disavowed, leading to exploitative, precarious working conditions for all. Zanoni and Miszczyński (2024) note some ambivalence among their participants about working at the warehouse. They resent the need to adapt to the organization's culture which strips them of their agency. Beyond the organization, Zanoni and Miszczyński (2024) emphasize the multiple borders created at the level of national borders as well as within the Polish labour market that filter the labour process to sustain exploitation and precarity. The authors highlight the need for more research that addresses the implications of such 'post-diversity' governmentality for the workers.

Concluding Remarks: Future implications for social diversity and precarious organizations

How can we conceptualize and frame the intricate nexus between social diversity and precarity within contemporary organizational structures? The contributions in our themed section illuminate important aspects of the link between social diversity and precarious organizations, painting a complex view of the precarity of life. However, as these contributions reveal, precarity is a multifaceted concept with material, narrative, performative, affective and contextual meanings and consequences. We now turn our attention to how the field of organization studies takes forward a research and scholarship agenda that contributes to the understanding of precarious organizations and social diversity.

In particular, we suggest that a deeper exploration into the nuanced experiences of precarity across categories of diversity (which are not covered in this themed section) is needed, such as disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and belief, to show how they intersect with social stratification, to further challenge generalized understandings and highlight the diversity-based challenges related to precarious organizations. The arguments for doing so are both moral and pragmatic, as highlighted by a feminist perspective. Beyond the ethical imperative of organizing from the margins (hooks, 2000) and urgently prioritizing the needs of vulnerable and marginalized people, neglecting an intersectional perspective risks perpetuating and solidifying various other manifestations of oppression. Related to this, future research in organization studies can focus on the longlasting legacies and complexities of colonialism and examine the uneven relations of power, considered within and across the diverse political and cultural contexts. This research avenue may provide nuanced insights into the structures of precarious organizations and the experiences of individuals facing precarity.

Additional exploration is also needed into the resistance strategies of those experiencing precarity. The contributions of this themed section reveal that workers resist institutional practices that augment precarity to assert their agency with varying degrees of success. Workers often resist precarious working conditions to preserve their dignity. One of the significant casualties of precarious working conditions is the proliferation of dignity violations, taint and injuries. For example, jobs that are deemed 'dirty' have low dignity. Workers who do those jobs also report higher dignity injuries, reflecting instances and interactions where workers' sense of self-worth, respect or value is harmed or diminished (Thomas & Lucas, 2019). Dignity injuries affect physical and psychological wellbeing. In a large-scale quantitative study, Blustein et al. (2023) found that greater levels of precarity were associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety. Organizational scholars can study how resisting precarious working conditions is essential to challenge the normalization of dignity injuries. Precarious working conditions are also positively related to invisibility in the workplace (Hatton, 2017). By examining these dynamics, organization scholars can offer valuable insights into the interplay of power, agency, exclusion and resistance emerging from precarious organizations.

The intersection between precarious organizations and social diversity needs further investigation at the interplay of two global challenges: eradicating poverty (SDG1) and ending inequality (SDG10). Nancy Fraser (1997) argues that 'affirmative strategies' seek merely to elevate the position of underrecognized groups within existing hierarchical structures. She calls for 'transformative strategies' that seek to radically transform those very structures themselves. Pivotal to future research in organization studies is exploring governance and accountability mechanisms (Vincent et al., 2024). Understanding the role of various stakeholders and cascaded responsibility and accountability in delivering interventions for change is imperative. Responsibilization at the level of supranational bodies including the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, as well as the role of nation-states, governments, industrial relations actors, industries and sector associations of work and employment, and other institutional and individual actors, need further exploration. Understanding the dynamics of responsibilization at various levels is pivotal for designing effective interventions and promoting positive social and organizational change.

A final reflection concerns the implications of the matters raised in this themed section for ourselves as academics and educators. As academics often working in business schools, we need to use our privileged position to influence and mobilize the business community to take responsibility for avoiding processes that enable the creation, proliferation and normalization of forms of precarity. Our current level of engagement with this problem has proven insufficient. There is a need to rethink the public responsibility of education and our social obligations as educators to advocate and act for ethical and equitable practices within business environments.

As educators, we ourselves should take seriously the responsibility to train the next generations of students, researchers, workers and managers, to seek a better understanding of the intersecting dynamics of power, privilege and marginalization at play in the realm of employment. Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy emphasizes both the recognition that human life is conditioned, and the essential imperative to not only read the world critically but also intervene in the larger social order as part of the responsibility of an informed citizenry. Such learning, hooks (2010, p. 187) argues, requires openness and willingness to engage with new possibilities, 'so that we might discover those places of radical transparency where knowledge can empower'. As stewards of future research and business leadership, our students represent our hope for the advancement of equitable and inclusive strategies in addressing precarity and fostering meaningful change in the workplace.

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