

Anatomy of a mass resignation: moral entrepreneurship and academic outsiders within

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this viewpoint is to examine the claims made in the resignation letter and global petition surrounding the mass resignation of editorial members from the journal *Gender, Work and Organization*. It aims to shed light on the overlooked voices that criticized the boycott and to reflect on how the protest, while addressing legitimate concerns, inadvertently marginalized early-career and minoritized scholars, undermining principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Design/methodology/approach – The authors adopted a reflexive methodology, engaging with a globally diverse set of junior, mid-career and senior scholars to gather their insights on the unfolding events. By intentionally seeking out those critical of the resignation, the authors emphasized their positionality as scholars committed to fostering inclusivity and fairness. They positioned themselves against the instrumentalization of social justice rhetoric, critiquing how it disproportionately impacted vulnerable academic communities.

Findings – The viewpoint highlights how the mass resignation and academic boycott of *Gender, Work and Organization* failed to account for its adverse effects on early-career and marginalized scholars, missing opportunities for feminist care and solidarity. It argues that the boycott, while signalling virtue, had a polarizing impact and overlooked key principles of EDI, leading to unintended negative consequences.

Originality/value – The originality of this viewpoint lies in its focus on the often-unheard voices of scholars who opposed the mass resignation and academic boycott of *Gender, Work and Organization*, offering a counter-narrative to the widely publicized protest. Its value comes from critically examining how actions intended to promote social justice and equality can inadvertently harm early-career and marginalized scholars. By spotlighting these complexities and challenging the virtue signalling behind the boycott, the critique contributes to ongoing discussions on the ethical responsibilities of academic activism, solidarity and inclusivity in feminist scholarship.

Keywords Mass resignation, Moral entrepreneurship, Academic boycott

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

In early March 2024, a resignation letter (see [Appendix](#)) was circulated through various virtual channels informing the academic community that some members of the editorial board of the academic journal, *Gender, Work and Organization* (GWO) felt compelled to resign from their positions to safeguard the quality and impact of gender scholarship. One of the editors-in-chief (EICs) and a number of associate editors (AEs) led the effort, including the creation of a global petition that called for wider support of their cause. In this contribution, we critique the claims made in their resignation letter and petition. While the voices of those who have resigned from the journal are plentiful and heard, we present the relatively unheard voices that have criticized the mass resignation. We also include our conversations with a globally-diverse set of junior, mid-career and senior scholars, as we collectively reflect on the unfolding of the mass resignation. To accentuate these marginalized voices, we approached several scholars who



were concerned about the petition, asking them to contribute a single quote should they wish. Those who shared quotes had the opportunity to review the draft and confirm consent to publish their views.

We write to critique this mass resignation, including the sensationalization and instrumentalization of woke (i.e. social justice and equality) arguments, which had adverse consequences for early-career researchers (ECRs) and minoritized scholars with an interest in publishing in *GWO*. While public petitions of this kind do challenge social and organizational structures, we argue that this particular mass resignation suffers from intra-field struggles that produce both unexpected and disproportionate consequences for not only business and management scholars in gender studies but also early-career, minoritized and marginalized scholars for which publishing in *GWO* presents a career lifeline.

While leading and supporting academic boycotts allow privileged and/or powerful actors to signal virtue, their boycotts can also adversely affect the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our academic communities. We contend that the majority group members who engaged in the academic boycott of *GWO* overlooked three key principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as they: (a) excluded others (i.e. minoritized members); (b) failed to demonstrate feminist care and solidarity (i.e. with marginalized members and the new editorial team); and (c) missed opportunities to transform structures of inequality through dialogue. We also argue that academics who signed the global petition may have overlooked these complexities, rather focussing on broad and legitimate concerns concerning the uneven role of commercial publishers in academia (Brabet *et al.*, 2021). In this case, we thus illustrate how virtue signalling through the academic boycott of a single journal became an ineffective and hypocritical process.

The authors: positionality

According to Blaikie (2007), researchers select one of three roles in the research process: insider, outsider and impartial observer. During the mass resignation, we, as co-authors, assumed all three positions, and our intersectional identities – particularly our career stages – influenced our positionality. Author 1, an ECR, was first an impartial observer, one of many who received email notification of the mass resignation at *GWO*. However, Author 1 abruptly shifted to outsider after learning that the review process of her submissions at *GWO* would be negatively impacted by the resignation. Author 2, a senior scholar in the field of diversity and gender research, fluidly shifted from outsider during the initiation of the mass resignation to insider due to his commitment to not only the journal but also its broad mission to publish gender research. We thus individually reflect on the mass resignation as two scholars at different career stages, possessing intersectional identities that encompass multiple aspects of otherness and marginalization, including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, belief and non-belief and parental status. We also collectively consider how the academic life cycles of both established and junior scholars are fraught with barriers, especially in terms of inclusion for minoritized scholars.

The journal: *Gender, Work and Organization*

Established in 1994, “Gender, Work and Organization is the first gender equality journal dedicated to gender relations, the organization of gender and the gendering of organizations” (*Gender, Work and Organization website*). The journal, published bimonthly by John Wiley and Sons, Inc., predominantly focuses on qualitative research involving multidisciplinary topics, such as “gendered power relations, identity and inclusion” (*Gender, Work and Organization website*). The scope of the journal includes feminist theory, intersectionality, postcolonial and decolonial feminisms, feminist ecology and critiques of neoliberalism and postfeminism. According to the journal website, *GWO* prioritizes submissions that advance theoretical debates are conceptually mature and deeply engage with international scholarship.

GWO also welcomes both theoretical and empirical research that critically reflects on – or advances – sociological and gender theories, as well as extends simplistic binaries and descriptive approaches. Overall, the journal is not only the first but also one of the few that address topics, theories and methodologies of gender-related research that often remain at the margins of business and management scholarship.

Finally, GWO is organized around a journal by Wiley and has a conference associated with it. Ownership of a commercial enterprise, rather than a community or cooperative ownership, impacts the exploration of accountability structures within editorial succession and management processes.

Background: impetus for resignations

Wiley's autocratic strategy of managing GWO is moving the journal away from its critical gender and feminist roots towards high-volume, low-quality and mainstream management research ([ECPR Standing Group on Gender and Politics](#)).

In early March 2024, a resignation letter drafted on Google Docs was circulated on various social media platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook and female scholar affinity groups. The two-page letter (see [Appendix](#)) encouraged academics around the globe to join a collective resignation in support of a no-confidence motion, emphasizing that Wiley's new strategy and alleged autocratic management of the journal will not be beneficial for the journal itself and its international readership.

Since the resignation letter has undergone a few revisions since its initial release, we have drawn from the version dated March 27, 2024. The mass resignation has garnered support from other non-Wiley journals, such as [Organization](#) and the *Journal of Business Ethics*. The EICs at *Organization* expressed strong support and solidarity with their GWO colleagues for their contributions to critical research on gender, diversity and inclusion. They acknowledged the ongoing struggle to create inclusive academic spaces, believing that recent setbacks would not hinder continued progress and resiliency in this community. EICs at the *Journal of Business Ethics* highlighted editorial independence and transparency as core values in scholarly publishing: "academic journals must uphold these values to effectively represent and communicate the research of the academic community". The GWO mass resignation also attracted attention from *Times Higher Education* (see [Ross, 2024](#)), as well as *Financial Times* (see [Jack, 2024](#)).

Online distribution of the two-page resignation letter came as a shock and surprise to many academics. While the letter articulates the reasoning behind the resignations, it lacks a comprehensive explanation of the precipitating circumstances. The letter highlights seven salient factors that spurred the group of EICs to resign:

- (1) Change concerns: resignations were prompted by Wiley's new strategy, which was tied to a perceived lowering of journal quality and a shift from the interdisciplinary and feminist roots of GWO;
- (2) Governance issues: the process of appointing new editors was criticized as not only undemocratic and non-transparent but also structured to exclude a community contributing free labour to GWO;
- (3) New role and exclusion: creating a "conference lead" role and excluding certain candidates from editor roles were perceived as problematic, disconnected from the established focus of feminist and critical gender scholarship at GWO;
- (4) Protest against management: Wiley was perceived as steering the journal away from critical, feminist scholarship towards mainstream, low-quality work;
- (5) No-confidence motion: that Wiley's new strategy and autocratic management of the journal will be beneficial for the journal itself and its international readership;

- (6) Scholarly community support: while the *GWO* conference, independent of Wiley, was supported, Wiley's top-down management was viewed as sabotaging 30 years of work;
- (7) Action plan: no longer contributing to *GWO*, the signatories planned to establish a new platform for critical gender scholarship.

Overall, the letter expresses profound disillusionment with Wiley's management of *GWO* and key concerns of academic integrity, editorial independence and the feminist mission of the journal. In the resignation letter, we identify only one demand for dialogue between the protesting scholars and the publisher:

Our request for the Wiley publishers to meet with the Distinguished Advisory Board (DAB), as well as the Associate Editor Board (AEB) and the Editorial Review Board (ERB), only received a response after several weeks, which we take as a delaying tactic to ensure the top-down recruitment process was completed.

We contend that the letter was not constructive: rather than facilitating a discussion to resolve issues within the journal and with the publisher, it presented a list of complaints and the claim that past processes were comparatively more fair.

These complaints led many individuals to sign the petition, resulting in a mass resignation of reviewers, AEs and readers. As of 27 March 2024, over 550 predominantly senior, well-published and established academics and some ECRs in their worldwide networks had signed the petition. One professor explained:

What took place with the *GWO* journal happened fast and from one day to the other, without a true understanding of what was really at stake. Suddenly, you feel like you need to choose a "camp". It is "us versus them", "real feminists vs feminists by name only", as we see in many progressive or left parties globally. This is such a shame since the oppressions are tightly articulated, while the struggles remain divided. What happened with the journal is sadly one more illustration of that.

We contend that the *GWO* resignation letter created uncertainty, confusion and polarization in the academic community. We especially noted the power of academic networks and how a two-page letter could catch the attention of hundreds of scholars, convincing them to sign a petition that did not provide conclusive evidence. In our view, the letter is one example of how consent is created and manipulated through virtue signalling of the few and the pluralistic ignorance of the many followers who refrained from seeking further evidence to avoid public shaming. Supporters of the cause trusted that the resigning group was not only righteous but also required the support of the academic community. Moreover, we argue that supporting the signatories, who were well-established scholars, created instrumental solidarity alongside delayed reciprocal returns for some less-established scholars. As articulated by a second professor:

What shocked me the most was how communication developed in social media. I have a hard time understanding how so many colleagues accepted the simplistic Manichean arguments without much reflection, quite possibly without any first-hand information about what happened. Many have easily accepted the narrative of a group of noble, self-sacrificing scholars resisting an organized attack by villains moved by obscure interests. The verbal violence of comments to the social media postings is particularly atrocious. The overall tone is of destruction and vilifying the other, with very little possibility of moderation or dialogue.

We also argue that the resignation letter presents the resignation as a moral case. Viewed through the lens of moral entrepreneurship (Becker, 1963), the letter illustrates that social groups are not only able to construct virtuous victims and vicious villains but also the resigning community are knowledgeable rule makers and enforcers who utilize moral arguments for their cause. Rule makers cast their mission as morally-driven (i.e. virtuous) and unwavering, strengthening it by casting their opponents as villains, deviant others and vicious enemies (Greenhalgh et al., 2019). For example, the letter highlights key changes in *GWO* governance and depicts Wiley as a profit-making machine. It also emphasizes the

exploitation of feminist labour, undemocratic practices and processes, alleged autocratic management and violent attacks on the academic community. Overall, it reminds readers of a journal that “stood against oppression, injustice, and discrimination”. Moral entrepreneurship creates a virtuous cycle that outlines a state of good evil. However, moral entrepreneurship also prompts vicious cycles, whereby emotive language leads to moral outrage within related communities. Both the resignation letter and news reports presented the mass resignation as a scandal, legitimating the petition as a benevolent cause and presenting of virtue signalling as an innocuous act.

Exclusion of marginalized scholars

We explore the impact of the mass resignation on vulnerable and marginalized groups among gender researchers at business and management schools. The resignation letter was presented as a movement towards emancipation. Academics, including ourselves, desire emancipation. [Honneth \(1996\)](#) characterizes those who desire emancipation as striving for recognition and improvement in their life conditions. Since the letter was signed by direct members of the *GWO* community, the petition drew a large number of supporters many of whom may have conflated the rather narrow aim of the petition with pursuit of emancipation and recognition within the academic publishing system as a whole, rather than just the *GWO* journal or Wiley publishing.

We argue that the resignation letter conflated the two due to the cloaked targeting of the new editors. The divisive language used towards the new editors-in-chief, in the resignation letter as well as other communications, entrenched methodological and paradigmatic hierarchies of power, and revealed invisible fault lines of colour, ethnicity and class in the *GWO* academic community. For example, a third professor and former *GWO* EIC confirmed our critique:

By policing the boundaries of feminism and attributing the label of ‘non-gender scholars’ to colleagues whose theoretical approaches do not align with our purported theoretical stances, we are, at the same time, imposing a quiet kind of epistemic violence on those bodies who are not part of elite Global North institutions or communities.

Failure to show feminist care and solidarity

From a broader perspective, the complaints and concerns were aimed at Wiley’s management practices and the recruitment of new editors. The same recruitment methods are used when recruiting editors in other journals of the publisher. Further, they were the very same methods that had produced the editorial group that now was part of the mass resignation. We could understand the resigning community’s call if they demanded a change in the future, contextualising the relatively stable historical legacy in this regard.

Academic publishers like Wiley rely on the free labour of academics, which places these organizations among the most lucrative businesses internationally. While academic publishing and journal practices can appear exploitative to the outside world, they have been normalized within academic communities, with members socialized to expect and accept associated norms and hegemonic practices. While this labour is classified as free, it is, however, a necessary component of career advancement and academic collegiality. Senior signatories play editorial roles in other business and management journals published by Wiley and other global publishers. While the mass resignation targeted one journal, *GWO*, other journals controlled by this network of scholars of the Global North remained unquestioned. We thus contend that the mass resignation at *GWO* should not be cast as an isolated issue but rather as a wider revolt against an exploitative academic publishing business that has already been discussed, critiqued and scrutinized for many years within numerous outlets. A fourth professor noted the impact of isolating *GWO* as the sole target of the resignation letter:

I find the arguments offered to support the call for boycotting the journal one-sided and simplistic. Their argument suggests a divide between those who would be the “good gender scholars” and the ill-intentioned others. They also lament that Wiley’s management and the new Editors-in-Chief are benefiting from their effort of “building a journal.” This effort is implied to be noble and altruistic. Still, they forget to mention that they also benefited greatly from publishing in the journal when they were active editorial team members. It means they were not only “building a journal” but also building their careers. I also find that denouncing the work we, as academics, do as editorial members and reviewers for journals as “free labor” is quite hypocritical. We do it because this is our job and because that is how we advance in our careers. Thus, to say that Wiley (or any other academic publisher) exploits us is a misplaced auto-victimization.

While the resignation letter emphasized the notion of feminist and academic free labour in the name of journal profit, free labour can also be converted into reputational capital that advances one’s overall position amongst one’s peers. When recruiting ECRs, we determine their value primarily by their publication records in the fields of business and management. Scholars are repeatedly reminded that their publications are their currency and that academic relevance is closely associated with one’s latest publication. For more senior faculty members, publications not only help secure positions of disciplinary and network power but offer opportunities for leadership at other research and publishing organizations. Many senior signatories of the mass resignation letter were offered new senior editorial roles at other academic journals (e.g. *Organization*), converting moral credits associated with the mass resignation to move on and up. However, less senior signatories have not experienced the same benefits and career mobility some six months after the outset of the academic boycott of GWO. We thus do not perceive transformative feminist solidarity in this case. Is the feminist labour we provide to these journals free if it allows us to gain access to specific journals and institutions and, in some cases, reduces teaching and service loads?

We thus expose contradictions between the mass resignation letter and the goals of feminist care and solidarity during times of crisis, a topic that has been extensively explored by various academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. While scholars have recently interrogated the notion of feminist care and its absence for marginalized actors, the mass resignation at GWO is yet another example of disregard for marginalized scholars. The polarization and directionality of feminism and feminist care over-rules feminist ethics that prioritize a care-centred approach for all individuals impacted by a crisis. We argue that feminist ethics of care should draw upon transformative dialogue rather than halting engagement.

In essence, this movement is deepening inequalities, but for what purpose? According to a fifth professor within the GWO academic community:

At the end of the day, I believe the call for a boycott and the pressure made by a group led by senior scholars are particularly harmful to early-career scholars who depend on publishing to find jobs and get tenure. The bitter choice is between cutting ties to the journal or being ostracized and marginalized by a powerful group of established scholars and by a horde of followers. It is sad, but we are all losing. These events have already caused disruption to the flow of manuscripts, and they are already harming GWO.

ECRs in the academic networks of the scholars who resigned *en masse* from GWO were tacitly pressured to sign the petition, discouraged to offer new submissions and asked to retract those already under review. Although an established scholar may be able to afford retractions, this same gesture can impede ECRs career advancement, which depends on publishing in high-quality journals like GWO. To put in context, within the area of feminist scholarship, GWO is the only high-ranking journal listed by the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) that has an explicit focus on gender.

Missed opportunities to transform structures of inequality through dialogue

According to Wiley’s website, the publisher offers an exceptional portfolio of over 8 million articles from 1,600 journals. The GWO mass resignation is thus a drop in the ocean. If we are

indeed boycotting Wiley, including its perceived autocratic editorial management practices, are we also boycotting the remaining 1,599 Wiley journals? Neither the resignation letter nor subsequent communications clarified a stance on other journals managed by Wiley, such as the *Journal of Management Studies*, *British Journal of Management* and *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, all familiar to scholars who publish in GWO.

Considering the scope of Wiley as publisher and the academic publishing system in general, we first question whether the GWO resigning community mismanaged a critique of wider issues within the academy. They also subsequently and inadvertently harmed the reputation and standing of the only high ranking gender related journal in the CABS journal quality list that many business school deans reference in making recruitment and career progressing decisions for their staff. Although we consider the widespread use of CABS list ethically dubious and as poor proxy for academic paper quality, we acknowledge that the CABS list continues to make and break careers in the field of business and management. While senior scholars with multiple research streams can still submit to other journals, ECRs and minoritized gender scholars now face losing the only high-tier outlet, that recognizes and values their feminist methodologies, contributions and theorization. According to a sixth professor, there is a profound sense of disappointment in the polarized academic community that disregards scholars in precarious situations:

With total sincerity, I think that Wiley does not really care, and the ultimate recipients of the consequences of these resignations will be early-career gender scholars. So, it does the opposite of helping the community. Also, I think the tone of the letter is too self-righteous, bordering on narcissistic . . . and I feel sorry for the new EICs who have not done anything bad yet but are already being accused of hypothetical future crimes of killing the journal and conspiring with Wiley because they are not “proper feminist scholars”. I am shocked and extremely disillusioned by this whole thing. We tend to underestimate the capacity for groupthink in academic circles . . . People sign what sounds like a “fair struggle” to them not giving it too much thought and then congratulating themselves on social media for being fearless freedom fighters. But the situation may look quite differently from outside of this relentlessly perpetuated collective self-admiring. Three women were thrown under the bus by the loving community of fellow feminists.

We also contend that the complexities of multiple AE and reviewer resignations require further discussion. This move is particularly incongruent with feminist, inclusive and transformative practices, such as transforming structures of inequality through dialogue, and its consequences are largely born by ECRs engaged in critical feminist scholarship.

Since ECRs typically face marginalization due to multiple, intersecting identities of disadvantage, those engaging in critical feminist scholarship – an area already overlooked within mainstream management research – are now bearing further, unnecessary marginalization. These scholars are caught between demonstrating solidarity with the espoused values of the boycott and enduring harm to their career prospects in an increasingly competitive and precarious academic labour market that rewards scholars who publish widely in elite, high-impact journals. As outsiders within politicized academic settings, gender scholars in business schools must now resolve dissonances in their choices, chances and careers. They are encouraged to withdraw submissions currently under review to signal solidarity, yet they rely on the same to secure positions within academia. On the one hand, the most vulnerable in academia, especially minoritized ECRs and women, have been harmed and overlooked during the mass resignation. They were left with the choice of either submitting to alternate journals (i.e. extending timelines and requiring further revisions) or waiting for GWO to recover from this disruption and resume the review process. On the other, a small group of highly networked, established and predominantly white cisgender scholars enjoy the moral credits garnered from supporting the academic protest. ECRs and minoritized scholars remain overlooked, but they are also instrumentalized as allies by those who hold power and control in this highly politicized setting. While the GWO resignation letter was initiated by established scholars from

dominant backgrounds, significant and disproportionate career risks have been largely borne by scholars from marginalized and disenfranchised backgrounds.

What now?

In an *Agora* essay published in *Organization Studies*, [Korica \(2022\)](#) offered a manifesto for a humane academia. [Korica \(2022\)](#) called for academics to use their considerable powers to craft better systems, model a better academic reality and make room for others. During the *GWO* crisis, we also call for everyone, from those who signed the petition to those who have engaged in dialogue, to be not only pragmatic but also reflexive. Whom are we serving? Whom are we impacting? Scholars, whose contributions are solely recognized by journals like *GWO* and whose submissions are currently trapped in the publishing system, are having their careers negatively impacted by the crisis. Even in the best of conditions, review processes are lengthy academic endeavours, requiring months if not years of dedicated work.

During the *GWO* crisis, some manuscripts had been caught in the system of submission, review and revision for an inordinately long period of time due to a lack of reviewers and AEs. Six months after the mass resignation, the journal has now recruited a substantial number of new AEs and Editorial Board members, and through the extra labour of non-signatory AEs and reviewers, has renewed its operations. However, the mass resignation has negatively impacted not only Wiley as publisher but also marginalized feminist scholars who have offered free labour in the hope of successfully navigating a precarious academic realm and being recognized and rewarded for their research.

While academics depend on successful publications to remain in academia, we argue that the community of *GWO*-related scholars have failed some academics offering no alternative high-tier gender journal. Where is feminist care and solidarity? If we yearn for better academia, our practices must create an improved reality that dignifies all individuals and their work. Instead, we are harming the most vulnerable in attempts to fight superstructures like the publishing system. Our interactions with journals and publishing houses must be negotiated; however, there are better ways of building and improving relationships. Rather than initiating protests through mass resignations, we contend that calling for accountability and democratic practices from all commercial publishing houses holds more promise for positive and actionable change.

We argue that the current crisis at *GWO* has been a disingenuous effort by a few powerful actors to critique – and disengage from – a publisher by targeting only a single journal in its considerable portfolio of titles, many of which publish research on business and management. The boycott has not been extended to other journals, even though we know from our insider positionality that they are managed similarly to *GWO*. While these journals do not share the same aims and objectives as *GWO* (i.e. critical feminist scholarship), we argue that many signatories may have (mis)interpreted the letter as a general call to boycott publishers who do not employ democratic practices when recruiting members for their editorial boards.

We also argue that the academic community must be reflexive, reflecting on potential malpractice and abuses of our respective positionalities. An independent auditing process of all journals and their practices could reveal whether the peer-review process has been potentially impacted by authors who have assumed the role of reviewer, all the while favouring the publication of manuscripts from ingroup scholars. During doctoral training sessions, ECRs are often urged to network and build their “invisible college” to advance their careers. However, at what point does this same community harm and polarize? Like other hegemonic practices in academia, we argue for pluralism over purism. Accountability for interdisciplinary, rigorous, relevant, ethical, humanized and bias-free publishing practices must start from the grassroots and cascade up. We, as academics, must voice our concerns about intra-field struggles for power and domination, and call for transparency, accountability, non-violence and inclusion in publishing practices. Looking to the future of the *GWO*, one current EIC commented in March 2024:

Lessons from family business and issues of succession tell us that family firms survive successions, but take different forms and directions of travel. In the case of GWO journal, the outlook is also bright, because the editors and the new board will make it their mission to ensure that the papers can and will be published across all topics related to gender, work and organization. Generally, journals survive and thrive, and all is in our hands as we can develop working principles based on inclusion, transparency and openness around processes, ethics of publishing and topicality with an enthused focus on being a space for quality papers.

Six months after the mass resignation, GWO has fortunately recovered. New AEs, editorial board members and social media editors have been – or are being – recruited. Special issues and original submissions are being reviewed and published, and a new conference has been announced for 2025. Submissions, up by 25% from the previous year, now reflect not only a wider cultural geography but also several scholars who had signed the petition. The GWO crisis might have opened new spaces for critical voices from the margins at a time when the influence of former gatekeepers has come to an end.

In sum, we contend that the call of the GWO resignation letter for “establishing a new home for our community and celebrating 30 years of critical gender, work and organization studies” did not adequately address the overarching problem of the so-called exploitative academic publishing business. Submitting to a newly-established journal could be career-ending for ECRs in business schools that expect multiple publications in elite journals. We should be concerned about potentially significant career costs some ECRs will endure if they support the establishment of a new journal, as promised by the signatories. Committing time and energy to a new journal is at best ill-advised and a risky venture for ECRs. Advertised plans for a new journal have also created prestige roles for senior group members and rely upon abundant free labour from ECRs. As authors, reviewers and editors, ECRs again risk career harm in a neoliberal academy. What is the likelihood that a new publisher, operating under similar rules, will offer an improved setting, one that embraces feminist care and solidarity? Will feminist commitment to transformation and improvement be balanced with publisher ownership and accountability?

As publishing is an essential component in academic career progressions, a mass resignation at GWO has unfortunately left ECRs and minoritized gender scholars exposed to uneven power structures that do not favour critical gender scholarship in business and management. While the publishing industry undeniably has many faults and can benefit from change through healthy dialogue, the mass resignation at GWO has not proven to be a successful means for improvement. Who ultimately bears its effects is an important consideration, especially for scholars committed to emancipatory research. Rather than engaging in intra-field struggles that can lead to pluralistic ignorance, we must adopt means that not only support knowledge production but also strengthen our academic community.

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Appendix
Resignation letter
March 2024

Dear incoming editors and publishers of GWO,

We, the undersigned, are writing to tender our immediate resignations as Associate Editors, members of the Distinguished Advisory Board, members of the Editorial Review Board, reviewers and authors for *Gender, Work and Organization*.

We note with profound sorrow how events have unfolded over the last few months at GWO. While there have been longstanding concerns over the limited resourcing of the journal and lowering of quality of standards, Wiley's new and unannounced strategy of mainstreaming this world-class interdisciplinary journal during its 30th anniversary year has left us with no choice but to walk away from it to secure the quality and impact of gender scholarship.

We no longer identify with the aims, scope or undemocratic practices and processes underpinning the journal, and we have no trust that the current governance is aligned with the values of our inclusive, feminist community. Furthermore, the process for recruiting the new editors in chief (all business academics with expertise in marketing and entrepreneurship, not reflecting the breadth of gender and feminist research of the journal) was not appropriate, consistent, transparent or inclusive, as it excluded those who provide their free labour to ensure the success of the journal either wholly or in part (e.g. members of the DAB among many others). We are not confident that Wiley's new strategy and autocratic management of the journal will be beneficial for the journal itself and its international readership.

In particular, one outcome of this process was the arbitrary creation of the role of the conference lead, which was never advertised and is entirely inappropriate since Wiley does not have proprietary rights over the conference. We were also dismayed that several shortlisted candidates were never contacted afterwards about the decision. Please note that this is not an ad hominem attack on the new editors, which we gather has been one of the interpretations presented in your meetings with the Associate Editors (AEs). Instead, it is a deep concern that the process was flawed in the extreme and excluded the community that sustains the journal with its free labour. We also wanted to note that we will be giving our full support to the GWO conference in Canada this summer, given that this is not owned by Wiley.

The meetings that were held with the AEs on 29th February were very problematic in their own right with some AEs leaving early in protest. There, unfounded accusations were levelled at AEs, and considerable misinformation was presented – for example, that the board lacks expertise in masculinities, technology and Indigenous knowledge as well as representation from the Global South. As you are aware, three members of the board have already resigned, all experts in Southern theories. Our request for the Wiley publishers to meet with the Distinguished Advisory Board (DAB), as well as the Associate Editor Board (AEB) and the Editorial Review Board (ERB), only received a response after several weeks which we take as a delaying tactic to ensure the top-down recruitment process was completed. After the meetings with the AEB we conclude that neither the new editors nor Wiley are interested in the work we do as a scholarly community as demonstrated by your inability to listen to our expertise and experience.

It is clear to us that the journal is moving away from its long-established critical gender and feminist roots – the AEs amongst us have been receiving papers to process that do not fit the aims and scope of the journal, and papers rooted in our critical heritage are being routinely desk rejected. It is evident that the journal is now interested in high-volume, low-quality and mainstream management papers.

Moreover, we will no longer be submitting papers to the journal or accepting invitations to review for it; and we will be sharing this letter with our wider scholarly communities so that they are well informed of these changes, as well as to encourage them to think about supporting our concerns which may include withdrawing papers that they currently have under consideration with the journal.

We will not continue to provide free labour and feminist scholarship to this journal in these very problematic circumstances. Since the journal's founding in 1994, it has grown to become the home for academics engaged in a wide range of gender and diversity research, especially by established and emerging scholars examining social and organizational problems from critical, feminist and Global South

perspectives. Wiley's recent actions are sabotaging 30 years of world class scholarship and the collective work of a community which has stood against oppression, injustice and discrimination for just as long. As the number 1 Women's Studies journal, Wiley's directive is a violent attack on the community.

To continue our scholarship and our struggle we will be establishing a new home for our community and celebrating 30 years of critical gender, work and organization studies.

This letter is for information purposes only, a response is not expected.

Yours sincerely,

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