Sixth Fairness at Work Conference

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1. Un(usual) Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic in the Biographical Experiences of American and Polish Health Care Workers

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The aim of this paper is to analyse and compare the mechanisms of 'normalisation' and 'de-normalisation' of crises at work in the biographical narratives of health care workers in Poland and the USA. In both countries, the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis can be explored in terms of the overlapping effects of an exogenous shock with a chronic and structural 'crisis of care' (Nancy Fraser) in marketised public services. Existing research has mainly focused on the direct effects of the pandemic as an extraordinary, "unusual" crisis on the conditions and organisation of work in hospitals. To a lesser extent, it has considered the role of "usual", long-term, systemic and structural problems and intersecting inequalities related to class, gender, ethnicity and other factors affecting the quality of work and services for managing the crisis in the first months of the pandemic. In the conceptual part of the paper, we critically examine three meanings of 'normalisation' of the crisis at work: the chronicity of the crisis among socially disadvantaged but invisible groups, the (desired) return to (socially constructed) 'normality', and the redefinition of what is normal as a result of the experience of the crisis. We elaborate on the link between the three concepts of 'normalisation' and intersecting social inequalities. In the empirical part, we try to answer the question of whether and if so when, for whom and how the pandemic was perceived as a crisis, and in which cases and in which sense its experience was 'normalised'. The empirical basis of the chapter is 62 narrative-biographical interviews conducted in 2021-2023 with doctors, nurses and other hospital workers, as well as care workers and support staff in nursing homes in Poland (31) and in 2024 with hospital, nursing home and home care workers in the USA (31), in the latter case mainly in New York State. In the case of the American workers, particularly the unionised nurses, the experience of working under COVID-19 shaped the overall logic of the biographical narratives much more than in the case of their Polish counterparts, despite the greater distance in time between the interviews and the outbreak of the pandemic. In the case of the interviews conducted in Poland, as well as with the non-union and more precarious American workers, the stories of work during COVID-19 were not only relatively less dramatic, but also less often framed in terms of problems structuring the informants' overall life histories. In discussing the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic was normalised and problematised ('de-normalised') in workers' narratives, the paper considers the institutional factors shaping anti-crisis responses, different forms of intersecting inequalities at work and in wider society, and the role of union discourses and collective mobilisation around 'essential work' in both contexts. The implications for debates on 'good jobs' in public services in times of polycrisis are also discussed.

2. Platforms' Employment Models in the Face of Regulatory Change in Spain and Chile

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Recent research in Industrial Relations and related disciplines have examined the corporate power of Digital Labour Platforms and its influence and impact on regulations, focusing on how these companies adapt their employment models to regulatory constraints and challenge laws to their advantage, a concept termed "contentious compliance" (Valdez, 2023). The contexts of Spain and Chile offer a unique opportunity to empirically study this phenomenon, as both countries have enacted regulations establishing new rules for the operation of both ride-hailing and delivery companies. Based on extensive qualitative research involving over 50 interviews and documentary analysis, this study aims to explore companies' responses to regulatory shifts in each country, draw lessons for policymaking and understand the political nature of these new "employers."

The findings indicate that regulations face severe enforcement problems due to platforms' 'strategic circumvention' or 'partial compliance' with the law. In Spain, ride-hailing companies transitioned to a subcontracting model in 2016. Under this arrangement, workers are employed by license-holding entities managing private-for-hire cars (called VTC companies in Spain). At the same time, platforms establish exclusive commercial contracts for services with the VTC companies, facilitating compliance with labour laws and reducing priority for labour inspection, as employment no longer qualifies as "false self-employment." In Chile, ride-hailing companies continue to operate with a self-employed worker model, as the new labour regulation easily allows them to evade requirements regarding the reclassification of workers as employees. However, the conflict has focused on new transportation regulations, where Uber has led an aggressive campaign against the government and has managed to align drivers' organisations in its favour, as it is estimated that under the new regulatory terms, more than half of the drivers may not qualify as authorised vehicles for the service. This has forced the government to pause the law's implementation and negotiate a gradual approach to its enforcement.

In the case of delivery, Spain's Rider Law established a presumption of employment, requiring companies to hire couriers. Companies have responded with different strategies, ranging from exit to insourcing. Some, like Deliveroo, exited the country after the regulation. Others, like UberEats, transitioned to a subcontracting model akin to ride-hailing. Glovo, the largest company, maintained its self-employed model, arguing that they are genuine self-employed workers under the new hiring conditions. This has led other companies to denounce unfair competition and conclude

that regulation is ineffective, prompting the Spanish government to enact even more regulations to ensure law enforcement. In Chile, the law offers the option of classifying workers as self-employed or employees, resulting in companies only offering the former option, forcing both workers to keep adopting litigation strategies if they want to rebut this and the Labour Inspection to develop new inspection plans.

Overall, platforms in Spain and Chile deploy strategies to confront the law. However, the regulatory context allows these platforms to operate under their preferred model in Chile, while in Spain, they have had to make more concessions. This may indicate that some regulations are more effective than others, but none seem to solve the puzzle entirely.

3. A Great Place to Work, Also for Senior Women: The Label Impact on Their Perception of Inclusion and Fairness

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"Despite laws and measures, women at the end of their careers still suffer from unfair treatment" (France Info, 2023)1. Given young social network influencers who apply anti-aging products to their youthful faces and that France has the youngest head of state since Louis XIV, one must consider whether France is suffering from ageism and sexism. According to the French Defender of Rights barometer published in 2020, 49% reported experiencing gender discrimination and 36% reported experiencing senior discrimination.

This discrimination is peculiar considering the current competition to attract and retain talented employees (Usanova & Géraudel, 2023). Little companies have realized the opportunity offered by a talent pool extended to senior women (Guillemard, 2021). Most are not even concerned about age and gender discrimination, out of the twenty-six other legal criteria in France. Despite introducing the stronger legal framework in Europe, age and gender discrimination remains an unsolved issue within French organizations (Bereni, 2023).

In the United States (US), equal employment opportunity laws introduced in 1964 were strongly mobilized thanks to class actions, mainly in the 1980s. However, this inflation of legal procedures had little effect on discrimination acts. During this period, many firms preferred paying significant litigation fees rather than complying with the Law, even if their degraded reputation had a stronger financial impact (Hersch, 1991).

The first employment branding label 'Best places for Blacks Engineers' was introduced in 1982 to promote diversity management practices adoption through firm reputation (Chauvin & Guthrie, 1994). Along with other labels promoting labor friendly practices, research demonstrated that the Great Place to Work® (GPTW) label improves firm reputation and notably increases by 50% the number of candidates per recruitment (Turban & Cable, 2003).

Since then, more than ten scientific studies demonstrated how the GPTW label was a proxy to measure human capital as a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Carvalho and Areal, 2015). However, only one research was conducted on employees to observe their perception of working in a 'best workplaces' (Carberry & Meyers, 2017).

In our research, we are interested in the perception of French senior women working in a GPTW, an organization we label as BEST. More specifically, we are interested in the demographic effects of working in a BEST on fairness and inclusion perceptions in France, as well as the influence of the French culture on these perceptions.

Our study mobilizes hierarchical linear regressions to examine the impact of the Great Place to Work® label on perceptions of inclusion and fairness, in function on respondents' age and gender. Our findings illustrate that the label has a stronger impact on these perceptionsin France than in the United States. While it serves as a barrier against the double standard of aging, encompassing ageism and sexism in the workplace, it has a limited effect on inclusion perceptions for senior women. We suggest that employment branding labels measure demographic characteristics survey differences prior to promoting a fair and inclusive workplace for all employees, with a particular focus on senior women in France.

4. Capturing 'Work' Instead of 'Employment': A Participatory Method for Feminist Statistics

Anna-Maria Köhnke, *University of Manchester*

Thanks to feminist scholars and activists, it is now widely acknowledged that 'work' is not the same as 'employment'. Work includes a range of unpaid activities, especially those associated with care or reproduction (e.g. household work, informal childcare, or volunteering). While researchers now frequently acknowledge that these activities are 'real work' whose organisational mechanisms matter a great deal to people's wellbeing, with some attempting to quantify this work or the economic value it provides, unpaid activities continue to be systematically excluded from research on the *quality* of work. This is especially problematic when trying to compare work quality internationally – in so-called developing counties, a larger share of economic activity occurs outside the formal labour market.

Much unpaid work occurs as a 'double shift' phenomenon, i.e. alongside paid work. Nevertheless, established surveys on work (quality) capture participants' 'main paid job' only. Consequently, these surveys miss important aspects of inequality, some of which are at the heart of intersecting crises such as the climate crisis and the crisis of care. I presented preliminary findings from quantitative exploratory data analysis to the Fairness at Work conference in 2023, drawing especially from the UK Labour Force Survey and the European Working Conditions Survey. These findings suggest that to capture 'work' instead of formal employment alone, researchers need to develop methods which can capture not just a person's 'main paid job' but all work activities they engage in throughout their day. Otherwise, research fails to capture not just those engaging in housework, but also people with multiple paid jobs.

Since then, I held qualitative panels with working people, giving them a say in how their work quality should be measured. Participants considered unpaid activities 'work' and described how these activities fundamentally impact their wellbeing. To explore possibilities of capturing 'work' instead of employment alone, I designed and trialled an experimental activity based on a novel conceptual framework of work quality. The activity allowed me to capture multidimensional work quality not just of formal employment but of all work activities participants engaged in. This activity is suitable for producing participatory statistics on 'work' instead of employment alone, which can be analysed 'on the spot' by working people themselves – or they can be converted into a 'traditional' dataset using statistics software. My experiences with this activity demonstrate that it is indeed possible to capture 'work' instead of employment alone, and that it is possible to do so in a participatory way inclusive of working people's voices.

To promote exchange between researchers, policymakers, and working people themselves, I created a website which provides a range of interactive resources on my research and the conceptual framework I developed. This website was created with financial support from the Sustainable Consumption Institute at the University of Manchester. Beyond academic forums, it has been presented to trade union representatives, political decisionmakers, and various groups of working people. For more information, visit the following page: https://work-quality.com/en/.

5. Why Don't We Talk More About HRM's Relationship to Inequality Regimes? The Case of Healthcare

Anne McBride & Nick Krachler, *Work and Equalities, University of Manchester*

The concept of inequality regimes (defined as "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations"; Acker, 2006: 443) provides a framework for analysing and evidencing the number of ways in which inequalities are created and perpetuated in organisations, including through HR practices such as recruitment and pay. The concept has global resonance (see Tatli et al., 2017 and Ugarte and Rubery, 2021) but there is limited discussion in the HR field about its potential use in identifying the role of an organisation's HRM system (understood as the interrelation between the HR function, HR policies and effective HR practices) in the processes that produce (or could reduce) inequality regimes. Indeed, references to HR practices in inequality regimes are more likely to be found in non-HRM specialist journals (e.g. Cohen et al., 2023; Duberley et al., 2017; Quinn et al., 2019).

This paper argues that there is a need to more explicitly centre HRM's responsibility for recognising the bases and shape of systemic in/equality and bringing more visibility to the HR processes that maintain and reproduce such inequalities. This argument is illustrated by applying the concept of 'inequality regimes' to international extant health and social care management literature. This application identifies how HRM can engender multiple relationships to inequality:

- *opposing inequality*, e.g., through equality standards and collective bargaining to reduce inequalities in the UK (Bach and Kessler, 2012, Krachler, 2023); using care workers experiences to guide managerial models in Sweden (Mulinari and Selberg, 2023); mobilising collective action to (partially) reject the "self-sacrificing worker ideal" in Italy (Galanti, 2024).
- *condoning inequality*, e.g., through managers not implementing policies that could reduce workforce inequalities in the UK (McBride, 2003; McBride and Mustchin, 2013); not fully understanding the impact of effects of precarious employment on workers' health in Canada (Gunn et al., 2023); obscuring "the workings of gendered power relations" using lean as a management model in Finland (Aho and Mankki, 2023: 146); not recognising the implications of women health workers inhabiting gendered spaces in communities in Ethiopia (Jackson et al., 2018).
- *actively producing inequality*, e.g., through the hierarchical organisation of jobs and occupations that legitimize gender and other inequalities of recruitment, pay and promotion, with examples from the UK (Batnitzky and McDowell, 2011, Braithwaite, 2023, Hammond et al., 2017, Oikelome and Healy, 2013); a number of countries in Africa (Uneke and Uneke,

2021) and globally (WHO, 2022, Newman, 2023); and organisational practices of global nurse care chains, linking the Philippines and Finland (Nare and Silva, 2021).

The paper concludes with an argument for research that conceptualises HRM's multi-faceted relationships to inequality regimes so that HRM can more effectively contribute to reducing such marginalising processes and practices – both in healthcare and elsewhere in the post-COVID inequalities landscape (Butterick and Charlwood, 2021).

6. Put Up with Professional Gender Inequalities or Correcting Them? What Women Want

Anne-Sophie Bruno, Ylenia Curci, & Nathalie Greenan, *Centre for the Study of Work and Employment (CEET), CNAM, Paris*

The Recent evolution of the French industrial relations brought France to adopt a state-led decentralized bargaining system, of which the fight against professional gender inequalities represents the flagship. Through mandated GE bargaining, French firms are invited to seek for internal solutions within a framework precisely defined by the legislator and receive an obligation to issue regularly a text describing the bargaining procedure and the actions retained to deal with inequalities. The fulgurant boost of GE texts released by firms the day after the formalization of the bargaining obligation suggests that this approach might be working. However, complying with the obligation to negotiate does not assure a minimum level of firms' engagement, nor an objective reduction of inequalities in the workplace. Even when major effort is put into the bargaining process at firm level, what women want and ask for, and what equality means in the mind of the management and employees, is kind of a mixed bag. As a result, the different meanings that professional gender equality takes on in different negotiations translate into a high heterogeneity of actions mentioned in the texts.

This paper investigates the determinants of these different approaches via a text mining analysis of the texts issued by French firms. To do so, we exploit the Cage database that, for a representative sample of French firms, collects information about negotiations habits, the structure of the employment and about other firms' characteristics, and match them with information extrapolated from the texts they have issued. We have created several dictionaries that help classifying the texts according to the rationale behind the actions retained to address inequalities. Corrective measures gather terms which rationale is to erase the source of inequality, such as automatic promotion after maternity leave, interdiction for all the personnel to organize meetings outside core business hours, etc. Accommodating measures sum up terms linked to the attempt to subdue professional life of women to inequalities arising in their private life, such as extra leaves or time flexibility for taking care of family members. Employer's responsibility measures, which rationale is to have a collective effect beyond the measures to copy with the individual situations of female employees in the company, includes programs to support female students or install the practice of anonymous CV screening. Moreover, we created dictionaries to distinguish between Elitist equality measures, intended to promote the careers of women executives, social justice measures, related to the general importance of assuring fair opportunities and diversity, and Competitivity measures, which treat gender equality as a means of production.

7. The Role of the Line Manager in Achieving Greater Fairness and Equality in the Workplace

Tony Bennett, Adrian Wright, Mark Wilding, Mary Lawler, & Dorota Marsh*, Institute for Research into Organisations, Work and Employment (iROWE), University of Central Lancashire.*

The NHS is witnessing significant cultural changes in terms of their approach to managing employee relations. This is driven in large part by a national strategy to increase recruitment, retention, and employee voice, and improve staff wellbeing (NHS, 2023). A central tenet of this change is the move towards a 'no blame' culture when conflict arises in the workplace; which accepts that many disputes arising at work are less the fault of the individual, leading typically to performance reviews, disciplines or grievances, and are due rather to systemic flaws within the organisation of work and the delivery of services. The findings of a recent study of the resultant changes in employee relations offer an interesting insight into how a cross-section of senior managers, HR practitioners and union officials feel employees are being treated in the workplace. The study employed a mixed methodology, with a statistical analysis of the views of over 210 survey respondents and the qualitative analysis of 33 follow up in-depth interviews.

The findings

Generally, the cultural change was viewed positively. However, line management was seen as a significant barrier to this initiative. Survey respondents overwhelmingly felt that improving line manager capability was the most pressing challenge facing their organisation. The line manager was also cited as the key reason for workplace conflict. In resonance with other studies (Townsend et al., 2012; Saundry et al., 2020; Saundry and Wibberley, 2023). respondents felt that line managers must have appropriate training and development and support by HR colleagues on an ongoing basis, whilst recognising that that role still needs a level of autonomy, to be effective. Secondly, line managers, who are often 'squeezed' (Bajorek, Z. (2020) between the expectations from above and below, must also manage their operational duties and need, therefore, the capacity to carry out both those roles. This research confirmed that NHS organisations also need to identify future managers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and awareness, and give them opportunities to refine that capability, before promotion, rather than promote a person solely because of their technical and operational competence alone. Taking this more strategic and nuanced approach, the research suggests, will give line managers greater confidence to successfully manage the employment relationship in a fairer and more equitable fashion.

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8. The Complex Effects of Job Complexity: A Meta-Analytical Investigation of How Job Complexity Relates to Employee Well-Being, Learning, and Job Performance

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Job complexity has been identified as an important job characteristic that affects employee performance, learning and well-being (Grimshaw & Miozzo, 2021). However, there are conflicting theoretical accounts regarding the proposed effects of job complexity. For example, a mutual gains perspective suggests generally positive effects, while a conflictual perspective suggests gains for performance and learning but deleterious effects on well-being. Moreover, the considerable heterogeneity in empirical findings (with positive and negative relationships being found with each type of outcome) does not provide clear support for either perspective. The aim of this paper is therefore to conduct a meta-analysis of the effects of job complexity to advance and clarify our conceptual and empirical understanding of this key job characteristic. We also examine important demographic (e.g., age, gender) and methodological (measurement, study design) factors to shed further light on the effects of job complexity.

Our systematic search identified 68 sources and 110 effect sizes (N=68,113). Job complexity had a significant and positive relationship with employee, performance, positive well-being, but also negative well-being. Regarding demographic factors, the most notable result was a curvilinear relationship of the mean age of the sample on the relationship between job complexity and learning, and job complexity and performance. This could suggest that older employees may benefit more from job complexity when they develop skills to cope with it more effectively. The pattern of effects suggests that job complexity can be conceptualized as a 'challenge demand', as it positively relates to performance, learning, positive well-being *and* negative well-being, i.e., job complexity is rewarding and stressful. But such effects may only be found when job complexity conceptualized as a form of job demands and not just job resources. We discuss our findings with regard to future research, organizational practice and policy.

9. Diversity Management Practices in Favour of Renewal: An Employer Experimentation in a Canadian Union

Blandine Emilien, *University of Bristol Business School*

The study presented in this paper draws from a union organisation's experimentation that has involved rethinking its management practices in the light of diversity. The organisation's willingness to undergo experimentation despite its length and complexity was designed to respond to a call from its staff and membership, who decried the need to better address ethnocultural diversity within the organisation's management practices and policies.

Union experimentation has been studied elsewhere and extensively to highlight social actors' work in favour of the union renewal (among others, Fairbrother, Williams, Barton, Gibellieri, & Tropeoli, 2007; Fairbrother, 2015; Murray, 2017), or their intended input in institutional governance (see for example, Lévesque, Fairbrother, Emilien, González, & Morissette, 2022). Where union renewal has implied the need to revisit existing repertoires of action and resources (Lévesque & Murray, 2010; Ford & Gillan, 2022), previous research has touched on human resource management practices including diversity-related matters (Kelly & Heery 1989; Kirton & Healy, 1999; Murray, 2017). However, unions are rarely studied with a specific focus on them as employers facing challenges that are usually captured outside industrial relations and inside the field of management and organisation research.

This paper focuses on the first phase of an action research project conducted within a framework of coproduced research (Thomas-Hughes, 2018; Howard & Thomas-Hughes, 2021). The first phase involved a survey conducted among the union's professional staff in order i) to map the main characteristics and features of existing staff and ii) gather staff members' voice regarding the relevance of the project. 50% (n=304) of the targeted participants responded to the survey. Findings indicate a rather homogenous staff composition and a relatively low percentage of staff members identifying with ethnic minority groups. They also indicate that 4.3% of the respondents claim to have experienced discrimination. More open-ended questions led to respondents confirming the relevance of this study, which some hoped would lead to a sustainable diversity management endeavour within the organisation.

10. Workplace Dignity in Precarious Employment: Perspectives from Taiwan's Platform-Based Food Delivery Couriers

Bo-Yi Lee, *Institute of Technology Management, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu City, Taiwan*

This study explores how platform workers in Taiwan conceptualize workplace dignity and examines the challenges to their dignity within the platform-based food delivery sector. With the rise of precarious employment and the gig economy, platform workers are often paid per task rather than through conventional employment contracts. This dynamic, which treats workers as mere instruments to achieve specific outcomes, contrasts with Kantian notions of dignity, potentially undermining workers' sense of self-worth and respect. In addition, platform workers frequently face precarious working conditions, low wages, and minimal job security, placing them at risk of exploitation and inclusion in what some scholars term a "21st century servant class," subordinated to a small group of capitalists and clients. This study builds on previous research exploring workplace dignity, particularly Hudson's (2001) typology, which has been widely applied in Western contexts, and the emerging studies in Asian settings.

Taiwan's unique cultural context, influenced by both Confucian traditions from Mainland China and American organizational practices, provides a compelling case study for examining workplace dignity among platform workers. In Taiwan, over 145,000 couriers work for major food delivery platforms like Foodpanda and Uber Eats. Their median income is lower than the national average, positioning them as part of a precarious workforce. Using qualitative research methods, this study seeks to answer the following question: How do platform workers in Taiwan conceptualize workplace dignity, and how is their dignity challenged?

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of workplace dignity in several ways. First, by integrating Hudson's and Lucas's approaches, the research highlights two distinct perspectives on dignity: one that emphasizes monetary compensation and another that focuses on external evaluation and respect. This suggests a nuanced understanding of workplace dignity shaped by both internal values and societal expectations. Second, the study identifies an emerging shift among some Taiwanese platform workers who increasingly link dignity to monetary rewards, reflecting the influence of globalization and shifting societal values. Third, the research provides insights into the unique challenges faced by platform workers in the gig economy, including algorithmic management and the misclassification of workers as independent contractors, which contribute to their precarious employment status.

Finally, this article positions platform workers within the framework of "customer sovereignty,"

where customers hold disproportionate power over workers, often leading to disrespectful interactions. This concept underscores the parallels between platform workers and a modern servant class, enhancing our understanding of the growing platform-based workforce. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of workplace dignity, particularly in the context of the platform economy and its challenges to traditional employment norms.

11. Wellbeing and the Post-Pandemic Employment Relationship: A Study of Scotland's Further Education Colleges

Brian John Gilchrist, *University of Glasgow*

In 2022/23, Scotland's 24 further education colleges delivered vocational and skills training to 248,907 students (Audit Scotland, 2024), and 46% of learners from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds who progressed to university did so from a college course (Scottish Funding Council, 2023). However, the sector is experiencing significant, linked challenges in terms of financial sustainability, employment relations, fairness at work, and staff wellbeing. Since the reintroduction of national bargaining in 2015, industrial action has been taken by staff every year but one – including an extensive programme of action relating to a two-year long dispute over the 2022/23 pay award. Against this backdrop, EIS-FELA (the recognised trade union for academic staff) launched the campaign "Fighting for the Future of FE" in November 2022, with the embedding of fair work principles for all staff being one of six desired campaign outcomes.

Despite this landscape, there is a lack of academic research on how such macroenvironmental challenges affect the wellbeing and Fair Work experiences of college staff - within a sector that is surprisingly under-researched. Given the extent to which college success is built upon the contribution and effectiveness of both academic and professional services staff, a lack of understanding of the potential effects of the sector's macro-level stresses on the wellbeing of individual staff members is concerning. To address this gap, my PhD study draws from interviews with academic and professional services staff from five case study colleges, to explore what wellbeing means to staff, how they construct their individual sense of wellbeing, and how this is supported or challenged by broader organisational and sectoral factors.

To conceptualise this, I have proposed a model of wellbeing at work that integrates dignity and decent, fair, and meaningful work with Quality of Work Life principles, using the lens of Amartya Sen's capability approach (Sen 1993, 2001). In a sector that relies on substantial goodwill and commitment from staff, my research data shows that while many staff feel their individual role is meaningful and they continue to value the broader social and economic contribution of the institutions in which they work, this is increasingly accompanied by a deterioration of perceptions relating to the Scottish Fair Work principles in terms of fairness, effective voice, perceived value and recognition of individual contribution, and organisational trust. In response, data indicates staff are prioritising individual wellbeing by restricting voluntary contribution, changing work arrangements, or at the extreme, by considering leaving the sector altogether.

This study may be unique in exploring staff wellbeing in the Scottish college sector through the concepts of decent and fair work, and how individual staff are constructing their sense of

wellbeing in challenging organisational and sectoral circumstances. It thus makes a valuable contribution to the debate on the effects of macro-decision making in relation to Fair Work in public institutions.

12. Financialization and Precarity: A Recipe for Disaster, and the New Normal

Carl Packman, *University of Birmingham*

A double derogation of responsibility has taken shape and is becoming normalised in UK society today to the detriment of a growing number of working people today. On the one hand, financialization (the deregulation of financial and labour markets) has transformed the role of state and non-state organisations such that there is an increased use of financial products like consumer credit by individuals (increasing their exposure to debt) and forced the responsibilities of welfare upon individual citizens in an open and financialised environment (Finlayson, 2009; Sherraden and Rank, 2008). One the other hand, recent changes to the labour market has seen an increase in precarious contracts, creating a new class of worker called 'the precariat' (Standing, 2011). Where the traditional working class tended to enjoy fixed contracts, the 'precariat' today finds they are offered 'flexibility' in the workplace in the form of temporary jobs, casualisation (jobs on a very short-term basis), part-time work, or intermittent work (ibid). What this has resulted in for a growing number of people today is what Guy Standing (2011) has described as a situation of personal financial insecurity typically resulting in limited access to government benefits and rising personal financial debt. My contribution is to develop this underexplored link between financialization and growing workplace precarity to show that there is an emerging crisis waiting in the wings where financial and employment risk is being pushed onto individuals causing widespread personal financial harm.

13. Unlocking the Potential and Understanding the Challenges of Focus Groups in Industrial Relations Research: A Methodological Exploration

Carlos Jesus Fernandez Rodriguez, *Autonomous University of Madrid*
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In the field of industrial relations and related broader areas (such as employment relations), various methodologies are used to study the interactions between employers and managers, employees, trade unions, and the state – and within them. These approaches often draw from multiple disciplines, including sociology, economics, law, psychology, and political science, and typically involve either or both quantitative and qualitative methods. Although qualitative methods have gained traction in recent years, not least in the context of the increasing dominance of quantitative research, not all available options are equally explored and used. Most qualitative research relies on individual interviews, while other methods remain underutilized by researchers. One such underrepresented method is the focus or discussion group, which has has limited visibility in terms of publications.

While focus groups are widely employed in sociology across various topics (e.g., consumption, political attitudes, etc.), they are far less common among industrial relations researchers and practitioners. The aim of this paper is to explore the potential of focus groups in industrial relations research, as they offer a unique approach to investigating different topics and issues. Focus groups can serve as a valuable tool for examining nuanced and subjective experiences as well as a range of tension and differences within a group, thus generating hypotheses and gaining insights into social phenomena from the perspectives of participants. Conversations among employees, union representatives, civil servants, or managers, for example - and groups of workers and activists - can deepen our understanding of related motivations and interpretation and help reconstruct events or critical situations. Besides, focus groups can help us to deepen our knowledge about how people experience actions at work and work itself, forms of labor market relations such precariousness and workplace issues such as exploitation.

We will also within this paper/presentation reflect upon challenges to the use of focus groups in work environments, e.g. the increasing nature of individualisation, the lack of trust at the shopfloor/office level, the ongoing disappearance of collective spaces in some key new sectors within the workplace, or specific institutional barriers that make the use of this technique difficult such as the extent of indeterminateness of the discussions.

Our contribution will be structured as follows: first, we will provide a theoretical discussion of focus groups and their relevance as an established method in the social sciences. Next, we will examine the potential and limitations of using focus groups in industrial relations research. Finally,

we will conclude with a discussion of creative ways to incorporate focus groups in future studies and the importance of not relying simply on individualised researcher-participant relations.

14. Emotional Capital and Inequality: Emotional Strategies and Socioeconomic Disparity in Colombian Call Centres

Carlos Pineda Ramos, *University of Bristol*

Outsourcing services are often driven by the economic and political situation of the outsourced country, with companies seeking higher revenues while reducing investments in infrastructure and human resources (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000; Schwarz *et al.*, 2009). Language skills also play a crucial role in these decisions, which is why much research on global services focuses on relationships between countries that share a common language, often shaped by colonial histories (Mirchandani, 2004; Poster, 2007). As a result, outsourcing frequently exploits unequal social, political, and economic conditions while benefiting from cultural and linguistic proximity to tap into a larger labour pool.

However, when English proficiency is not a common factor, the continental separation between what Sallaz (2019) identify as "life" and "hell" perspectives of the work crumble and start to coexist in the same workplace. This is evident in Colombia, where English-speaking outsourced services have grown over the past decade despite the country's generally low English proficiency levels. My research investigates how unequal socioeconomic backgrounds within the same service labour pool led to differing perceptions of the job and varying strategies to cope with the emotional demands of the workplace. It highlights the role of emotions as both a requirement and a reflection of existing inequalities in the service sector.

Central to this study is the concept of emotional capital (EC), which I conceptualise as an extension of Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital. Emotional capital refers to enduring dispositions that equip individuals with emotional skills and knowledge, as explored by scholars such as (Cahill (1999), Thoits (2004), and Cottingham (2016). Emotional capital, a subset of cultural and social capital, is accumulated over time through daily interactions and can be strategically exchanged depending on its value in specific contexts. In this framework, emotional resources become tools that workers can leverage in response to the demands of service work.

This article explores the challenges faced by customer service agents, examining both interpersonal struggles and broader economic forces. Drawing from my fieldwork in Bogotá, Colombia, where I conducted 46 semi-structured interviews with contact centre agents, supervisors, quality analysts, trainers, and psychologists, I analysed workers' various emotional

strategies to manage their jobs. The data revealed diverse perspectives on working in call centres, shaped largely by the workers' socioeconomic backgrounds.

In this research, I argue that the expansion of the labour pool in countries like Colombia has led to varying perceptions of outsourced service jobs, largely influenced by workers' socioeconomic conditions. These differences, in turn, shape the emotional strategies workers employ to cope with the demands of their jobs. This analysis also stresses the different emotional resources at hand within the same job based on previous socioeconomic individual differences.

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15. Navigating Fairness and Challenges: The Impact of Automation on Job Quality in Chile's Manufacturing Industry

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This research critically examines the impact of automation on job quality within Chile's manufacturing industry, advocating for a nuanced understanding of this phenomenon. As automation technologies increasingly permeate global industries, their effects on labour dynamics are profound yet complex, particularly in the context of developing economies like Chile. This study adopts a case study methodology to uncover the specific challenges that automation introduces in the Chilean manufacturing sector, with a focus on how various key stakeholders—workers, trade unions, direct supervisors, and human resource managers—engage with and respond to these technological shifts in their work environments.

Drawing on 21 semi-structured interviews conducted across two company case studies, the research reveals that while automation is present, it has not yet fully transformed Chilean workplaces. Moreover, its potential impacts are not being adequately anticipated or managed. The research highlights the uneven diffusion of automation across the industry, where its effects vary significantly based on factors such as company size and the skill levels of workers. Unskilled or non-professional workers are found to be disproportionately affected, facing greater job insecurity and fewer opportunities for retraining, while managerial and professional occupations enjoy a higher degree of control over their work tasks and time.

Additionally, a central focus of this study is how stakeholders confront and negotiate their ideas about fairness, particularly regarding the allocation of automation's benefits and burdens. The research delves into the debates surrounding equitable access to retraining opportunities, the distribution of job security across different occupational levels, and the fairness of decision-making processes that determine which jobs are automated. These negotiations are often filled with tensions between short-term economic gains and long-term considerations of job quality. The conflicting interests between management and labour unions further complicate efforts to define what constitutes a fair and just adaptation to technological change.

The findings of this study suggest significant challenges faced by workers and unions in mobilising their views on fairness, especially given the limited training opportunities available to workers, a prevalent short-term vision among employers, and an institutional framework that is ill-prepared to address the long-term implications of automation. For instance, workers often express concerns about being left behind by rapid technological advancements, while trade unions struggle to advocate effectively for comprehensive retraining programs that could help workers transition into new roles.

The study argues that these challenges necessitate a critical re-evaluation of current strategies and policies within the industry. There is an urgent need for a more inclusive approach

that considers the voices and interests of all stakeholders, particularly those most vulnerable to the disruptive effects of automation. The research calls for stronger collaboration between employers, unions, and policymakers to develop forward-looking strategies that not only mitigate the risks associated with automation but also harness its potential to improve job quality across the sector. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how automation can be integrated into the manufacturing industry in a way that promotes fairness, equity, and sustainable economic growth.

16. Regulating Sexual Violence in the Workplace: The Rocky Path to Effectiveness

Dalia Gesualdi-Fecteau, *School of Industrial Relations, Université de Montréal, Montreal*

In 2020, in Canada, one in four women (25%) and one in six men (17%) reported having personally experienced inappropriate sexualized behaviours in their workplace during the previous year. While workplaces must comply with anti-harassment and anti-discrimination regulations, one in five women (20%) did not report about what they experienced at work, stating that they feared negative outcomes on their careers. In February 2022, the Quebec minister of Labour appointed an Expert Panel to evaluate the coherence and effectiveness of the regulatory framework that addresses sexual violence. Over the course of 2022, the three experts collated a wealth of data from various sources and empirically assessed the nature and scope of the interventions of different institutions. In Quebec, the regulation regarding sexual violence is fragmented across multiple legal sources. The report of the Expert Panel, which laid out 82 recommendations, speaks to the importance of understanding the role of various actors and their front-line agents, from unions to the labour inspectorate, as the strategies and practices they put forward in their daily work is concretely what enacts public policy. This paper will present a critical overview of the administrative and legislative initiatives that were set forth since the release of the Expert Panel's report.

17. Organising Among Paid Care Workers in England: Worker and Policy Priorities, and Potential for Progress?

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Despite its growth and ubiquity, paid adult social care (ASC) work persists as a site of very low pay, insecurity, and exploitation, where 'decent work' (ILO, 2018) remains elusive. ASC provision's quasi-market (Le Grand, 1991) model, where local authorities assess and commission predominantly independent sector providers to deliver care, relies on outsourcing and contributes to workforce fragmentation. This atomisation, with thousands of providers and many workers employed to support people in their own homes, contrasts with the terrain of more established trade unionism and impedes organising (Whitfield, 2022). In fact, a mere 15% of private sector-employed ASC workers are unionised (Cominetti, 2023: 5), in contrast with 21% of all employees in England (Department for Business and Trade, 2023: 21).

Although care workers lack a unified voice or influence through sectoral collective bargaining, they, and organisations representing them, undertake significant organising and activist work towards improving their situation (Johnson, Rubery and Egan, 2021). In the English context, however, this phenomenon has received only limited attention in academic research. This paper draws on a series of qualitative case studies of organisations engaged in care worker organising, consisting of interviews with key actors and care workers. This dual approach has provided organisational insights at the meso level, as well as micro-level insights, including on care worker motivations in relation to organising. These case studies explore the focus, strategies, and successes in approaches to care worker organising, and include both independent as well as more established trade unions, and care work-specific campaign groups.

Based on the issues and campaigns at the centre of these organisations' activities and concerns, we identify key policy areas where care workers and those representing their interests call for positive change and explore how this may be achieved. These areas include various aspects of labour market policy, including pay and conditions, and migration policy, alongside policies that shape the wider social care system (which this relational work is bound up in) (Williams, 2018). They also encompass views on broader issues, such as gender inequality, and relatedly, societal understanding and perceptions of paid care work. We conclude by reflecting on what the issues identified in care worker organising reveal about the relative status of care work, the circumstances of care workers, and the prospects for change, before outlining the wider socio-economic benefits that positive changes to care workers' collective situation could bring.

18. Employee Voice in Temporary Agency Work

Dustin Hafki , *University of Strathclyde, Glasgow*

With an increasing share of employees in non-traditional employment globally (ILO, 2017) research into those markets has increased as well. In the realm of the gig economy and platform-based work food couriers and delivery drivers have received a lot of attention, while the far longer standing actors, namely temporary agency workers (TAW) and their respective organisations have been somewhat neglected in these discussions, and specifically in regard to voice at work. This research project suggests researching voice dynamics in TAW to add to the academic understanding and influence how voice is heard and raised (Wilkinson et al., 2018) in agency work in the social care sector in Scotland.

Oyetunde et al. (2022) evidence in a literature review that there are prevalent research gaps around non-traditional employment and voice, as established models and frameworks assume traditional employment relationships, pointing out a need to further investigate voice in triangular ER such as agency work. Further, Retkowsky et al. (2023) as well as Rybnikova (2016) highlight investigating voice, silence and agency work with a consideration of different, unexplored organisational contexts as a future research direction. One such unexplored context are the agency organisations, as existing research into agency work focusses on the workers (e.g. O'Dowd, 2023), trade unions (e.g. Pulignano & Doerflinger, 2013; Keizer et al., 2023) or on the hiring-firms (e.g. Johnstone, 2018; Sancha et al., 2020). Employee silence has further been highlighted in agency work (Been de Beer, 2022; Rybnikova, 2016) with agency workers finding themselves in an employment relationship that structurally and socially reinforces silence due to a lack of control and protection (Alsos & Evans, 2018), however these studies have a different institutional background to the UK. This study will consequently contribute to giving agency workers in Scotland a voice. While the role of agencies is explored as part of the triangular relationships in terms of health and safety (Strauss-Raats, 2019), voice and silence dynamics (Been & de Beer, 2022; Rybnikova, 2016) as well as their role in legislation (Alsos & Evans, 2018), the dynamics at play in the agency have often been ignored in favour of organisational contexts of client-organisations. There is, however, evidence that voice opportunities exist within TWA (Rybnikova, 2016), which leads to voice dynamics within the agency being explicitly included in this project.

The research questions "How is voice expressed in the fragmented context of the triangular employment relationship?", "Under what circumstances do agency workers choose to speak up/stay silent?" as well as "How does technology shape voice in agency working?" are currently explored via qualitative interviews. As Scotland's Fair Work Framework (2016) highlights effective voice as an important dimension for fair work, this research aims to contribute to the Sixth Fairness at Work Conference by presenting the conceptualisation around voice and silence in TAW and presenting preliminary findings.

19. Young Workers in the 'Missing Middle': Examining the Labour Market Opportunities and Employment Conditions of Young Non-Graduates in England

Edward Yates, Jason Heyes, Kaidong Yu, *University of Sheffield*

This paper examines the labour market opportunities and employment conditions of young (aged 18-30) non-graduates in England from the perspective of both young workers and employers. This 'missing middle' group of young workers who are neither graduates nor NEETs accounts for 40-50% of young people in the UK. The paper is based on research funded by a UKRI Economic and Social Research Council 'Transforming Working Lives' grant entitled '*Transitions of Young Workers in the UK Labour Market: Consequences for Careers, Earnings, Health and Wellbeing*' (ES/W009536/1).

The paper theorises and situates young non-graduates experience within broader shifts in the UK's political economy over the last four decades, which have involved a re-shaping of the UK's accumulation model (Gamble, 2019), shifts in the sectoral and occupational distribution of employment, and changes in employment relations (Howell, 2016) as capital has become more powerful relative to labour. The paper's analytical framework draws on transitional labour market theory (Schmid 2002), labour market segmentation theory (Grimshaw et al. 2017) and labour regime theory (Peck 1996). The paper explores how local economic conditions affect young non-graduates' ability to secure employment and the role of employers in shaping employment outcomes through their recruitment, training and management practices and strategies. The paper draws on interview data collected in two English mayoral combined authorities - Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire. Interviews were conducted with 57 young people and 20 employees, as well as labour market intermediaries.

Our findings suggest that non-graduates can be categorised as belonging to one of three groups: (i) young people with limited skills, work experience or career direction who churn between low-end labour market jobs and periods of unemployment, (ii) young people who have undergone - or are undergoing - training and have entered into a job with career prospects, often via a 'shielded'

entry route (Ashton et al, 1990) such as an apprenticeship and (iii) young people who have undergone a career change in their mid-20s and transitioned into higher-quality employment or training.

The paper also shows that quality career advice for young people remains critical for promoting uptake of training or jobs with career development prospects as young people often possess limited knowledge of different types of work which are available to them However, we also find that perceptions of apprenticeships are changing as young people become more aware of them as a viable alternative to university, seeing them as a route to secure, high quality employment without accruing high levels of debt.

Employers repeatedly identified a lack of soft skills among young people as a key challenge to successful recruitment and retention. A lack of technical skills or specific qualifications was much less frequently identified as a problem. The size of employers (as measured by turnover) is a major factor shaping opportunities for young non-graduates, particularly as large organisations are compelled to invest in training under the provisions of the Apprenticeship Levy. The complexities of the levy were reported as an issue by employers, with some speaking of the need for dedicated 'youth champions' in organisations to represent the interests of young people. Finally, the findings reveal the importance of well-developed links between employers, the local state, and local education providers to both support the flow of labour market and training information and reduce the complexity of options which often confuse young people and employers.

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20. Co-Creating New Technology in Work– The Quiet Voice of Workers

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New digitalised production processes have sparked much academic and political debate with some even referring to these technological advancements as the 4th Industrial Revolution (Warhurst and Hunt, 2019). The main research focus has been outcomes eg the extent of job losses (e.g. Frey and Osborne, 2017). Less researched is the introduction of these process and, specifically, the role of employee voice. This omission is surprising given that new technologies are introduced within a set of social relations, resulting in organizations introducing new technology in different ways (Badham 2005). Echoing the socio-technical systems (STS) approach to understanding the relationship between technology, workers and outputs, this paper examines the role of worker voice in the introduction of new technology at work.

Analytically, we draw on Trist and Bamforth's (1951) STS approach premised on organisations being systems combining both social and technical systems. Successful technological introduction requires integrating these systems. Empirically, we draw on company case studies within Danish and British manufacturing, which represent two highly distinct industrial relations settings. Danish manufacturing has strong collective bargaining with high union density, extensive collective bargaining coverage and strong workplace representation. British manufacturing represents a less regulated sector with low union density, patchy collective bargaining coverage and weak workplace representation (Visser, 2016). We draw on interviews with management, workers, workplace representatives and local unions in Danish and British manufacturing companies. We triangulate interview data with policy documents, collective agreements and company-based documentation and statistical material.

We find that although the introduction of new technology often hinges on substantial company investments and high expectations of increased productivity and efficiency returns, the success or failure on new workplace technology depends on employee voice. When implementation fails – i.e. technology goes un- or underutilized – workers have little meaningful engagement in its introduction, contributing to workplace conflict and mistrust. In contrast, successful implementation (i.e. r more efficient and productive work systems) occurs when workers are involved in the co-creation and design of jobs and technologies. Thereby, (un)fairness, understood as level of employee engagement, appears pivotal for the outcomes of new digital technology

introduction. Our paper thus provides novel insights into company dynamics when new technology is introduced.

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21. "In a Dream World It Would Be Nice to Be Able to Support Expecting and New Mothers with More Finance…": Challenges, Concerns and Good Practices Around Parental Leave Within UK SMEs

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Bianca Stumbitz, *Middlesex University*
Amy Burnett, *Middlesex University*
Laura Jarvis-King, *University of Manchester*
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The transition to parenthood is one of the most impactful periods in a person's working life and the single most important event in the gendering of careers (Bradley, 2012; Gatrell, 2011). Understanding and addressing challenges in managing this transition in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is critical, given they account for 99.9% of the UK business population, three-fifths of employment and around half of turnover in the private sector. Despite considerable progress by some larger employers, with respect to extended parental leave and pay, evidence suggests SMEs lag in both recognising the challenges parents face, and the promotion of 'family- friendly' options.

Parental leave is high on the policy agenda and seen as important for 'supporting parental employment, child well-being and…promoting gender equality' (Moss et al., 2019: 1). Some elements of UK leave (most notably maternity) are generous in length, yet all types (maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave) attract low rates/periods of statutory pay[1], with employers left to decide whether they will enhance remaining entitlements. While some employers have well-developed policies and resources, financially supporting this transitional period is a key challenge for most SME employers.

In view of this conundrum, we ask: What are the challenges and opportunities experienced by SMEs and their employees in relation to parental leave? Specifically, we seek to discover other ways SMEs who offer only limited enhancement can support their employees during this transitional phase, and how this is experienced by employees.

Our study, part of a wider multidisciplinary exploration into the management of, and experiences with, maternity/paternity within UK SMEs, draws on multiple qualitative interviews with 32 employers and 35 employees. Employee interviews were carried out with those currently expecting a child or at least one child under five, and employer interviews were with those with HR responsibilities (e.g. CEO owner-manager in smaller organisations).

While we recognise wider policy development is key, we focus on the mutual adjustments (Stumbitz et al., 2018) made within SMEs as they relate to the leave period/entitlements. Employers felt their ability to support employees was constrained by resource scarcity and this pointed to key concerns with managing staff absences. However, our findings identify innovative practices around multiskilling and buddy systems which respond to challenges covering roles like-for-like for limited time periods. Employee concerns pointed to a need for open dialogue moving discussion beyond leave entitlement to meet concerns around the boundaries of contact during leave (e.g. a clean break/how to maintain contact), as well as changing needs after return to work.

Underpinning employer and employee experiences is the need for a supportive workplace culture, where both parties can discuss options, work together and develop appropriate/preferred approaches with flexibility to respond to changing needs in (early) parenting journeys. Our findings point to opportunities for differentiation via informal/ flexible approaches yet with inherent concerns around blurred boundaries/privacy.

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22. Work and Employment in Adult Social Care

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Much research on the adult social care sector tends to focus on a specific organization or service. This paper adds to existing knowledge by examining the adult social care system more broadly in England.

Our research question is: How are the work and employment challenges in adult social care experienced by actors across the system?

To address the research question semi-structured interviews were conducted with 76 participants working in the adult social care sector in England. Additionally, 9 interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders, such as unions, charities and employer representatives. Respondents were asked about the work, employment and industrial relations challenges in the sector, the implications for different stakeholders and the institutional, economic and social changes required. To analyse the qualitative data systematically, the interview data were coded in NVivo. Thematic analysis provided a structured but flexible approach to analyse the data.

The findings are organized under three themes which adopt a multi-level perspective to contextualise the empirical data. Worker, manager and stakeholder experiences of challenges in the social care sector are linked to individual, organizational and external factors. A framework is developed from the findings which contributes to sociological theory by providing a new perspective on the work, employment and voice issues in the adult social care sector. The analysis also contributes to policy and practice by suggesting how a more sustainable approach could be achieved in adult social care.

23. Are Sectoral Agreements the Vehicle to Rebuild Union Density in Ireland

Eugene Hickland , Tony Dundon, Tony Dobbins, & Niall Cullinane

This paper investigates the legal reinstatement of sectoral bargaining in Ireland and the continued legal campaigns by some employer groups against any form of sectoral collective bargaining. It further explores the strong potential of, and the actual extent of, sectoral bargaining taking place in Ireland as part of trade union mobilisation and organising campaigns and a range of sectoral agreements with larger employer groupings and organising campaigns. The paper considers the likely impact of sectoral bargaining regulation in response to the EU Directive (2022/2041) on Adequate Minium Wages.

This paper was developed in the light of the legal actions taken by some employer groups against Government moves to reinstate forms of sectoral bargaining from 2015 onwards. The authors conducted a review of existing literature on sectoral bargaining. They further reviewed the new Acts of the Irish Parliament, Statutory Instruments and the Oirechtas debates of same, legal papers and courts judgements, interviewed some of those involved in the cases, trade union officers and public officials.

Ireland had a system of sectoral bargaining since 1946 (known as Joint Labour Committees, JLCs), of which there was 16. Sectoral bargaining in Ireland was not widespread but confined to specific low paid and vulnerable occupations (Ó'Riain, 2014). However, the system for sectoral bargaining which had been in force for over 70 years, was declared illegal by the Irish Supreme Court 2013 in the case of *McGowan & others v The Labour Court, Ireland & another* (Hendy, 2014).

The response in Irish IR has witnessed support from trade unions for the SEOs and JLCs, but sharp divisions among employers' groups have emerged with one group taking yet another constitutional case to the courts challenging the legal basis of sectoral bargaining in the electrical contractor sector. Although it is apparent the considerable tensions surrounding the future of Irish sectoral bargaining legal architecture will be a central component of their deliberations at National Social Dialogue level in the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF)

This paper suggests that Irish trade unions are utilising sectoral bargaining architecture to expand membership and collective bargaining agreements in the face of declining collective bargaining coverage in Ireland for many years. The second finding is that larger employer groups are broadly in favour of sectoral bargaining for business stability purposes; for instance, those in construction, security, and contract cleaning. The third finding is in relation to sectoral bargaining as a feature of a continued pluralist approach to Irish IR by; state, employers, and unions. The fourth finding is that the opposition to sectoral bargaining may be an ongoing contestation of attitudes

between employers as to how business should be managed, and workers treated in the workplace. The fifth finding surrounds the role of the current and past governments, as broadly supportive of pluralism and features of sectoral bargaining, while maintaining a liberalised economy dependent on MNC companies and their demands. The sixth finding is that the EU Directive could have significant positive consequences for Irish workers and unions: depending on how the Directive is transposed into Irish Law.

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24. The Living Wage in the UK Care Sector: A Simple Answer to a Complex Problem?

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In response to chronic staff shortages and the cost-of-living crisis, a growing number of UK employers have voluntarily adopted the Real Living Wage (RLW), a voluntary wage set based on the cost of living. While the number of accredited employers has increased substantially in recent years, the proportion of accreditations in elder care and childhood education and care (ECEC) is low. It is argued this is because both sectors are low paid and highly reliant on Government funding unable to adjust their prices and profit margins (Irvine et al., 2024).

Research suggests that paying the RLW has multiple functions including, reducing staff turnover, improving worker morale and productivity, as well as being a market of business ethics, and being "right thing to do" as it reduces inequality and lifts workers out of poverty. The challenge is to reconcile these multiple often competing expectations of pay with organisations and wider society (Rubery et al., 2021), as well as the material impact on workers.

Drawing on two in-depth 'nested' organisation-in-sector case studies within the ECEC and elder care sectors. This paper seeks to understand the process and outcome of RLW accreditation and how these competing expectations are reconciled and the impact on workers. Interviews with managers (prior to RLW adoption and after) and workers, were triangulated with company documents, and accounts of union and policy experts. Findings were reviewed by non-academic sectoral experts to ensure that the findings were understood.

The cases show that employer's decision to pay RLW was a moral and business decision with the impact on their overall expenditure being minimal, in particular with the rise of the National Living Wage. Employers saw the RLW having symbolic importance as an ethical employer, recognising staff contribution during Covid-19 and a tool for poverty reduction among local community and workforce.

For workers higher pay generally was seen as positive but awareness of the RLW and material impact was minimal. They were more sensitive to changes in weekly and monthly household earnings (including overtime and in-work benefits) than the hourly rate and reported that much of the extra pay went on day-to-day living expenses. They felt their jobs were societally undervalued contributing to the low pay and lack of professional recognition. Despite this they were committed to their jobs, the families they support and their employer. Commitment to their employer was not because of the RLW but rather because of generally positive workplace employment relations in particularly in comparison to other employers.

The findings highlight that whatever the positive intent of individual organisations and managers, for the RLW to have a positive impact, the broader rollout of the RLW across the ECEC

and care sectors will require greater investment, along with coordinated reforms to raise the status and social valuation of the caring profession.

25. Chances, Challenges and Pitfalls of Regulating Platform Work in the Face of the EU Directive: Perspectives of Labour Market Stakeholders from Germany

Fabian Beckmann - Fabian Hoose, *Institute for Work, Skills and Training at the University of Duisburg-Essen*

As a hyper-flexible form of work, platform work is often discussed as an example of the changing nature of work and employment. Despite its heterogeneity, a common feature of platform work is its de-institutionalised character: as most platform workers formally perform as independent contractors, traditional labour market and welfare institutions aiming at protecting workers do not apply here. This institutional void fosters unfavourable working conditions, ranging from low pay and new forms of labour control to poor social protection and missing opportunities for collective voice. Consequently, debates on regulating platform work have become prominent in recent years. While prior attempts of regulation were based on individual lawsuits, the European Union has taken over regulatory action since 2021 and finally adopted a directive on platform work in 2024. The core of the directive is to tackle misclassifications of the employment status of platform workers and hereby give platform workers access to collective labor and social rights.

While the adoption of the directive can be considered a milestone in the supranational regulation of platform work, the actual work is only about to begin: the final directive gives broad discretion to national legislators, especially with respect to developing criteria for bogus self-employment in platform work and administrative solutions in order to enable platform workers to dispute their employment status. Consequently, the scope and impact of the directive is contingent and will be a result of how stakeholders like unions and other associations are willing and able to take advantage of the Directive's groundwork.

Against this background, the contribution gives insights into the perspective of labour market stakeholders from Germany regarding the regulation of platform work. The contribution draws on ten interviews with unions, employer associations, ministries, social security providers, associations of the self-employed and platform enterprises, which were conducted in spring 2024 as part of the ongoing research project "Platform Economy and Social Security", funded by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The analysis focusses on how the stakeholders perceive the need for regulation, whether they prefer national or supranational regulation, which platform workers are perceived as vulnerable, and which impact the EU directive will have for platform workers in Germany. The results not only reveal some "unnatural coalitions" between stakeholders' views, but controversies with respect to fundamental aspects of platform work regulation, e.g. what is to be considered a platform and platform work, whether platform workers are a special group among the self-employed, which indicators should be

used to reclassify platform workers as employees, how the EU directive fits into the German legal framework and whether the Directive will have an impact in Germany at all. Against this empirical background, challenges and pitfalls of platform work regulation in the face of the EU directive and the need for further experimental social policies targeting the platform workers not covered by the directive are discussed

26. Perpetual Liminality: A Qualitative Study of Temporary Doctors

Gemma Stringer, *University of Manchester*

Background

When doctors work as locums, they may be seen as misaligned to the values and norms of medical professional identity which can result in exclusion and marginalisation. Locum doctors are liminal to the organisations they work in and may take or are placed in a position at the boundary of formal and informal support and governance. Concerns about doctors can place them in a vulnerable position and for locums this may be amplified due to their liminal identity. There has been little empirical research on the implications of locum working on the way concerns are raised, investigated and dealt with. In this paper we draw upon theories of liminality and professional identity to examine the role of organisations in managing and supporting locums when dealing with concerns. We particularly focus on how locum liminality can place locums outside of professional, organisational and socio-cultural systems of governance, support and responsibility.

Methods

Qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with 88 participants including locums, permanently employed doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals with governance and recruitment responsibilities for locums across primary and secondary healthcare organisations in the English NHS. Data was collected between March 2021 and April 2022. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and abductive analysis.

Results

Using theory on liminality and professional and organisational identity, five main themes were constructed: i) a lack of trust in and 'othering' of locum doctors resulting in a low tolerance for problems and increased risk of scrutiny and blame; ii) if relationships are mutually beneficial and there is a 'reciprocity of effort' then increased responsibility was taken to support locums; iii) locums can avoid scrutiny and organisations can avoid responsibility due to the lack of engagement with substantive systems of governance and 'freedom from structural assertions'; iv) locum work implies 'collective individualization' which affects access to communities of support, shared norms, professional loyalty and shared learning.

Conclusion

Locum liminality can result in the experience of organisational extremes ranging from increased risk, blame and scrutiny to decreased supervision, support, loyalty and protection. Concerns about locums can exacerbate this liminality and consequently increase risk for the locum, the organisation, and ultimately the patient. Organisations should reflect on how they work with locums when concerns are raised to improve not only quality and safety and patient care but also locum learning and development.

27. On the Relation Between Freedom and Fairness in Employment Relations

Georg Barthel, *Universitat Duisberg-Essen*

Freedom has been one of - if not the most important - ideas of modern society. To act of one's free will has been heralded as a major driver of people and movements. In employment relations, however, employees enter relations of domination, in which they must obey the command of the employers. From a liberal standpoint they do so voluntarily, because they exchange their labour power for wages as free actors. Social critiques have challenged this interpretation by highlighting the preconditions that are forcing workers to enter the labour market in the first place. Consequently, they speak of domination and exploitation in the workplace, which workers would resist. Historically, however, workers most often have not challenged capitalist employment relation as such but have fought for better working conditions.

Correspondingly, one of the major slogans of the labour movement has been "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay". It implies the acceptance of the command of labour power by the employer, while at the same time demanding limits to it. A major objective of the labour movement has been to counter the asymmetry in the power balance between labour and capital to enforce a fair exchange. This relates the concepts of fairness and freedom in the labour market in a specific way: unfreedom in the workplace is accepted if the conditions of selling and applying labour power can be considered fair. It is not surprising that feelings of fairness or justice have been considered major motivators for industrial action. Additionally, empirical studies show how feelings of unfreedom can drive individual and collective action of employees, too.

The paper raises the question, when do employees experience their working conditions as fair and free, and how are both related to each other? It is combining a theoretical elaboration on the relation between freedom and fairness in the employment relation with an empirical analysis of triggers of collective action. The theoretical argument refers to mobilization theory and Labour Process Theory, while the empirical data is based on various case studies of industrial action in different sectors.

28. Wage Premium of Collective Bargaining Coverage in Germany

Gerhard Bosch-Thorsten Kalina, *Institute Work, Skills and Training (IAQ), University Duisburg-Essen, Germany*

Only a few employees have sufficient bargaining power to negotiate individually decent wages and good working conditions. Most employees can only achieve this through collective action and collective agreements. Many empirical studies show that employees covered by collective agreements have higher wages and better working conditions than employees not covered by collective agreements, except for groups with high market power.

In Germany, collective bargaining coverage has fallen from over 85% to around 50% since 1990. The impact on the labour market has been severe: income inequality has increased, and a large low-wage sector has emerged. It has now become clear that this inequality cannot be reduced by the statutory minimum wage alone, which only compress wages in the two lowest deciles of the wage distribution. Strengthening the middle of the income distribution can only be achieved through collective agreements with their differentiated wage grids, which ensure that qualifications, responsibility and special workloads are adequately compensated. Mirroring these effects of collective agreements, it can be assumed that income losses because of declining collective bargaining coverage are greatest for employees with low bargaining power.

This thesis is confirmed by our calculations of the collective wage gap based on the socio-economic panel data for 2021. The adjusted pay gap in the economy as a whole is around 6%. However, it is substantially higher for women, migrants, semi-skilled and unskilled workers and employees in small companies and in fragmented industries. It is also above average for skilled workers with vocational training, which undermines one of the most important pillars of the German model of diversified quality production. A smaller or no pay gap is found in large companies, where employees have effective institutional power resources through works councils, and in the top decile of the income distribution, where employees with high individual bargaining power are concentrated.

These data show that the increase in collective bargaining coverage to 80%, which is one of the aims of the European Minimum Wage Directive, is an effective instrument of an inclusive distribution policy. Disadvantaged groups on the labour market would benefit significantly and the gender pay gap would be reduced. In addition, the high shortage of skilled workers in the area of intermediate qualifications, whose attractiveness has been particularly impaired by the declining collective bargaining coverage, would be reduced. The article concludes with proposals for increasing collective bargaining coverage, ranging from strengthening the organizational power of trade unions to facilitating the extensions of collective agreements and collective bargaining compliance laws.

29. The Bottom of the Skills Food Chain No Longer?

Gregor Murray, Mathieu Dupuis, & Julie Hagan, *Department of Industrial Relations, Université Laval*
Julie Hagan-CRIMT, Université de Montréal

Auto services, namely the maintenance and repair of vehicles, are an exemplar of digitalization and climate change. It is a huge industry, predominantly male, drawing on a large labour force of mechanics and technicians whose formal education is often limited and may or may not have obtained vocational qualification. Their required skill profile is changing dramatically in the light of the changing nature of vehicles and the political economy of this industry. This presentation explores the pressures on and transformation of this occupation and the dilemmas it raises for past and present skill settlements and ecosystems.

30. The Municipal Lineages of Equality: The New Left as Innovators of Inclusion

Holly Smith – *Work and Equalities Institute, University of Manchester*
Miguel Martinez Lucio – *Work and Equalities Institute, University of Manchester*
Stefania Marino – *Work and Equalities Institute, University of Manchester*
Heather Connolly – *Grenoble Ecole de Management*

This presentation examines the origins and the development of the workplace equalities agenda in the UK. It focuses on a 4-year ESRC financed research project which aims to contrast the experiences and issues related to equality at work in terms of policy and regulation within the UK to other cases within Europe which have made an explicit and concerted effort to engage with a more progressive and inclusive approach to equality. Through a range of interviews with key individuals and experts, the article tracks the extant 'marketplace' of EDI consultancies and HRM professionals within the UK back to the unlikely context of experiments with municipal socialism. During the 1980s many local authorities were sites of political resistance to a hostile and ideological Conservative government. Yet these councils were not just an oppositional project – they were often progressive and radical sites of experimentation for a positive political programme. Broad "rainbow alliances" of progressive local politicians, civic officers, trade unions, activists, and other civil society actors developed policy innovations which moved beyond discursive commitments to include the creation of equal opportunities structures, anti-racist activism, political representation initiatives, and self-organised groups. This article relocates the agential roles of these communities of action and coalitions and argues that these networks and diverse range of social actors from across the equality sphere continue to build consensus and develop the policy agenda within the contemporary workplace, despite structural impediments and constraints. The presentation will highlight the importance of putting the study of equality at work in a historical context and understanding the role of specific political projects and the use of spaces within and between the state and civil society that engender new forms of equality initiatives and politics

31. A Single Enforcement Body for Employment Rights and Labour Market Non-Compliance

Ian Clark, Darryl Dixon, & Richard Pickford, *Work Informalisation and Place Research Centre, NTU, UK*.

Fairness and equality require concrete initiatives, commitments and accountabilities that exposes the degraded form of capitalism centred on the market and light-touch regulation prevalent in the UK for the past fourteen years (Collier, 2024:47-48, Hutton, 2024:1-15). Therefore, the research questions posed by this presentation centre on why a single enforcement body for labour market enforcement necessary? And secondly, can its re-imagination as a Fair Work Agency go beyond a re-branding exercise?

To answer these questions the presentation will proceed through three parts. Part, one outlines how the current (pre–Fair Work Agency) enforcement landscape is unfit for purpose. This is the case because light-touch regulation creates frameworks to regulate regulators and encourages regulators to focus on education and awareness to the detriment of harder edged enforcement by providing civil and criminal sanctions for offences. These choices are different to enforcement which centres on measures compelling employers and individuals to observe a law or regulation. Empirical evidence suggests that choices made by enforcement, regulatory and political actors enable highly individual approaches to enforcement (Clark, et. al. 2023, Mendonca et.al. 2023, Mustchin and Martínez Lucio, 2023). A common characteristic centre on a tolerance of coercion and exploitation that accepts the presence of both rather than seeking to enforce labour market regulations.

Part two examines in detail proposals put forward by the Trade Union Congress Employment Rights section on what a Fair Work Agency must look like in terms of enforcement and employment rights to demonstrate a step-change in the approach of the state away from the frailties of light-touch regulation that has dominated the UK since 2005 (Dixon et.al. 2024). To support this a review of the Regulators and Growth Duty Codes regulation is necessary to ensure a strong enforcement response enabling appropriate and proportionate protection of worker rights for all workers irrespective of status as a priority over better regulation.

Part three imagines what a Fair Work Agency might look like when focused primarily on enforcement. The new body must function as an enforcement body first, and regulator second. Whilst education and awareness will be key parts of its role, it must be capable of exercising a strong enforcement response unhindered by existing Better Regulation Codes, which focus on reducing burdens on business, preventing a greater focus on the protection of worker rights. For example, enforcement actors must have enhanced powers of entry into businesses.

Fairness re-imagined must witness labour market enforcement becoming politically prominent in terms of fair and reasonable wages for all workers not just those protected by collective bargaining and compliant employers. Here a combination of national enforcement agencies and

local authority regulation is necessary. Secondly, active enforcement rather than light-touch regulation must not be seen as heavy handed but rather as a form of decency and active protection in the same way that alcohol licensing, event licensing, regulation of cigarette sales and advertising and buildings regulations are seen.

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32. 'Soft' Fair Work Regulation and Employee Voice: Reflections for 'Hard' Law from a Case in Scottish Social Care

Ian Cunningham, Stewart Johnston, Alina Baluch, Dora Scholarios, Phil James, & Eva Jendro

Despite some evidence indicating that 'soft' forms of regulation can, under certain conditions, deliver 'substantial effects' (Heery, et al 2020), there are also concerns regarding the effectiveness of non-legislative forms of state intervention on employment rights (Sisson, 2019). Actors can remain locked into a neo-liberal status quo of weakened employee voice without effectively enforced, robust 'hard' legislation to move them to a more equitable power equilibrium (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017). New Labour's earlier Partnership agenda, for example, was found to have 'ran out of steam' once the Partnership at Work Fund ended (Stewart, Martinez-Lucio and Robinson, 2011). Since 2015, Scotland has used 'soft' forms of regulation to promote decent work under the heading of Fair Work (FW). The framework has five dimensions - effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect (Fair Work Convention, 2016; Heery, Hann and Nash, 2020; Sisson, 2019). Studies have highlighted considerable barriers in terms of ensuring widespread compliance with this agenda (Baluch, 2021; Gall, 2021).

Scholars are increasingly exploring the interaction of the 'soft' forms of regulation with 'hard' legislation. This perspective sees neither form as mutually exclusive nor do they function in isolation to produce positive outcomes in labour standards. There are also contexts where 'soft' regulation acts as a substitute or complements 'hard', including states with more active labour laws (Sisson and Marginson, 2001; Locke, et al, 2007; Locke et al, 2013; Szabados, 2020; Macdonald and Charlesworth, 2021).

The election of a new Labour administration in July 2024 has led to the re-emergence of such debates, as the devolved nations find themselves with a UK government more sympathetic to the goals of FW, and ideas such as workplace partnership appear to be resurfacing. For Scotland, there are a number of common strands between its Fair Work agenda and the Labour Government's policies relating to worker voice, albeit that the latter is promising additional protection around union recognition, collective action, and facilities time. In addition, for social care, at a time when Scotland has struggled to introduce national collective bargaining in its sector, Labour has promised to use it as a 'proof of concept' for similar purposes through Fair Pay Agreements (FPAs) (The Labour Party, 2023).

This paper explores the interaction between 'soft' and 'hard' law through an organisational qualitative case study from the voluntary sector centred on union – management relations, in a context marked by a managerial desire to be an exemplar in FW. The findings reveal that even among exemplar organisations promoting 'soft' FW principles of voice, and despite benefits like increasing engagement with strategic HR decisions, including rewards, and social dialogue, unions can struggle to organise and gain real benefits for their members. These experiences under 'soft' regulations offer lessons for the statutory strengthening of union rights, the establishment of FPAs,

and other new promised rights, including around mental health, the 'right to disconnect', and health and safety.

33. Blocked Pathways to Better Working Lives: Precarious Transitions of Healthcare Workers in Buffalo and Rochester

Michelle Chen (*Cornell University*), Ian Greer (*Cornell University*), and Adam Mrozowicki (*University of Wrocław*)

Policies to improve the lives of workers often target their labor market transitions, as in welfare-to-work or post-incarceration re-entry programs. In both cases, workers receive assistance to enter paid work and are told that their lives will improve with sustained employment. As a very large sociological literature has shown, much paid work is precarious, in the sense that it generates risks for workers, including the risk of job loss (Kalleberg 2018). Policymakers often assume that paid work makes people more resilient, but this assumption does not hold for precarious work, which can make people more vulnerable to crises (Castel 2017).

The proposed paper explores precarity and labor market transitions using biographical interviews with 25 low-wage healthcare workers in Rochester and Buffalo, New York. About half of our respondents were recruited through a community-based organization that assists them with their criminal records, with an aim of assisting them in their labor market transition, often post-incarceration. The other half were recruited through their union. Respondents include home health aides, nursing assistants, cooks, and cleaners, working in homes, hospitals, and nursing homes. Most had a personal narrative that includes striving towards a better life by attaining a better job. All are female and the overwhelmingly majority are black. This allows us to look at the racialized stigma of a criminal record, and stereotyping practices more generally, in the context of gendered, undervalued occupations.

Drawing on critical race theory (Lee and Tapia 2021), we look at the intersections of different forces that frustrate respondents' striving for a better life. Race, gender, migration status, disability, and class are identity-based vectors of oppression cited by interviewees that interact to shape their work transitions. These play out within two interacting forms of precarity. Precarity in work makes it difficult to handle non-work problems, as when it triggers physical or mental health problems, intensifies family stress, exacerbates substance-use issues, or simply prevents individuals from consistently meeting their basic social needs. Preacariousness in life more broadly – the straining of social ties, support from civil society, and problems with the welfare and carceral systems – often leads to job loss and traps participants in insecure low-wage work.

We use biographical interviews (Schutze 2016) to gain insights into the relationship between life at work and life beyond work and demonstrate how precarity is managed by making use of biographical resources accumulated or lost. Additionally, they allow us to trace change over time, for example transitions between work and non-work statuses and increasing or decreasing levels of precarity. Comparing the two samples of interviews, we show that these problems can be

particularly acute for people with criminal records, but that criminal records are just one of many features of life that hold back these workers.

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34. A Multi-Level Analysis of Challenges Faced by Employee Resource Groups' (ERGs) as a Potential Voice Channel for Underrepresented Groups

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Introduction and Theoretical Concepts

Employee Resource Groups or Staff Networks are relatively new phenomena in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) scholarship. Employee Resource Groups ERGS are typically voluntary employee-led groups formed to address the issues and concerns of the particular group and can act as a resource for both employees and organizations to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. These can be based on race, sexuality, gender, religion or other source of commonality (Hastwell, 2020; Welborne et al., 2017). There is an increasingly recognition of ERGs as a source for employee voice (Mcfadden and Crowley–Henry, 2018; McNulty, 2018). However, the nature and the mechanism through which these groups function as well as the challenges they face as an emerging voice channel need examination for these groups to fully realize their potential (Welborne et al., 2017). Using the Macro-meso-micro framework as employed in EDI research (Pringle and Ryan, 2015; Syed and Obzilgin, 2009), in this study we aim to examine the barriers faced by these groups.

Methodology

This paper is based on a larger project designed to understand the functioning of ERGs. This paper is based on 36 in-depth interviews of Staff Network Chairs, EDI leads and HR managers from both the public and private sector in the UK
Findings: Challenges:
We find that ERGs face multi-level challenges which may prevent them for delivering voice outcomes.

Macro Level Challenges.

The support and interest in ERGs are linked to global external events such as the Black Lives Matter protests following the killing of George Floyd in the US, indicative of a potential diminishing of interest by organisations when these events are no longer in the news which in turn affect the sustainability of support for ERGs.
Meso Level Challenges: ERGs in most organizations lack clarity about their place within the formal systems of voice and the broader organization structure. This is compounded by the fact that they are not uniformly funded and other than chairs, most members do not get allowances of time to attend meetings and participate in ERG activities. Furthermore, some even lack formal terms of references or reporting relationships to EDI committees and/or HR. Even though these groups can inform broader EDI policies they are often not included in policy conversations because of this problem. Finally, staff networks are dependent on passionate
2 sponsors or chairs and tend to have weak succession planning that also impacts their sustainability.

Micro Level Challenges

At the individual level, members struggle to identify with some groups because of intersectional identities. For example, many Muslim women did not seem to fit in the women's group in one of the organizations we studied, as the issues discussed predominantly represented the interest of White British women. Historically minority employees have not trusted mainstream voice

channels (Nagesh, 2023) and if ERGs are seen as another extension of management voice, then underrepresented groups are less likely to engage with them.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The paper makes a contribution by connecting the EDI and voice literatures by highlighting the challenges of that ERGs face. Mainstream voice channels such as unions and employee surveys and internal meetings have suffered from trust issues with ethnic minority employees. ERGs present a potentially powerful source of voice for these underrepresented groups, helping to expand the notion of employee voice as currently understood (Mobray et al 2015; Townsend et al., 2022). Organizations are increasingly looking for ways to engage with their broader constituents and harnessing the potential of their ethnic minority workforce, a goal to which ERGs can contribute.

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35. Transnational Solidarity as a Necessity to Achieve Fairness at Work in a Transnational Labour Market

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In order to achieve fairness at work the focus often is on disadvantaged groups in the labour market as for example migrants. Among migrants, posted workers (PW), seem to be even more precarious than others as overall in the European Union both labour legislation of sending (i.e. social security contributions) and receiving countries (i.e. minimum standards of pay) apply and create a kind of transnational labour market. The complex regulation structures and a lack of enforcement and control, however, give opportunities to use legal loopholes or to commit fraud to exploit these workers.

Historically, a relevant power to counterbalance workers' exploitation are trade unions. As they are still primarily national member organisations, the representation and organisation of PWs seems to be a challenge for them. Relating this problem to the discourse on solidarity, preconditions for achieving transnational solidarity are lined out.

Based on interviews conducted with trade unionists in six EU-countries and on EU level between 2020 and 2023, we identified three initiatives of servicing and organising PWs that showed different degrees of transnationalisation of union organisations itself. The respective initiatives were overall initiated by unions in receiving countries but enacted in cooperation with unions in sending countries. Interpreting these initiatives, we analysed which perceptions of PWs, and motives of national trade unionist enabled these forms of transnational solidarity. Additionally, we indicated why in other countries such initiatives did not develop. As a result, we could show that in all three cases of transnational solidarity identified a combination of self-interest and altruism existed as a precondition to support PWs.

With the enlargement of transnational labour relations the improvement of working conditions and the achievement of fairness at work may depend always more on the development of transnational solidarity in the future.

36. Discretion and Power in Work: Firefighters as 'Thinking Professionals'

Irena Grugulis - James Brooks, Hugh Cook

Discretion and autonomy are central to work (Fox, 1974; 1966) and an important part of decent work. The authority to make decisions over which tasks are done, as well as how and when they are done, has a significant impact on the way work is designed.

There are many studies of declining discretion. Braverman (1974) argued that deskilling and reduced discretion were inevitable tendencies within Capitalism (see Thompson and Smith, 2010; Edwards, 2010; Rose et al., 1994 for challenges to this argument). Studies of call centres (Taylor and Bain, 1999; Taylor et al., 2002) and algorithmic platform work (Joyce et al, 2023) demonstrate increasing surveillance and decreasing worker discretion. Findings supported by national surveys (Felstead et al., 2002; Henseke et al., 2018).

While declining discretion can be observed consistently in the literature, official attempts to increase discretion rarely feature, possibly because few organisations seek to do this. This article attempts to address that gap. It examines an attempt, following a preventable death, to increase the discretion that firefighters could exercise in work.

Firefighters have always known that "every incident is . . . different" (interview) and have relied on local knowledge as well as standard protocols in their work. The attempts to increase discretion saw changes to procedure, including encouragement from senior ranks and the introduction of a decision log, where they could report departures from standard protocols. But internal power structures remained, and firefighters could still expect to be disciplined for exercising discretion.

Here we examine the ways that firefighters made their decisions, the procedures they went against, the rules they broke and the ways these actions were treated by their bosses. Firefighters exercised discretion for three reasons: (i) when the situation they were facing was more complex than the guidelines, (ii) when the situation was more urgent and (iii) when (they believed) the guidelines were simply not very good, and another way would work better.

Increasing discretion was not as straightforward as simply changing the guidance from senior management. Organisational power structures still specified reporting lines, managers were also negotiating the new procedures and firefighters exercising their discretion could expect to be disciplined as well as commended (some were told that both had been considered for the same actions).

This paper is drawn from a longitudinal and ongoing study of firefighters. Three research phases have been covered since 2016 with a fourth phase currently underway. Phases one and two covered 62 firefighters including 10 station managers, four group managers and 14 senior managers, as well as four months of ethnographic observation, participating in a 'live burn' and shadowing the incoming Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who also kept a diary. Phase three involved a further 60 interviews, almost all of which (48) were with firefighters previously interviewed. The current fourth

phase, set to be completed in December 2024 involves interviews with FBU officials as well as firefighters away from their station houses to better cover what happens when things go wrong.

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37. EDI in Russell Group Universities: Progress, Challenges and Prospects

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Women and ethnic minorities remain under-represented among higher education staff, especially in senior academic and management roles, with the gap more pronounced in Russell Group (RG) universities (AdvanceHE, 2023; Baltaru, 2023). Despite significant investments in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) over the past two decades, the persistence of these inequalities raises questions about the effectiveness of universities' strategies.

Our research aimed to understand why inequalities remain so significant in RG universities by exploring the following questions:

How do RG universities justify their EDI goals and priorities?
How do EDI policies contribute to workplace equality?
What challenges and tensions hinder progress?

To address these questions, we analysed the EDI policies of RG universities and conducted 23 interviews with EDI leads and key actors in six of them.

Our findings revealed that while EDI is often underpinned by both moral and business cases, the emphasis on the latter could sometimes hinder rather than facilitate support for EDI action because EDI officers struggled to quantify and demonstrate its value. Equality charters like Athena Swan, by signalling equality commitments externally, particularly to funding bodies, helped strengthen the business case. Still, internally they could be seen as tick-box exercises, with resource-intensive applications and over-reliance on voluntary work from the groups they aimed to support. Concerns were also raised that Athena Swan's focus on women sidelined other protected groups, although the Race Equality Charter has recently shifted more attention to race. Yet, the proliferation of separate action plans was seen as hindering intersectional approaches and fragmenting EDI efforts.

The interviews identified some areas of progress associated with the expansion of EDI but also some challenges. Progress included improved data collection that helped evidencing inequalities and justifying action; more transparent and inclusive recruitment and promotion practices; and more flexible working policies. However, "datafication" made it difficult to justify EDI action when under-representation of a protected group meant staff numbers were too small to generate meaningful data, further exacerbating the issue. Improvements in recruitment and promotion processes were counteracted by the over-use of precarious arrangements that disproportionally affected ethnic minority and disabled employees. Moreover, while flexible working policies helped work-life reconciliation, academic norms of long hours and hyper-productivity created career barriers for those who used them.

Finally, despite senior leaders' proclaimed commitments to EDI, it was rarely prioritised, and the accountability remained an issue: responsibility for EDI was assigned to EDI leads, but the authority to implement real change remained with senior leadership, who often viewed it as someone else's responsibility. Despite lacking the power to enact and enforce policy, EDI leads and officers nevertheless contributed to change by increasing scrutiny and challenging poor practice

This paper contributes to critical diversity scholarship by highlighting the tensions and challenges of managing EDI in RG universities, where these efforts compete with performance targets in a highly competitive environment. By exposing these complexities, it calls for a shift in diversity research and practice away from superficial commitments and simplistic solutions towards deeper engagement with the real challenges of addressing entrenched societal inequalities from within organisations.

38. Varieties of Digital Ecosystems and the Future of Work

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The alacrity and trajectory of digital adoption shaping the future of work varies by nation, region and sector. To capture these disruptive dynamics, we propose a novel framework of Varieties of Digital Ecosystems (VoDE). The VoDE approach encompasses three key domains: governance, connectivity and inclusion. Across all countries there are common dimensions of contention around digitalisation. In the governance domain, this includes policy makers' capabilities, stability and geo-politics; in the domain of connectivity, state-business relations between MNCs, FDI, local SMEs and government matter; and in the domain of inclusion, inequalities in skills, occupations and demographics are the spaces of contestation. In these domains key actors from government, business, trade unions and community organisations debate and act to create future digital trajectories. The extent and strength of these digital dialogues, or the lack of them, distinguishes between fragmented and more integrated, but not necessarily more inclusive, digital ecosystems. The VoDE approach provides a dynamic and relational analysis of how digitalisation is challenging the assumptions and boundary conditions of traditional organisations and management theories comparing the evolving future of work and employment in different contexts.

39. Money or Life: The Relationship Between Job Stress and Job Burnout Among Employees in Chinese Financial Firms

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With the development of digital economy, financial enterprises show a trend of technological and intelligent development. By integrating cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, block-chain and big data, fin tech is actively promoting the process of technological and intelligent transformation of the traditional financial industry. On the other hand, financial enterprises are faced with international financial regulation, compliance and sustainable development, and the work is difficult, the work intensity is high, the performance assessment requirements are high, and the work characteristics are higher than those of other enterprises. With the rapid development of financial enterprises and the intensification of internal and external competition, the problem of work pressure faced by employees is becoming increasingly prominent. How to solve the problem of working pressure of employees in financial enterprises is a problem that the industry and employees need to pay attention to together. Through 324 questionnaires and in-depth interviews, this study aims to explore the relationship between job stress, job satisfaction and job burnout in Chinese financial enterprises. The results show that the work pressure of employees in Chinese financial enterprises is at a high level, the job satisfaction is at a medium level, and the job burnout is high. There are obvious differences in the influence of age on job burnout and the influence of work experience on job satisfaction and burnout. Job stress positively predicted job burnout and negatively predicted job satisfaction, while job satisfaction negatively predicted job burnout. Job satisfaction plays a mediating role between job stress and job burnout. Job stress and job satisfaction are important predictors of job burnout in financial enterprises, and job satisfaction can cushion the impact of job stress on job burnout. In order to effectively mitigate the job burnout of employees in financial enterprises, this study suggests that relevant institutions and enterprises in the financial industry pay special attention to employees aged 30-40 years and those with 6-10 years of work experience who have the highest job burnout. Financial companies should reduce employee stress by improving the working environment, providing career development support and enhancing communication within the organization, thereby improving overall work efficiency and employee satisfaction. This study has implications for the problem of work stress in the financial industry worldwide and provides strategic suggestions for achieving work-life balance, reducing work stress, achieving job satisfaction and job sustainable development.

40. Ideal Worker Norm, Gender Egalitarianism, and Swiss Men's Part-Time Work. The Role of Occupational Contexts

Jan Mueller & Youngjoo Cha

This paper examines whether and how occupational contexts affect Swiss men's developing preference for part-time work and changing to part-time hours. In Switzerland, part-time work is widespread, comprising more than a third of the labor force, yet it remains highly underutilized among men. Swiss men's desire for part-time work has been steadily rising, however, leading to increasing mismatches between their desired and actual work hours. What explains Swiss men's underutilization of part-time work? Under what conditions do men develop part-time preferences and change to part-time hours? To address these questions, we focus on two normative forces operating at the occupation-level – (1) expectations for workers to exhibit complete and undivided devotion to work and (2) gendered structures and beliefs about men's and women's work.

We use a unique dataset that matches individual-level records from the 2002-2020 Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS) to longitudinal occupation data pulled from multiple sources. From the job posting data of the Swiss Job Market Monitor (SJMM), we use natural language processing and machine learning techniques to create variables measuring employer's expectations about "ideal worker norms": expectations for long hours and attributes of ideal workers (e.g., "willingness to work overtime"), and openness to employees' non-work devotions (e.g., "work-life-balance"). We also use the overtime prevalence in the occupation drawn from the SLFS data, which measures the ideal worker norm reflected in employees' work behaviors. From the Swiss Household Panel and SLFS data, we constructed a series of variables to measure occupation-specific gender egalitarianism: prevalence of gender beliefs about maternal employment and male dominance and managerial gender diversity. We offer two sets of analyses. First, we examine how these occupation-specific norms affect the likelihood of men's developing part-time preference. Second, we examine how these occupational norms lead to reductions in work hours among men who developed part-time preferences. We leverage the longitudinal structure of our data using Random Effect Within Between (REWB) models, which allow us to estimate both the effects of the norms differing across occupations ("between-occupation effects") and the effect of the norm changes within occupations between 2002 and 2020 ("within-occupation effects").

Our results show that on average 10.5% of men working full-time develop part-time preference, and 6.4% of men who previously expressed part-time preference move to part-time. Overall, fathers, college-educated and high-income workers, and workers in non-management positions tend to develop part-time preferences and move to part-time at higher rates. We find that occupation-specific gender egalitarianisms play an important role in determining both men's part-time preference and transition to part-time. However, the ideal worker norms appear to be more consequential to behavioural changes than changes in work-hour preferences. Specifically, occupations emphasizing strong work devotion suppress men's part-time transitions whereas employer's shifts towards openness to employees' devotions to other domains are associated with a higher chance of men's transitions to part-time employment.

Taken together, these findings show that men's preferences for part-time are constrained by social norms about "good workers" and gender beliefs operating at the occupation-level yet shifts in these norms can change these dynamics.

41. Anti-Racism at Work

Jayne Bekoe, *Royal College of Midwives*

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to creatively approach anti-racism training for members and the wider workforce of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), that aligned with the RCM's Race Matters Initiative - while working collaboratively with Show Racism the Red Card and Odd Arts.

Background

Racism is a systemic issue, permeating all our institutions. This piece of work explores how we can use creative approaches to deconstructing racism within maternity services across the UK and within professional trade unions such as RCM. RCM have previously expressed commitment to a Race Matters Initiative which aimed to improve and transform membership experiences. From this project Jane Bekoe discovered Show Racism the Red Card, the UK's leading anti-racism charity and Odd Arts a transformative charity using theatre to challenge inequalities. In 2022, SRtRC, Odd Arts and RCM began a collaborative approach to create its bespoke anti-racism training to roll out.

Aims and objectives

The decision was made to run two pilot conferences, one for RCM staff and another pilot workshop for activists in London. The training was created following the themes from the initial Race Matter Project piloted in the London region and now being rolled out UK-wide. Additionally, it was concluded that RCM staff would benefit from some 'warm up' training prior to the activist conference which took place virtually with staff participating in four hours of anti-racism training which ensured a good, shared understanding of concepts and definitions. The aims and objectives for both conferences were to really upskill participants to recognise and respond to racism at work with an emphasis on skills practice and allowing delegates to unpack and explore issues in a curious and deliberate manner.

Methods and Delivery

The initial project began with pre-evaluation surveys to RCM staff to gauge current knowledge and confidence around racism. The virtual training was tailored to increase ability to recognise racism including an emphasis on everyday racism which is endemic in the workplace. Following the

training post surveys were conducted showing a marked increase in confidence and generated enthusiasm for the staff conference. Staff were brought to TUC Manchester for the conference which began with a performance from Odd Arts, giving the day context weight and grounding, The Great British Lie is a short theatrical interpretation of how much of our history has been whitewashed and demonstrates the structural nature of racism. The day then explored how to have challenging conversations around race and racism, using forum theatre to develop skills practice, active allyship and how we embed anti-racism into our workplaces. Following the conference delegates were once again surveyed showing a sense of empowerment to now be able to tackle 'difficult' conversations.

The second part of this project has been working with activist members. Around 30 activists from various Trust within London attended the bespoke workshop, the agenda followed a similar pattern beginning with The Great British Lie, before exploring identity, bias, and challenging conversations. The workshop design was central to the Race Maters project themes collated and took place shortly after the realise of the 'Too Hot to Handle' report by Roger Kline. There have been many other reports by the Race Health Observatory, FIVE X More, Nursing and Midwifery Council and many more that have heavily influenced the direction of the training.

Conclusions and implications for the RCM

The Pan London workshop and conferences have had strong outcomes for increasing ability to recognise racism and empowering better responses to racism. Embedding anti-racism cultures is a process and we are aware this has been the starting point; we have been utilising creative methods of anti-racism training to ensure engagement from all so that there is a sustainable legacy created from our work.

Next steps

Support regions at their conferences, training events

Cascade training to all staff

Cascade training to all activists

Encourage wider NHS trusts to examine the transformational nature of the training and consider how they could utilise our methods to unpack systemic racism.

Continue to raise awareness of the RCM Decolonising Midwifery Education Toolkit – used to support the understanding of systemic and organisational racism and discrimination that exist in education and practice.

42. State Monopsony in the Foundational Economy: Undervaluation and Devaluation of Women's Work in Early Years

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The notion that women's reproductive labour is under or devalued – and that this is a root cause of gender inequality - is widely accepted in feminist theory, yet these two concepts have tended to be used interchangeably. We argue instead for a conceptual distinction between undervaluation – a persistent gendered process through which feminised skills are misrecognised and inadequately rewarded – and devaluation, defined as a concrete economic process through which lower prices are assigned to women's wages over time. While distinct, they are mutually constitutive and interdependent, and when they operate symbiotically and the process cannot be distinguished into its component parts, we refer to this as 'under/devaluation'.

We draw on the example of early years education and care (ECEC) to advance this argument. Early years education and care (ECEC) constitutes a core part of the foundational economy (essential goods and services that are vital to the functioning of a society and economy). As a foundational public good, the social and economic advantages high quality early years provision are well-evidenced in terms of addressing social inequalities, enabling parents to enter the workforce and positive impacts on child development, particularly for the most disadvantaged children. We demonstrate that as a monoposony, the state's role in price setting has led to a recruitment and retention crisis and as such, that dependence on the devaluation and undervaluation of women's work creates volatile social infrastructures.

To make this case, this project draws on two linked studies on work and employment conditions in the ECEC sector. Study one was an 18-month UKRI Covid-19 rapid response multi-method study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on sector and families of pre-school children in England and Wales (2020-22). This first project is complemented by a follow up sector study, study two, funded by the Early Education and Childcare Coalition (EECC), undertaken in the Summer of 2023 to examine further the recruitment and retention crisis which emerged as a key finding from the rapid response project.

Our example of early years work demonstrates that the historic and persistent undervaluation of women's work with children as 'natural' and an inherent capacity, rather than a skill. This process has provided the basis from which this feminised work has also been devalued over time in real and comparative terms in relation to the wages which are attached to it. Undervaluation is particularly visible in designating ECEC primarily as 'care' rather than education

and in the misrecognition of work intensity and skill requirements. Declining comparative real wages in ECEC attest to its devaluation. As such, we demonstrate the ways in which the under/devaluation of women's labour not only occurs in abstract or in historical terms but is reproduced in the contemporary society and economy through specific mechanisms by the state.

43. Reflexive Backstories of Academic Engagement with Policymakers and Practitioners

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This paper discusses academics' engagement with policymakers and practitioners. The pressures and higher rewards for demonstrating research impact have led to academics' increased engagement with practitioners and policymakers. However, the nature of these relationships is complex, multilayered and fraught with tensions, dialectics, and paradoxes (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). This can have a substantive impact on academics' sense of identity (Empson, 2013), the relational dynamics they establish with practitioners and policymakers (Quayle & Kelly, 2019) and the situated context of impact-orientated work they are seeking to develop and, in turn, its prospects for success (Cairney & Oliver, 2020).

Despite the importance of these relationships (see Spiel & Strohmeier, 2012; Bartunek & McKenzie, 2017), there is limited discussion about the emotional, embodied dynamics that emerge from academic policymaker/practitioner relationships. For example, the intensity of internalised conflict emerging from practitioners resisting academic contributions, or practitioner resistance strategies, such as holding back or restricting data use, remain largely unexplored.

Drawing on data from reflexive accounts about our engagement with policymakers and practitioners, we explore what we term the backstories of this engagement. We adopted Frigga Haug's (2008) memory work to interrogate what academics do within a framework that juxtaposes conflict and collaboration. Our discussions highlighted a range of conflicting emotions, where our reflexive accounts unveiled the centrality of the unspoken and the hidden as central dimensions that shaped our engagement and subsequent experiences with practitioners and policymakers.

The paper makes two contributions. First, it contributes an understanding of the obscured emotional and visceral processes that underpin academic policymaker/practitioner relationships, showing the strategies academics mobilize to navigate them. Second, the paper contributes a more

nuanced understanding of academic policymaker/practitioner relationships, showing the usefulness of problematizing them as multi-layered sites of simultaneous conflict and collaboration. The paper has practical implications for the reflexive praxis of academics (see Orr & Bennett, 2009); encouraging academics' reflexivity when engaging with policymakers and practitioners, to focus not just on expected outcomes but adopting a more holistic approach that includes the co-construction of relational dynamics. Insights from this paper have the potential to enable generative conversations that inspire academics, policymakers and practitioners to collaboratively develop rules of engagement to frame their interactions and understand their diverse positionalities.

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44. The Customer as a Source of Risk? An analysis of occupational hazards in frontline service work in Germany

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Service work is characterised by direct social interactions between workers and customers or similar groups in the context of paid employment (Leidner 1993). The customer has been conceptualized as ambiguous and a "key source of pleasure and pain" (Korczynski 2003: 55) for service workers. A variety of notions have been used to describe different types of customers. Moreover, customer behaviour has been the focus of research. Specifically, customers who behave disrespectfully or unfair towards service providers are described as jaycustomers (Lovelock, 1994; Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021), problem customers (Bitner et al., 1994), disliked customers (Dormann & Zapf, 2004) or customers from hell (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Withiam, 1998). Although these contributions are informative as they underline various facets of customer behaviour, we lack knowledge about the conditions leading to different kinds of customer behaviour or types of customers.

Thus, this contribution investigates why and under which conditions customers are perceived as a stressor by frontline workers. It aims to identify the risks for frontline staff arising from customer interactions and to uncover the conditions that are conducive to particular facets of customer behaviour. To date, there are hardly any systematic approaches identifying (and mitigating) risks in frontline service occupations, so the question whether and how frontline workers can be protected from the risks resulting from the nature of their work emerges. Data from a qualitative cross-sectoral comparative study in Germany carried out between 2020 and 2022 is used to address this gap. We conducted 106 interviews with workers, managers and employee representatives, and carried out 10 days (about 1 and a half weeks) of workplace observations in six service sectors (i.e. elderly care, retail, hospitality, business consulting, public employment services, police).

The results underline that frontline workers are confronted with a wide range of hazards which can be assigned to different analytical levels. Specifically, at the interactional level, hazards resulted from customer unfriendliness (e.g. rudeness) and aggression (e.g. verbal, physical, sexual) as well as from the emotional demands (e.g. emotionally disturbing situations, traumatic experiences) coming along with frontline work. At the organizational level, lacking autonomy, hindering work environments, low staffing levels, and competing demands tended to cause hazards. Overall, the findings demonstrate that difficult customer behaviour is often the result of unfavourable conditions like long queues, unavailable or poor-quality products, or high prices. Such conditions tend to make customers express their discontent to the service provider in manifold ways. Organizations can thus take measures to reduce the likelihood of negative customer behaviour, which contributes to the

protection of frontline workers. Health and safety regulation as well as related policies and measures should give consideration to the nature of frontline work and the specific risks coming along with it. Overall, this article emphasises that the object of research should be viewed from a multi-level perspective. The results show that factors at the organisational level often determine the extent to which service providers perceive their work with customers, patients or clients as a stress factor or as a resource at the interactional level.

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45. A Fair Deal for Last Mile Delivery?

Joyce Mamode - Sian Moore, Kirsty Newsome, Safak Tartanoglu Bennett

In July 2024, the contents of a new Employment Rights Bill were outlined in the first King's Speech of Keir Starmer's Labour Government. This confirmed earlier commitments from the 2021 Fair Deal for Working People policy document to establish a Fair Pay agreement in the adult care sector. Interestingly, from an industrial relations perspective, the King's Speech also included a signaled intention to consider, at some time in the future 'how and to what extent such agreements could benefit other sectors', raising the possibility for some form of sectoral bargaining for a range of sectors. Although not included in the Bill, a new single status of worker giving greater access to employment law protections for so-called 'self-employed' workers is also expected to be consulted on within the first year of Labour's administration.

This paper considers the potential impact of these proposals for the parcel delivery sector, characterised by a combination of direct employment and self-employment and where sectoral bargaining could build on the existing strong multi-union presence in parts, if not all of the workforce (IER, 2018:20-21; Mustchin, 2017). It firstly interrogates the issue of 'worker preference' and apparent desire for both self-employment and employment rights among parcel delivery workers. Secondly it explores how this conflicting agenda may shape the strategies and policies of trade unions as they seek to extend levels of union organisation and collective bargaining within the sector.

The paper draws on the early empirical findings of an ongoing, mixed methods research project that is exploring the trends in employment practices in the UK parcel delivery sector based on data collected through qualitative interviews with national and regional full time trade union officials and key lay reps from the main unions organising in parcel delivery. It also explores some initial findings from a large national survey of parcel delivery workers. The survey results provide an overview of employment conditions within the sector. More specifically they highlight seemingly contradictory responses from delivery drivers who may on the one hand report their 'preference' for self-employed status but simultaneously highlight the lack of predictability this may present in terms of working hours, shift patterns as well as levels of pay. The close scrutiny of performance through closer surveillance and monitoring is also evident from the survey results.

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46. Economic Pressures and Research Culture: Navigating the Academic Landscape

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This paper examines the economic circumstances surrounding work in academia and theorizes their impact on research culture. In recent years, academic institutions have encountered evolving financial pressures, characterized by fluctuating public funding, increasing operational costs, and an intensely competitive landscape for grants and resources. These economic factors play a crucial role in shaping the overall environment in which academic researchers operate, influencing not only professional trajectories but also the collective culture within research institutions. Drawing on theories of the Labor Market, Human Capital, and Bureaucracy this study explores how these economic pressures influence the growth of contingent labor and the precarious nature of academic employment, while also examining the ways that the beaucracy of academic life perpetuate insecurity.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data analysis of funding trends and employment patterns with qualitative interviews of faculty members across various disciplines. The quantitative component analyzes data on research funding from governmental and private sources over the past decade, revealing trends such as variations in public investment in higher education and a growing reliance on competitive grants. Additionally, the study investigates employment patterns, focusing on the increasing prevalence of contingent labor in academia, including adjunct positions, short-term appointments, and postdoctoral appointments. Labor Market Theory helps explain how economic forces drive these labor patterns, emphasizing the instability and precariousness of academic employment in the current environment.

The qualitative component of the study involves in-depth interviews with faculty members from diverse academic backgrounds. These interviews aim to uncover researchers' lived experiences in the context of prevailing economic conditions and their perceptions of how these conditions influence research culture. Preliminary findings suggest that economic pressures often encourage a focus of securing funding as a primary strategy for institutional survival, fostering a culture centered around grant acquisition.

In addition to analysing these trends, the paper discusses the implications for policy, practice, and trust within academic institutions. It emphasizes the importance of addressing the pervasive issue of job insecurity. This study highlights the intricate relationship between economic circumstances and research culture. By examining these systemic dynamics through the lenses of Labor Market Theory, Human Capital Theory, and theories of Bureaucracy, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about addressing job insecurity and creating a more supportive and inclusive academic landscape that values collaboration, integrity, and accountability.

47. L-Earning Inequalities: Young People's Engagement in Education and Paid Employment

Kate Hardy, Kim Allen, Rachel Cohen, Kirsty Finn, Lilith Brouwers, & Mia Zhong

Most young people in full-time education in the UK now engage in paid employment alongside their studies, due to labour market fragmentation, increased demand for part-time labour (Mizen et al. 1999) and rising education costs. This includes both school students, the majority of whom will have done some form of paid work by the time they leave school (Hobbs et al. 2007) and students in Higher or Further Education. In England, over half of full-time HE students do paid work, and there are now more students (55%) in paid employment than not (45%) (HEPI and Advance HE 2023). This rate of employment is higher among female students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (DfE 2018), expressing existing inequalities in the labour market. Not only are more students working, but they are also working longer hours (HEPI and Advance 2023). Recent surveys suggest that the current cost of living crisis is exacerbating these trends (APPG For Students 2023; Sutton Trust 2023; ONS 2023) with students working to support themselves and, sometimes, a wider family.

In both wider policy discourse and academic literature, 'earning while learning' is typically presented in binary terms, either as positive for developing young people's labour market experience and 'employability', or in contrast, as hindering students' ability to fully engage in their studies and academic work. These latter studies identify and emphasise the negative impacts of work on student engagement, achievement and completion, positioning work as instrumental, temporary or detrimental to movement into 'graduate careers' (Williams 2014). We argue that such an approach is overly binary and instead offers a new conceptualisation of the 'working life course'. Empirically, we develop analyses in this paper using data on the young full-time student samples from APS annual datasets (2005, 2010, 2015, 2019, and 2022). We examine the working conditions, occupations and students' experience of employment, as well as the gender patterns which emerge. We focus on the working lives of current full-time students (aged 16-29) over the last 18 years. We show small increases in the proportion currently engaged in paid work, but considerable consistency in rates of student work, job characteristics and occupational distribution. We find that women are more likely than men to work while studying, especially at younger ages, but among working students' men work longer hours. Older students are more likely to work in gender-segregated occupations, with both male and female gender pay advantages for sex-typical employment, hinting at early incentives for occupational gender segregation, particularly for men. Conceptually, we subsequently argue that rather than a singular and sequential conceptualisation of 'the transition' from education to work, education and work should instead be theorised as concurrent and therefore as part of a longer term 'working life course'.

48. Parcel Delivery in Norway: Unregulated Pocket of the Norwegian Labour Market Model

Kristin Jesnes & Elin Svarstad

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the growth of home delivery of food, groceries, and goods, exposing the precarious working conditions of couriers, as well as the regulatory gaps in the industry. In this article, we examine the parcel delivery industry within the setting of the Nordic labour market model, known for its strong employee and employer organization sand organized collective bargaining framework. However, parcel delivery operates on the 'fringes 'of this model and is characterized by widespread non-standard employment and bogus self-employment, raising concerns about inequality. Algorithmic management by platform companies further exacerbates unfair treatment, with limited opportunities for workers to raise their voices. Even traditional logistics companies, once using more standard employment, now increasingly use solo self-employed couriers to remain competitive, and leverage new technology to stay competitive.

This article examines the (lack of) regulation and complexities of the delivery industry in Norway, focusing on couriers using bicycles and small vans (under 3,5 tonnes) for home deliveries—a segment not covered by industry-wide collective agreements. The theoretical framework builds on segmentation literature and precarious work, as well as industrial relations. Our analysis is based on interviews with 10 key informants, are view of documents including regulations, company practices, and consultation responses to a hearing on regulating vans under 3,5 tonnes, and an analysis of register data covering individuals listed in administrative data sources. Defining the industry is a challenge the registration of couriers into industry codes is often random and imprecise. Weask: What characterizes this industry? What drives precarization in this industry? How should the industry be regulated? Our research identifies two patterns driving precarization in this industry: 1) the use of self-employment in combination with algorithmic management, 2) the misuse of self-employment classification. These patterns require differentiated regulatory approaches to address the growing precarity in the parcel delivery industry.

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49. Workers' Rights as Human Rights: A View from Canada

Larry Savage, *Department of labour Studies, Brock University*

In recent years, the notion that "workers' rights are human rights" has gained significant traction among unions. This paper explores the implications of this framing, focusing on both the possibilities and pitfalls it presents for the long-term strategies of the labour movement.

The analysis draws from the Canadian experience where unions have used this framing to make significant progress in extending constitutional protection for core labour rights as part of a broader legal strategy via the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While there is no doubt that these advances have provided the labour movement with additional defensive legal tools to fightback against wage freezes, limitations on the right to strike, and interference with collective bargaining, an increased reliance on legal strategies rooted in liberal human rights discourse has also sidelined more traditional, class-based, and potentially more emancipatory approaches to advancing workers' rights.

The paper argues that the central flaw of the "workers' rights are human rights" approach is that it assumes power flows from rights when, in fact, it is the other way around. The paper begins by tracing the evolution of Canadian labour law through key Supreme Court rulings which have expanded the scope of freedom of association and the right to strike under the Canadian Constitution. The paper then goes on to explain why these decisions, and the elite-driven judicial strategies they have spawned, are double-edged sword for the labour movement.

While unions' legal challenges have resulted in some limited defensive victories, they have also contributed to an embrace of sectionalism that has arguably diverted attention from broader, structural inequalities in wealth and power. The paper argues that framing labour rights as human rights have worked to constrain the labour movement's ability to engage in radical, class-based, collective action by subtly aligning workers' struggles with a liberal individualism that prioritizes legal remedies over collective organizing and grassroots political mobilization. For example, the labour rights as human right framing have proven disorienting in relation to issues like workplace-based vaccination mandates that pit the individual rights of workers to privacy and bodily autonomy against the collective need to ensure that workers can report to work with confidence that they would not be exposed (or expose others) to potentially fatal illness.

Overall, the paper makes the case that while there is normative weight associated with linking human rights to labour rights, this approach leads in practice to more sectionalist

thinking and an increased reliance on the courts as arbiters of workers' rights, and that this approach cedes too much ground to a legal framework that is limited in its ability to challenge the power of employers and the state.

In conclusion, the paper calls for a reimagining of labour strategies that balance the pursuit of judicial rights-based victories with a renewed commitment to class-based, collective action, ensuring that legal strategies do not come at the cost of political mobilization and broader grassroots eMorts to address structural inequalities in the workplace and society more generally.

50. Digital Connectedness and Inclusion-Exclusion: The Unintended Consequences of Digital Work Practices

Laura Jarvis-King - Jill Rubery, Emma Banister, Debra Howcroft, & Isabel Tavora, *University of Manchester*

This paper investigates the impact of digitalisation at the white-collar workplace drawing on in-depth, longitudinal case studies of two professional services firms, one in law (LawCo) and one in IT (ITCo), involving 67 participants. The research took place mainly from summer 2021 to summer 2022 thereby covering the end of the COVID lockdown and the transition out of restrictions. Although inevitably shaped by this context and the increase in remote working, the research focused on the wider implications of digitally enabled work practices across multiple technological applications and tools for work practices and workplace norms.

The paper explores whether the rollout of digital technologies promotes more inclusionary workplaces or unintentionally excludes and exacerbates pressures; focusing on six dimensions of work: working time; work-life balance; connectedness and presenteeism; work intensity; networking; and skill development. Across each dimension, we find some inclusionary benefits that extend opportunities to participate in or thrive at work but also challenges and barriers to integration. Such contradictions may be experienced by a single person or emerge in differences among interviewees' experiences and interpretations (Bijker and Law, 1994), according to their personal contexts and identities, such as career stage, age or gender.

The form taken by these inclusionary and exclusionary effects reveals similarities and differences across the two companies linked to the nature of the work alongside organisational aims, cultures and management practices (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1985; Richardson & Benbunan-Fich, 2011). Importantly we consider how the social, economic and technical relations already in place in the case-study organisations influence how the technologies shape the organisation of work and people's experiences of that work. Thus, for example, despite appearances of open digital communication, personal connections and networks could take on more importance as the volume of interaction expands; the potential to combine work and family might create not work-life balance but double shifts and work/family interference; and remote working could extend working hours as work becomes easier to access (Felstead, 2022; Green, 2004).

These divergent experiences and levels of inclusion/exclusion at work highlight inequalities and issues around the sustainability of these evolving employment arrangements for workers. The extent and mode of digital connectivity has a range of outcomes on wellbeing, work outcomes and productivity, which is of growing relevance as workplaces and employees are increasingly digitally connected. While professional workers are relatively privileged, they also have longer term experiences of digital connectivity practices, which can be used to extrapolate to other forms of work. The divergent experiences of professional workers highlight issues about inequalities and the sustainability of these evolving employment arrangements for workers. The findings contribute to an understanding of the contradictory effects of digitalisation in the professional workplace, which highlights some key issues for the design and promotion of inclusionary employment systems.

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51. Relational Working Dignity: A Multidisciplinary Approach for Aspiring to Global Autonomy

Laura Mitchell, *University of York*

Dignity is defined as simultaneously inherent, earned and remediated in the work context (Lucas 2015). In practice, dignity at work policies derive from related worker rights protections to promise to recognise and protect staff diversity and inhibit bullying, discrimination or victimisation. However, academic dignity at work discussions have more loosely drawn on ideals of equitable treatment to promote worker autonomy and democratic participation (Hodson 1991, Bal 2017) and explore the potential for the workplace to provide a site for connection, respect, value and meaning (Gibson et al 2023). These approaches commonly draw upon Kantian principles to give ethical weight to dignity in the workplace, emphasising a deontological commitment to the inherent moral value of all human persons. However, the simultaneous commitment to earned or meritocratic worth (Pirson, Goodpaster & Dierksmeir 2016) associated with a fair and just workplace or career hierarchy (and associated material rewards) contradicts this commitment. Furthermore, demands for recognition and remediation of activities harmful to individual worker dignity, while consistent with many contemporary approaches to diversity and inclusion, undermines a categorisation of human dignity, as expressed in the employment situation, as inalienable.

It is unclear how a concept of workplace dignity grounded in Kantian ethics can contribute to developing more useful analytical insights than,say, decent work, or address pragmatic problems of fairness and justice such as poor diversity and lack of inclusion in organisations. While research in management scholarship to date has empirically focused on challenges and enablers (Hodson 2021; Bolton 2007; Gibson et al 2023) towards improved relations of workplace dignity, there has been no attention given to reconciling these fundamental contradictions.

This paper sets out to **i)** articulate the Kantian theorising of existing literature on workplace dignity, **ii)** highlight the key ethical assumptions of existing studies of workplace dignity, and **iii)** propose an alternative grounding for workplace dignity founded in care ethics.
This paper argues that taking a care ethics approach offers substantial benefits to theorising over Kantian ethics. It allows for a pluralist conception of the worker as an agent in complicated webs of relationships that may enable or frustrate dignified working experiences. It further supports integration of the impact of material and social relations at multiple levels of analysis, from micro-interactions in the workplace to worker's entitlements in their political-economic circumstances. A care ethics orientation also encourages a more nuanced understanding of worker autonomy as an acquired competency rather than an essential property of rational human agents. This furthers opportunities for research into contextual and specific factors or behaviours that may inhibit worker autonomy as a crucial element of dignified working relationships.

Grounding future studies of dignity in the workplace in care ethics also requires an amended definition of the topic. I propose relational worker dignity (RWD) to refer to a sensible quality of relations between workers, as well as workers and organisations, that is productive of global autonomy through attentiveness to worker's needs, rights and status as a moral agent in multiple communities. I invite colleagues to consider how this may enrich debates on workplace fairness, organisational justice, and worker wellbeing.

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52. An Application of Intersectionality to the Examples of US 20th-Century Civil Rights Movement Figures

Lawrence Benson

The presentation is given from the perspective of an educationalist studying US twentieth century leaders in the African American civil rights movement. He is interested in a theoretical framework of intersectionality, and the related concepts of white saviours, allyship and privilege. This scholarly interest has been developed to help to give both NHS workers and business school undergraduates a greater contextual understanding of these relatively contemporary named concepts by providing and exploring historical examples. It is hoped that these exercises will further raise awareness to remaining deep seated current societal inequalities and systemic prejudice.

Diagrammatic applications of intersectionality to historical figures involved in the civil rights movement are included in the presentation. These have been introduced and discussed both in previous academic conferences and in the author's teaching practice of NHS professionals studying a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) and business school undergraduates taking a second-year course in U.S. politics and history. The University of Manchester and its business school is not unusual in the U.K. by asking all course leaders and programme directors to ensure that the themes of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI,the US equivalent of EDI being DEI, Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity) are woven throughout its educational awards and their components. EDI is also a major concern within many NHS commissioned programmes such as HSST.

An intersectionality framework will be applied to the examples of three US black and one white historical figure. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (1884 to 1962), Mary MacLeod Bethune (1875 to 1955) and Pauline (Pauli) Murray (1910 to 1985) were and are still all nationally and internationally recognised. Cecil Peterson (1919 to 2006) who was far less known but nevertheless had a considerable impact on his community. Each of these four people were key in the African American civil rights movement whether this be on national or local stages.Correspondence between Roosevelt and these three people has been considered including letters held in the FDR Presidential library, Hyde Park, New York State. Roosevelt knew and supported all three African Americans.

Roosevelt had from adolescence many interests in the pursuit of greater social justice for a wide range of marginalised groups. She became one of the leading progressive white liberals of her time. However, it was not until she became FDR's Presidential First Lady in 1933 that she became more acutely aware of the particular suffering of African Americans in the Great Depression. She had first met Mary MacLeod Bethune in 1927 who was a leading black educationalist and civil rights luminary and became known as 'the First Lady of Negro America'. They soon became very good friends and Roosevelt ensured that MacLeod Bethune and other black leaders such as Walter White head of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP) had either direct access to her husband or indirect though her to the President. Macleod Bethune became a senior member of FDR's African and American advisory body, the so called 'Black Cabinet.'

Murray emerged in the 1940s as an influential legal campaigner within the civil rights movement. She drew upon Constitutional amendments to challenge discrimination and segregation in the US. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg cited her as key in developing her approach to ensuring greater gender equality in the eyes of the law.

Peterson was a U.S. World War II and Korean War serviceman and from 1942 became a pen pal to Roosevelt as he worked in the Tuskegee, Alabama flying school created to train black air crew. This initiative was sponsored by Roosevelt. She became his mentor and proved key in helping him to pursue and achieve his career ambitions. In return he gave her an insight to the experience of a black man serving in the segregated armed forces of WW2. She introduced him to highly influential African Americans in her networks including MacLeod Bethune and others. Following his military service, he took a degree in psychology and then became a tutor and locally elected politician in California.

It is apparent through this scholarly work that Roosevelt consistently over long periods acted as an ally to these three individuals and became more than just a white saviour preoccupied with serving her own interests. Her African American friends and contacts from 1933 to 1962 ranged across the 'broad church' of this political and social movement. For example, MacLeod Bethune argued for more gradual change whilst Roosevelt's much younger friend Murray acted as a radical urging her and others for the rapid and full realisation of civil rights.

The framework of intersectionality proves helpful to demonstrate the key lifetime challenges faced by each of these selected actors in twentieth century America. Roosevelt allied herself with MacLeod, Murray and Peterson to affect positive change for all three of them and the many millions of African Americans they represented. Within this application exercise the supporting concepts of white privilege, allyship and saviours become evident and are discussed. These concepts together with intersectionality are key in understanding both progress and resistance to greater EDI in workplaces.

This presentation concludes by affirming that marginalised groups in 2025 still suffer discrimination and oppression both in the U.K. and U.S. Yet there has been positive change in both societies but arguably without alliances formed between black and white actors there is an ever-present risk and threat that these advances can and will be reversed.

53. Critical Insights into the Control of Community Nurses' Work in the NHS in England: Increasing Productivity or Conscious Exploitation

Lise Elliott

Context:

LPT is a well-established theoretical framework and is used in this study to analyse and illuminate the labour process of nurses who administered IV antibiotics, to patients in the community. In recent decades, LPT has been increasingly utilised to analyse service work, including care-giving labour. In this study, I used LPT to provide insights into the mechanisms used to manage and control the workload and work pace of nurses and ask is this so-called, productivity improvement, or is it conscious exploitation?

Methods:

My research used evidence from data produced through an ethnographically oriented study of a group of nurses, in a large city in the North of England. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2016 (from July to November). During this period, I carried out over 140 hours of field observations, which were recorded across 22 individual shifts. In addition, I undertook semi-structured interviews with the six community nurses who participated in the study. I observed the nurses as they went about their work, but did not observe them providing direct care to patients (this was deliberate and allowed me to focus solely on the perceptions, attitudes, concerns and behaviours of the nurses). The data was produced from field observations of the nurses and verbatim interview transcripts.

Results:

Using LPT as the theoretical lens, my research highlighted how work intensification and work extensification was used by the nurses' employer (or their management proxy), to control the workload and work pace of a nurse, on every shift. Despite the nurses working outside the geographical confines of a typical healthcare setting – which would allow for more traditional forms of control – the nurses' workload and work pace was managed and controlled using a combination of patient allocation and organisational expectations. This study highlighted that the allocation of patients was not based on the time it took to actually treat patients in their home and so, as a consequence, the nurses' shifts were routinely extended (unpaid), to ensure all allocated patients were treated successfully.

Discussions:

The mechanism used to manage the nurses, relied on them being willing (consenting) to work after the (official) end of their shift. They appeared to do this for at least two reasons. Firstly, to fulfil an organisational expectation that all their patients would be treated by the end of their shift. Secondly, a commitment that they wished to complete the treatment of all their patients, which seemed to derive from their own professional and personal values. However, the 'cost' of this commitment to care was not borne by the nurses' employer; but rather, by the nurse themselves. A cost of either; unpaid, extra hours worked (work extensification), or the concern and sense of guilt resulting from rushing their patient's treatment and potentially compromising their care. Based on the data, the former was very common, the latter, very rare. There was no obvious 'cost' to their employer.

54. Industrial Relations at the Lithium Mining in Chile

Lucas Cifuentes Croqueville, *The University of Manchester*

This paper explores the dynamic industrial relations in Chile's lithium mining sector, characterized by its dual nature as both an "old" and "new" industry. While Chile has a longstanding mining tradition, recent exponential growth in lithium extraction has significantly altered the sector. The study aims to understand how these changes have reshaped labor relations, focusing on the roles of key actors, including companies, unions, the state, and local communities.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data from interviews with union leaders, company managers, and state officials, with an analysis of secondary sources such as policy documents, labor regulations, and previous studies on the sector. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions and conflicts between the different actors in the industry. Richard Hyman's radical perspective on industrial relations serves as the theoretical foundation, emphasizing the conflictual nature of labor relations and the processes of control and resistance within the workplace. Additionally, the frameworks proposed by Doellgast et al. and Jörg Nowak are incorporated to expand the analysis beyond traditional industrial relations, considering new global labor dynamics and the strategic significance of lithium in the global energy transition.

Empirically, the study finds that the rapid growth of the lithium industry has led to significant organizational changes within companies, shifting from a small, even "family-oriented "business model to a more hierarchical and bureaucratized structure. This transformation has affected labor relations, with evidence of both increased union activity and new forms of conflict emerging. The study also highlights the role of local communities, which, while historically marginalized, have become more vocal and involved in labor conflicts due to their dual status as community members and part of the workforce. The findings show that unions in the lithium sector are predominantly workplace-based, focusing on local economic demands such as wages, working conditions, and benefits, with limited capacity to address broader industry-wide issues.

Furthermore, the state plays a complex role, both as a regulator through the Directorate of Labor and as a strategic actor via the "National Lithium Strategy." However, monitoring labor conditions remains challenging due to geographical constraints, limited resources, and resistance from companies. The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) adds another layer to the conflict, as they increasingly influence labor relations by questioning the legitimacy of corporate practices and advocating for workers' rights.

The paper concludes that the lithium industry's unique configuration—marked by rapid growth, global strategic importance, and the presence of both traditional and new actors—

generates a distinctive pattern of labor relations and conflict. This evolving landscape necessitates a broader analytical framework that incorporates global labor studies perspectives while recognizing the limitations of traditional industrial relations theories.

55. Student Working Lives: Sector and Demographic Differences in the Quality of Work

Mark Wilding, Adrian Wright, & Mary Lawler, *Institute for Research into Organisations, Work and Employment (iROWE), University of Central Lancashire.*

Recent media discourse has highlighted student part-time work as a mainstream issue. Although students working during their studies may be nothing new, various studies have underlined how student part-time work is increasing. The failure of maintenance loans to keep up with inflation, alongside the cost-of-living crisis means students face a considerable shortfall in meeting the Minimum Income Standard. Many students are left with little choice but to undertake paid work to make ends meet, with students working 14.5 hours per week on average.

Universities and the media have argued for financial support so that students can work less. Meanwhile, researchers considering student work from the perspective of impact on studies have also seen the number of working hours undertaken by students as a key issue. With economic necessity dictating students' need to work, a small number of studies have begun to investigate the effects of paid work on health and wellbeing, alongside issues such as low pay, guidance, and control. There is currently less in-depth academic research on these issues, however, particularly in terms of how they vary among students. As such, this paper seeks to bring student jobs into the good work conversation, with a focus on more equitable outcomes by age, gender, domicile, and ethnicity. More specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the quality of work students experience while studying?
2. How do the experiences of student part-time work differ by economic sector and student demographics?

The study is based on a university-wide survey of students in the northwest of England (n493). Regression analysis of responses tests the relationship of sector and demographic variables (including gender, domicile, and ethnicity) on the quality of work outcome, and identifies which student workers need the most support to improve their quality of work. The findings suggest that health and social care jobs, gender, domicile, and ethnicity all have statistically significant relationships with the quality of work, including lower levels of control and guidance, and less job security when compared to other student workers. On this basis, recommendations are made to make targeted improvements to the quality of work for students.

56. Digitalization-Work-Wellbeing: How Corporate Health Activities Affect Wellbeing and Fairness at Work

Martin Kuhlmann, *Sociological Research Institute Göttingen (SOFI) at the Georg-August-Universität, Germany*

Digitalization has put questions about the future of work and the relationship between work and health on the agenda. At least in Germany, corporate health activities are seen more and more as important and there is a debate, whether digitalization is connected with new challenges as well as changing conditions in this field. Partly based on legislative obligations, employers as well as public institutions like health insurance funds are putting considerable resources into activities around occupational health. The proposed paper will present and discuss empirical findings about: (1) how digitalization, work, wellbeing and occupational health are connected to issues of inequality and fairness and (2) what companies actually do in the area of corporate health activities, how this is assessed by employees and what conclusions should be drawn for the future of corporate health management.

For many years, there have been broad scientific, political and public debates on the health effects of digitalization with far-reaching predictions and conclusions (Tarafdar et al. 2015; Matusiewiecz et al. 2018; Dragano/Lunau 2020; Tisch/Wischniewski 2022; Parker/Grote 2022). The focus is on phenomena such as virtual cooperation/mobile work or a growing fear of a general deterioration of work due to increasing management control, deskilling or digital technostress. Sometimes, it is assumed that strains are inherent to technology but, it is still notclear whether and in what way digitalization fundamentally affects work and occupational health. Our own research suggests e.g. that the Matthew effect which is strong in the field of corporate training can be observed in the field of corporate health activities, too.

Against the background of these debates and open questions, the paper will present findings of empirical research on the connection between digitalization, work and occupational health activities in Germany. It combines conclusions from almost ten years of research on

digitalization and work in Germany (Ittermann/Niehaus 2018; Pfeiffer/Huchler 2018; HirschKreinsen 2020; Buss et al. 2021; Bauer et al. 2021; Dehnbostel et al. 2021; Tisch/Wischniewski 2022, Kuhlmann 2023, Pfeiffer et al. 2024) with results from a recently finished research project on occupational health, covering sectors such as industry, logistics, healthcare, retail and administration (Carls et al. 2020, 2021, 2023; Kuhlmann 2021). The findings are based on in-depth case studies comparing companies and specific task areas using a mixed-methods approach, including (1) workplace observations, (2) interviews with employees, management, health experts and works councils as well as (3) a quantitative employee survey.

Main conclusions are:

(1) Along the lines of task areas and work policies we found a 'structured diversity' of effects of digitalization on work and health that is highly relevant for issues like inequality and lack of fairness.
(2) Occupational health problems around ergonomics or work environments, such as physical stress or shift work, are still important, and have even increased in some areas. In the field of occupational health as well as corporate health management, we observed several forms of inequality as well as increasing feelings of unfairness.

(3) Work-related strain and health problems are seldom caused by digital technologies itself. Problems are primarily caused by work design processes and how digital technologies are implemented as well as by different ways of integrating new technologies into the work process.

(4) Corporate health management is often out of touch with work-related needs of employees. Based on an empirical typology of corporate health practices, it is possible to differentiate between more or less effective forms of corporate health management. Policies have to be much more oriented towards work processes and work organization, issues of inequality as well as employee involvement in corporate health management. The recent discourse about mindfulness, leadership/awareness and the promotion of digital health tools are of limited value or even dead ends.

57. Decent Work and the City: The Opportunities and Limits of Local Experimentation

Mathew Johnson, Eva Herman, Ceri Hughes, & Stephen Overell, *Work and Equalities Institute, University of Manchester*

Recent literature has explored how cities around the world have experimented with alternative economic models that attempt to move beyond the narrow goals of GDP growth and competition for inward investment. Inclusive growth, Community Wealth Building and the Foundational Economy all represent efforts to promote more sustainable approaches to local development and economic upgrading. Such approaches also seek to address underlying issues of inequality and exclusion through 'decent work' experiments such as the living wage, improved social protection, and strengthened mechanisms of worker representation.

Through a comparative study of diverse cities around the world, we explore the distinct 'motives and means of local experimentation and critically reflect on how alternative economic and labour market models are framed and legitimised. We also analyse the potential implications of these models for the quantity and quality of work within key sectors such as care, retail and hospitality. Our analysis draws on semi-structured interviews with elite and non-elite actors, along with secondary sources such as policy reports, official documents, published statistics, and media coverage.

We find that many cities have attempted to combine transformational policies aimed at expanding and upgrading foundational industries, with more incremental approaches that seek to upskill the workforce and distribute existing job opportunities more evenly. These policies rely on a combination of voluntary negotiation with employers and other social actors to improve job quality, as well as more institutionalised rules that seek to protect decent minimum standards. This piecemeal approach reflects the practical difficulties of tackling entrenched labour market issues at the local level, as well as the fragile coalitions of social actors that have a stake in promoting decent work. Nevertheless, in the 'interstices' of municipal policy making, which have widened in many cities after COVID-19, we find dynamic examples of experimentation that seek to improve pay and working conditions and build worker voice from the bottom-up.

58. The Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Job Quality of Essential and Non-Essential Workers

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The COVID-19 pandemic hit economies and societies around the world in a disruptive and potentially lasting way. In this study, we investigate the immediate and lasting effects of the pandemic on job quality. Therefore, we use panel data from Germany. To understand the extent to which the dynamics of the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in job quality between different occupational groups, we compare the effects on essential workers with those on non-essential workers and the overall working population. The study relies on a detailed classification of critical jobs in Germany, which expands the scope of frontline workers to include a broader range of essential workers, with a particular focus on critical value chains. To capture the multidimensional nature of job quality, we analyse a total of six outcome measures representing six core dimensions of job quality, derived from different social science traditions: (i) wage satisfaction, (ii) work autonomy, (iii) job loss worries, (iv) work-life balance, (v) excessive work demands and (vi) trade union membership.

We draw on different theories from the field of work and organisational psychology and hypothesise a decreasing work-life balance for non-essential workers as well as increasing demands for essential workers due to the pandemic. Our analysis is based on five waves of the Panel Study Labour Market and Social Security (PASS), which includes information from before, during, and after the pandemic. This allows us to disentangle the effects of the different phases and waves of the pandemic, thus incorporating the time dimension into our analysis. Furthermore, we adopt a within-person perspective and estimate individual fixed effects regressions to account for, among others, time- constant between-person variation in job orientations and preferences.

The results indicate that essential workers have suffered from a negative short- and medium-term impact of the pandemic on their job quality in terms of reduced wage satisfaction, job autonomy and career opportunities, and increased job demands. However, most of the effects are wave-specific and do not persist in the long run and disappear after the most critical phases of the pandemic. In contrast, the job quality of non-essentials remains rather stable over the entire course of the pandemic, except for a temporary increase in subjective job insecurity. The results therefore suggest that pre-existing inequalities in job quality between essential and non-essential workers were temporarily, but only temporarily, exacerbated by the pandemic.

The fact that the negative impact of the pandemic on the job quality of essential workers was mostly evident at the beginning of the pandemic and in the summer of 2021 suggests that this occupational group may have been particularly affected by the large-scale policy interventions following the outbreak of the pandemic and the increased bureaucratic burdens associated with the conditional re- opening in the summer of 2021. The results also show a long-term increase in the work-life balance for non-essential workers. This finding contradicts the expectations derived from theory and suggests that the extensive shift to remote work might have enabled non-essential workers to better reconcile work and private life than essential workers.

59. Building-Up Collective Competences in Organizations: A Road Towards Fairness at Work and Team Efficiency. The Case of a French Entrepreneurial Network in the Vocational Continuous Training Field

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'The whole is more than the sum of its parts', says Aristotle (Metaphysics), and these whole feeds off the parts and has a feedback effect on them, adds Edgar Morin (1977). At an organisational level, this relationship between the whole and the parts, and between the parts and the whole, is a first step towards understanding the collective dimension of competence. Understanding collective competence means understanding how the performance of a team and the well-being of its members are built together - two fundamental issues for management. The aim of this article is to present a grid for practitioners, with a view to understanding how collective competence is formalised and how it can be induced within groups.

The concept of collective competence in management began to take shape in the 1990s to provide a response to that 'something' (Jankélévitch, 1980; Michaud, 2009) which transcends the sum of individual competences (Picq, 2008; Bataille, 2001; Leplat, 2000; Permatin, 1999). It is defined as a common ground built around acting together (Dupuich, 2011) that enables a collective to coordinate in order to solve complex problems. The development of collective competence is based on the essential elements of interaction between the members of a collective, the identity of that collective and the creation of meaning within that collective (Bitencourt and Bonotto, 2010). It provides collective operational capabilities that are inseparable from individual capabilities, based on a jointly constructed frame of reference, a shared language, a collective memory and a subjective commitment (Retour and Krohmer, 2006). Collective competence also acts synergistically on individual competencies, thereby increasing a team's operational performance (Brulhart, Favoreu and Loufrani-Fedida, 2019). Collective competence provides a group with a sense of purpose and values of fairness, solidarity, sharing and cooperation (Charles-Pauvers and Schieb-Bienfait, 2009). Collective competence therefore offers a way forward for organisations wishing to improve both the working conditions and the performance of their employees. However, despite all these benefits, HRM practitioners do not seem to be interested in how collective competence emerges (Picq 2008), no doubt due to its complex nature.

The aim of this article is therefore to provide some food for thought in this area by reporting on the initial results of an exploratory survey in the form of a research-intervention conducted with a group of continuing vocational training entrepreneurs in France. The emergence of collective competence and its reinforcement within the collective was identified using a processual analysis (Mendez, 2010), 16 semi-structured interviews, 33 days (about 1 month) of observation and 10 focus groups. Based on the data collected, the article discusses the state of the art to propose an operational framework for HRM practitioners. The aim is, on the one hand, to enable practitioners to

recognise what collective competence is and, on the other hand, to provide them with the conceptual tools that enable collective competence to emerge within groups and achieve fairness at work.

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60. Is Fairness at Work Possible Without Employer Coordination?

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This paper draws on recent research in Scotland undertaken between 2020 and 2022 which explores the emergence of a uniquely Scottish sub-national system of industrial relations within the context of partial devolution of employment policy from UK level. A key Scottish Government priority has been to promote Fair Work which is defined as being jobs that are characterised as good in relation to effective worker voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect (Fair Work Framework 2024).

While good progress has been made to promote fair work principles in, for example, Scottish Government procurement processes, as well as raising the profile of poor-quality work in key sectors such as care and hospitality, current policies rest heavily on *persuading* employers of the merits of fair work principles. This approach has, unsurprisingly, received criticism from a range of sources (e.g. Gall 2021) for its lack of ambition arguing that persuading employers creates fewer effective outcomes than, for example, requiring compliance.

This paper takes a different perspective, arguing that the absence of *employer coordination* is, in fact, the major obstacle to achieving fair work objectives. Building on empirical research undertaken between 2019 and 2021 with employers and employer associations in Scotland (Simms 2024), this paper develops the argument that a key distinguishing condition of Liberal Market Economies (LMEs) (Hall and Soskice 2001) is not that *worker* voice is uncoordinated, but that *employer* voice is uncoordinated.

Scotland provides not just an interesting, but an important, natural experiment as a distinct sub-national system of industrial relations attempting coordination around fair work and emerging within the context of a wider UK context that is archetypically LME. The Scottish Government has a suite of policy initiatives to promote Fair Work (see Findlay et al 2024 for detail) but the ability to deliver outcomes at scale is hampered by a lack of engagement of large numbers of centrally important employers (see Simms 2024).

The paper argues that the (near) absence of employer coordination mechanisms in Scotland renders visible the boundary conditions of State agency in a context where the (sub-national) State clearly sets an ambition to move towards greater coordination of economic and labour market activity. The paper recognises that while some of the observed outcomes in Scotland can be attributed to a lack of political ambition or coherence (in line with the Gall 2024 argument), the inability to engage with employers in a coordinated manner is a more significant explanation of currently observed outcomes.

The paper ends with some reflections on the policy implications of the analysis presented, arguing that there are historical examples in coordinated market economies where the State has incentivised, promoted and required employer coordination and explores options within the Scottish context.

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61. Reinforcing Poor Skills Opportunities through Times of Crisis: An Analysis of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Employer-Provided Training in the UK, a Gender and Occupation Focus

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The primary aim of this research is to examine the extent to which Covid-19 exacerbated existing labour market inequalities, particularly by socio-economic status and gender. This research examines differences between men and women in terms of training opportunities and wages over the Covid-19 Pandemic in the UK, using a structural equation modelling approach to longitudinal data (UKHLS). Within this theory, training and wages are viewed through an occupation and gender segregation lens (Kalleberg & Mouw, 2018), constraining the notion of individual preference, career commitment or self-selection (Becker, 1985; Hakim, 2000). It is then these structural factors which segregate or segment the labour market, which shape the nature of training opportunities by applying different functions through different types of training. Building on research from Luchinskaya & Dickinson, 2019 and Blanden et al., 2012, this theory delineates between non-skills and skills-related functions of training, as well as considering the quality or duration and participation of training (Green et al., 2016), to more accurately showcase the processes through which some occupations offer poorer skills and future prospects to employees.

Covid-19 disruptions are grouped into two major forms and are highlighted in figure 1 below: (1) employment-status related (furloughed, laid-off and reduced hours workers) (Witteveen, 2020), and (2) the remote versus 'key' in-person workers divide. This theory hypothesises that workers in the employment-status group suffered a 'stagnation' of skills, and lower wages in the long-term as a result of reduced training opportunities compared to those in regular employment able to work from home (Green et al., 2022; Kramer & Kramer, 2020). While the second group did not see long-term wages suffer, they received less training as a result of Pandemic-related pressures, such as intensification, burnout and heighted regulation (May et al., 2021). Finally, compounding effects from existing labour market discrimination, segregation, and Pandemic home-schooling/child-care pressures, accumulate resulting in reduced skills-related training opportunities for women, and particularly women in low-wage occupations (Xue & McMunn, 2021). This last group is the most important contribution and focus for this research, as many women this category are working in low wage, 'undervalued' and 'under-rewarded' jobs, despite being 'essential' or 'key' during the Pandemic (Warren et al., 2024).

Figure 1: Covid-19 Skills Disruption Theory (Original Work)
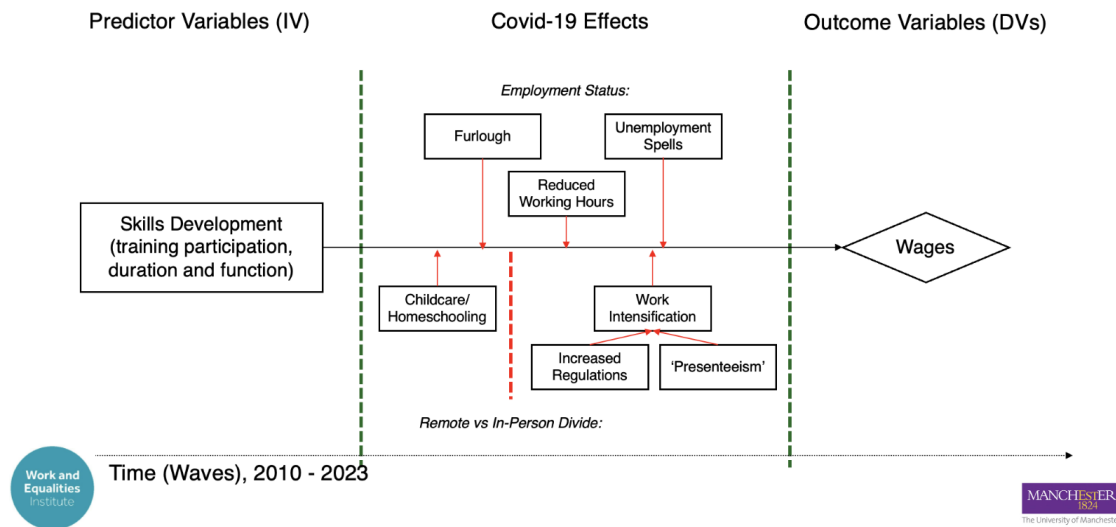
Overall, this research highlights the compounding role of Covid-19 on existing vulnerabilities in the labour market and speaks to the need for additional consideration to be paid to occupational and gender effects during times of crisis to avoid reinforcing poor life and work opportunities.

Please note that the analysis and writing up of the model results is still ongoing as the latest waves of the data (UKHLS) are only released in November 2024. The preliminary results will be ready ahead of the conference in April 2025.

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62. Non-Standard Employment in the Danish Public Sector - Scope, Drivers and Problems

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Until relatively recently, non-standard employees – such as part-time employees, fixed-time employees, temporary agency workers and self-employed without employees (solo self-employed) - was in academia believed to be less prevalent in the public than in the private sector. This perception was based less on empirical evidence than on an understanding of the public sector as protected from competition and therefore having better pay and working conditions than the private sector.

The perception of better conditions for employees in the public sector found support in compara-tive studies of public sector industrial relations, often referring two ideal-types of public employer models. The 'sovereign employer' label stresses the unilateralism that characterised it. The other ideal type is the 'model employer' related to a lack of fundamental separation between public and private employment legislation and lack of separate laws and tribunals for civil servants. Despite of this, also in this ideal-type the public sector it presumed to provide better job security and higher benefits (including pensions) than in the private sector, but this type includes in contradiction to the sovereign employer an extensive role for collective agreements and other joint regulations (Bach and Bordogna 2011; 2016; Bordogna and Pedersini 2013).

Alongside the tendency to exclude the public sector in studies of non-standard employment, there has been a tendency to regard all non-standard employment as 'precarious', i.e. insecure and with worse pay and working conditions than standard employment. There are important exceptions from this tendency, e.g. Grimshaw et al. (2016); Green and Livanos 2015; Larsen and Ilsøe (2019); Keune and Pedaci (2020). Nevertheless, the dominant perception has been to see all or nearly all non-standard work as precarious, often without empirically proving that this really is the case.

Related to the tendency to see non-standard work as precarious is yet a tendency in research of non-standard employment, namely, to focus mainly on the precariousness, i.e. the (presumed less rewarding) pay, working and employment conditions as the problematic part of these employment types. Other potential problems have largely been ignored.

The present article will critically address the three assumptions and tendencies mentioned – that non-standard employment is less widespread in the public than in the private sector that all non-standard employment is precarious, and that precariousness is the only problematic part of this type of employment – in a single-country study of the public sector in Denmark.

This will be done by analysing: 1) *The scope of non-standard employment in the public sector and its drivers*. 2) *The extent to which non-standard employment in the public sector is precarious*. And 3) *The way the social partners and others problematize these types of employment*.

The paper includes three main arguments. Firstly, different types of non-standard employment are very widespread in the Danish public sector and as widespread as in the private sector, although not all types are equally widespread in all parts. Secondly, only a minority of the non-standard employees analysed can be characterised as precarious, which indicates that the Danish public employer to some extent is still a 'model employer'. Thirdly, the way non-standard employment is problematized varies and include not only pay, working and employment conditions, but also non-standard employment's contribution to labour shortages, reduced service quality and, to lesser extent, worsening of work environment.

63. When Fairness Matters More Than Equality?

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The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of key work for the functioning of society (ILO 2023). Key work is often carried out by frontline workers, whose jobs involve social interactions with customers, patients or similar groups (Doerflinger 2022). At the same time, the pandemic underlined the manifold risks to which key workers were (and are often still) exposed to. Despite the relatively universal European health and safety legislation, gaps in protection became evident. This conceptual paper focuses on frontline jobs to account for the unequal exposure of frontline workers to risks. Our paper analyses the OSH (occupational safety and health) system's capacity to achieve equitable outcomes considering frontline workers' risk exposure.

This paper combines literature on service work and OSH with key insights from debates on actor-centred institutionalism and governance. Based on Mayntz and Scharpf (1995), we analyse the translation of OSH legislation into guidelines and practices and their implementation and enforcement. The framework combines the top-down hierarchical paradigm of OSH legislation with collective problem-solving forms of national policy implementation and enforcement. It considers institutional contexts that define actor constellations, access to resources, and orientation for OSH governance (Mayntz 1998).

We use secondary data from Germany and the UK to illustrate our analytical framework and mainly focus on the psychosocial risks characterising frontline work. The framework aims at disentangling and investigating the factors, processes and mechanisms shaping the risks to which frontline workers are exposed. It spans multiple levels and departs from a bottom-up analysis at the workplace level, where frontline workers and customers, patients or similar groups interact, and specific occupational risks emerge. In line with the Varieties of Capitalism literature, we expect worker protection to be more stringent in coordinated (i.e. Germany) than in liberal (i.e. the UK) market economies. Despite similar OSH legislation in Germany and the UK (EU Directive 89/391/EEC), the compared countries represent different policy coordination and enforcement systems. The rationale for managing risks focuses on cost-benefit trade-offs in the UK, while in Germany, safety goals aim at prevention (Rothstein et al. 2019).

The proposed analytical framework enables deconstructing the conditions leading to the variety of risks to which frontline workers are exposed as well as discussing the suitability of

existing regulations and strategic calculus trade-offs informing 'institutional fixes' that could be conducive to achieving equity in protection for frontline workers.

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64. "My Work Has a Purpose and This Makes Me Happy". Assessing Experiences of Meaningful Work in the Contemporary Service Economy in Germany

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Recent studies suggest integrating various objective and subjective dimensions to assess experiences of meaningful work (Laaser & Karlsson 2022). Furthermore, they underline that meaningful work is created by making (positive) contributions to others (Martela 2023; Bailey et al. 2024). This could especially refer to interactive service work – a form of work that involves social interactions and relationships with customers, patients or similar groups. It is thus characterised by both economic (exchange) and social (interpersonal) relationships. While the aforementioned studies shed light on a number of facets and their interplay contributing to experiences of meaningful work, they hardly provide insights into the processes and mechanisms conducive to such experiences, which include both the economic and social relationships between service provider and recipient.

We build on interdisciplinary perspectives on meaningful work to investigate these processes, mechanisms and practices of meaning-making at different levels with a focus on service work. Our contribution thus addresses the question of how, under which conditions and why experiences of meaningful work are generated in the contemporary service economy. Empirically, the paper uses qualitative data from two studies investigating interactive service work in three very different, but inherently relational sectors, i.e. elderly care (34 interviews), graphic design (15 interviews) and business consulting (29 interviews) in Germany.

We identify sources of meaning and processes of meaning-making from the workers' perspectives in a contextualised way and at different analytical levels. The findings illustrate that the interactional context is a source of meaning for many workers, who experience (monetary and non-monetary) recognition, appreciation or other evaluations in their social relationships with customers or similar groups. At the same time, these social relationships enable economic exchanges generating value for organisations. To enhance valorisation, organisations may create supporting narratives which can translate into sources of meaning for workers, too. Meaning is also associated with regulatory structures and the prestige of particular occupations. While the former affects monetary (material) aspects, the latter points to the non-monetary (immaterial) characteristics of meaning. Overall, meaningful work is a multidimensional concept involving subjective and objective as well as material and immaterial dimensions that are shaped at different levels.

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65. AI Hiring for Gender Bias Mitigation: Public Hype vs. Capabilities of Recruitment Technology

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Gender discrimination has been a persistent issue for many years and has more recently received attention due to inequalities in female representation in organisational structure. This paper defines gender discrimination as the unequal treatment and exclusion of a person due to their gender. It has been identified as a social issue which mostly disadvantages women in society, but in recent years, it has been prevalent in the workplace. Traditional organisational structures have been criticised due to problems of unequal opportunity experienced by women. This has been reflected in

both developed and underdeveloped countries, as men have been found to have a higher representation in the workforce than women in most countries globally.

On the other hand, AI use has grown within industries, and the human resource field has been included. AI vendors claim their tools can automate tasks and aid in corporate diversity, inclusion and equality strategies. Human Resource Management, through recruitment, has been at the forefront of these diversity goals and, more recently, has adopted AI hiring technology to meet these goals. Despite cases (Amazon and Facebook) where these AI hiring technologies have been exposed to reproduce existing gender biases in their algorithms, AI vendors maintain that their tools can aid in diversity and inclusion goals. Reterio and myInterview maintain their claim to be proficient in streamlining and mitigating biases in recruitment, thereby offering AI hiring as a potential solution to a long-standing social problem.

Organisations need to analyse claims made by AI vendors to make a more informed decision on incorporating AI in recruitment and diversity strategies. As such, this paper will examine two claims made by AI hiring companies using a case study by (Drage & Mackereth, 2022). These are (1) AI hiring tools can objectively assess candidates by removing gender and race from their system, and (2) removing gender and race will make the recruitment process fairer. The paper will then outline three recommendations for HR professionals, customers, and policymakers regarding AI's fairer hiring use.

66. Closer Interaction Between Minimum Wages and Collective Bargaining? A Six-Country Analysis

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Minimum wages serve to safeguard employees from receiving unjustifiably low compensation and provide a fair playing field for businesses. All European Union Member States have implemented some form of minimum wage regulation, although in different forms. Moreover, collective bargaining agreements often establish higher wage rates and regulate pay in greater detail. One of the primary objectives of the EU policy agenda for a long time has been to improve the situation of low-wage employees. Nevertheless, this goal received additional impetus with the implementation of the directive on adequate minimum wages (Directive (EU) 2022/2041). This paper analyses the interaction between national minimum wages and collective agreements in six countries (Germany, France, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain) within two low-paid sectors, manufacture of food and drink, and residential and social care. The six countries compared exhibit different configurations of minimum wage-setting systems. These differences not only refer to the approach in setting the national minimum wage, but also to the role of social partners and the characteristics of industrial relations systems. The analysis focuses on understanding the impact of national minimum wages on two dimensions: the evolution and distribution of negotiated wages and the potential crowding out of collective bargaining by national minimum wages.

Results show that in all countries and sectors analysed, there is an increasing relevance of collective pay bonuses and supplements (very often negotiated at company level). This is because basic pay rates tend to increase at a slower pace compared to the national minimum wage, and to guarantee that actual wages remain above the legal rate, companies resort to these bonuses. This trend can have negative effects in pay transparency, according to trade unions. Moreover, there is evidence in the residential and social care sector in some countries that employers are no longer willing to improve other working conditions which in the past were used to compensate for low wages. The analysis shows a compression effect in the wage distribution because of the increase in the national minimum wage. This effect is observed in the two sectors and most countries analysed. This compression effect can be interpreted as a short-term adaptation impact of collective bargaining to the new minimum wage, whilst in the medium-term, spillover effects can be expected as collective agreements translate national minimum wage increases to the whole wage distribution. Moreover, spillover effects are more likely to be observed in those sectors or countries experiencing more intense labour shortages. Finally, national minimum wages are having a limited impact on the observed collective bargaining processes: there is no strong evidence of crowding out effect of collective bargaining, despite some concerns expressed by employer organisations in some countries. Similarly, there is no significant impact on the duration or renewal of collective agreements is observed in the countries and sectors analysed.

Overall, the results lend support to the hypothesis of a strong interaction between national minimum wage and collective bargaining in the two low pay sectors. In all countries, a shift towards a close interaction is observed, including those not belonging initially to this type. This interaction has diverse manifestations and varies in intensity across the countries compared. However, it is more visible in the form of a compression in the wage distribution, its impact on the components of pay included in collective agreements, or by reducing the scope for negotiating a collective agreement

67. Women's Underrepresentation in Leadership Roles in Indian BPO Industry

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Description:

Despite its reputation as women-friendly, India's BPO industry shows notable gender gaps in leadership, with women representing 37% (PLFS, Labour Bureau, 2023) of the workforce, but only 10% in senior roles (NASSCOM,2021). This research examines hidden factors behind this disparity, exploring men's and women's perceptions of leadership opportunities and barriers in the industry, providing new insights into gender and organizational culture.

Research Problem:

Despite strong representation at entry and mid-management levels, women in the Indian BPO sector remain significantly underrepresented in senior leadership roles. This study aims to explore the less visible, underlying factors contributing to this disparity, beyond those identified in existing research. It seeks to uncover latent causes of gender imbalance and examines how women perceive and navigate these challenges within the industry to understand barriers to advancement.

Theoretical Framework:

This research combines several theoretical frameworks to examine the underrepresentation of women in senior roles within the BPO industry, offering a distinctive approach that extends beyond conventional analyses. This study centres on Butler's (1988) gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell, 2005) to analyse the power-dynamics men hold within the industry. It highlights how male-dominated norms and leadership styles contribute to the exclusion of women from leadership roles. Additionally, Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations is applied to examine how BPO structures may hinder women's access to managerial positions. Kelan's (2009) concept of gender fatigue explores how individuals may become desensitized to gender bias, perpetuating a gender-neutral perception despite ongoing inequalities. Lastly, meritocracy theory challenges the assumption that organizations reward purely based on merit, arguing it masks structural biases. Together, these theories offer a unique perspective on the structural, cultural, and psychological mechanisms maintaining gender disparities.

Methodology and Data:

This qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews with 51 participants—35 women and 16 men—across various managerial levels in the BPO industry. Thematic analysis was conducted to uncover key patterns and themes in their responses.

Summary of Kep Findings:

Preliminary findings reveal that women in corporate leadership in India encounter multiple barriers, particularly due to gender blindness—failure to recognise gender bias within societal norms and organizational practices. This normalization of inequality sustains the status quo, making change challenging. Additionally, professional networking for women is stigmatized by gender stereotypes and harassment laws, and performative diversity efforts often lack genuine inclusion.

Menopause remains a workplace taboo, while internalized sexism and maternity-related challenges continue to hinder career advancement. These findings are still being developed.

Key Contributions:

This research makes significant contributions to the literature on women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, specifically within the relatively underexplored context of the Indian BPO sector. By focusing on this industry, the study sheds light on implicit barriers hindering women's advancement to senior roles. It introduces a multidisciplinary theoretical framework, combining Butler's gender performativity, hegemonic masculinity, Acker's gendered organizational structures, and Kelan's concept of gender fatigue—concepts that have not been applied in the Indian context.

68. How Do You Really Perceive a Disabled Colleague? Obstacle or Inspiration?

Patricia Perlman-Dee, *The University of Manchester*

Whilst the discussions are constantly about EDI, the discussion is often about students. How about working with disabled colleagues? This presentation will discuss the prejudice and

perceptions around working with a colleague who is a wheelchair user, reflecting on preconceptions/challenges, perceived obstacles and benefits.

This presentation will review the benefit and challenges of a diverse educator profile. It will reflect on the perception from educators and students and the benefits (and challenges) of employing a disabled educator in a higher education setting. The presentation is based on a discussion around the decision of employing a new workshop tutor for a Global MBA program. The new tutor is a full-time wheelchair user and travels with personal assistance. The presentation will reflect on prejudice (mainly educator) and additional benefits and learnings (mainly students). The presentation will also reflect on perceived obstacles versus real obstacles from professional service staff. This will be contrasted with the opportunities, inspiration and increased motivation perceived from students.

The final discussion will be a self-reflection; how do you as an educator perceive and/or have experience from working with disabled colleagues? Do you have any preconceptions? What are your expectations (if any)? The presentation will open your mind and cement the idea that difference can be exceptional in many ways.

The presentation is considered a thought piece, accessible to all with opportunities for learning and self-reflection from a practical perspective.

69. Right to Disconnect and Fair Working Conditions

Philip Schörpf, *FORBA (Working Life Research Centre)*
Bettina Stadler, *Institute of Sociology, University of Graz*

The widespread use of smartphones and laptops, and the almost continuous connection of these devices to the internet make it increasingly easy for some employees to work anywhere and at any time. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more employees started working remotely. During the pandemic, the trend towards remote work received a further boost. However, these technological possibilities, and particularly remote work, make it increasingly difficult for many employees to draw boundaries between their work and their life outside of work.

A constant digital connection to work, described by Ursula Huws as logged labour (Huws 2016), resulting in an "invisible leash" (Belkin et al. 2020) can have severe long-term negative effects on recovery, health, and the work-life balance of employees (Sonnentag und Fritz 2007; Vieten et al. 2022; Chung und Van Der Horst 2020). For this reason, there has been an ongoing discourse in many countries and within the European Parliament and the European Commission about the "Right to Disconnect," a right to be unreachable by the employer for a certain period of time (Eurofound 2023). Some countries introduced legislation to guarantee this right. However, to truly achieve improvements, the everyday practices within companies must change. To do so, a better understanding of the mechanisms that lead to the blurring of boundaries between work and life is needed.

Thus, we want to study how boundaries between work and non-work are drawn by employees and what impact these developments have on the work-life balance and health of employees. These questions will be addressed in our contribution. To answer these questions, we draw on qualitative data from a European research project on telework practices and regulation (TWING) and on a second research project on technology use and technostress in two Austrian companies (ShapeTech).

Following the approach developed by Michael Burawoy in *"Manufacturing Consent"* (Burawoy 1982), the rules for drawing boundaries between work and non-work are negotiated in a "game" within firms, particularly within teams. By participating in this "game", the underlying rules of the capitalist production process are being accepted. Thus, an analysis must be concerned not only with the "game" and its rules but also with the underlying inequalities and capitalist interests in resource exploitation.

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70. A Brand New Start for Social Dialogue?

Roberto Pedersini, *Università degli Studi di Milano*

The paper presents an analysis of the initiatives taken by the EU through the Juncker and von der Leyen in the field of social dialogue and namely with the introduction of the European Pillar of Social Rights and, more recently, the Directives on adequate minimum wages, platform work, and corporate responsibility due diligence, as well as with the guidelines on the application of EU competition law to the collective agreements of solo self-employed Persons.

The paper tries to assess whether these initiatives, among others, have marked a change compared to previous EU interventions, which were interpreted as promoting a decentralization in industrial relations and potentially a weakening of their capacity to regulate forms and terms of employment in the changing world of work.

The analysis will cover both the elects at the EU level and the impact on national industrial relations systems.

71. Explaining the Ubiquitous Harm of Workplace Sexual Harassment in Hospitality: Power Dynamics, Industry Level Characteristics, Deregulation and Prospects for Collective Organising

Ruth Beresford, Bob Jeffrey, *Sheffield Hallam University*

Workplace sexual harassment affects a 1/3 or more workers on an annual basis. It disproportionately affects women, young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people and LGBT people. While social movements like #MeToo have done much to highlight the ubiquity of sexual

harassment, and specifically workplace sexual harassment, in the global north, arguably the academic research lags behind. This is particularly the case in the hospitality sector, despite large sample surveys (ComRes, 2017b: 26) suggesting that not only does this industry feature the highest levels of sexual harassment, but that the reporting rate by women is double that of men.

In this research, we adopt a zemiological – or harm based – perspective to explain the ubiquity of workplace sexual harassment in hospitality, drawing on findings that we published in a recent report (Beresford and Jeffery 2024). We argue for a zemiological perspective on 'work-based harms' because of its attentiveness to harms that exist beyond traditional justice and regulatory agendas, because it understands harm as a byproduct of work-based controls (Scott, 2018), and because it helps us understand how harm is produced at different scales (Lloyd, 2019).

Firstly, at the micro or individual level, we explore our participants' experiences of sexual harassment, the psychological, social and financial harms it entails (Canning and Tombs, 2021: 64-88), and how those acts are often an outcome of power dynamics between victim-survivors and perpetrators, in terms of demographics, seniority and status.

Secondly, we then explain how the prevalence of sexual harassment in hospitality is linked to three key features of the industry - at the meso level. These are 1) the sexualisation of service work (Adkins, 1995), 2) the business strategy of recruiting vulnerable – or what Royle (1999) called 'acquiescent' – workers, and 3) the use of manager controlled flexible scheduling (Wood, 2020).

Thirdly, at the macro level we explore state (de)regulation (including the specific regulatory failures around workplace sexual harassment).

Finally, acknowledging Jeffery et al's (2024) critique that existing zemiological approaches neglect the role of worker resistance and collective organisation, we consider the prospects for union campaigning on this issue, given problematic histories of sexism and misogyny (Avendaño, 2018). In doing so, we draw on examples from Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise and Unite's *Get Me Home Safely* campaign.

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72. Eco-Equalities: Efforts to Progress Just Transitions for Net Zero Jobs in Wales Through Application of an Equality Mainstreaming Policy Development Model

Sara MacBride-Stewart, Alison Parken, Rachel Ashworth, Rachel Minto, *Cardiff University*

It is possible that an emerging concept of eco-equalities can progress Just Transitions equality actions. Equality gains for Net Zero are typically argued to reflect a heterogeneity of outcomes for sectors and people and is in tension with a homogenous Just Transition, advocating for "Net Zero for all". Establishing that there are issues with how equality and justice is theorised in the context of a worsening of equalities and where 'multiple forms of justice' (equalities perspective) are not well reconciled with local needs (a culturalist perspective) this paper turns to ecological theories and the practices of gender mainstreaming. We aim to show how far we progressed in bringing equalities to the fore as part of the Net Zero landscape. Reviewing qualitative data derived from a case study in Wales, a nation which has suffered the lasting effects of previous industrial transitions, we established three different positionalities emerging from a web of equalities: same but expanding, structural change and new interfaces. An eco-equalities approach can answer how far groups or sectors are from the web of equalities, the extent to which an equalities frame is adopted or whether it challenges assumptions around green skills and jobs, transforms the process of addressing inequalities; and learns from the communities most directly affected by Net Zero. Beyond this we argue that eco-equalities may be idealisations of more ecological ways of thinking, but that it has characteristics that could support organisations to approach Net Zero through its efforts to meet it ethical, cultural and environmental demands.

73. Navigating Contested Terrains: Strategies Used by Diversity Networks to Negotiate Change in Organisations

Shreya Roy Choudhury, *The University of Manchester*

Diversity networks or staff networks/employee resource groups, are networks created based on a shared sense of social identity e.g. women's network, disability networks etc. They are meant to counter organizational inequalities by alleviating the exclusionary effects of 'old boys' networks' and providing an alternative space for networking to historically marginalised communities. Having said that, critical diversity scholars are skeptical about the efficacy of these networks in combating organisational inequalities as they are composed of historically disadvantaged groups, who themselves occupy a low status in the organization. Moreover, organizations are concerned about improving the bottom line, which is often times at crossroads with network goals of advocating for equality and this is further exacerbated by networks reliance on organizational resources, and lack of legitimate power, unlike unions, to influence equality policies. Hence, diversity networks operate in contested terrain, but not much research has focused on how they navigate it to negotiate change and advocate for equality.

The limited research focusing on network activism and resistance is situated in the critical diversity studies but have not considered the intersectional nature of networks and adopted a single axis lens to their ability to negotiate change. However, networks are at the intersection of multiple identities which create unique instances of privilege and marginalisation, and this is likely to affect their ability to negotiate change in their organizations. The aim of this paper is to fill this research gap and take a systemic approach to understand how the intersectional positioning of diversity networks is implicated in organizational power dynamics and how this affects their ability to negotiate change in their organizations. To this end, the paper poses the following research questions: What are the tensions that arise due to the organizational expectation of the networks and what the networks want to do? What strategies do networks use to navigate these tensions and push for change? How is the intersectional positioning of the networks implicated in their ability to influence the organization?

The paper draws on primary data from 39 interviews with network chairs, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) committee members, and EDI management team across 22 organisations in the UK. In addition, the paper uses secondary data from publicly available EDI documents from organizational websites to answer these questions. The paper is in its developmental stage, but initial findings suggest that the more unique the form of disadvantage experienced by the network members as a result of their intersectional identities, the greater the disconnect between the organizational goals and the network goals. This in turn leads to resentment and resistance towards

the organization, but the networks are only able to push for piecemeal change to the extent that enhances the organizational image. Thus, the networks find themselves in an identity hierarchy, where the closer they are to the hierarchy (based on the needs of the organizations' EDI objectives), the more they have influence to negotiate change.

74. The Effects of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Outcomes: A Job Crafting Perspective

Shubhanghi Sharma, David Holman, Sheena Johnson, *The University of Manchester*

Introduction: Flexible working arrangements (FWA) can be broadly described as the discretion over where employees work (Flexplace) and when they work (Flextime) (Kelliher et al., 2019). FWA can offer benefits for employees and organisations. For example, FWA can help employees to adapt work schedules to meet personal needs, and they offer organisations the opportunity to improve labour utilisation (Kossek & Michel, 2011). However, literature also suggests that FWAs do not consistently result in positive outcomes (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008), with some studies reporting negative effects as well (Brennan et al., 2002). The mixed results suggest that the relationship between FWAs and employee outcomes remains inconclusive (Kelliher et al., 2019), highlighting a need for further research to understand how and when FWA can lead to positive outcomes.

This study explores how employees actively craft their FWAs to achieve better alignment between personal and professional lives and how this affects employee outcomes. Our approach is grounded in the Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory, which explains that individuals naturally seek out environments that match their unique characteristics (Van Vianen, 2018). This involves aligning one's abilities and requirements with the demands and resources of their occupation. This theory suggests that when there is a fit between an employee's needs and job demands, positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and work-life balance are more likely (Allen et al., 2015). While prior research acknowledges the importance of fit, there is limited understanding of how this fit is achieved. This study proposes that employees modify their work arrangements to improve the alignment between their personal and professional lives.

Methodology and Data Analysis: This study employs a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with 16 employees having FWAs. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006) was conducted using NVivo software, which resulted in 134 codes. These codes were grouped into 22 organising themes and 7 global themes that reflect the research questions. This method allowed for the identification of patterns in how participants engage with FWAs, particularly focusing on how they craft flexible work to fit their personal and professional responsibilities.

Results and Discussion: The analysis revealed that employees actively engage in "work crafting", adjusting their work hours, locations, and routines to better balance personal and professional responsibilities. Central themes such as "flexible work crafting," "benefits of flexible work," and "challenges of flexible work" emerged. Benefits of flexible work included increased job satisfaction and better health and well-being, while challenges included communication difficulties and blurred work-home boundaries. Work-life balance emerged as the most significant outcome, prompting its inclusion in the conceptual model.

This qualitative analysis supports that flexible work arrangements positively influence employee outcomes when employees actively craft their arrangements to achieve a fit between their personal and professional lives. It also underscores the importance of organisational support to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of flexible work. The research aligns with themes of well-being at work, showing that greater autonomy allows employees to modify their arrangement which enhances employee work-life balance, thereby promoting well-being. In the next phase, a longitudinal survey will be conducted to gather quantitative data.

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75. Global fairness: Transnational Labour Regulation Through Global Framework Agreements

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The concept of fairness at global level has gained increasing attention as multinational companies operate across borders with diverse legal, social, and economic conditions. Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) represent a critical tool for addressing labour rights and fair labour standards in this context. These agreements, negotiated between multinational companies and global trade union federations, aim to establish minimum labour standards and improve working conditions throughout multinational companies' global operations and across global supply chains.

Numerous studies have explored various dimensions of GFAs with a primary focus on the negotiations preceding the agreements, their dissemination, and the content of the agreements. Research has also addressed specific challenges related to their implementation. However, there remains limited understanding of the conditions that lead to the successful implementation of GFAs. Successful implementation can be evaluated through three key aspects: (a) the resolution of compliance issues with labour standards within companies and their supply chains, (b) the empowerment of trade unions, particularly in gaining a stronger voice at the transnational level within multinational companies, and (c) the enhancement of relationships among trade unions, especially between trade unions in the Global North with those in the Global South. This includes fostering deeper collaboration within the multilevel system of interest representation, as well as strengthening transnational trade union networks.

In our paper we analyse the factors and practices that promote successful implementation in this direction. Our findings are drawn from case studies conducted in 12 multinational companies, based on over 70 expert interviews with representatives from global union federations, headquarters trade unions, works councils, and trade union members across various countries.

Our analysis identifies three key elements that are essential for successful GFA implementation: first, the process norms established in the GFA, which both enable and constrain actions; second, the strategies and orientations of the key actors involved in the implementation; and third, the resources and capabilities available to these actors, enabling them to take an active role in the implementation process. Together, these factors highlight the dynamic interaction between structural conditions and agency, which is crucial for the successful implementation of GFAs in the dimensions we examine.

Ultimately, our research contributes to the ongoing discussion on the potential of GFAs to foster more equitable global labour standards and reduce disparities in working conditions across countries.

76. The Digitalisation of Work among Disadvantaged Social Groups in India: The Widening Precarity Gap

Sudipa Sarkar, *Digital Futures at Work Research Centre*
Richard Dickens, *University of Sussex*
Wil Hunt, *Economic Studies, University of Dundee*

The tasks carried out by workers on the job serve as valuable indicators of the direction and impact of technological advancements. Routine repetitive tasks have been identified as particularly vulnerable to technological innovation, while non-routine tasks are considered to be at a lower risk. In this paper we look at the task contents of occupations in India and compare them for workers belonging to different caste groups. The caste system in India is a social and hierarchical stratification system that has existed for centuries. It is a complex social structure that categorizes people into different groups based on colour, occupation, and social status. The caste groups are mutually exclusive, endogamous, hereditary, and occupation specific. In current times, the Indian census classifies its citizens into four broad categories for the purpose of affirmative action: Scheduled Castes, the ex-untouchables (SCs hereafter), Scheduled Tribes, consisting of indigenous tribes (STs hereafter), Other Backward Class (OBC) and General Castes who are also referred to as 'Upper Caste'. In our study, we focus on these four categories and combine the most disadvantaged categories, SC and ST, as these two groups are often placed together in various affirmative action plans by the government. We use three sources of data for this study: Employment-Unemployment survey data and Periodic Labour Force Survey data of India as well as occupational task intensity data from O*NET database.

Results from our analysis reveal that: 1) workers from disadvantaged castes work in occupations with much higher manual task intensity than those in higher castes; this is also true for the OBCs; 2) while there has been an overall decline in manual task intensity and an overall growth in cognitive and interpersonal task intensity for all castes, this has been less pronounced for disadvantaged castes followed by OBC; 3) for disadvantaged castes, where the task intensity gap to higher castes has closed the fastest is in the routine cognitive category. From the above findings we draw two inferences. First, individuals from disadvantaged castes work in occupations that are much more exposed to automation by technology than those from higher castes. That is, occupations with a high intensity of routine cognitive and routine manual tasks. Second, workers from higher castes appear to have benefited more from digitalisation than those from disadvantaged castes, as they increasingly perform jobs with non-routine interpersonal and analytical tasks.

77. Unionizing Against Algorithms: A Case Study of South Korean Delivery Workers

SuMin Park, *Korea Labor Institution*

This study examines how food delivery workers have resisted the data-driven economy, drawing on the case of Rider Union, the food delivery workers' union in South Korea. The data for this study was collected through field study including participant observation and interviews with gig workers and union activists.

"Data justice unionism" provides key concepts for this research. Dencik (2021) defines data justice unionism as "a form of social justice unionism that engages with data-centric technologies as firmly situated within a workers' rights agenda and that approaches AI governance as informed by the labor movement in solidarity with other social movements." By examining the activities of Rider Union, I will further elaborate and endeavor to expand the concept. To engage with technologies in a manner that prioritizes workers' rights, I propose three approaches: revealing the human labor behind the user screen, interpreting data from the perspective of workers, and securing workers' presence within administrative data.

Revealing workers behind the user interface can serve as an entry point to raise awareness about occupational health and safety issues. The occupational accident rate of food delivery workers ranks as the highest among all industries in Korea. Although consumers easily blame their risky driving, they are unaware of the process workers go through. Customers only acknowledge the dots on the map heading to them, not the penalties for missing the delivery time or traffic situation. Rider Union experimented with their union member and live-streamed it on YouTube in 2021. One cohort strictly adhered to algorithmic instructions, while the other maintained their usual practices, declining undesirable orders. Viewers of the live streaming could observe the intricacies of food delivery. Workers encountered difficulties navigating basement parking lots of large residential complexes and climbing up the stairs of the buildings lacking elevators.

In 2021, food delivery apps calculated the delivery distance in a straight line, not the actual itinerary, resulting in shorter traveling and less income. One of the members provided an example in which the estimated traveling time of the delivery app based on the straight-line route consisted of only half of the real traveling time required by a driving navigation program. This example earned the spotlight of media outlets. The company changed its calculation method, after bargaining with the Platform Delivery Union, which has negotiation rights and is a rival union of the Rider Union.

The experiment of Rider Union empirically demonstrated unpaid work of food delivery intuitively. The prevalence of unpaid labor among food delivery workers was common knowledge within the industry but rarely discussed in public discourse. Another platform workers' union adopted this experiment methodology to reveal unpaid work in their industry. Many precarious workers are frequently required to perform unpaid work, but unpaid work has never been calculated or datafied. For powerful bargaining, public attention, or regulatory action, workers need their data.

This presentation is based on a chapter that will be included in an upcoming book.

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78. Work Activity: A New Angle for Analysing Inclusion at Work

Tarik Chakor, *LEST-CNRS, Aix-Marseille Université*

The concept of inclusion has gradually grown, appearing in scientific work in management sciences at the end of the 1990s (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Inclusion in the workplace has been the subject of growing interest (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Mor Barak, 2005), particularly for certain populations such as people with disabilities (Folguera, 2014; Kulkarni et al., 2016), immigrants (Ponzoni & al., 2017) or transgender people (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016).

The aim of this theoretical article is to analyse the main approaches to inclusion at work, identify some limitations and propose a new framework of analysis around real work activity.

Inclusion at work is essentially based on approaches centred on the individual: work group inclusion, leader inclusion, perceived organisational inclusion (Shore & al., 2018). These works only retain the individual experience as the main angle of apprehension. The analysis of individual perception within the group, the quest for balance between belonging and one's own specificities, the role of inclusive leaders (or inclusive leadership), and the analysis of perceived organisational inclusion do not make it possible to grasp the totality and complexity of inclusion, particularly the role of the work organisation in promoting, developing and sustaining inclusion in the workplace.

Organisational approaches have gradually emerged, with the inclusion of organisational practices and the climate of inclusion. The limitations of these approaches are various: although they provide fundamental elements in promoting inclusion in the workplace, they are not sufficient on their own to create and ensure equal opportunities. In addition, the emphasis on the central role of managers and leaders in creating and supporting an inclusive environment tends to disempower, at least in part, the other actors and stakeholders in the workplace... or to over-empower managers. Here, leaders must both address issues of discrimination in their organisation while fostering and developing a talent pool among members of minority groups through multiple inclusion practices (Shore & al., 2018).

We propose to look at inclusion at work through the prism of work activity and a clinical approach of activity (Clot, 2008). The aim of this approach is to analyse the actual work activity, taking into account the subjectivity of the worker, his or her experiences at work, emotions and affects. The triptych of Being able to act - Being able to debate - Being able to think (which we will develop in more detail) can help to strike a balance between belonging to a group and preserving its specificity (work group inclusion), can encourage dialogue on differences and authenticity (leader inclusion), participation in decision-making (perceived organizational inclusion), and different organisational approaches, both upstream and downstream (organizational practices inclusion and inclusive climate). Placing the activity and reality of work at the heart of exchanges, discussions and confrontations on inclusive practices seems a promising and novel avenue for research (and action). Debating and acting on the conditions for inclusive work should enable us to overcome the obstacles, misunderstandings, paradoxes and impediments to real work... and to real inclusion.

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79. Platform strategies towards health & safety regulations in the gig economy: from rule preventers to rule makers

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Digital labour platforms continue to expand and challenge the foundation of most labour market and welfare institutions. They often rely on self-employed rather than employees, offer patchy if any social and employment protection and in many instances abrogate or circumvent the traditional employer responsibility of employee protection. However, some digital labour platforms, notably in the Nordic countries, have opted for a different approach towards statutory legislation and collective bargaining. Research in this vein often focuses on securing minimum wages, social and employment protection as well as the roles of platform workers and trade unions in pushing this agenda. Less researched are the roles of digital labour platforms and social partners more broadly in regulating health and safety issues within the platform economy, although recent studies suggest that platform workers are more exposed to health and safety risks and less protected.

This paper offers a fresh perspective on the strategies adopted by digital labour platforms and social partners more broadly towards regulating health and safety in the European platform economy. We focus on recent institutional developments in seven European countries with distinct industrial relations models: the Nordic model (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), the Continental model (Belgium), the Southern European Model (Spain), the AngloSaxon model (the UK) and the Eastern European Model (Poland). Our research questions are: How are platform workers covered by health and safety regulations in the selected countries? And what are the strategies of digital labour platforms and social partners towards regulating health and safety? Empirically, we draw on desk research of policy documents, statutory health and safety laws, labour laws and collective agreements, which we supplement with interviews from key stakeholders in the seven countries. Analytically, we seek inspiration from power resource theory and the literature on the regulatory welfare state, notably the regulatory intermediary target model (RIT-model). We aim to explain why the approach of digital labour platforms and social partners (trade unions, employers' associations, policymakers) to health and safety regulation differs across Europe.

We find that while digital labour platforms initially tended to exploit the regulatory grey zones across Europe to abrogate and circumvent the traditional employer responsibility of employee protection, they are increasingly utilising different forms of social dialogue to develop unilateral, bipartite and in some instances tripartite health and safety initiatives to protect platform workers. This shift from being what can be characterised as rule-preventers towards being rule-makers appear largely driven by the pressures from the broader institutional setting, where the national

context appears pivotal. To push forward new regulation, digital platforms, especially trade unions and employers' organisations have utilised their institutional power resource, but often in different combinations. Their combinations of power resources appear closely tied to the national context and also seem to influence their regulatory approach – statutory law, collective bargaining, unilateral initiatives, or case law rulings – as well as their role as rule-makers or rule preventers when addressing the regulatory health and safety loopholes.

80. Perceived Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: An Enabling or Opposing Factor?

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Sexual harassment and violence remain persistent problems for women in the workplaces of many European countries. Broader social movements such as the global #MeToo have contributed not only to increasing the visibility of these issues, but also to showcasing women's reinforced awareness and willingness of denouncing and fighting sexual harassment and violence far beyond the legal parameters. We acknowledge such awareness and explore its ramifications in the context of work, whereby harassment can be considered a case of discrimination based on sex, by arguing that women's perceptions of their working environment as discriminatory may also be critical to assessing risks and developing prevention initiatives in this context. We use data from the European Working Conditions Survey to analyze the effects of female workers' perception of discrimination on their likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment, physical violence, or multiple forms of violence. Here, perceptions of discrimination are assessed as perception of discrimination for gender reasons, but also for gender at the intersection with other aspects of inequality (age, race, sexual orientation, etc.). The results show that perceiving gender discrimination increases the likelihood of being exposed to sexual harassment, but this is especially so for women who perceive they are discriminated against also based on other aspects of inequality, who are also more likely to experience physical violence alone in addition to multiple forms of violence. These findings support existing perspectives but also have important implications considering current workplace trends. They offer insights into how individual perceptions of discrimination can be considered an indicator of hostile working environments and can therefore contribute to informing risk assessment and prevention programs, with the aim of reaching the most vulnerable groups of female workers.

81. The Digital Moral Economy of Care: The Expansion of Platforms into Care and Personal Services in Belgium

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Research on on-location platforms in food and transport services has primarily focused on analyzing how algorithmic management influences work conditions by empowering platforms to govern services delivered digitally by workers. By focusing on on-location care platforms, this study challenges the prevailing argument that platforms exert control over care work and care workers solely through technology. We propose a more nuanced view instead, suggesting that platforms use a 'moral' mechanism of welfare care, which we call the digital moral economy of care, to justify, normalize, and legitimize the use of algorithmic management. The analysis is based on an ethnographic examination of 55 narrative interviews with care platform workers, 8 interviews with management in 4 care platforms and 5 no-profit care organizations in Belgium and France. Based on concepts and theories of moral economy, legitimacy and conception of control the main contribution of this study lies in explaining how care platforms legitimize the technology-mediated transactions in the 'digital market' of care by employing normative frameworks (i.e., the platform as a 'gift' and as a 'digital encounter') to dominate the market while justifying and legitimizing their control over work through their technological infrastructure within various socially embedded welfare contexts.

82. Women's Vulnerabilities in Climate Crisis-Related Extreme Weather

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This thesis investigates women's vulnerabilities in climate crisis-related extreme weather events in the Global North. The German Ahr Valley, subject to a severe flood in 2021, was selected as the study area. The primary research question guiding this study was to ascertain the gender-specific vulnerabilities experienced by women during and in the aftermath of the Ahr Valley flood. Data was collected through eight semi-structured interviews with women personally affected by the flood, as well as women occupying different positions in the flood relief, both non-governmental and governmental. Analysis was conducted using Grounded Theory principles within MAXQDA software. The results indicated that socially constructed vulnerabilities were most prevalent in the domains of mental health, unpaid care work, reconstruction and flood aid participation. These vulnerabilities, like gender itself, are socially constructed and not the result of biological differences. Rather, they are the consequence of existing gendered social, economic, and political structures that create specific disadvantages for women in extreme weather events. Subsequently, the division of labour and gendered power hierarchies were identified as key drivers of these vulnerabilities. Indicators of resilience, such as women's self-organisation around community care services, were also uncovered. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on fairness in the context of work by highlighting the need to acknowledge and value unpaid care work and to address the structural barriers that impede women's influence in recovery phases. The broad societal understanding of the concept of 'work' must encompass unpaid care work, predominantly undertaken by women, to ensure equal recognition alongside paid work. Equally, it is important to address structural discrimination in flood aid and political decision-making, as seen in phenomena such as the gender authority gap, to ensure that women's perspectives are fully represented in recovery phases. To support resilience and reduce gender-specific burdens, investments into the care sector are essential to prevent women from bearing the inevitable increase in care work brought on by extreme weather events. Future research should aim to diversify samples to deepen understanding of how gender intersects with other identity factors in shaping vulnerability to extreme weather events.