

**Call for Papers:****Old norms in the new normal: Exploring and resisting the rise of the ideal pandemic worker****Guest Editors**

Frederike Scholz, Hasselt University, Belgium

Liz Oliver, University of Leeds, UK

Jennifer Tomlinson, University of Leeds, UK

Robert MacKenzie, Karlstad University, Sweden

Jo Ingold, Deakin Business School, Australia

Acker's (1990; 1998) ideal worker concept has captured the intellectual imagination of contributors to Gender Work and Organisation (GWO) for decades (Adkins, 2019; Pocock, 2005; Pullen et al. 2019). The concept has been used to understand how gendered workplaces prioritise and reward certain abilities over others. Under capitalism, this disembodied, ideal worker is an unencumbered male worker, who is able to undertake full-time work, whereas women are assumed to have 'non-job' work responsibilities, such as housework and childcare, beyond those associated with the abstract job. The ideal worker concept was later extended to an intersectional analysis through 'inequality regimes' to understand gender, race and class as processes of difference and inequality within organisations (Acker, 2006). The concept of inequality regimes has been widely used to understand the creation and recreation of inequalities in organisations and occupations across national contexts (Healy et al. 2011; Wright, 2016).

Similarly the concept of a disembodied worker which rejects certain bodies as ideal workers has also been used to explain the experiences of workers with impairments and the devaluing of their skills and abilities in relation to ableist expectations of working (Foster and Wass, 2013; Scholz and Ingold, 2020). The ideal worker concept informs understanding of the processes of individual divergence from established organisational practices and processes (Acker, 2006). Women and men's negotiation of flexible working options has been described as an affront to the ideal worker norm (Williams, 2000) since it challenges many of the gendered work expectations that underpin it, similarly disabled peoples' negotiation of reasonable adjustments has been found to clash with organisational logic.

However what is less well understood is how ideal worker norms interact with larger-scale changes in organisational practices and processes of the sort demanded by Covid-19 crisis management. Could societal events like pandemics open up possibilities for organisational imaginations to evolve? We think that the ideal worker concept, used within wider analytical frames such as inequality regimes, has the potential to expose and challenge the assumptions that inform organisational expectations of workers in response to Covid-19 and other crises, the management of which demand rapid organisation-wide changes.

We think that engagement with the ideal worker within an intersectional frame can generate important knowledge of how sudden large-scale changes to ways of doing work, interact with existing processes of difference and inequality within organisations, across different national contexts, to alter or maintain perceptions, meaning and expectations (the fabric of the ideal worker). Acker (2006:442) argued that such an analysis should be attentive to the intersections of "at least" race/ethnicity, gender, and class; we posit that, particularly in the context of a pandemic, other dimensions of inequality such as disability, age and sexuality should also form part of the analysis. In some workplaces, once hard-fought access to remote access and working, seemingly fell from the sky as organisational logic gave way to the conditions of a pandemic; potentially paving the way to "new normal" remote working in certain sectors. But changed practices do not translate into equality outcomes; remote working is underpinned by an assumption that home spaces are already set up for

individual's needs and can be converted to a workplace unproblematically. Likewise, for many women, the 'boundaries' between the work sphere and private sphere have been suddenly and brutally redrawn. This creates a rise of an 'ideal pandemic worker' who is a man, able-bodied, able to do full-time work in the private sphere by delegating their family and other responsibilities to women. This call for multidisciplinary papers encourages scholars to consider the role of feminist concepts of ideal worker and inequality regimes within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and other ongoing global social and economic challenges. We encourage submissions that reflect cultural diversity and experiences across a full range of countries and contexts.

**Submissions may address questions such as:**

- Are we witnessing an entrenchment, reformulation or rejection of the ideal worker norm? Who is able to conform to the ideal worker, and how have assumptions about presenteeism and availability for work altered through the pandemic?
- How tenacious are ideal worker norms when organisation-wide working practices are disrupted?
- When organisations implement wide-spread and sudden changes, how do different workers respond and what are the consequences for (in)equalities within organisations?
- Is greater use of technology beneficial to organisational practice? How will use of technology shape workplace inclusion and exclusion?
- Will working from home become the 'new norm' or will more traditional workplace practices resume? How might this vary across occupations and sectors?
- What is the potential for critical theory, postmodern, poststructuralist, new materialism, decolonizing approaches and feminist theory to advance our understanding of the ideal worker and inequality regimes during this COVID-19 pandemic?
- Studies or theoretical papers that engage with scientific innovations that are blurring the lines between the public and private sphere of working.

**Submissions**

Submissions should be made electronically through the Submission System:

<https://submission.wiley.com/journal/gwao>. Please refer to the Author Guidelines at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14680432/homepage/forauthors.html> before submission.

Please select the 'Original Article' as the article type on submission. On the Additional Information page during submission, select 'Yes, this is for a Special Issue' and the relevant Special Issue title from the dropdown list.

For questions about the submission system please contact the Editorial Office at [gwooffice@wiley.com](mailto:gwooffice@wiley.com)

For enquiries about the scope of the Special Issue and article suitability, please contact Frederike Scholz ([Frederike.scholz@uhasselt.be](mailto:Frederike.scholz@uhasselt.be)), Liz Oliver ([e.a.oliver@lubs.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.oliver@lubs.leeds.ac.uk)) and Jennifer Tomlinson ([J.Tomlinson@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:J.Tomlinson@leeds.ac.uk)).

**Deadline for Submissions: 22 March 2021**

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