

## **GENDERED, COLONIZED, AND RACIALIZED BODIES IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: APPLYING AN INTERSECTIONALITY LENS TO UNDERSTANDING EMBODIED ACTIVISM**

### **Stream Organizers:**

*Convenors of the GWO Race, Embodiment and Ethics Research Network*

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In accordance with the GWO 2024 conference focus on justice, equity, diversity, decolonization, inclusion, and indigenization (JEDDII), we aim to gather and explore intersectional scholarship centering on the body *doing* or *enacting* social justice in organizations and social movements. Our objective is to raise the importance of applying intersectionality analyses to inquiry on the effects of systemic inequities and injustice on (and within) the bodies of individuals and collectives who engage in social justice activism. At the same time we wish to highlight and investigate the possibilities of “theories of the body” (e.g., Damianidou & Georgiadou, 2021; Lawrence, et al., 2022; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Pullen, Rhodes and Thanem 2017; Pérezts, Sébastien and Faÿ, 2015), that intersecting with ethics and politics, are promising for the study of intersectional experiences of gender within social movements and organizational change.

This stream focuses attention on ‘the body,’ which is still today rarely centered and thematised in organisation and management studies (e.g., Hassard, Holliday and Willmott, 2000:2-3; Fotaki, Kenny and Vachhani, 2017:7). We consider ‘the body’ the primary vehicle of all experience (Bhattacharyya, 2001), a material symbol of culture (Sawicki, 2020), and therefore “enrolled in the process of organising” (Pullen & Vacchiani, 2013). With the convening of like-minded scholars and activists, we hope to contribute to the individual and collective healing, liberation

and flourishing of individuals and collectives in colonized societies. We are especially interested in engaging participants who integrate intersectional analyses of (1) how histories of colonization have translated into organizational practices that subjugate, diminish and 'other' colonized, gendered and racialized bodies, (2) how movement organizing has gathered bodies to "stand against" purposeful and otherwise unconscionable acts of business and government, and/or (3) how privileged and 'othered' bodies "stand with" one another during critical moments of confrontation. Three essential motivations for the stream are expounded upon below.

First, little social movement scholarship has examined the role of intersectionality in the "lived experience" of social movements. Despite the emergence of social movement scholarship responding to mounting social and ecological crises, such as broad racial inequity and corporate social action following BLM movements and the COVID pandemic (Edmondson, et al., 2020; Gupta & Briscoe, 2020; King & Carberry, 2020; Wang, Whitson, King & Ramirez, 2021), as well as organizational responses to environmental racism (Sze & London, 2008; Walsron, 2021) and climate change (Caren, Andrews & Lu, 2022; Stammen & Meisner, 2022; Von Storch et al., 2021), organizational scholarship has not yet centralized intersectionality and the broad array of gendered experiences in both indigenous and colonized cultures related to these movements. As such, we argue that considering intersectionality highlights differences in bodily experiences within social and environmental contexts, and helps scholars and activists understand how social and economic forms of inequality are "reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins, 2015).

Second, discussion of embodied identities in organizing is largely situated within gender and feminist studies (e.g., Fotaki & Pullen, 2019; McMurray & Pullen, 2019; Taylor, 1999; Vachhani, 2020; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). An intersectionality lens pushes us to consider how embodied identities (including colonized and racialized identities) affect the experience of gender in social movements. To this end, using "theories of the body" as frameworks for developing social movement scholarship has epistemological and methodological implications for researchers,

and practical implications for movement activists. How we develop a phenomenology of social movements and activism (i.e., understanding persons' lived experience of social movements) changes how we understand social movement experiences. Embodied research methods (see Waquant, 2005) such as field studies, as well as narrative analyses using oral traditions as forms of inquiry shifts the study of activism from ideology to embodied experience. Therefore, the study of social movements would consider culturally relevant perspectives of "the body's" role in perceived justice and fairness (Johnson, 2022), including evaluations of which bodies deserve justice, as well as affective experiences that drive and sustain activism.

Third, it is important to examine how systems of oppression based on indigeneity, race, gender, class, etc. are not independent but mutually constitute (c.f. Collins, 2013) the lived experiences of social movement activists. While the suffering of indigenous, Black, and Brown, as well as 2SLGBTQI persons has been raised in the global conscience (e.g., due to broad international media coverage of George Floyd's murder, extractive corporations' encroachment on natural spaces in protected indigenous territories like the Dakota Access Pipeline or bauxite mines in Jamaica, and transgender activism across the globe), critical attention to the embodied experiences of persons from these groups who stand on the "front lines" in social movements have been largely absent in organizational scholarship. Specifically, the affective and physiological toll on activists' bodies in pursuits of justice (Haynes, 2012) are examples of the compounded effects of colonization and racism. As such, scholars and activists must co-construct accounts of experiences, as well as theory that centers "the politicized body" in social movements. This would include a discussion of "politics of dissent" (Rhodes, Munro, Thanem & Pullen, 2020; Vachhani, 2020), embodied ethical perspectives (Tyler, 2019) that address how we moralize, perceive, and treat the suffering of indigenous, BIPOC and 2SLGBTQI activists, and corporeal examinations of social justice activism and organizing in academia, traditional corporations, non-governmental organizations, or other sectors (e.g., de Vaujany, Aroles & Pérezts, 2023; Idahosa, 2020).

Considering the above motivations, we invite empirical and theoretical presentations that conceptualize and examine the intersectionality of gendered (Acker, 1990), colonized (Prasad, 2014), racialized (Nkomo, 2021; Nkomo & Rodriguez, 2019; Ray, 2019) and/or sexualized (Rumens and Lewis, 2023) bodies in social justice work and movements (Collins and Bilge 2020; Collins, 2023). We also invite action research or autoethnographies that portray the ‘lived experience’ of activists including bodily encounters with injustice and deconstruction of colonizing ideologies that highlight liberatory action. We encourage the use of recent historical events or persisting cultural challenges with de-racialization or de-indigenization (that turn a ‘blind eye’ to embodied cultural and identity differences) as a starting point. Examples include (but are not limited to) using the body and intersectionality as a lens to explore the role of women activists in indigenous movements in Latin America and the Caribbean (Findji, 2018; Gahman, Penados & Greenidge, 2020; Warren & Jackson, 2003), the role of transgendered activists in South Asia (Bataccharya, 2019; Dutta & Roy, 2014), and the exclusion of women and 2SLGBTQ+ in social movement accounts and scholarship on racial justice in the West (Crenshaw, 2013; Guidroz and Berger, 2009). Presentations of research, practice, or theory are welcomed.

We call for abstracts (of 500 words or less) from a broad array of disciplines and interdisciplinary perspectives that pursue the following questions (or related inquiries):

- What are the implications of different understandings of intersectionality for theorizing and studying the body in social movements? Does intersectionality help us understand why organizing should or should not be different in social movement work?
- What does social movement theorizing through an embodied intersectionality lens look like?
- How are embodied social movement practices shaped by colonized, racialized, and gendered ideologies?
- How do social movements in indigenized communities, as well as global diasporic communities (African, Asian, Australian, etc.) respond to the various forms of violence on their bodies (e.g., precarious, and dangerous industrial labor; excessive policing and

incarceration; grouping BIPOC employees in “diversity-related” roles)? How do they perceive structural power arrangements with respect to their embodied identities?

- Must gendered and racialized bodies develop activist and organizing strategies differently? Are there intergenerational differences in how activists organize in different collectives or communities, e.g., in LGBTQi communities (Hagai, Annechino, Young & Antin, 2020)?
- What role does digital activism play in social movements? Are there different embodied ethics or moral codes associated with social movements started and sustained online?
- To what extent does capitalism sublate the body or reproduce structures of domination? How could alternative moral frameworks, e.g., ethics of care (Gilligan, 2014; Larabee, 2016 ); virtue ethics (Bright, Wynn & Kanov, 2014; Stansbury & Sonenshein, 2012) or liberation ethics (Cannon, 1987; Dussel, 2013) shape perceptions or treatment of the body within social movements?
- What are the roles of emotion (such as anger, fear, or pride) and ‘bodily states’ (such as suffering and resilience) in social movement organizing? How do emotional displays or “emotional energy” (Collins, 2012) motivate and sustain social movements focused on racial, gender or indigenous heritages?
- How does the “process of caring” (e.g., in transgender communities, see Greene, 2021) during organizing help to sustain social movements?
- How do perceptions of indigenous, gendered, or racial suffering influence how social movements are perceived as morally justified?
- How do social determinants of health (Braveman, Egerter & Williams, 2011; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005) determine the longevity of social movements?
- Are there theories that are currently marginalized within management and organizational studies that offer unique affordances for thinking about embodiment and social change?

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (excluding references) must be submitted to the GWO 2024 submission system hosted by FourWaves. The link is available on

the [GWO conference 2024](#) website as of November 6th, 2023. No independent abstract submissions (i.e., an abstract submitted to someone's personal email) will be considered for acceptance or presentation at the conference. Stream convenors will be conducting a blind review process and redirecting abstracts to the GWO organising committee for consideration in the open stream if and when appropriate. The abstract itself should then not have any author details to ensure this blind review process. Abstract formatting specifics are available in the submission system. Abstracts are due by December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream convenors by the end of January 2024. No extensions to this deadline will be possible as some participants will need time and justification documents to secure visas to attend the conference onsite.

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