

Gender, Work and Organization 2024 - Conference Stream Proposal

Stream Title: “Grief and Loss in organizations and processes of organising”

N.B. this stream call for papers includes information on grief and loss.

Stream Convenors:

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This strand invites conceptual, empirical and methodological contributions on the themes of Grief and Loss. We are interested in individual experiences in organisations and processes of organising rather than loss for organisations. Grief and loss can be understood literally, in connection to death and bereavement, which has been increasingly discussed in organization studies (e.g., Han, 2012; Reedy and Learmonth, 2011; Smith, 2016), although still under-researched (Bergeron, 2023). Grief and loss are often gendered notions, for example in terms of pregnancy endings, where embodied and affective responses are juxtaposed to more ‘logic’ or ‘masculine’ responses (Boncori and Smith, 2019, Porschitz and Siler, 2017). As such, grief and loss still remain somewhat of a taboo subject within organizations, depending on who or what has been lost (see Hazen’s (2003) study of disenfranchised grief).

Grief is a multifaceted response to loss and operates on several dimensions, “such as physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and philosophical” (Corvo and De Caro, 2019, p. 335). It is a complex phenomenon that becomes deeply embedded within life in the workplace (Fisk, 2023, Gilbert and Kelloway, 2021), although still under-researched as individual lived experience and in the support provided in organizations (Tehan and Thompson, 2013). Living through loss often results in a feeling of being betwixt and between or in a liminal space between identities (Conroy and O’Leary, 2014). A liminal period may be accompanied by disorientation and a sense of meaninglessness, and perhaps beginning with a sense of separation from past sense of self, followed by transition and identity-making and finally, reincorporation in the form of a new identity (Conroy and O’Leary, 2014). Liminal contexts in relation to loss can apply to identity, affect, temporalities and other aspects of personal and professional lives. Responses to loss also vary with regards to time and temporality (Hazen, 2003) as ways of thinking about time does not always resonate with the lived experiences of grief: but rather may be experienced as “time travel”, and as “broken time” (Samuels, 2017). Our response to loss varies and is connected to our context, environment, community, culture, religion and/or social networks (Corvo and De Caro, 2019).

In the management and organizational literature, loss manifests in many forms and is understood to intersect with our social networks and organizational environments. For example, loss can affect individuals outside of work and then how individuals come to work and function in organizations. Therefore, it is useful to consider grief as a relational phenomenon spanning and connecting individual experiences in the workplace (Bell and Taylor, 2011).

We also wish to shed light on the loss of individual voices – as within the academic organization, there is a tendency to marginalize ‘othered’ forms of knowledge, power, and being that do not align with the ‘masculine’ dominant mainstream, essentially characterized as White, heterosexual, and middle- and upper-class (González & Harris, 2012). Instead of dismantling it, this form of knowledge loss results in the reproduction of the systematic erasure of marginalized voices and perspectives of historically oppressed groups, such as Black people, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals and other intersectional identities (Williams, 2000). This epistemicide, which brings grief and loss, is the denial of the epistemic value of these experiences, ways of knowing and forms of knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2013; Silva, 2021).

To that end, we invite critical, qualitative scholarship that discusses and problematises issues around grief and loss. We particularly welcome interdisciplinary, ethnographic, and arts-based (narrative and visual) explorations of these topic (e.g., Scuro, 2017; Hurst, 2021). For example, papers could explore (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Grieving what is not there and what is not talked about in organisations – Indigenous, racialised or colonised bodies; forgotten or silenced histories; lost testimonies; indigenous knowledge etc.
2. Different types of loss - disenfranchised loss and hierarchies of loss.
3. Temporalities of loss and grief – how loss is understood as an event rather than an ongoing process; the support (or lack thereof) for loss that is time-sensitive; rituals and anniversaries, etc.
4. The impact of loss as bereavement – how organisations support grieving workers; the impact of work on loss and vice versa (positive as a coping manage, or not)
5. The interaction between the individual and relational experience of grief and loss in the workplace.
6. The impact of emotional journeys or tapestries of loss – perinatal loss; bereavement; PTSD; emotional management in the workplace; mental health etc.
7. Grieving the loss of identity: changes in identity and priorities after critical life events, or in professional identities following organizational change.
8. Metaphors of grief, loss and death in processes of organising.

Please email Ilaria Boncori (iboncori@essex.ac.uk) or Elizabeth Siler (esiler@worcester.edu) for further information or to discuss potential submissions.

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 22nd, 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.

The Strand format will be hybrid (both in persona and online), as we wish to foster access for scholars around the globe, and in particular for early career scholars and those who do not benefit from conference funding. Wishing to include diverse communities, members of the organising committee will attend both in person and online.

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