

# Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing



**Workshop in Equity,  
Diversity and Gender  
in Employment (wEDGE)**

*Booklet of abstracts*

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Griffith University, Nathan campus

## **Professor Yvonne Due Billing, University of Copenhagen and WOW**

### *‘Gendered inclusion, stereotyped expectations and leadership roles’*

A gender division of labour is still pronounced, horizontally and vertically, and there are often gendered expectations to the sexes in relation to work and leadership. The inclusion of women in organisations as leaders is said to be gendered. But what does it mean? This paper discusses the concept of gendered inclusion on the basis of a small study of women managers, and looks at how and under which conditions these women are included in leadership roles. It concludes that new concepts are needed in order to catch the complexities within this field.

## **Carolina Bouten Pinto, Griffith University**

### *‘Autoethnography as method to illustrate, facilitate and extend inclusion and diversity scholarship and practice’*

Autoethnography (AE) is a qualitative research methodology that resides within a social constructionist and interpretivist ontology (Creswell, 2013, Duberley et al., 2013, Johnson and Duberley, 2003). As a research method, the work of an autoethnographer represents a combination of performance, pedagogy and the political through the reproduction of personal experiences and the presentation of intersubjective impressions of the stories of others (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, Ellis et al., 2011, Adams and Jones, 2008). Through writing, talking, reflecting and performing, autoethnographers re-enact and recreate the world they study. They do this through the production of evocative narrative accounts of personal and interpersonal experiences that shed light on cultural phenomena and organisational processes (Yanow et al., 2013, Wall, 2006, Van Maanen, 2011). Boyle and Parry (2007) propose that the inherently reflexive processes that underpin AE and the subsequent production of evocative narrative accounts of personal and interpersonal experiences, provides compelling evidence of what actually happens with people in organisations involved in, in this case, organisational MD initiatives (Boyle and Parry, 2007). When in the (re) construction of these narrative accounts, specific reflexive analysis lenses are placed, in this case sensemaking and identity, in the moment interactions between people in organisations dynamic processes can be revealed and analysed. This is important, as the narrative accounts represent the micro level experiences of macro level organisational influences on everyday interactions. As organisational MD initiatives are designed to address inequality in organisations, valuable insights into why such efforts continue to largely reproduce the status quo can then be gained. For example, in an organisational context, MD efforts in the Australian context are often principally positioned from a gender perspective and as efforts to advance women or, to a lesser extent, other identity groups. This invokes a number of taken for granted assumptions, i.e. that people singularly identify with these groups (Anthias, 2013, p. 326) or that a focus on ‘etic’ depersonalised notions of identity are capable of addressing inequality (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). AE as method has been useful in uncovering and exploring how an identity group focus operates in everyday taken-for-granted micro interactions between people in organisations, and why and how macro organisational initiatives could get in the way of change to occur. AE has been useful in exploring what actually takes place between *all* people in organisations, by revealing dynamics that are based on intersubjective understandings, and taken for granted assumptions, processes and practices. After all, people in organisations individually and collectively make sense of these efforts and then enact and reproduce that which has been understood (Sandberg and Targama, 2007).

The presentation will provide an overview of how AE as methodology and method was used in the exploration of three MD practice stories within three different organisations and sectors which were underpinned by a shared practice methodology. The research design and process used will be outlined, followed by an overview of how different reflexive methods supported the use of an analysis framework based on, in this study, sensemaking and identity work literature. Examples of the resulting narrative accounts will be shared followed by an overview of the preliminary findings and initial insight for MD practice and research resulting from the endeavour will be shared.

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## **Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh, Griffith University**

### ***‘Women in management and the concept of the ideal manager’***

As in most other countries, women in Australia are underrepresented in senior positions and continue to have low representation in senior executive roles. Although much research has been dedicated to this issue, the problem remains. This study draws on Joan Acker’s (Acker, 1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) concept of the “ideal worker” in order to examine how do male senior managers construct the “ideal worker” for a senior position? How does the construction of the “ideal worker” influence women’s career paths to senior positions in organisations? Through interviews in two Australian organisations, this research explores the experiences of both women and men in senior management positions and examines their views about what is required to achieve and retain a senior position. A social constructivist worldview grounded in a critical social philosophy was used to analyse gender relations in both organisations.

The senior managers interviewed identified working long hours, geographic and/or organisational mobility, having an unbroken career path, focusing on career instead of family and actively seeking and planning for career advancement as essential for their progress into senior positions. These are the characteristics identified as necessary for the “ideal manager”, a concept which resembles in part Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) “ideal worker”, but extends this with the addition of further specific characteristics.

The concept of the “ideal manager” emphasises the masculine aspects of senior positions with aforementioned characteristics. With these characteristics in mind, organisations, in the minds of senior executives, can recruit senior people willing to make the sacrifices necessary to ensure the economic

success of the organisation. The “ideal manager” is usually constituted by men and by masculine values and norms; thus, women are not seen as qualified for the demands of senior positions. The perspectives of men shape the instrumental characteristics of the ideal manager and, hence, played a major part in women’s experiences of achieving senior management roles. As a result of this stereotypical view, women faced discriminatory behaviour in their daily interactions and experiences and were not considered to be legitimate “ideal managers”.

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## **Lorraine Tulele, Griffith University**

### ***‘Indigenous employment: Are good intentions enough to address employment disadvantage for Indigenous workers in the private sector?’***

Despite a range of initiatives over recent decades, the issue of Indigenous employment disadvantage has not been fully addressed, resulting in the widening of the inequality gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population. In an attempt to narrow this employment gap, researchers and policy makers have been interested in understanding more about the characteristics of the issue from both the supply-side and demand-side factors.

This paper will discuss the employer attitude towards Indigenous employees’ skill acquisition in the private sector as part of the efforts to understand and explain the complexities of Indigenous employment disadvantage, specifically their training and development in the workforce. This study examines this phenomenon using the labor market discrimination theories and human capital theories to explain the reasons behind employer attitude, which is reflected in the organisation’s employment strategies, policies and practices that impact Indigenous participation. The methodology used is a mixed method design incorporating survey, interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis. The results of this empirical research highlight that good intentions by employers are not enough if the outcomes do not lead to real employment and the retention of Indigenous people in the workforce. Hence, a call for more flexible industrial relations and human resource systems, policies and practices is required in order to accommodate and increase Indigenous participation in the workforce.

## **Tho (Alan) Alang, Pauline Stanton & Raymond Trau, RMIT**

### ***‘Indigenous employee voice and workplace experience’***

In Vietnam, there are over 20 number of Indigenous groups mainly situated in the Central Highlands Region of the country. Evidence suggests that these Indigenous people are more likely to live in poverty, have poorer health outcomes and are less likely to be in the paid workforce or in tertiary education than the Kinh population. The Government of Vietnam has made a great effort in fostering Indigenous participation and involvement in public sector organisations to alleviate these problems. These policies have included appointing Indigenous students to attending universities, preferential recruiting into public sector organisations, preferential appointing to positions of management, etc. However, a report from

the World Bank (2012) showed that these policies were ‘well begun but not yet done’ and in particular there is concern that until Indigenous voice is captured successfully in the workplace not much will change.

This paper investigates public sector organisational responses to Indigenous voice and Indigenous employee experience on participation and involvement. The study uses a qualitative approach based on three case studies and a social media discussion in Facebook. Thirty-one in-depth interviews were conducted including thirteen managers (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers) and eighteen Indigenous employees. Also, secondary documentation and observation are utilised to validate the data from the interviews. The Facebook discussion generated over 200 responses within the first week.

The findings show that the policies from both the central and local governments have had a positive impact on Indigenous participation and involvement in the workplace and in decision making. In the three organisations, there were greater number of Indigenous employees especially in health and education through the success of policies regarding the designation and support of Indigenous university places in particular degrees. Moreover, not only are there greater number of Indigenous people employed in the three organisations studied due to the introduction of government policy but there were also greater numbers in executive and senior manager positions in all three organisations.

However, for a range of contextual reasons each organisation implemented government policies and direction differently and while non-Indigenous and Indigenous managers were generally positive about the success in their own organisations, Indigenous employees in these organisations were less positive. They felt that the implementation of policies relating to participation and involvement in particular depended on the individual leader’s understanding of Indigenous people. Non-Indigenous managers often did not understand how to communicate with Indigenous people, particularly in regard to the significance of language and expression. There had been no cultural awareness training provided by the organisations or indeed any recognition of the need and value of such training. This meant that Indigenous employees were often loath to speak up and contribute and consequently felt that their voices were not taken into consideration by many non-Indigenous managers. Furthermore, a number of interviewees identified the existence of underlying racism in the workplace that was often accepted and not addressed by managers. This racism was often exacerbated if non-Indigenous employees felt that the Indigenous employees were receiving extra benefits or preferential treatment. The existence of racism dominated the Facebook discussion as Indigenous participants felt able to share their experience and non-Indigenous participants also contributed in a constructive manner.

This study represents an important step in capturing the voice and workplace experience of Indigenous peoples in Vietnamese workplaces, which may contribute to the conceptualisation of Indigenous voice in the global context as well as leading to practical recommendation in Vietnam.

**Jack Hayes, Griffith University**

*‘Politics and identity: A qualitative study of queer politicians in Australia’*

This research charts the experiences of queer politicians in Australia. Recent strides in minority liberation movements, from feminism to the enfranchisement of ethnic minorities, has steadily increased the level of diverse representation in politics. With this movement, representation of the queer community is progressing with every local, state and federal election, yet at the time of writing there are no qualitative

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studies researching this phenomenon in Australian political science. This study seeks to remedy this gap in existing literature. Using qualitative methods from adjacent fields of research, the study of female and ethnic minority political representation, research examines the experiences of ten Australian politicians that identify as either gay or lesbian. The study evaluates the manner in which non-normative sexuality affects the experiences of these politicians, and how this deviates from the experiences of their heterosexual peers. Analysis begins with the prevalence of sexuality in the politician's path to politics; in choosing a political party, nominating for preselection and in campaigning. Research is then focused on the queer experience while in office, discussing interactions with the media, colleagues, and with the broader LGBTI community. Finally, a queer theoretical lens is used to determine the ways and means by which gay and lesbian politicians queer the political structure. The thesis argues that due to internal and external factors, non-normative sexualities are strong destabilisers in the queer political experience. In reaching this conclusion, the study also discusses barriers to queer representation and diversity in Australian politics.

## **Ainslie Meiklejohn, Griffith University**

### ***'HERstories: Listening to the experiences of the women Members of the Queensland Parliament'***

Through the use of qualitative research, this paper aims to understand women's experiences in the Queensland Parliament and indicate the barriers which may explain the stagnation to the representation of women in the Queensland Parliament. Over the past century, much progress had been made with women's participation in parliament, and in more recent years, Queensland has reached many milestones with women in leadership in the Queensland Parliament. However, there is a discrepancy in the overall quantitative data pertaining to the women Members of the Queensland Parliament, and the current literature suggests women face numerous barriers which prevent women's representation in parliaments. Through listening to the women's voices and listening to the women's experiences, this paper will explore the dissonance between the external layer of apparent gender equality with the recent success of female leadership and the stagnation of the overall woman's representation in the Queensland Parliament