

Caring about the unequal effects of the pandemic: What feminist theory, art, and activism can teach us

At the time of writing this editorial, it has been 2 years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. One lesson learned, perhaps more than any other, is that the pandemic is not the great equalizer some commentators had conjectured it would be (Berkhout & Richardson, 2020). The pandemic has been deadlier and more prolonged to certain populations due to underlying socio-economic inequalities (Oxfam, 2022). It is equally evident that COVID-19 will not seamlessly cease to impact the everyday lives of people around the world. Instead, it poses enduring and systemic harm, exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new ones. Research published during the heights of the pandemic illuminates the disproportionate social and physical consequences leveled against, among other groups, women (Boncori, 2020; Harvey, 2021; Pereira, 2021; Plotnikof et al., 2020; Özkazanç-Pan & Pullen, 2020), ethnic minorities (ONS, 2021; Prasad, 2020; Richardson et al., 2021), the elderly (Prasad & Zulfiqar, 2021), people with preexisting health conditions (Simpson et al., 2021), and members of the working class (Jagannathan & Rai, 2021). This stream of scholarly inquiry has found that those working under precarious conditions, such as individuals with unstable or non-existent working contracts or otherwise lacking institutional support—including low-wage workers, the self-employed, care workers, and artists (Branicki, 2020; Mandalaki & Daou, 2020), as well as people located in the Global South for whom social distancing is often impossible—have been disproportionately impacted (Levin et al., 2021; Wasdani & Prasad, 2020).

These inequalities are intersectional, cutting across social class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, disability, and age. This means that the strain of the current situation falls disproportionately on those people whose social and/or geographic location encompasses several of these disenfranchising markers (Zulfiqar & Prasad, 2022). Relatedly, the pandemic has also highlighted vaccine nationalism (Rutschman, 2021), causing a perversely unequal global distribution of available vaccines against the virus. This renders countries in the Global South more vulnerable to economic, social, and political destruction relative to those in the Global North.

We posit that today's conditions call for new ideas, new voices, and new answers to the questions raised by the pandemic—particularly as they relate to the ways of organizing social life that catalyzes and enables exclusion. Specifically, we interrogate who is subjected to the politics of exclusion and why, and how such exclusions play out across different geographical locales.

With this Special Issue, we aim to respond to these questions and offer the opportunity for others to offer their own responses. Care, featuring in the title of the call for papers for this Special Issue, foregrounds our endeavor. Care has been at the forefront of the pandemic, reminding us of our unavoidable inter-dependence on one another for our literal and symbolic survival (Butler, 2015). The pandemic has illuminated that care is both a human ability and a human need that extends to considering the requirements and the interests of others (Fotaki et al., 2020, Chapter 1). Care addresses the needs of the body and is necessary to recover, whether it be from diseases or when facing illness or death. It thus grounds the relationality and inter-connectedness that are prerequisites for survival, as advocated by intersectional and transnational feminist perspectives (Butler, 2004; Ettinger, 2006; Federici, 2019; Fotaki & Harding, 2018; Holvino, 2010). Highlighting care and exploring the complex web within which it develops (Tronto, 2013), helps us to understand and problematize the undervalued work of care within the neoliberal paradigm during the pandemic (Branicki, 2020; Chatzidakis et al., 2020).

In this process, we take inspiration from those areas of social life that can disrupt both hegemonic academic discourses and practices, while debunking the poverty of neoliberal politics: *feminism*, *art*, and *activism*. Each of these three areas offers its own language and methods for articulating diverse experiences and dissent, while providing new grounds upon which care can be reconceptualized as a core aspect for meaningfully transforming social life.

Feminist theorizations provide opportunities to understand and critically rethink power imbalances and inequalities related to gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, ability, and much more. First, they push back against dominant white, western, masculine, and anthropocentric academic normativity, confronting us with diverse realities of injustice and calling us to action. Second, feminist theorizations bring novel and more inclusive approaches to knowledge production by making space for the conceptualization of diverse experiences and practices of historically marginalized groups (e.g., Ahmed, 2016; Barad, 2017; Benschop, 2021; Butler, 2004; Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Georgiadou et al., 2021; Holvino, 2010; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020; Nkomo et al., 2019; Zulfiqar & Prasad, 2021).

Art, in its different expressions, is well suited to create knowledge by engaging with affective and sensorial experiences (Gherardi, 2019; Leavy, 2020; Li & Prasad, 2018; Mandalaki et al., 2021; van Amsterdam & van Eck, 2019). In particular, art opens up possibilities to address, explore, and reflect on experiences that are often left invisible because they are difficult to articulate (Biehl-Missal, 2015; Mandalaki & Daou, 2020; van Eck et al., 2021). It inspires arts-based research approaches by offering novel languages to speak and is, therefore, closely aligned with scholarly work in organization studies on 'writing differently' (e.g., Beavan et al., 2021; Gilmore et al., 2019; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2020; Prasad, 2016; Pullen et al., 2020; van Amsterdam & van Eck, 2019). Both arts-based approaches and 'writing differently' can be considered parts of a 'creative turn' in organization studies (Calvey, 2021).

Last but not least, *activism* is a political practice aiming to rectify contemporary injustices through immediate or deliberate action (e.g., Alakavuklar, 2020; Plotnikof et al., 2020; Prasad et al., 2021; Rhodes et al., 2018). Given the overlapping ideological grounds they share, feminist theoretical, artistic, and activist initiatives have the capacity to bond different bodies together against neoliberal patriarchies (Mendes, 2020). Collectively, they create new amalgams and possibilities for making, feeling, thinking, doing, and knowing that can help us re-imagine new ways forward in this time of crisis.

By exploring these interconnections, we embrace the idea that both content and format matter in academic research and writing. In so doing, we challenge long vested epistemic practices, which traditionally limit possibilities for meaningfully speaking of social inequalities and vulnerabilities insofar as such practices tend to render social and economic inequalities invisible (Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Ul-Haq & Westwood, 2012). In contrast, the articles included in this Special Issue, individually and collectively, offer multi-disciplinary dialogue between feminism, art, and activism; therein, illustrating the political capacity of genre-blending engagements and non-traditional methodologies to create inclusive spaces in which different voices can be expressed and heard. By presenting the collection of articles that constitute this Special Issue, we catalyze global debate over the power structures that create and sustain social injustices, which have been only worsened by the pandemic.

The Special Issue articles address a wide variety of topics, authored by scholars, activists, and artists from different parts of the world, who express themselves through storytelling, photography, poetry, collage, music, drawing, autoethnographic narratives, metaphors, and imaginative vignettes. These diverse sources of knowledge offer new ways to understand and grapple with the unequal impact of the pandemic across different contexts, while providing theoretical reflections and experiential accounts that invigorate scholarly dialogs on the phenomenon. They enliven organization studies by reconnecting it to situated embodied experiences of othering in a globalized, neoliberal world, identifying possibilities for social and political transformation (Durepos et al., 2016).

1 | THE PROCESS THROUGH OUR VOICES DIALOGUING

A few months after the deadline for paper submissions to this Special Issue had passed, we wrote this editorial. We decided to do so in a dialogical manner allowing each of us, and all of us together, to express our ideas and motivations for participating in this academic endeavor. In following this slightly unconventional format, it allowed us to walk the talk of what we called for in this Special Issue through open and creative conversations.

1.1 | Emmanouela

I don't know where to start from in writing these lines. In April 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the first confinement period that this involved, I saw one of Alison Pullen's posts on Facebook about GWO's call for Special Issues. This Facebook post found me in my apartment in Paris and came at a time of social isolation when I felt particularly low psychologically. As many others, I was significantly affected by the new surrounding realities and an augmenting awareness of how vulnerabilities were becoming overexposed, in varying ways, both in society and in academia, under the conditions of the emerging pandemic. With death tolls rising exponentially, public hospitals increasingly unable to keep up with the increasing number of patients in need of hospitalization, shortage of masks, daily routines changing under social isolation, colleagues (and namely female ones!) struggling with work/family needs, new remote working routines, and social isolation as well as considerations of how for some social distancing was even impossible—namely for vulnerable populations in the Global South (Wasdani & Prasad, 2020)—among other realizations, I felt helpless, still, frozen; conscious of my privileges and feeling bad for these. When I saw the post, I knew I had to respond. Putting forward a Special Issue proposal in response to GWO's call was maybe one of the very few acts within my direct capacity; to use the academic space granted to me to make sense of the new realities initiated by the pandemic, which I felt voiceless to express otherwise. I remember having lost my sleep for a few nights, which, for me, is an embodied sign that an idea for writing is worth exploring further. This is like an *itching* sensation that pushes one to engage with a subject matter in an embodied manner (Thanem & Knights, 2019). I reached out to Alison by email and presented my initial thoughts to her. Overall, she found the intuition relevant, and provided directions that encouraged me to drive my ideas forward. I took a deep breath and a leap of faith and started thinking of colleagues with whom I could imagine doing this alongside. It was the first time I would ever be involved in such an initiative, and I was unsure whether my experience, as an early career woman academic, would be enough to allow me to lead such a project. But the itching was still there. I had to try and trust the process.

I gave it some thought for a few days, but most importantly I opened my body to feel through it. A few days later, I reached out to Noortje, Ash, and Marianna, asking them if they would be interested in joining me on proposing this Special Issue. The idea was to create a dialogical space for different voices—especially those that have been under-represented, marginalized, and/or silenced, either socially and epistemically—to be heard, under the dire conditions of this biopolitical crisis. Honestly, I did not expect a positive answer, knowing how busy and perturbed our (personal/working) lives had become due to COVID. To my surprise, all three responded positively. And the adventure started!

1.2 | Noortje

To be honest, I don't fully recollect how Emmanouela's invitation for this Special Issue reached me. The early days of the pandemic were all a bit of a blur. I remember checking the news on my phone every 5 min or so. I remember discussing with my partner how to handle the situation with our kids if one of us would be hospitalized due to COVID. I remember the sheer panic creeping up my spine when schools closed during the first lockdown. I remember hiking a lot to curb the panic. I remember feeling totally overwhelmed with online teaching and homeschooling. I remember not being able to see and hug my parents for months. I remember crying. And I remember feeling guilty for

crying because, all things considered, I am in an enormously privileged situation. I have a job, including a permanent contract. I have a house with a small garden in a middle-sized city in the Netherlands. I have a partner and two kids I can hug. I have enough money to not go hungry. I have electronic devices and Wi-Fi that connect me to the outside world when in lockdown. But even under these circumstances, I felt scared, exhausted, unhinged, and anxious most of the time. What motivated me to participate in the Special Issue was the need to connect to others, engage in caring relationships, and use my privileged position to create space for the experiences of those less fortunate than me to be heard, seen, and legitimized. Part of my motivation thus stemmed from a need for self-care, to safeguard my own wellbeing. At the beginning of the pandemic—with the increase in social distancing—I desperately yearned to be in touch with people outside my household, probably because I longed to feel some sense of myself through connections with others. But most importantly, I hoped that the Special Issue would mean something beyond my tiny, privileged, socially distanced bubble—a space to breathe, to express multiple, unseen, and unheard experiences, and to relate to others through reading their work. I hoped for multiplicitous and creative writing that would touch and inspire readers, and I am grateful that my hope was met with enthusiasm and much more by the authors who submitted their work to this Special Issue.

1.3 | Ajnesh

The pandemic struck at a time when I was in the middle of working on several research projects devoted to social inequality. While much of my intellectual focus was on the Global South, I spent the heights of the pandemic in Canada. Even in an economically privileged country like Canada, the social and economic inequalities between different classes of people were palpable. Indeed, there was a clear distinction between those who were compelled out of necessity to expose themselves to COVID-19 by working on the frontlines and those who were able to avoid physical contact. While I was fortunate to be part of the latter group, I could see the toll that being on the frontlines took upon members of the former group. The pandemic, almost immediately, exposed the class stratification that organizes the community in which I live.

So, when I was approached to take part as a guest editor in this Special Issue devoted to the unequal effects of the pandemic, I was most pleased to do so. I was intrigued by the fact that while I encountered some of the psychological angst and anxiety that the lockdown measures instigated (as described above by Emmanouela and Noortje), in an almost perverse way, my career benefited from the pandemic—I continued to publish at similar rates as I did before the lockdowns, successfully applied for research funding, delivered courses that yielded positive student evaluations, and re-connected with colleagues with whom I had lost touch over the years. But I recognize that these outcomes cannot be separated from the fact that I live a relatively privileged life, holding a permanent academic post with a research chair and, as importantly, not having the same caregiving or financial responsibilities as many others whose careers did not fare as well. For this reason, I was interested in learning how others—especially, other academics—went about negotiating the enduring challenges levied by COVID-19. The manuscripts that were submitted to the Special Issue provided me with vivid and poignant illustrations of the material and the psychological effects of the pandemic on academics who occupy very different social realities.

1.4 | Marianna

The shock of Covid did not come in one big blow but rather in many small punctures. End of January 2020: I attend the graduation ceremony at the university, where one of my students will be presented with a Ph.D. degree. Her parents flew from Turkey for the occasion. It is lovely to be there, but many Chinese parents in the audience wear masks. I begin to wonder: am I in danger sitting there for three hours? The next day, the Chinese government confirmed the animal-to-human transmission of the virus. A few days after, the WHO declared a global pandemic. The question for

the people who live in more than one country in such situations is: Where is home? Where does it feel safer? For me, it was simple: it is where the government takes care of its citizens...

I travel on a planned trip to Kerala in February—everywhere in the airports people check my temperature and give me leaflets with Covid related information. I feel much safer in Kerala than in the UK after reading news about major sporting events continuing as late as mid-March and the Prime Minister boasting about shaking hands in hospitals and mocking “bizarre autarkic rhetoric” about lockdowns (Fletcher, 2020). I leave on the last plane to Greece to stay with my octogenarian mum, who lives alone. Emmanouela's invitation to join the Special Issue was an opportunity to speak out about the carelessness of governments and their disregard for the lives of the most vulnerable citizens. It was also to decry the neglect of healthcare services under the neoliberal regime in the wealthiest countries on this planet, including the UK and USA. These fared much worse in the pandemic than many developing countries that adopted a public health approach (Fotaki & Kenny, 2020). I carried out the work on this Special Issue in different locations I found myself: mainly in Greece and the UK. This also allowed me to gain additional insights each time as I compared initial government responses and public attitudes to Covid, the ensuing lockdowns, and the uptake of vaccines.

1.5 | Coming together

We met on Zoom, where we exchanged ideas and got to know each other better, since not all of us had worked together before. We all work on critical, intersectional, and transnational feminist and care perspectives, as a meaningful response to addressing social inequalities and vulnerabilities (Fotaki & Harding, 2018; Kjær & Van Amsterdam, 2020). We also address issues of embodiment, diversity, ethics, and relationality in our work (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020; Mandalaki et al., 2021; van Amsterdam et al., 2021). We agreed that these were the issues around which we wished to encourage debate in this Special Issue and to particularly do so by inviting non-conventional pieces exploring inter-connections between feminist theories, art, and activism, as elaborated above. The COVID pandemic presented a timely opportunity for reinvigorating such debates.

We were delighted to see the expression of interest for this call by authors from around the globe, even before the deadline for submissions. We received 22 submissions which meaningfully engaged with related issues. For reasons of space constraint, we selected a maximum of 11 papers to go out to review, 10 of which were finally published. Making this choice was not an easy task to perform, given the inclusive character of the call of papers itself, the methodological and theoretical approaches we called for, and our very ontological and epistemological stances as persons and academics. After various collective discussions, we made the final choice based on the papers' fit with the foci of this Special Issue and the journal itself. Papers that were not directly related to the focus of the Special Issue were redirected to the general track of the journal for consideration or were encouraged through feedback to develop their approach further for resubmission to other journals.

In this Special Issue of *Gender, Work and Organization* we are honored to include a collection of 10 papers written in theoretically and methodologically disruptive ways. These speak (of) the different ways in which feminist, artistic, and activist endeavors grounded in ethics of care can meaningfully resist normative paradigms that over-expose inequalities during the pandemic. We are grateful to the authors of these papers for their courage to write from the heart and the body to raise awareness of various forms of inequality that generally remain invisible. We are also grateful to the reviewers of these papers for their caring attitude in helping to further develop these papers. Before proceeding with a short summary of each one of these papers, we stress how meaningful the process of co-editing this Special Issue was for all of us, in the team of guest editors, also in relation to the different parties that contributed to this outcome.

We grounded our process of reviewing in the logic of care and relationality toward one another and vis-à-vis the papers we engaged with and their authors as well as love and enjoyment for what we do (Lund & Tienari, 2019; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2020). This was an important realization for all of us, which we discussed during one of our

zoom meetings, where we made our final decisions on the papers. We agreed that the process of working together, as editors, was an embodied manifestation of what we called for in this Special Issue. This enabled us to work meaningfully by considering each one's embodied needs and surrounding realities, across our different professional, personal, and geographical contexts. It is worth mentioning the situation when one of us needed to abstain from their editorial tasks for some time due to Covid-related sickness. The rest of us immediately volunteered to cover for their absence by making sure that all papers would be sent out for review on time. This was also a demonstration of care toward the authors who expected a prompt response. Care and relationality were manifested at different levels among the four of us, in the team of guest editors, but also vis-à-vis the Chief-Editors of the journal, namely Alison Pullen, who acted as Chief-Editor for this Special Issue. Equally, we appreciated the care of the GWO team, who assisted us with all technical matters. GWO manifested itself as a genuinely caring host, always swift in addressing any emerging concerns and providing support throughout the process.

All of the above remind us of the importance of turning our critical academic gaze toward ourselves to rethink what and how we write in academia. We must also consider how we review and edit academic papers as well as how we handle our relationships with authors, other editors, reviewers, and all actors participating in our academic processes. To create meaningful space for unheard voices that speak of embodied experiences that matter, we need to challenge standardized norms of knowledge production in their different dimensions (Jammulamadaka et al., 2021). Thus, we regard editing and reviewing as relational practices rooted in care, from which meaningful knowledge can emerge. This is in the spirit of the relational perspectives we advocate through the feminist theories we engage with, in the accounts that we write, to join forces for driving meaningful change in society and academia.

Embracing this relational approach, we bring together non-conventional theoretical and methodological papers to build on the momentum of writing *differently* for driving the change we wish to see in the academy and broader society (Beavan et al., 2021; Fotaki et al., 2014; Mandalaki, 2021; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2021; Prasad, 2016; Pullen et al., 2020; van Amsterdam, 2020). In line with the focus of this Special Issue, these papers specifically add to these debates by illuminating how artistic and activist endeavors can be creatively integrated in academic writing to inspire transformative feminist explorations in terms of theory, methodology, and practice.

2 | THE VOICES OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

In one of the papers of this Special Issue, *Indignação and declaração corporal: Luta and activism in Brazil during the times of the pandemic*, Yuliya Shymko, Camilla Quental, and Madeleine Navarro Mena take us to Brazil by providing a theoretically and methodologically disruptive piece that questions normative social and epistemic patterns, which the pandemic brought to the fore, in this part of the Global South. Specifically, by drawing on the work of two Brazilian activist artists, Adriana Calcanhotto and Debora Diniz, who creatively problematize social inequalities over-exposed during the Covid pandemic in Brazil, the authors discuss the potential of activist art -*artivism*- to meaningfully address instances of public shaming. Reading the work of these two artists in the light of feminist Latin American thinkers' perspectives and epistemological perspectives from the south, the authors distinguish two symbolic utterances: *indignação* and *declaração corporal* (indignation and bodily declaration). In doing so, they discuss how these utterances seek to meaningfully question the validity of the abstract, universal, and modern human being and rather reveal new frames of progress, grounded on sensitivity and care for the pain of the other.

Using liminality as a theoretical anchor and an artistic methodological tool, Liela Jamjoom, in her paper, *Tread Lightly: Liminality and COVID-19 Reflections*, takes us to a 10 km run, which provides a symbol for the liminal spaces that the pandemic demonstrates. The author grounds her symbolic running experience within related feminist accounts to explore experiences, thoughts, and modes of writing where bodies and minds, whether knowingly or unknowingly, travel across places of origin to (un)familiar destinations. Her autoethnographic creative writing seeks to question social inequalities through personal reflections and to challenge normative writing conventions dominating the field of organization studies and other academic disciplines more broadly.

Amy Kipp and Roberta Hawkins's paper, *From the nice work to the hard work: 'Troubling' community-based CareMongering during the COVID-19 pandemic*, takes us to Canada, where the authors study CareMongering, a virtually organized community-based response to COVID-19, to explore the uncomfortable relations that emerge when engaging with care work. Anchoring their discussion in feminist debates on care and relationality and following a creative writing approach, the authors answer feminist calls on 'trouble care'. Through their own reflexive involvement in the methodological analysis and writing of this piece, they propose that the hard work of caring for a community involves an intersectional, reflexive, and relational approach that addresses underlying inequalities and promotes actions aimed toward making structural and collective change.

Angelo Benozzo, Mirka Koro, Anani Vasquez, Mariia Vitrukh, Pietro Barbetta, and Charlton Long present a manifesto: *A femin...manifesto: Academic ecologies of care and cure during a global health pandemic*. In this creative piece, the authors offer the reader insight into a multiplicity of experiences during the pandemic as a diverse collective of laborers, white, native American, European, Caucasian, cisgender, neurodivergent, bisexual, gay, and... academics. With the use of the three dots...they signal their openness to the potentiality of what might be invisible and resists pinning down at the time of writing; a space that may be explored or filled by others. Their *Femin...manifesto* is a performative text that celebrates the heterogeneity and undecidability of both experiences and the practices of care and cure during COVID-19. The authors blend several writing genres such as storytelling, poetry, academic reflections, and calls for action (*manifest-actions*) with visual materials to challenge and address opportunities for solidarity that the pandemic offers.

Anne-Marie Greene, Deborah Dean, Sarah Bartley, and Caoimhe McAvinchey use the case of Clean Break—a women's only theater company based in the UK—to offer an example of how the ethic of care was operationalized during the pandemic. The central aim of Clean Break is to provide theater, education, and advocacy for and about women affected by the criminal justice system. Positing art as an avenue by which to actualize the ethic of care, Greene and colleagues scrutinize the inequalities engendered by the pandemic to offer a compelling account of why the ethic of care requires intentional actions that seek to remedy the conditions of marginalization experienced by vulnerable subjects.

Ritesh Kumar and Rahul Kamble provide a revelatory look into how poetry, poetic practice, and graffiti were leveraged during the pandemic as sources of arts-based resistance in the face of state persecution of an ethnic minority group. Specifically, they show how such forms of arts-based resistance can bridge the disjuncture in praxis—that is between theory and practice—by raising consciousness about the political relegation of, in this case, Muslims in India. This paper illuminates the potency of arts-based resistance to subvert the noxious ideological agenda of hegemonic state actors.

Mie Plotnikof and Ea Høg Utoft explore the shadow sides of academic labor's 'new normal' during the pandemic. The authors consider the new forms of colonization and penetration in our homes and bodies by the greedy neoliberal university during lockdown. They use autoethnography to unveil processes of toxic productivity, toxic passivity, and toxic affectivity that this combination brings about. The authors mobilize feminist resistance to develop a relational approach for writing gender differences together, flashing their multifaceted lived experiences associated with the toxic new normal. This may not provide an escape from toxicity but helps the configuring and the enactment of care for the self and others as a way of re-energizing, and re-imagining lives in academia differently.

Ana Paula Lafaie, Aleks Soini, and Lena Grunbaum engage in writing differently by presenting a collective collage about doctoral students' experiences during the pandemic. The collective collage provided a discursive space in which to reflexively make sense of how the pandemic invoked myriad tensions related to, among other things, empathy, and motivation among doctoral students. The collective collage proved to be an exercise in empathetic practice insofar as it allowed participants to have compassion for themselves and others occupying similar realities. This paper exemplifies how reflexive sharing can be a powerful move to negate the negative emotions ubiquitously experienced by students during their doctoral journeys.

Seyma Ozdemir draws on an autoethnographic approach to explore the tensions that she was required to navigate as a Muslim mother who had to remote school her child during the pandemic. Using her personal journal entries

from the heights of the pandemic, Ozdemir critically revisits a phenomenon that many parents of children had to negotiate. Through insightful glimpses into how remote schooling amplified the signifiers of socially relegated identities, which for a Muslim woman is often signified by the hijab, the paper captures how the personal remains political, even during times of great uncertainty.

Angie Mejia, Danniella Balangoy, and Chandiuses Katoch use collaborative autoethnography to explore the roles of women of color in providing care and engaging in caring during the pandemic, in the context of an academic health institution in the US. The authors incorporate sociological concepts to examine the racialized dimensions of care work in organizational settings, and the complex dynamics between intersectional vulnerabilities emerging from COVID-19. Specifically, they draw on Hochschild's concepts of emotional labor and emotional work, Kang's work on racialized body labor, and Wingfield's theory of racial tasks within organizational settings. The authors unearth the persistent and structural gendered racism via Whiteness in academic settings, using the example of a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the Midwest. The article considers the affective and material effects of the settings whose mission is to train future healthcare professionals and analyzes how the body normalizes racial inequities and organizational dynamics that define the institutional identity of an undergraduate health sciences campus.

Drawing on a variety of different theoretical and methodological perspectives, these papers complement each other in reconceptualizing the possible forms of relationality and care necessary for navigating pandemic-related challenges for different individuals and communities, across different contexts. Taken together, they encompass various aspects of social life to understand better how to reframe the individualism that proliferates under the neoliberal order (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020). We hope that in presenting these cutting-edge pieces of research, this Special Issue accomplishes its initial objective: to make space for voices across geographical contexts, theoretical and epistemological perspectives to bring to the fore alternative ways of organizing relationally and with care in times of crisis through explorations of how feminism, art, and activism can help creatively transform our lives. It raises awareness and speaks out against various inequalities that vulnerable populations face in different parts of the globe, more so now in the wake of the pandemic!

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Noortje van Amsterdam is Assistant Professor at Utrecht School of Governance. Her research focusses on embodiment and health in organizations, specifically addressing experiences related to gender, ability, age, and size. She often uses arts-based methodologies to explore the affective and material aspects of workplace in- and exclusions. Her work has appeared in international peer reviewed journals such as *Organization Studies*, *Gender, Work and Organization*, and *Health* as well as in edited books.

Ajnesh Prasad is Professor and holds the Canada Research Chair in Critical Management Studies. His research focuses broadly on gender and diversity issues in organizations, interpretive methods, and social inequality. He recently completed a five-year term as chair of the Critical Management Studies division at the Academy of Management and he serves on the senior editorial teams of several journals. Ajnesh earned his PhD in organization studies from York University's Schulich School of Business.

Marianna Fotaki holds degrees in medicine, and obtained her PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Before joining academia she has worked as EU resident adviser to the governments in transition and as a medical doctor for Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins Du Monde 10 years in total. She has published over 100 articles on gender, inequalities and the marketization of public services appearing in the leading international journals. Her recent books include *Business Ethics, and Care in Organizations* (Routledge 2020,

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