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Stream No. 22

Call for Abstracts:

Gendered Ageism and Dis/Abl(e)ism in the Workplace

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Description:

An important recent policy goal in many Western countries is to extend individuals working lives. It has been claimed that certain policies may have had unintended consequences. Frameworks such as “successful ageing” and “active ageing” may have led to a ‘new ageism’ where a fear of ageing is replaced with a more specific fear of ageing with a disability (Angus & Reeve, 2006: p. 143; Moulaert & Biggs, 2013). An important stereotype of ageing is that individuals will be in worse mental and physical health (Lamont, Swift, & Abrams, 2015). As such dis/abl(e)ism may be a component of ageism and the two - isms may be strongly intertwined. As the philosopher Overall (2006) argues “there is a real (though quite imperfect) correlation between years lived and certain bodily features designated as impaired. [...] [B]ecause of imperfect correlations such as these, ageism and ableism are strongly linked and even reinforce each other. A large number of years is stigmatized at least partly because people associate it with the supposedly inevitable development of features regarded as impairments” (p. 132).

The link between ageism and dis/abl(e)ism may have grown stronger over recent years with technological advances. As Ayalon and Tesch-Römer (2018) argue, technological advances have kept more older people alive, resulting in them becoming “a common occurrence generally associated with frailty, morbidity, and disability” (p. 7). At the same time, their knowledge for which they may previously have been valued (sometimes referred to as ‘sageism’—see e.g. Minichiello et al., 2000) is less necessary due to technological advances. As such, with technological advances, the link between age and disability may have grown stronger, and therefore the overlap between ageism and dis/abl(e)ism as well. This may have particular consequences for the labour market. Goodley (2014) writes in this respect about “compulsory neoliberal able-bodiedness” (p. 29). The structure of the labour market has changed to more competitiveness and

emphasis on productivity, which stereotypically is bad for older workers (Stypińska & Nikander, 2018) and probably especially if the link between age and physical and mental decline has become stronger in people's minds.

Moreover, both ageism and dis/abl(e)ism are claimed to be gendered (e.g. Meekosha, 2006; Duncan & Loretto, 2004, Gransleese & Sayer, 2006). For disability it has for example been claimed that “the image of disability may be intensified by gender – for women a sense of intensified passivity and helplessness, for men a corrupted masculinity generated by enforced dependence” (Meekosha, 2006, p. 170). For ageism it has been claimed that women are ‘never the right age’ (Duncan & Loretto, 2004).

In this stream we aim to bring together the fields of [gendered] ageism and dis/abl(e)ism in the workplace. We would like to explore questions on the various ways individuals experience ageism and dis/abl(e)ism in the workplace. To what degree are these experiences gendered? To what degree do they overlap and to what degree are they unique? What is done in the workplace to make it more inclusive for older workers and people with a handicap and what else can be done? To what degree is the workplace disabling and to what degree is this gendered? What are the best ways to research such questions? Which interventions can make workplaces more inclusive, and how can we test their effectiveness?

We are looking for papers on themes related to these issues and would like to bring together researchers from various disciplines to think about these subjects. Themes can for example include:

- Gendered ageism
- Gendered dis/abl(e)ism
- Internalised ageism and/or dis/abl(e)ism
- Intersectionality
- Workplace discrimination, based on age, health, and/or sex
- Workplace inclusiveness
- The ideal worker
- How to research -isms

Biographies:

Mariska van der Horst is lecturer (Universitair Docent / Assistant Professor) at the department of Sociology, VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Her research focusses on a variety of labour market issues, with a special interest in older workers, gender differences, disability, and intersectionality. She is also interested in research methods and the opportunities these bring for social science research. Recently she received ESRC research funding with Professor Sarah Vickerstaff for the project *Internalised and gendered ageism and disableism and its consequences for labour market participation of older workers: a mixed method study* (ES/S00551X/1). She is a 2019 nominee of the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research. For more information see her website: <http://mariskavanderhorst.com>.

Sarah Vickerstaff is Professor of Work and Employment at the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent. She is an internationally recognised researcher into paid work in later life. In the last 15 years her research on older workers and retirement has been funded by research councils, charities and the UK Government. She recently led an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC/MRC) funded research consortium undertaking a mixed method study of: *Uncertain Futures: Managing Late Career Transitions and Extended Working Life*. She has edited 3 books, written 5 reports, 25 journal articles and many book chapters in this field. She is Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. In 2017-2018 she was a Specialist Adviser to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee's *Older people and employment inquiry*.

Submission of papers:

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (submitted direct to stream leaders, ONE page, WORD NOT PDF, single spaced, excluding any references, no headers, footers or track changes) are invited by Friday 1st November 2019. Decisions on acceptance of abstracts will be made by stream leaders within one month and communicated to authors by Monday 2nd December 2019. All contributions will be independently refereed. Abstracts should include FULL contact details, including name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. Abstracts should be emailed to m.f.j.vanderhorst@vu.nl.

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