

Gender, Work, and Organization

Call for Stream Proposals

Title: 'Post-qualitative' methodologies (of difference)

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Recently, the term 'post-qualitative research' has gained methodological attention and served as an impetus for new methodological directions among qualitative scholars. Various methodological journals have dedicated special issues to post-qualitative inquiry: 1) in *Qualitative Inquiry – Qualitative Data Analysis after Coding*; 2) in *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies – Data*; and 3) in *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education – Post Qualitative Research*. However, post-qualitative research seems somewhat unknown in the field of organization studies

The notion of difference in methodology and 'post-qualitative' methodologies represents methodologies without strict boundaries or normative structures; methodologies that diversify, that may begin anywhere anytime but by doing so can create a sense of uncertainty and loss (or mourning of stable, fixed, repetitive, preconceptualized, or (traditional) historical knowledge). These types of 'becoming', diversifying, and emerging practices bring about methodological challenges and examples that might push current research practices and question rigid methodological traditions. 'Post-qualitative' methodologies can begin anywhere, stay (at least temporarily) lost and uncertain, and still promote change in onto-episte-methodo-logical practices.

Lather and St. Pierre (2013) in their QSE special issue on post-qualitative research put forward engaging ideas regarding the presence and 'future' of qualitative research in the wake of 'after' and 'posts'. Scholars such as Lather and St. Pierre among others have questioned various neo-positivist tenets in qualitative research practice and they have envisioned qualitative research beyond positivism, after interpretive and linguistic turns. Post-qualitative' scholars might focus on ontological turns especially rethinking and moving beyond humanist ontology. Sameness, representation, voice, experience, "I", analysis, data, binary logic, interview, reflexivity and many other central concepts of neo-positivist and interpretive frameworks are put under erasure and are sometimes even completely avoided or found irrelevant. In addition, many recent developments of qualitative inquiry have had to do with new materialism, bringing individuals and their material worlds closer (see e.g., Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2006; MacLure, 2013).

Lather (2013) proposed that post-qualitative research examples utilize multi-directionality, post-human bodies, networks, othernesses, and disparities. In some ways this stream of proposals also emerges from the call to explore and exploit post-qualitative research practices and from Lather's (2013) description of QUAL 4.0 which reassembles many of those approaches and thoughts highlighted. For instance, inquiries and methodological approaches might not be tidily described and many instrumental methodologies may not apply to these ideas or they may seem insufficient.

In ‘post-qualitative’ research terms such as qualitative, methodology, ethics etc. are labels without stable identity and identifiers and are thus always, at least partially, becoming- maybe only referring to conceptual and material differences.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze (1968/1994) devoted an entire volume to the study of difference, which becomes the criterion for *being* in his ontology (Smith & Protevi, 2013; Williams, 2013). Typically we think of difference as difference from some identifiable object or matter, but Deleuze encourages us to think of difference-in-itself. Concerning identity and difference he writes, “That identity not be first, that it exist as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle become; that it revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept, rather than being maintained under the domination of a concept in general already understood as identical.” (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 41). Deleuze aims to free difference from the dominance of identity by making difference primary and identity secondary. Perhaps another way to take this is that it is difference that creates something rather than commonality or sameness, or that difference is constantly in dynamic tension with commonality or sameness. In this view what a thing *is* constantly fluctuates so that there really is no *being*, but things are *becoming*.

Deleuze’s conception of difference and identity has resonance with more recent sociological conceptualizations of the intersectional nature of identities (e.g. Choo & Ferree, 2010) which are also reflected in work and organizational literatures. Such theoretical and methodological positions – building especially on long-standing work of feminist and race scholars – stress the multiple, dynamic and situation-specific complexities within and through which one might make sense of identities and identifications of difference in work and organizational contexts. Much of this work has focused somewhat narrowly on the intersections of gender and race as axes of identity, while socio-economic class also features in this scholarship stream (e.g. McDonald 2015a). McDonald (2015a; 2015b), adopting a queer lens in thinking through difference in work and organizational contexts, adds to those scholars who call for alternative ways of thinking about work identities and, perhaps more importantly in the context of this stream, identifications in work contexts. In this, he advocates for a consideration of difference across a wider range of possible identifications that have significance in how work is (co-)performed and how the performativity of work is, itself, productive in framing ideas of difference. Additionally, McDonald’s recent work adopts what Mc Call (2005) identifies as an *anti-categorical* approach to thinking about intersectionality whereby the very categories and ontological frames, most traditionally used in difference research practices, are interrogated and threatened under erasure. A corollary of such critique is to (re)imagine existing and envision alternative forms of research practice in revising claims to knowing difference in work and organizational contexts. The debates addressing intersectionality and difference resonate with the increasing criticality that characterizes many social justice approaches elsewhere seeking to understand issues of difference in work and organizational contexts. Our questions is how these diversity discourses could be applied to methodological questions and if one adopts theoretical stances similar to McDonald and Mc Call, for example, how should methodologies be rethought.

Furthermore, we encourage scholars to consider what kind of methodological work could be possible in the field of gender, work and organization studies when scholarship moves beyond normative qualitative methodologies. In addition, it might be important to move beyond qualitative research 1.0 or 2.0. toward more complex methodological understandings and practices. More

specifically, the purpose of this stream of proposals is to celebrate methodological differences and complexity in qualitative research and advocate for increased openness, creativity, and risk taking especially in scholarship that relies on ‘post-theories’. Innovative and critical ontologies call for methodological movement, accidents, conceptual leaps and slips as well as theoretical arrests. As argued by many (i.e., Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Koro-Ljungberg, et al, 2009; Koro-Ljungberg, 2015; Lather, 2007) theories and methodologies are interconnected actualizations forming practical relations. In addition, theories and accompanying methodological moves could also be seen as political moves against normative science especially among those scholars interested in emergent and experimental ontologies and surprising and failing methodologies. Similarly, when methodologies are seen as imminent, changing, and “becoming” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994)—and carrying elements of the unknown and unanticipated—research practices seem to draw scholars closer to open-endedness and creativity.

The papers in this stream seek to review, expand, and critically examine the status of normative qualitative research in gender and organization studies. We argue that normative qualitative research methodologies also in the field of gender studies and organization studies can be limiting, problematic, theoretically, ontologically, and methodologically, in the dual sense of being open to doubt, and as a source of productive problems. Yet the problematic/problematising status of conventional, fixed, assimilating, and non-diverse research practices has often been overlooked in methodological texts and discussions. In conventional humanistic qualitative research (St. Pierre, 2011) and method discourses, methods are often construed as relatively simple and concrete, compared to the more complex or abstract entities that they will help to generate: information, knowledge, evidence, concepts, and arguments differently.

It is in the nexus of such differences (onto-episte-methodo-logical ↔ identities/identifications/categories), that this stream emerges. We are especially interested in proposals that extend and contend with normative and standardized qualitative research methodologies in exploring difference within organization studies. Furthermore, we encourage authors to consider the notion of difference in their methodological work and address how such differences (of many kinds) function in their methodological thinking and decision making.

Timeline:

- Stream convenors circulate their stream call for abstracts. Deadline for submission of abstracts (approximately 500 words) to stream convenor, 1st November, 2015.
- Stream convenors decision on acceptance of abstract communicated to author by 1st December, 2015.

Submissions should be sent to mirka.koro-ljungberg@asu.edu .

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