

1 *Introduction*

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The idea for this book emerged from a number of conversations among colleagues in which observations were made surrounding changing political, economic, and societal circumstances, both in the countries in which we live and globally, and their differential impact on society, working conditions, and the diversity and inclusion of marginalised groups. These discussions were consolidated during meetings at the Academy of Management Conference over the years, highlighting the limited scholarly attention on precarious work and the ways it affects various socio-demographic groups. As such, while we started small, this edited volume is the result of a substantial community of scholars whose contributions spotlight the missing link between diversity and precarious work during times of socio-economic upheaval.

As a defining feature of contemporary life, precarity denotes a condition induced by socio-economic transformations, such as the introduction of ‘flatter, leaner, more decentralized and more flexible forms of organization’ (Jessop, 2002: 100) that result in the reduction of welfare provision and work rights (Standing, 2011). Precarious work is characterised by low pay, insufficient and variable hours, and short-term contracts rights, and is shaped by work–life balance considerations (Ayudhya et al., 2017) and the degree of regulatory protection (ILO, 2015; Kalleberg, 2011; Vallas, 2015). These characteristics are frequently found in what is known as part-time, temporary, and zero-hours contracts, and in dependent self-employment. At the same time, the concept of precarity captures the experiences of people and communities engendered by these existing conditions. In that sense, precarity is defined as ‘the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks ... becoming differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death’ (Butler, 2009: 25). Capturing how the ‘objective insecurity gives rise to a generalized subjective insecurity’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 83) is critical because while recent analyses of the precarity of work have unveiled certain aspects

of labour market exclusion and marginality, scant attention has been paid to the gendered, racialised, and class-based challenges of these changes (Vincent, 2016). The rise of the gig economy, rooted in neo-liberal industrial relations, has sparked significant controversy due to its effects on labour conditions, wages, and the distributions of income and wealth, which have created a further surge in precarity among marginalised workers around the world.

The diversity-related challenges or the ways that precarity is experienced across various communities lie at the heart of this edited book. However, in line with Wacquant's (2022) critique of how communities that experience precarity are unjustly termed as an underclass, the contributors in this book purposely flesh out not only the precarity but also the agency of these groups in response to the limited choices and chances they are offered. Contrary to expectations of human development (Becker, 2009), there is an upsurge of precarity across sectors of work in developed countries and a deepening of precarity in less developed countries. Precarious work has deleterious effects on vulnerable demographic groups worldwide, with women, ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities, among others, experiencing in- and out-of-work poverty and being affected considerably more by precarious living. The purpose of this edited book is to unpack the research on the missing link between diversity and precarity and offer insights into the role of organisations and policymakers in fostering inclusive change and transformation. In doing so, it brings together international scholars in order to discuss ways to address the diversity challenges of precarious work and offer a way forward. Thus, we contribute to drawing awareness of precarious work and diversity in organisations by bringing together experts in an edited book designed to: (1) uncover and document the variety of issues facing vulnerable demographic groups at work, (2) promote greater scholarship on the link between precarious work and diversity during economic and social upheaval, and (3) develop a research programme and agenda that sheds light into new and important aspects of precarious work and diversity issues.

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, recent policies of radical deregulation, technological change, and heterogeneous workforce have intensified shifts in the occupational structure, the place and the timing of work, and career patterns, putting a further strain on the standard employment relationship and promoting more commodified

forms of labour (Stiglitz, 1982, 2000, 2016). Many countries have introduced neoliberal economic policies, including austerity measures in response to the 2008 financial crisis. The adoption and diffusion of neoliberal values worldwide, such as economic competition, individualism, and a lack of state-provided safety nets have led to significant uncertainty and deterioration of human rights in countries without social and economic safety nets (Kusku et al., 2021; Meliou and Özbilgin, 2023), due to an increasingly precarious mode of living for many in the world (Vassilopoulou et al., 2018). The energy crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic have created even more uncertainty, primarily due to policy choices driven by political interests rather than social safety concerns (Greenhalgh et al., 2022). Some countries, such as the United Kingdom, are again turning to austerity measures in response to the current crisis, which ultimately will lead to even more precarity.

The neoliberal austerity measures have exposed vulnerable demographic groups even more to precarity with, for example, women being disproportionately affected by the crisis and austerity measures (Vassilopoulou et al., 2016). Research has shown how such groups bear the brunt of the increase in the fragmentation of work and changes in the labour market. Women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+, among other groups, are more likely to experience precarity with regard to access to work opportunities and resource accumulation. Intersecting categories of exclusion such as ethnicity/race, class, sexual orientation, and age, as well as issues of migration embedded in life course trajectories, complicate those of gender and have widened class and race inequalities between and within communities (Acker, 2006; Walby, 2015). Intersectionality, a term and theory increasingly used by scholars and practitioners (e.g., Villesèche, Muhr, and Sliwa, 2018), refers to the intersecting, or a place of crossing, of two or more social categories, providing space for the connection and understanding across and within 'difference'. In her theorisation of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) identified that black women's experiences are not only shaped by gender or race alone, but also by gender and race together. Intersectionality theory has since expanded to include all forms of etic and emic diversity and difference at work (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012a, 2012b; Sang et al., 2013), indicating the push for social movements to legitimate diversity and equality for all (Özbilgin and Erbil, 2021). Further, intersectionality is now used as a methodological and analytical tool (Kamasak et al., 2020). Kamasak et al. (2019) critique the

individualisation of intersectionality theory when institutions and systems have intersections such as male, white, and cis gendered cultures and structures that can be more palpable to change when compared to individual intersections. Thus, the authors of this edited volume call for changing institutional intersections, with reflection on the intersectional precarities that individuals experience in their encounters with such institutions.

Intersectional precarities describe and highlight the subtle and insidious character of precarity that variously affects individuals at work and in life. The normalisation and all-encompassing character of precarity as a 'privileged engine of economic activity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001: 3) is promulgated by popular media and policy discourses of empowerment, flexibility, and choice (e.g., Villesèche et al., 2022). Such enabling discourses echo modern labour economics arguments of human capital (Becker, 1993) according to which people are induced to enhance their human capital and become responsible for their social and economic fate (Fleming, 2017). However, as the contributions in this book show, this is puzzling and bears consequences for those who lack access to necessary material and symbolic resources. In this context, neoliberal politics on equality and diversity in organisations have significantly decreased the repertoire of interventions for diversity management in organisations in recent years (Kusku et al., 2022, 2021; Özbilgin and Slutskaya, 2017).

The interplay between precarity and diversity is often conflated with discussions of haves and have nots, leading to trivialising precarity by diversity and difference. Even when diversity is considered seriously in relation to precarity, this is not done in an even-handed way. There is a tendency to prioritise gendered forms of precarity or to use gender as an overarching framework through which other categories of difference could be considered. This approach highlights a pecking order and a hidden hierarchy among diversity categories, through which some marginalised diversity concerns, for example, of trans and/or refugee precarities, could be further sidelined. In order to counter this tendency and bias, in this volume, we present each salient diversity category and its concomitant form of precarity in each chapter. Table 1.1 outlines the kinds of precarity experienced by different diversity categories.

It seems, however, that in some cases, precarious forms of employment are for some people the only way to secure work. Studies have

Table 1.1 *Forms of precocity experienced by diversity categories*

Diversity category	Forms of precarity
Gender	Gender pay gap, lock in temporary, insecure, short term, part-time work, gendered organisation of work–life interface, labour market segmentation
Ethnicity and race	Ethnic pay gap, race discrimination, underrepresentation in positions of power and security, exposure to turbulent, unsafe, and insecure work
Class	Lack of class mobility, low pay, unsafe and insecure employment, stigma and devaluation, precarious working conditions affecting self-understanding
Sexual orientation and gender identity	Bars on and barriers to employment, closet, lack of representation on positions of power and security, voices silenced and marginalised in mainstream discussions
Migrants	Legal restrictions, health issues, and non-recognition of qualifications, ethnic pay gap, underrepresentation in positions of power and security, exposure to turbulent, unsafe, and insecure work, race discrimination, overrepresentation in the precarious gig economy, voices silenced and marginalised in mainstream discussions
Refugees	Legal restrictions, health issues, and non-recognition of qualifications, ethnic pay gap, underrepresentation in positions of power and security, exposure to turbulent, unsafe and insecure work, race discrimination, overrepresentation in the precarious gig economy, voices silenced and marginalised in mainstream discussions
Disability	Precarious position in the labour market, social and economic precarity for disabled people, unemployment and underemployment, discrimination, exclusion
Age	Age discrimination because of workplace cultures of youth, unemployment, low-paid positions, precarity arising from age–work-related exclusion faced during life course

demonstrated how, for example, in crisis economies, women have resisted a gender regime shift from public to domestic work by engaging in precarious labour market activities (Meliou, 2020). Kamasak et al. (2019) have shown how the gig economy had dual impact of widening precarity due to lower wages for workers, while at the same time allowing access to marginalised workers from ethnic and religious minorities to secure work, even if precarious. Given the limited opportunities for conventional forms of employment, precarious work, including through digital labour platforms may provide earning opportunities, allowing vulnerable groups to transcend local labour markets and secure employment during economic and social upheaval. The contributors in this edited volume discuss how diverse groups of workers resist and enact their agency under conditions of precarity. In turn, the analyses here highlight how for an emancipatory struggle to emerge, we must contest the self-evidence of precarity collectively, calling into question the legitimacy of precarity and enacting a ‘demand for livable lives’ (Butler, 2015: 218). Intersectional coalitions can open up possibilities for emancipatory transformation and solidarity in ways that precarity is no longer considered a personal shortcoming. Such initiatives should inform policy debates and actions by acknowledging the diversity of precarity experienced and inclusive policy solutions to address it.

1.1 Overview of the Chapters

The first chapter of this book introduces the topic of this edited book and sets the context for the following thirteen chapters, which examine how precarious work affects various socio-demographic groups. Each chapter is designated to a different socio-demographic and marginalised group. The following chapter, Chapter 2, titled ‘Pandemic Precarities and Gendered Biopolitics within the Neoliberal University’, explores the gendered biopolitics of the COVID-19 pandemic through an analysis of the UK’s marketised higher education sector, by theoretically combining feminist political economy with labour market segmentation theory to develop a novel meso-level biopolitical analysis. Chapter 3, titled ‘LGBTQ+ Individuals and Precarious Work’, seeks to shed light on the missing link between diversity and precarious work from the viewpoint of sexual and gender identity minorities whose voices have been silenced and marginalised in mainstream discussions.

In Chapter 4, titled ‘Age, Gender, and Precarity: The Experience of Late Career Self-Employment’, the authors adopt an intersectional approach and discuss the experiences of older women engaged in self-employment to manage precarity arising from the age–work-related exclusion faced during their life course. Next, Chapter 5, which is titled ‘How the (In)Ability of Using One’s Disability Strategically Reinforces Inequality and Precariousness amongst Disabled Workers: The Case of France’, presents three empirical studies on disabled individuals who use their disability strategically as they navigate their precarious position in the labour market. Chapter 6, titled ‘Classed and Gendered Experiences of Precarity in Dirty Work’, examines how precarity affects the experiences of low-skilled dirty workers – a group characterised by stigma and devaluation. Utilising Axel Honneth’s ideas of mutual recognition and the normative significance of work for identity, the authors explore how precarious working conditions affect self-understanding at the intersection of class and gender. Subsequently, Chapter 7, titled ‘Precarity and Diversity: The Intersectional Case of Female Christian Janitorial Workers’, presents case studies of female Christian janitorial workers, working on a contractual basis in a public sector organisation in Pakistan where the typical employment format is full time and permanent. Chapter 8, titled ‘Precarious Work in the Gig Economy: Diversity, Race, and Indigeneity Lenses’, discusses how the meteoric growth of the platform economy, its economic underpinnings as well as the accompanying human practices, have provoked academic debates as well as shone a light on its praxis. The chapter highlights that many employees, migrants, and foreigners remain dependent on in-country structures to grant them rights – in many countries, though, they do not have the power to engage with those structures and have no way to build on and improve their rights. Chapter 9, titled ‘Refugees’ Vulnerability towards Precarious Work: An Intersectionality Perspective’, highlights that refugees are particularly vulnerable to under- and unemployment and are more likely to find themselves in precarious working conditions compared to host country residents, with legal restrictions, health issues, and non-recognition of qualifications being the most discussed reasons for this. The authors draw on the concept of intersectionality and the psychology of working theory. Using four refugee accounts, this chapter illustrates how refugees’ gender relates to their vulnerability towards precarious work and how this relationship is further complicated by

refugees' economic status in their home country as well as by the societal expectations and protection in the host environment. Chapter 10, titled 'Trapped in Precarious Work: The Case of Syrian Refugee Workers in Turkey', drawing on a qualitative study, investigates the precarity experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Chapter 11, titled 'How Precarity Is Threaded into Migration Rules: The Cases of the UK, Germany, and Australia', investigates the precarious arrangements embedded in the systems and processes of migration management across three different country contexts: the UK, Germany, and Australia. The chapter sheds light on the rules underscoring and the implications of the process of migrant worker acceptance, settlement, and integration in a new land and labour market.

Chapter 12, 'Culture, Precarity, and Dignity', draws on a case study of janitors in India to illustrate the gigification of cleaning and service jobs by theorising precarity and dignity. Importantly, the chapter outlines a mindfulness perspective to protect the dignity of precarious workers for a caring organisational culture. Chapter 13, titled 'Transforming Humanitarianism: Precarities at Work in the New Activist Volunteer Sector', illustrates how the refugee volunteer community – which intersects and has much in common with other new forms of humanitarian activism – has faced challenges which are not widely evidenced by the European governments or populist mainstream media: It has suited both to continue 'othering' the 'foreign invasion' of refugees and render invisible or play down the vital and challenging support role that the volunteers fulfil – a role that many argue should have been assumed by governments themselves. The final chapter, Chapter 14, titled 'Artificial Intelligence, the Gig Economy, and Precarity', explores the duality of the artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled gig economy in terms of the precarity and the promise it offers. The chapter focuses on underrepresented and disadvantaged groups of workers who found new homes in the AI-enabled gig economy.

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