CALL FOR PAPERS

The 7th International Critical Management Studies Conference
11-13 July 2011, University of Naples Federico II - Naples

Stream: Identities and Critical Management Studies

Convenors:

Cynthia Hardy, Robyn Thomas and Sierk Ybema

There is no denying the centrality of the concept of identity in CMS. How we might understand identity, subjectivity and the self; identity construction, attribution and contestation; identification and disidentification; questions around social identities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality; and the dynamic interrelationships between individual and collective identities have all been significant areas of research within CMS. The popularity of identity has, however, led some to argue that this ‘academic fashion’ (Jenkins, 2004) has now become passé, leaving us to question whether identity has now ‘run its course’. In other words, is there anything left to say about identity? As du Gay (2007:1) asks: “has ‘Identity’ run out of steam?” We would challenge this portent, arguing that there is considerable promise politically, theoretically and empirically in identities research. In fact, we believe that critical identity studies has not yet lived up to its promise as a bridging concept mediating self and other, micro-politics and macro-structures, power relations and actors’ situational sensemaking practices. In this stream, we would like to identify some new and innovative, as well as established yet underdeveloped, directions for research on identities by calling for papers in relation to three broad research themes. Each of these themes suggests ways to take identities research forward and to challenge its putative demise.

**Politicizing identities.** The political imperative of CMS is to document and challenge forms of exploitation and oppression, and to engage in research oriented towards changing things for the better. This draws attention to the concern over
the relationship between critical studies of identities and the self-conscious emancipatory orientation of CMS.

A key draw of the concept of identity for CMS scholars has been the analytical promise to bridge the micro-political and the wider organisational, socio-cultural and temporal context. As Ybema et al., (2009: 307) argue, the self-other dynamic of identity construction “can be seen to refract the agency-structure dialectic in action, for it shows in plain words how selves and sociality are mutually implicated and mutually co-constructed”. However, others have argued that much of the CMS research on identities is politically inadequate in that it promotes an individualised understanding of the worker at the expense of collective identities, and that it offers an etiolated notion of agency and resistance, thereby removing the base from which to analyse and challenge the dynamics of work relations.

We encourage empirical, theoretical and reflective papers that address the political promise of identities research, in particular:

- Papers that develop understandings of the dialectic relationship between self and social, as well as the mutual constructions of self and organisation, each in themselves bound up with wider social, historical and political settings.
- Papers that help to inform and empower the embattled, individualised and exploited in contemporary configurations of capitalism. We encourage papers that examine how individuals might craft sustaining identities while being located within particular relations of power.
- Papers that consider how studies on identities can influence policy and practice, informing debates over society, varieties of capitalism, and the subject positions promoted.
- Papers that explore academic identities as a critical intellectual voice and public dissenter, speaking out and engaging with wider discourses in society.

Performing identities. The second area we wish to develop lies in the appreciation of embodied identities. Here we focus on how identities are constituted through “bodily sayings” and “bodily doings” (Rasche & Chia, 2009: 721). Performance comprises embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and identities are conveyed and attributed through the ways in which individuals use their bodies in...
various situations or on different ‘stages’ (Goffman 1959). While scholarly interest in the body has grown in recent years (Hassard et al., 2000), there are still relatively few empirical studies of how identities are constructed through both discursive and performative elements, and the relationships between identities, aesthetics, embodiment, and artifacts.

- We encourage papers that develop understandings of the intersection between identities and material and performative action. Papers that develop our understandings of the connections between the constitution of identities, through micro-political agency, and the transformation of wider social relations are also invited.
- Papers that combine the linguistic and ideational understandings of identities with the physical and material. This might involve exploring the relationship between identities, performance, settings and artifacts.
- Papers that explore how actions taken to perform identities are organized and regulated, through the way in which they are situated in the context of particular, local organizing practices.

Problematizing identities. The attraction for CMS scholars to the concept of identity has been its ability to offer powerful ways to interrogate the exclusionary practices by which subjects are constituted in and by organisations. We are interested in how identities can work as a productive lens in understanding contemporary and emerging issues in organisations. These might include:

- Aging identities and how age is “organized”. We encourage papers that explore how age identities are accomplished through discourse, as well as exploring the implications of particular age identities for individuals and organizations.
- Identities in the ‘Global Financial Crisis’. What are the effects of the financial crisis on power asymmetries and insecurities in contemporary workplaces? How might the financial crisis be understood from an identities perspective?
- The identity-less and those individuals, groups and organizations that are rarely considered in organizational research. We welcome papers that consider those who are invisible in organisations, as well as those with an absence of identity, such as migrant and transient workers.
Submission Instructions: Abstracts (maximum 1000 words, A4 paper, single spaced, 12 point font) should be submitted to Robyn Thomas at thomasmr4@cf.ac.uk by 30th November 2010. Emails should carry the subject heading of CMS 2011.

Important Dates:

Abstract to convenors 30th November 2010
Notification of decision 15th December 2010

Further information regarding the conference is available at http://www.organizzazione.unina.it/cms7/

About the convenors:

Cynthia Hardy

Cynthia Hardy is Professor of Management at the University of Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Professor at Cardiff Business School in the UK. She is also co-founder of the International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change (ICRODSC). http://www.managementmarketing.unimelb.edu.au/icrodsc. Cynthia’s research interests revolve around discourse, identity, and institutional change. Cynthia has published over 60 articles in refereed journals, including Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Organization Science, Organizational Studies Organization, Human Relations, and the Journal of Management Studies, in addition to numerous book chapters and conference papers. She has published over 10 books, including two Sage Handbooks - the Handbook of Organization Studies, which won the George R. Terry Book Award at the 1997 Academy of Management; and the Handbook of Organizational Discourse, which won the 2005 Outstanding Book from the Organizational Communication Division of the USA’s National Communication Association. E-mail: chardy@unimelb.edu.au.
Robyn Thomas is Professor of Management at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK, and Ghoshal Fellow of the Advanced Institute of Management Research. At Cardiff, Robyn leads the Cardiff Organization Research Group in critical organization research (CORGies). She is also a Co-director of the International Centre for Research on Organisational Discourse Strategy and Change. Robyn’s research interests centre on critical and discursive perspectives on management and organization, with particular attention to managerial and professional identities and forms of identification in relation to organizational change and restructuring. Robyn is joint Editor-in-Chief of Organization (Sage) and serves on the editorial boards of Organization Studies and the Scandinavian Journal of Management. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and books, including Organization Science, Organization Studies, Organization, Public Administration, Gender, Work and Organization, Critical Perspectives on Accounting, Journal of Management Inquiry, and the British Journal of Management. E-mail: thomasr4@cardiff.ac.uk.

Sierk Ybema is an Associate Professor in the Department of Culture, Organization and Management, VU University, Amsterdam. Sierk’s research centers on processes of politics, identity and sensemaking, with empirical settings ranging from amusement parks to newspaper offices. He has published widely on culture and conflict, relational and temporal identity talk, managerial discourse and ‘postalgia’, intercultural communications, interorganizational relationships, and organizational change and crisis. This work has been published in such journals as Human Relations, International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management, Organization Studies, and Journal of Managerial Psychology. Sierk has co-organized a number of conferences and sub-themes, including EGOS Upsetting Organizations conference in Amsterdam 2008, and the bi-annual conference on Organizational Discourse. E-mail: sb.ybema@fsw.vu.nl.

References:


