

## Call for Papers – Special Issue of *Journal of Management*

### **INVISIBLE INEQUALITIES: EXPLORING HIDDEN DIFFERENCES AMONG INDIVIDUALS IN THE WORKPLACE**

Evidence suggests that, despite declining rates of poverty, socioeconomic inequalities are rising. In recent years, organizational scholarship on social inequality has grown considerably (Amis, Mair &, Munir, 2020; Bapuji, Ertug, & Shaw, 2020). By inequalities, we mean “uneven distribution in the endowment and/or access to financial and non-financial resources in a society, which manifests in differential abilities and opportunities to engage in value creation, appropriation, and distribution” (Bapuji et al., 2020: 64). Scholars working in this field have developed important insights that are focused largely on “visible inequalities,” meaning inequalities driven by apparent and noticeable attributes of individuals and groups. Examples include visible dimensions of gender, race, age, appearance, disability and ethnicity. Much scholarship and practice has focused on understanding these inequalities (Jones et al., 2016) and alleviating them through diversity and inclusion interventions and practices.

Further inequalities can also arise from invisible attributes. Some suggest that “invisible inequalities” are driven by “a system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships” (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007: 58). Examples include caste, class, culture, geographic origin, economic status, religion, sexual preference or orientation, neurological conditions, or other attributes that could affect social group memberships. The social group memberships associated with these differences are sometimes ascribed to individuals at birth and, though hidden, external observers can often discern them using a range of context-specific material or discourse manifestations (e.g., language, rituals, signs, symbols). These group memberships are not necessarily chosen by individuals, although some can be voluntarily selected or acquired over time.

Examining invisible inequalities is important because their functioning in organizations can be difficult to discern and address (Jones & King, 2014). Often, these attributes and their observed correlates may be internalized both by the advantaged and disadvantaged groups, which makes their enactment, manifestations, and effects normalized and possibly invisible. As a result, such inequalities have a tendency to be overlooked or difficult to detect, and therefore can be persistently unaddressed.

Research has pointed out that social group membership plays an important role in access to and leveraging of resources and capabilities. For example, caste continues to influence inequalities in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and earnings (e.g., Bapuji & Chrispal, 2020; Chen, Chittor & Vissa, 2015; Damaraju & Makhija, 2018). Recent research explores how social class and socio-economic status influence inequalities in education, health, employment, and managerial decision-making (e.g., Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Martin & Cote, 2019; Martin, Cote, & Woodruff, 2016). Scholars have also found that religion can create inequalities in the workplace (Connelly, Shi, Walker, & Hersel, 2020). Although invisible inequalities are based on difficult-to-discern manifestations, they can intersect with visible characteristics. In addition, sources of invisible inequalities can be a gradient, with some attributes being less visible than others or less visible to some groups or individuals than to others.

## **Illustrative Research Questions**

There are numerous avenues for advancing research on invisible inequalities. This special issue seeks to engage with scholars across a range of communities with a shared interest in advancing organizational research on inequality, including human resource management, organizational behavior, organizational theory, diversity and inclusion, entrepreneurship, strategic management, business ethics, operations and supply chain management, and international business. We encourage submission of insightful and novel conceptual and empirical work (using a variety of methods – qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) that can help shape the way we understand invisible inequalities in organizations. Submissions should make a significant contribution to advancing scholarly understanding about invisible inequalities in organizations.

Below, we highlight some possible research questions, but submissions do not need to be constrained by these topics or suggestions.

### Invisible sources of inequalities in organizations

- What are the relationships between visible and invisible sources of inequalities? How do these relationships manifest in organizations?
- How can organizations identify and address invisible inequalities in their organizational practices?
- How does the consideration of invisible inequalities introduce challenges, or modifications, to existing organizational diversity and inclusion efforts?

### Effects of invisible inequalities in organizations

- How do invisible inequalities influence employees and organizations?
- How do employees navigate invisible inequalities?
- How do entrepreneurs navigate invisible inequalities?
- Do individuals differ on their views on various attributes of invisible inequalities based on their own social group membership?

### Maintenance of, and resistance to, invisible inequalities

- What factors contribute to the persistence of invisible inequalities in organizations?
- How do those who are advantaged by invisible inequalities in organizations contribute to their maintenance or resistance?
- What organizational challenges do those who are disadvantaged face in dealing with invisible inequalities?

### Invisible inequalities in management research and practice

- How do human resource management practices influence invisible inequalities within organizations?
- How do invisible inequalities manifest in individual and group behaviours at work/in organizations?
- How do invisible inequalities affect entrepreneurship, business strategies, supply chain and operations management, and international business practices?
- What are the ethical implications of invisible inequalities in organizational spaces?

In addition to the papers that result based on submissions that follow this call, the special issue will also include invited perspective pieces on the topic. The aim for these perspective articles is for them to be thought-provoking and agenda-setting. They will be published online as they are finalized/accepted/completed.

### **Special Issue Editors**

Hari Bapuji, University of Melbourne  
Gokhan Ertug, Singapore Management University\*  
Jason D. Shaw, Nanyang Technological University  
Vivek Soundararajan, University of Bath

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### **Timeline\***

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| August 1, 2020:           | Call for Papers Announced   |
| July 15 – August 1, 2021: | Submission of papers to the <i>Journal of Management</i> online at <a href="http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jom">http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jom</a> (please be sure to select Special Issue as the submission type) All papers must be received by midnight EST on August 1, 2021. |
| December 1, 2021:         | First round of editorial decisions (with reviews)   |
| April 1, 2022:            | Resubmission deadline   |
| July 1, 2022:             | Second round of editorial decisions   |
| October 1, 2022:          | Final resubmission  |
| December 31, 2022:        | Final decision  |

\*Please note that these are basic guidelines, and each paper may require different timing and a different number of revisions before a decision.

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