Editorial: The experience of work and experiential workers: mainline and critical perspectives on employee experience

Introduction

In academic and practitioner circles, employee experience has emerged as a hugely resonant notion, and the cutting-edge research from scholarship and practice increasingly centres employee experience management at the heart of human resource management (HRM) (e.g. Maylett and Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Pezet and Poujol, 2020; Plaskoff, 2017; Whitter, 2019). In the contemporary world of work, employees have a strong focus on the nature and quality of their experiences as workers in organisations, seeking to capture meaning and satisfaction on the job and pursuing a strong fit between work and wider personal priorities and projects. Thus, employees' relations with work organisations seem to encompass significant additional features beyond the utilitarian calculations and material benefits of the past. It is becoming a truism that employees desire more from their work lives, and organisations need to change or accept decline. In this tableau, understanding the experience of work and experiential workers from both mainstream and critical perspectives is crucial to forming a state-of-the-art view of HRM's frontiers as the field continues evolving.

One of the novel academic cornerstones of research in this topic area is due to Pezet and Poujol (2020), who theorise the experience of work as an alternative to the Marxist and humanist approaches to work, although they recognise ample value in those strands of research. Indeed, recent research has adeptly utilised Marxist analysis to show the pernicious consequences of detachment at work, revealing negative emotional and well-being effects for workers in organisations that fall short on the experience front (Shantz *et al.*, 2014). Yet, a historical-materialist perspective does not account for the complex symbolic realities of work and working, as experienced against the emergent challenges surrounding organised life today. Nor is the humanistic perspective towards work, which implicitly undergirds much of HRM research and practice, offers sufficient answers. This is because a sharp mismatch exists between employers' laudable rhetoric that casts employees as their most valued organisational resource and the unsustainable workplace conditions driven by the bottom line, which reveals the limitations of ostensibly caring, but ultimately limited-in-action humanistic approaches (McGuire *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the personal development agendas, which companies promote to their employees to sustain a mutually beneficial relationship, often offer a reductive and convenient picture of employees' hopes and demands from organisations. The employee experience approach to HRM complements, and in important ways potentially supersedes, relatively more conventional humanistic approaches and Marxist approaches, which significantly, if implicitly, shaped theory and practice surrounding work and workers to date (Pezet and Poujol, 2020). There is, thus, a pressing need to explore the dynamism of employee experience, which is an ongoing negotiated and situated process that can offer emotional dividends and mental satisfaction insofar as denoting a robust concordance with employees' life projects (Pezet and Poujol, 2020). We thus argue, in this special section editorial essay, that there is a significant benefit to exploring employee experience further, and relatedly, we submit that it is useful to consider workers as experiential subjects within contemporary work contexts.

There is a great deal of attention paid to employee experience in organisations for manifold reasons. A key issue is that over the past two decades, a significant shift toward an experience

—

economy has emerged (Hjorth and Kostera, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 2011). In the experience economy, consumers focus on undergoing experiences that have lasting personal significance. When selling a product or service, organisations therefore tend to offer a clearly identifiable sense of experience that engages with consumers viscerally. Experience-oriented consumption trends are mirrored in workers' relations with their employers as well. Organisations often attempt to distinguish themselves as employers of choice through the experience of work they offer (Pezet and Poujol, 2020), with the experience economy operating in a symbiotic relationship vis-à-vis the brand economy. As knowledge-based production and service logics push organisations into a perpetual war for top talent (Michaels *et al.*, 2001), strategic HRM priorities only intensify the pressures for employer branding (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010; Küpper *et al.*, 2021). Organisations are recognising the importance of employee experience as a means of competing for top talent (Morgan, 2017). In fact, organisations often set themselves apart by moving beyond generic branding as employers of choice to appealing to specific audiences in a targeted way with experiential messages. For example, organisations commonly utilise diversity and inclusion branding to appeal to minority workers to reinforce their offer of a more inclusive experience of work (Jonsen *et al.*, 2021).

Another crucial issue is that powerful generational shifts are reshaping the once calcified expectations around the relationship between employees and employers (Ng *et al.*, 2010). For example, Solnet *et al.* (2012) point to survey evidence that Gen Y workers tend to have higher scores when it comes to turnover intentions, requiring more responsive, holistic frameworks of management that account for their desires as employees (Naim and Lenka, 2018). Similarly, recent research highlights the necessity to address Gen Z workers' unique needs. Jayathilake *et al.* (2021) argue for changes toward more democratised learning and reverse mentoring options, indicating how Gen Z workers may value a stronger sense of equality and parity with members of management teams. In the face of such tectonic shifts, employees and organisations are doubtless re-aligning such that workers' experiences are emerging as a central driver that defines strategic HRM priorities. Accordingly, corporate legitimacy is becoming strongly linked to working processes (Rendtorff, 2009), putting the experience of work into the centre of organisations' HRM outlook.

The interplay of workers and employers is subject to myriad transformations in worker expectations, and people management approaches is clear. The exogenous shock of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought such transformations to a new inflection point, although the long-term reverberations of this effect may yet be somewhat inchoate. Exploring work experience and experiential workers as distinctive and critical social phenomena can be useful in understanding the interplay between employees and employers in the current era. In this editorial essay, our analysis builds on Pezet and Pujol's (2020) work on the experience of work, which supplements existing humanist and Marxist approaches to work and workers. Yet, rather than re-capitulating their theoretical views, we suggest a practice-based lens to understand employee experience (Schatzki, 2005). First, we provide a brief overview of the rise of employee experience as an important category of analysis in HRM. Then, we propose how employee experience can be theorised from the novel perspective of Theodore Schatzki's theory. Afterwards, we summarise the articles in this collection, some of which are more mainstream in their orientation, while others are more critically focused, showcasing how the experience of work is currently taken up in diverse ways by different authors in the current evolution of HRM. Finally, we offer concluding remarks about employee experience, and its future prospects, in HRM theory and practice.

Employee experience

Plaskoff (2017) is a key figure in the growing recognition in people management theory and practice that workers in the contemporary era desire that their experience is at the heart of work and working. Workforce claims go well beyond pecuniary benefits, such as a good

salary, bonuses for superior performance or in-kind benefits, such as gym memberships, spa weekends, company cars, low-interest loans, etc. or even the more recently popular worktainment approach that prioritises the emotional and social needs of workers by making work more fun (Plaskoff, 2017). Employees wish to experiment with the nature of work, co-create the coordinates of the moving boundaries of work and working with their employers and develop approaches and strategies for ensuring a more optimal experience of work for themselves in a context that emphasises care rather than worker control and manipulation (Plaskoff, 2017).

Employee experience is a potentially important pathway to both practical and theoretical gains in the field of people management. For example, employee experience, as mediated by organisational culture, is regarded as an important source of employee engagement (Shenoy and Uchil, 2018; Tucker, 2020). Leiter and Bakker (2010, p. 2) link the possibility of developing a more sophisticated and robust grasp of work engagement with tracing "employees' experience of work activity". Indeed, organisations invest in experience design as a means of innovating sustainable human capital management strategies (Ghosh and Itam, 2020). Moreover, as Ho et al. (2021) point out, employee experience is viewed as a major prerequisite of career satisfaction. Yet, in much of the emergent explorations of the idea of work experience, there is an implicit recognition that this is an area that needs further theorisation. For example, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) suggest utilising Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) notion of flow, a psychology-based conceptualisation of optimal experience, to explore how to explain work engagement better, but we consider such an approach incomplete as compared to practice-based theorising.

So far, we have cast experience in a primarily positive light, but to be sure, the sharpening interest in worker experience in contemporary HRM can have subtly negative undertones of discipline and control as well. There is a possibility that experience could be utilised by organisations as a new and more effective way of securing workers' contentment and ensuring their continued docility in an otherwise difficult professional environment that is encumbered with competing motives and conflicts that form the hidden side of employee and employer relations. Indeed, Mahadevan and Schmitz (2020) point out that the deployment of the experience idea may be legitimating human resource practices that are far from ideal. A plethora of changes toward a seemingly more caring and kinder mode of HR practices abound, but what initially seem highly encouraging have sometimes proven to be deeply problematic. For example, organisations have been censured for offering emotional and mental space to employees to pursue authenticity at work only to be revealed as in effect undertaking clever attempts at disguising domination rather than encouraging personal liberation (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011). Similarly, research shows how company policies and activities geared toward establishing a culture that maximises play as a central part of work can be an indirect means of enforcing strict cultural control over a workforce (Grugulis et al., 2000).

Organisational control entails the negation of the emancipatory potential of experience, particularly if experience itself is co-opted (or misused as a technology of inducing consent) to obscure workers' sense of their submission to organisational power. Emancipation from the disciplinary power of organisations is a process. The becomingness of experience denotes experience as a form of practice or as a succession of experiences instantiated at the interface of agency and structure. For HRM, shifting the focus on experience means broadening the spectrum of approaches to understanding work and workers and their behaviours. While the most widely utilised frameworks about work and workers have implicit assumptions relating to humanist or Marxist perspectives, we argue, following Pezet and Poujol (2020), in favour of a change toward reconfiguring work as an experiential construction.

The world of work has changed radically, and perhaps to some extent irreversibly, in the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2020). As a result of social distancing

requirements, office work has largely moved into the virtual environment. Remote working for office staff has already given rise to changes in work norms and practices as well as worker expectations in professional contexts. On the one hand, the significant spread of home-based working has potentially resulted in work intensification, blurring boundaries between home and the office and generating unique well-being challenges (Wang *et al.*, 2021). As well, the increasing use of surveillance technology to ensure employers' control over workers has dramatically exacerbated employee stress and dissatisfaction, leading to a rising sense of disempowerment by employees (Blumenfeld *et al.*, 2020; Charbonneau and Doberstein, 2020). On the other hand, working from home has cut commute times substantially and offered the possibility of greater leisure opportunities to some previously time-poor middle- and upper income employees (Barrero *et al.*, 2020; Rubin *et al.*, 2020). Periods of previously unusual flexibility have led employees to question why their work cannot be performed in more flexible modes indefinitely to pursue possibilities of play and wonder and wider opportunities for meaningful activities. Considering the dual nature of the working-from-home phenomenon, as defined by both advantages and disadvantages, it is vital for employers and employees to consider the experience of work at the intersection of new trends that are emerging in a pandemic world. With this recognition, we think that the forces that brought forward the employee experience as an HRM phenomenon are now accelerating with renewed vigour.

Understanding employee experience from Schatzki's practice theory lens

As Nicoloni (2013) suggests, practice theory offers significant value and promise in accounting for the fluidity and complexity of social life at the interface of agency and structure, which influences work and organisations, and workers' relationship to them. Scholars have noted a strong practice turn in management and organisation research over the past two decades, which expanded the theoretical toolkit available to business research considerably (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Whittington, 2011). The practice turn has revitalised a wide range of sub-disciplines in business and management studies, among whom the most notable one remains strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Rasche and Chia, 2009; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). As well, there have been strong calls to move towards a practice-theoretical treatment of HRM issues and problems particularly in view of HRM's strong and already-existing practice dimension (Vickers and Fox, 2010). Unsurprisingly, studies using various practice theories in a wide range of HRM topic areas have rapidly proliferated in recent years (Garbe and Duberley, 2021; Joy *et al.*, 2020; Siebers *et al.*, 2015; Van Mierlo *et al.*, 2018). While much of the endeavour to deploy practice theory in HRM research has revolved around Bourdieu and Giddens' works, we opt to mobilise Schatzki's practice theory in our essay. While Bourdieu and Giddens have highly robust theories that offer great analytical utility, Schatzki's ideas are recognised as the most up-to-date exemplification of practice theorising. Additionally, as Nicolini (2013) suggests, Schatzki offers a theoretical account of practice that is flexible, yet sophisticated, and free of issues to do with determinism that arguably influences Bourdieu's work, the emphasis on overly knowledgeable agents that is a key feature in Giddens' work. In this light, we see distinct benefits in using Schatzki's (1996, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2010) theory in our account of employee experience from the practice lens.

A fundamental problem with the current deployment of employee experience as a category of analysis in HRM is its static, decontextualised and disembodied formulation. In particular, in books geared toward practitioner audiences, and to some extent also in academic articles, a positive employee experience is portrayed as a fairly well-defined constellation of benefits, which can be offered (almost transmitted) by organisations to their employees to get the best out of them. In this way, employee experience is trapped into an

impasse, either as a construction belonging to employees or organisations. Yet, a more accurate conceptualisation might characterise employee experience as a practice, neither belonging to agents nor the social structures in which they operate (see Schatzki, 1996). Employee experience is a dynamic, emergent and embodied reality, which is always already in a process of becoming, instead of a fully formed nexus that can be transacted by the organisation to variously motivate or control employees. As employee experience is a process that involves emotional and cognitive, as well as symbolic and material, implications, it is not a phenomenon with discreet boundaries, but a processual reality that continually gets renegotiated between employees and employers.

According to Schatzki (2005, p. 471), "any practice is an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions". That is, practice gains meaning and substance by reference to its time and context bound codification via human action. Employee experience as a practice takes place within the bounds of a specific work and organisation context, and it is also instantiated in relation to a temporal order. Therefore, employee experience is not universally the same everywhere nor can be it immutable across time periods, considering the myriad exogenous events, shocks or changes in the macro-business realities of the day.

For Schatzki (2005, p. 471), practices comprised "understandings of how to do things, rules, and teleoaffective structure". First, Schatzki (2005) submits that practice is not feasible if there is no sufficient understanding about how and under what conditions practical enactments can be undertaken. For example, work organisations have established approaches and frameworks in their HR repertoires, and employees have particular work models and schemata in mind, regarding how an excellent employee experience can be generated, which may often reflect an evolving industry consensus amongst best practice organisations and their workers. Practices surrounding employee experience are thus in large part due to the practical knowhow that comes from the replication, reproduction and modelling behaviours across companies noted as employers of choice, and the employees' own understanding of how this evolution should occur. Second, according to Schatzki (2005), rules are an essential feature of practices, serving as boundary conditions and governing principles for actors in terms of what to do under varying circumstances. Rules are power-laden and flow from the authority of those actors and institutions that ushered them into social arrangements. Employee experience is not a process that reflects an anything-goes-logic of action, but the regulatory fabric of employment law, HR codes and conventions, as well as corporate governance. The legitimacy of the employee experience hinges on the observance of the explicit and implicit rules of the game surrounding work and workers in the corporate sphere. Finally, when it comes to teleoaffective structures, Schatzki (2005) propounds that practices have a value dimension, with a particular tendency toward what is viewed as desirable. For example, employee experience, at least in its ostensible marketisation as a desirable and good process that unfolds over time, ought to be tending toward rendering an employee happy and satisfied; thus, it should not be a means of employee suppression or subjugation. That is, from Schatzki's (2005) point of view, we can assess the teleoafective validity of employee experience by evaluating whether the employees and their organisations are able to propagate it in conjunction as a truly empowering process.

For Schatzki (2002), practices do not take place *in vacuo* as distinct phenomena unto themselves. Rather, practices are invariably *in actu*, often overlapping, contending and coalescing with other cognate practices. In this sense, not only does employee experience, as a form of practice, not operate in isolation from other dynamic aspects of the interplay between employees and employers, or employees and their organisations, but also it can gain meaning in relationship with them. Thus, following Schatzki, it is impossible to conceive of employee experience in a company without considering the nature and implications of the full array of employment practices propagated within the very same organisation. Employee experience is thus practice as it happens (see Schatzki, 2006), that is, understood as it unfolds,

dynamically and always in tandem with a plethora of practices that emerge at the interface of the employee and the whole of the organisation. Furthermore, practices are also inextricably linked to bodies (Schatzki, 2010); thus, practice is an embodied reality, reconciling subject–object binaries in organised life. Taking employee experience as practice immediately rejects experience constructed in disembodied terms or understood generically in relation to employees' bodies (e.g. by means of an ideal worker stereotype). Thus, giving due consideration to the embodied realities of employees (e.g. ageing, disability, pregnancy status, gender reassignment, etc.) would be an essential feature of understanding employee experience adequately.

An overview of the special section

This editorial essay is followed by four special section articles that consider employee experience as a key dimension of HRM ideas. As well, these works contribute to the foregrounding of experience in understanding work and workers in specific and carefully drawn HRM contexts. While none of the articles would seem to take a practice theoretical perspective, they display varying degrees of alliance along the mainstream-critical continuum of thinking in this topic area. The first article in this special section is "'It's the work climate that keeps me here': the interplay between HRM process and emergent factors in the construction of employee experience", by Maarit Laiho, Essi Saru and Hannele M. J. Seeck. Using qualitative data drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with both employees and managers from two organisations based in Finland, the authors investigate the ways in which HRM can promote positive employee experiences, and how HRM strategy and actions work together with a variety of contextual conditions to communicate clearly and sharply with employees to ensure a shared sense of employee experience. Deploying Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) theorisation, Laiho *et al.* (2020) show that there is a differentiated sense of experiential construction at play in the interplay between workers and their organisations, depending on the strength of contextual factors in shaping the way in which experience is perceived. Importantly, the authors observe the caveat that there is a need to keep difference in the forefront of analysis when thinking of employee experience, by paying due attention to identity categories, such as age, gender, race, sexuality, social class, etc. in HRM thinking and practice (e.g. Ashley and Empson, 2013; Di Stasio and Larsen, 2020; Ferrer and Murray, 2020; Ibarra, 2019; Ozturk and Berber, 2020; Ozturk and Tatli, 2018).

Our second special section paper is Fiona Wilson's "Learning with the devil: mentoring and advocates", which explores mentees' (i.e. Devils) lived experiences at work in interaction with their mentors (i.e. Devilmasters) in the Scottish legal profession. Throughout her analysis, Wilson is highly sensitive to the contextual conditions within which the participants' experiences take shape, underlining the inextricable link between work experience and its setting. Offering insights from rich and powerful data drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with mentees, mentors and key informants, the paper brings attention to inequalities and dependencies in mentoring as well as variability in the meanings attached to mentoring in mentees' experiences. Moreover, by accounting for power as a crucial dynamic constituting the relationship between a mentee and their mentor, the article highlights that a critical stance is vital to interrogating the lived experience of work.

The third article in this special section is "The role of individual characteristics and working conditions in understanding boredom at work", by Cecilia Toscanelli, Shagini Udayar, Ieva Urbanaviciute and Koorosh Massoudi. In this paper, the authors address the relatively neglected HRM topic area of workplace boredom through a focus on employees' job-related experiences. Looking into workplace boredom and its contextual antecedents, as moderated by individual characteristics, they call attention to the importance of experience in considering job design interventions that can potentially make work more engaging,

interesting and fulfilling for all. Deploying a cross-sectional study comprising 363 workers and theoretically informed by Bakker and Demorouti's (2017) job demands-resources model, this paper contributes to the HRM literature by offering an integrative understanding of what gives rise to boredom, and how it may be ameliorated, reconciling the fragmented aspects of the prior literature into a more convincing and coherent whole.

In the penultimate paper in this special section, which is titled "Why employee engagement matters? Evidences from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation in India", Vijay Kumar Shrotryia, Kirti Saroha and Upasana Dhanda put employees' workplace experiences at the heart of HRM research. In particular, the authors locate experience as a key dimension of employee engagement, which they argue shapes significantly the coordinates of the relationship between organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. Utilising primary data collected in a large public sector organisation in India, Shrotryia, Saroha and Dhanda demonstrate that workers' affective commitment exerts a significant positive effect on their organisational commitment. Thus, this paper highlights that employees' experiences (particularly ones that have a bearing on their emotions) should inform targeted HRM interventions as well as broader strategic human resource policies of organisations.

Concluding remarks

In this editorial essay, we analysed the experience of work and experiential workers against the backdrop of organisations that operate as active participants in the brand economy, both from mainline and critical perspectives. From a mainstream standpoint, HRM is rooted in the robust and persuasive projection of a positive employer brand (e.g. best employer and employer of choice), where organisations go to great lengths to offer a compelling employee experience. In this logic, the success of the entire employee lifecycle hinges on the adept management of the employee experience, from the recruitment and selection, retention, training and development, and promotion to the eventual employee exit (Maylett and Wride, 2017; Morgan, 2017). From the mainstream perspective, employee experience is a reality that can be offered or denied, and in general, managed, through the choices made by the employer. By contrast, a critical approach built around Schatzki's practice theory conceptualises employee experience as a form of practice, which is always dynamic, arising at the interplay of the employees and employers, against particularities of an organisation as well as the wider social context. The critical view considers employee experience, not simply as a concatenation of material and symbolic benefits conveyed by an all-powerful employer, but as a situated, negotiated and embodied reality, featuring indeterminacy, as it keeps unfolding (see Schatzki, 2010). In short, employee experience, from the critical, practice theory-based perspective, is never about fixed sets of benefits in the gift of employers, who may be thought to use employee experience as a straightforward tool for achieving a mutually improved equilibrium state between employees and employers. The employee experience as practice rejects treating the experience of work as a fungible commodity that can be transacted by organisations and their workers.

Our thinking in this editorial essay, and the related special section, reflects the goal of highlighting the importance of employee experience to understanding work and workers in today's organisations. We have endeavoured to chart a critical HRM path, envisaged as a process that serves the many instead of the few in society. Thus, our essay should not be taken as an intellectual enterprise that supports the status quo, but a way of revitalising HRM for the needs of a new order (e.g. in the light of the (post)-Covid ideas around "building back better"). Our intellectual travails in this piece also reflect the need for critique that seeks answers from management and organisation, in this case, by questioning HRM, to understand work and workers in the age of the brand economy. Without a focus on questioning, HRM strategy based on employee experience is bound to be co-opted by its tendency to reproduce the interests of the powerful in the status-quo situation

(Mahadevan and Schmitz, 2020). Thus, scholarship that considers employee experience seriously in the context of working in the brand economy must be ready to ask hard questions and demand answers that do not shy away from critiquing the foundational assumptions of how HRM strategy is implemented by organisations. We would like to emphasise the cautionary note that employee experience cannot be capitalised upon as a viable HRM tool, absent an ethos of empowerment and equality that allow all employees to take a profoundly questioning stance that is ready to upset time-honoured modes of thinking and action in people management.

We also think it is vital that academic researchers and practitioners pay attention to employee experience, as it varies in texture and form, across different geographies, including regions that are traditionally understudied and neglected in HRM. As the notion of employee experience as practice travels around the world, we caution that due care and sensitivity should be exercised in relation to the interactive effects of diversity and cross-cultural differences in divergent parts of the globe (see for example Groutsis *et al.*, 2014). We are conscious that the transnational movement of practices cannot occur without those practices undergoing significant changes and practical improvisations in their new settings. Indeed, it is inevitable that there will be reconstituted and varied practices, as they get borrowed or re-fitted and as they emerge and unfold in new ways. As well, it is important to note that the experience of work and experiential workers will continue to evolve as new generations of workers join the world of work and as they exert fresh demands on the relationship between workforces and their organisations. Thus, a searching, questioning and indeterminate understanding of employee experience should be the mode of enquiry in which to consider this problematic fruitfully.

Nelarine Cornelius and Mustafa Bilgehan Ozturk
School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London,
London, UK, and

Eric Pezet
Université Paris-Nanterre, Nanterre, France

References

Ashley, L. and Empson, L. (2013), "Differentiation and discrimination: understanding social class and social exclusion in leading law firms", *Human Relations*, Vol. 66 No. 2, pp. 219-244.

Backhaus, K. and Tikoo, S. (2004), "Conceptualizing and researching employer branding", *Career Development International*, Vol. 9 No. 5, pp. 501-517.

Barrero, J., Bloom, N. and Davis, S.J. (2020), "60 million fewer commuting hours per day: how Americans use time saved by working from home", available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3695188https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3695188.

Blumenfeld, S., Anderson, G. and Hooper, V. (2020), "Covid-19 and employee surveillance", *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 42-56.

Bowen, D.E. and Ostroff, C. (2004), "Understanding HRM-firm performance linkages: the role of the 'strength' of the HRM system", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 203-221.

Charbonneau, É. and Doberstein, C. (2020), "An empirical assessment of the intrusiveness and reasonableness of emerging work surveillance technologies in the public sector", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 80 No. 5, pp. 780-791.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990), *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper & Row, New York.

Di Stasio, V. and Larsen, E.N. (2020), "The racialized and gendered workplace: applying an intersectional lens to a field experiment on hiring discrimination in five European labor markets", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 83 No. 3, pp. 229-250.

Edwards, M.R. (2010), "An integrative review of employer branding and OB theory", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 5-23.

Feldman, M.S. and Orlikowski, W.J. (2011), "Theorizing practice and practicing theory", *Organization Science*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 1240-1253.

Ferrer, J. and Murray, P.A. (2020), "Age diversity: concepts, strategies and cases", in Syed, J. and Ozbilgin, M. (Eds), *Managing Diversity and Inclusion: An International Perspective*, 2nd ed., Sage, London, pp. 194-219.

Fleming, P. and Sturdy, A. (2011), "'Being yourself' in the electronic sweatshop: new forms of normative control", *Human Relations*, Vol. 64 No. 2, pp. 177-200.

Garbe, E. and Duberley, J. (2021), "How careers change: understanding the role of structure and agency in career change. The case of the humanitarian sector", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 32 No. 11, pp. 2468-2492.

Ghosh, N. and Itam, U. (2020), "Employee experience design: an innovation for sustainable human capital management practices", in Ordóñez de Pablos, P., Zhang, X. and Chui, K.T. (Eds), *Advances in Business Strategy and Competitive Advantage. Handbook of Research on Managerial Practices and Disruptive Innovation in Asia*, IGI Global, pp. 110-127.

Groutsis, D., Ng, E.S. and Ozturk, M.B. (2014), "Cross-cultural and diversity management intersections: lessons for attracting and retaining international assignees", in Özbilgin, M.F., Groutsis, D. and Harvey, W.S. (Eds), *International Human Resource Management*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 23-46.

Grugulis, I., Dundon, T. and Wilkinson, A. (2000), "Cultural control and the 'culture manager': employment practices in a consultancy", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 97-116.

Hjorth, D. and Kostera, M. (2007), *Entrepreneurship and Experience Economy*, Copenhagen Business School Press, Copenhagen.

Ho, N.T.T., Hoang, H.T., Seet, P.S., Jones, J. and Pham, N.T. (2021), "Career satisfaction antecedents of professional accounting returnees in international workplaces: an employee experience perspective", *Employee Relations*. doi: 10.1108/ER-06-2021-0258.

Ibarra, H. (2019), "A lack of sponsorship is keeping women from advancing into leadership", *Harvard Business Review*.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2004), "Strategy as practice: recursiveness, adaptation, and practices-in-use", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 529-560.

Jayathilake, H.D., Daud, D., Eaw, H.C. and Annuar, N. (2021), "Employee development and retention of Generation-Z employees in the post-COVID-19 workplace: a conceptual framework", *Benchmarking: An International Journal*. doi: 10.1108/BIJ-06-2020-0311.

Jonsen, K., Point, S., Kelan, E.K. and Grieble, A. (2021), "Diversity and inclusion branding: a five-country comparison of corporate websites", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 616-649.

Joy, S., Game, A.M. and Toshniwal, I.G. (2020), "Applying Bourdieu's capital-field-habitus framework to migrant careers: taking stock and adding a transnational perspective", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 31 No. 20, pp. 2541-2564.

Kniffin, K.M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S.P., Bakker, A.B., Bamberger, P., Bapuji, H., Bhave, D.P., Choi, V.K., Creary, S.J., Demerouti, E., Flynn, F.J., Gelfand, M.J., Greer, L.L., Johns, G., Klein, P.G., Lee, S.Y. and van Vugt, M. (2020), "COVID-19 and the workplace: implications, issues, and insights for future research and action", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 76 No. 1, pp. 63-77.

Küpper, D.M., Klein, K. and Völckner, F. (2021), "Gamifying employer branding: an integrating framework and research propositions for a new HRM approach in the digitized economy", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 31 No. 1, p. 100686.

Leiter, M.P. and Bakker, A.B. (2010), "Work engagement: introduction", in Bakker, A.B. and Leiter, M.P. (Eds), *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, Psychology Press, Hove, pp. 1-9.

Mahadevan, J. and Schmitz, A.P. (2020), "HRM as an ongoing struggle for legitimacy: a critical discourse analysis of HR managers as 'employee-experience designers'", *Baltic Journal of Management*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 515-532.

Maylett, T. and Wride, M. (2017), *The Employee Experience: How to Attract Talent, Retain Top Performers, and Drive Results*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.

McGuire, D., Cross, C. and O'Donnell, D. (2005), "Why humanistic approaches in HRD won't work", *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 131-137.

Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H. and Axelrod, B. (2001), *The War for Talent*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Morgan, J. (2017), *The Employee Experience Advantage: How to Win the War for Talent by Giving Employees the Workspaces They Want, the Tools They Need, and a Culture They Can Celebrate*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.

Naim, M.F. and Lenka, U. (2018), "Development and retention of Generation Y employees: a conceptual framework", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 433-455.

Ng, E.S., Schweitzer, L. and Lyons, S.T. (2010), "New generation, great expectations: a field study of the millennial generation", *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 281-292.

Nicolini, D. (2013), *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: an Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ozturk, M.B. and Berber, A. (2020), "Racialised professionals' experiences of selective incivility in organisations: a multi-level analysis of subtle racism", *Human Relations*. doi: 10.1177/0018726720957727.

Ozturk, M.B. and Tatli, A. (2018), "Sexuality, gender identity and career journeys", in Broadbridge, A.M. and Fielden, S.L. (Eds), *Research Handbook of Diversity and Careers*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp. 407-421.

Pezet, E. and Poujol, F. (2020), "Working in the brand economy: work, labor and experience", in Dahl-Rendtorff, J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Business Legitimacy: Responsibility, Ethics and Society*, Springer, pp. 1261-1273.

Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (2011), *The Experience Economy*, Updated Edition, Harvard Business Review Press, Brighton, MA.

Plaskoff, J. (2017), "Employee experience: the new human resource management approach", *Strategic HR Review*.

Rasche, A. and Chia, R. (2009), "Researching strategy practices: a genealogical social theory perspective", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 30 No. 7, pp. 713-734.

Rendtorff, J.D. (2009), *Responsibility, Ethics and Legitimacy of Corporations*, Copenhagen Business School Press, Copenhagen.

Rubin, O., Nikolaeva, A., Nello-Deakin, S. and te Brömmelstroet, M. (2020), *What Can We Learn from the COVID-19 Pandemic about How People Experience Working from Home and Commuting*, Centre for Urban Studies, University of Amsterdam, available at: https://urbanstudies.uva.nl/content/blog-series/covid-19-pandemic-working-from-home-and-commuting.html.

Schatzki, T.R. (1996), *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Schatzki, T.R. (2002), *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA.

Schatzki, T.R. (2005), "Peripheral vision: the sites of organizations", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 465-484.

Schatzki, T.R. (2006), "On organizations as they happen", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 27 No. 12, pp. 1863-1873.

Schatzki, T.R. (2010), *The Timespace of Human Activity: on Performance, Society, and History as Indeterminate Teleological Events*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.

Schaufeli, W.B. and Bakker, A.B. (2010), "Defining and measuring work engagement: bringing clarity to the concept", in Bakker, A.B. and Leiter, M.P. (Eds), *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, pp. 10-24.

Shantz, A., Alfes, K. and Truss, C. (2014), "Alienation from work: marxist ideologies and twenty-first-century practice", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 25 No. 18, pp. 2529-2550.

Shenoy, V. and Uchil, R. (2018), "Influence of cultural environment factors in creating employee experience and its Impact on employee engagement: an employee perspective", *International Journal of Business Insights and Transformation*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 18-23.

Siebers, L.Q., Kamoche, K. and Li, F. (2015), "Transferring management practices to China: a Bourdieusian critique of ethnocentricity", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 551-573.

Solnet, D., Kralj, A. and Kandampully, J. (2012), "Generation Y employees: an examination of work attitude differences", *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 36-54.

Tucker, E. (2020), "Driving engagement with the employee experience", *Strategic HR Review*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 183-187.

Vaara, E. and Whittington, R. (2012), "Strategy-as-practice: taking social practices seriously", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 285-336.

Van Mierlo, J., Bondarouk, T. and Sanders, K. (2018), "The dynamic nature of HRM implementation: a structuration perspective", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 29 No. 22, pp. 3026-3045.

Vickers, D. and Fox, S. (2010), "Towards practice-based studies of HRM: an actor-network and communities of practice informed approach", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 899-914.

Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J. and Parker, S.K. (2021), "Achieving effective remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic: a work design perspective", *Applied Psychology*, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 16-59.

Whitter, B. (2019), *Employee Experience: Develop a Happy, Productive and Supported Workforce for Exceptional Individual and Business Performance*, Kogan Page, London.

Whittington, R. (2011), "The practice turn in organization research: towards a disciplined transdisciplinarity", *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 183-186.

Further reading

Ipsen, C., van Veldhoven, M., Kirchner, K. and Hansen, J.P. (2021), "Six key advantages and disadvantages of working from home in Europe during COVID-19", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 18 No. 4, p. 1826.

Theurer, C., Tumasjan, A., Welpe, I. and Lievens, F. (2018), "Employer branding: a brand equity-based literature review and research agenda", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 155-179.