HANDBOOK OF GENDER, WORK & ORGANIZATION

EDITED BY

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Editorial Introduction to Handbook of Gender, Work, and Organization

I. Background

As with many projects, this book had a serendipitous genesis in the sense that it was first proposed by the commissioning editor of a publisher who eventually was not the one with whom we agreed a contract. It started when the editor who wished to produce a Handbook of Gender and Organization approached Emma as a potential editor. Emma suggested approaching David since he had founded and edited the journal *Gender, Work and Organization* (GWO). In developing the proposal, it was agreed that alternative publishers should be reviewed and Blackwell became the obvious choice because of its ties to the journal. Shortly afterwards it was decided that an American co-editor should be part of the project. Upon being invited, Patricia agreed to be involved. Inevitably the project grew and developed along the way but we were pleased with the response to an initial call for chapters, with many notable scholars from across the globe accepting our invitation. Their participation has resulted, we trust, in a Handbook that makes a material contribution to the field of Gender, Work, and Organization.

Apart from the publicity potential, one reason for linking the Handbook to the journal relates to the reason for establishing the journal in the first place, although once again serendipity played a part. As with the Handbook, the publisher (Blackwell) approached Marilyn Davidson, David Knights, and Jill Rubery – at the Manchester School of

Management – because they saw a niche for a professional journal on gender and equal opportunity that could bridge the academic–practitioner divide. They had in mind a journal something like *Personnel Review* with a focus on equal opportunity and a readership of personnel managers as much as academics. This prompted somewhat heated discussions whereby Jill and David agreed to continue negotiations only as long as the project was to develop a fully refereed academic journal (Marilyn withdrew from involvement due to a potential conflict of interests as she was the editor of *Women in Management*). Jill is a labour economist with a strong focus on sex discrimination and David, an organizational sociologist who had conducted research on race and sex discrimination. The title for the journal reflected the interests of the two editors. However, it was also believed that during the 1970s, the contraction of sociology departments and expansion of management and business studies had resulted in an influx of sociologists to business schools, thus creating a potential academic market for the journal's content. At the time, the proportion of women academics was increasing rapidly, and largely because of sex discrimination and the rise of feminism many academics, especially but not only women, had direct or indirect interest in issues of equal opportunity and gender.

During the first couple of years, the journal struggled to secure sufficient high quality copy but the introduction of the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)[1] combined with increasing numbers of social scientists and women in business or management schools helped resolve these problems. It steadily increased in circulation and status and after around 10 years of existence, secured Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) recognition.[2] Since then, GWO has enjoyed a 1+ impact factor and a second from the top ranking in the UK assessments for the RAE. At the time of

writing, it is rated highly among women's studies journals worldwide (8th of 29) and respectably among management journals (54th of 89).[3] The journal's impact indicates the importance of studies that link the issues of gender, work and organization.

When Jill resigned as co-editor in 2003, David ran the journal for a year before securing an agreement with Blackwell for Deborah Kerfoot to share the editorship. Although eclectic in terms of focus, the journal was developed to advance an intellectual and theoretical stance that made it distinct from journals concerned primarily with equal opportunity for women. That is, it sought to address critically a broad feminist discourse that not only included theoretical and empirical analyses of women and femininities in relation to work and organization but also of men and masculinities in the same regard. Its popularity as a platform for publication expanded and was facilitated by what was to become a biennial international conference, the first of which was held in 1993. The popularity of the conferences demonstrates, we suggest, that a large nucleus of academics are interested in gender, work, and organization.

Following a trend in other journals, many Special Issues (SIs) have been published over the years reflecting some of the key debates within the field. Among the issues that have been covered are debates on gender relating to academic careers (Krefting and Richards, 2003), binaries and boundaries (Linstead and Brewis, 2004), emotion (Knights and Surman, 2008), ethnicity (Calás et al., 2010), leadership, service work (Kerfoot and Korczynski, 2005), sexual spaces (Pullen and Thanem, 2010), time (Sabelis et al., 2008), undoing gender (Pullen and Knights, 2007), gender as practice (Poggio, 2006), and work–life balance (Gregory and Milner, 2009). Several chapters in the Handbook reflect many of these debates and extend beyond

them to include some of the latest thinking in gender and feminist theory, the relationship of gender discourses to issues of the body and embodiment, diversity, globalization, and the gendered organization. In 2002, the journal moved from four to five issues per year and in 2004 from five to six issues per year. In 2010, the journal enjoyed its 17th year of publication and, given the growing audience for the field, is continuing to expand globally with increasing demand from the economies of Asia and Latin America. These developments, which reflect a goal of understanding the diversity of experiences beyond a Western perspective, are particularly exciting.

The growing interest in this field of study demonstrates that issues of gender, work and organization remain a fruitful area of study. Concerns such as achieving fairness and equality in work and organizing practices (at work and outside work) remain unresolved and are often at the heart of research in this field. However the ways in which we have theorized and studied these challenges has been transformed over the years, as can be seen by the range of papers and special issues in the journal. For this reason, we trust the Handbook provides a timely opportunity for taking stock of the field and reflecting on the answers to such questions as: Where are we now? Where are we going? What remains to be done?

II. Reflections on Gender, Work, and Organization

According to Mary Jo Hatch (2010), nearly all theories of organizations and management ignore gender. It’s not that they initially consider gender and then dismiss it (or other categorical distinctions). Rather, they are silent about gender, implicitly communicating that it is not an issue.

They imply also that people are hired, assigned, evaluated, and rewarded (including promotions and pay rises) solely on the basis of their so-called objective qualifications and performance, not their gender, race/ethnicity, age, or social class. Yet, a large body of research documents the effects of gender (and other such characteristics) on work relations and interactions, including organizational policies and structures, in ways that belie any claims to 'objectivity' or 'gender neutrality' (Cockburn, 1988; Collinson, Knights, and Collinson, 1990; Roper, 1994; Pierce, 1995). Despite that research, hegemonic theories endure, remaining silent on gender, and thereby de-legitimating it as an issue and undermining assertions by any woman or man who believes she/he was discriminated against as a result of gendered institutionalized or interpersonal practices. People who make such a claim, furthermore, are apt to find their associates not supporting them and possibly assuming that the problem lies with the complainer rather than the rules, routines, norms, or practices of the organization (J. Martin and Knopoff, 1997; see also Korvajärvi, this volume; J. Martin, this volume).

In sum, judgments at work about competence, performance, and related organizational dynamics are reflections of power relations and, as a result, are extensively conflated with the gender institution (Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Acker, this volume). No doubt, some gendered aspects of organizations have benign effects but others produce real harm (Fletcher, 1999; J. Martin, 1990). Harm is often done, furthermore, even when no one intends it. Multiple chapters in this Handbook substantiate these claims.

If key theories fail to shed light on how gender relates to work, organization, and management in a rapidly globalizing world, what can we do? Raewyn Connell (2007) says we must create new theories and new research agendas. We

must interrogate and challenge the status quo and figure out the ‘whats, whens, hows, and whys’ of gender relations relative to knowledge creation and other kinds of work. Considerable progress in this regard has been made as evidenced by research on gendered work, gendered labour markets, gendered organizations, gendered management, gendering practices and dynamics, gendered leadership, and critical studies of masculinity/ies. Furthermore, scholarship on gender has encouraged researchers to think differently about other categorical distinctions such as race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, able-bodiedness, and appearance. Future scholarship will, we hope, address these issues further and link them with each other, as some authors in this volume do.

Marxist analysis has long focused on social class in relation to work and organizations, although outside of a theoretical theory literature (see Cox, 1948; Higginbotham and Romer, 1997) and a Marxist Feminist literature (see Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Barrett, 1981) and has also (largely) ignored gender and race/ethnicity (J. Martin, 2001). Joan Acker’s recent book, *Class Questions: Feminist Answers* (2006), integrates work on gender and race/ethnicity with that on social class to frame large organizations as inequality regimes. Acker explains that organizations are a key mechanism by which societal inequalities are created. Sex- and race-segregation of jobs and positions is one method and subtle dynamics associated with gendered perceptions and interactions are another (Blomberg, 2009). Organizations create social class disparities by (in part) segregating/crowding women and race/ethnic minority men into lower level positions and denying them opportunities, power, and control over resources. When they offer more opportunities and benefits to men than to women, to Westerners than to non-Westerners, to heterosexuals than to those with other sexual preferences, and so on, they

create or reproduce inequality inside the organization and economic and social inequality in the society. Since much of today's social, cultural, political, and economic life is transacted in organizations (Perrow, 1991), viewing organizations as inequality regimes offers a window on how societal inequality is created and how it may be challenged. Several chapters in this Handbook expand on these themes (Bird and Rhoton; Benschop and Verloo J. Martin; Omanovic ´).

Besides functioning as inequality regimes, most large organizations embrace a principle of corporate non-responsibility, in refusing to take responsibility for their workers other than to hire and pay them, according to Acker (2006). Many refuse to assume responsibility for their communities also, including the physical environment (e.g. use of scarce water or pollution of water) and societal resources on which they depend – an able workforce, potable water, public hygiene, paved motorways, airports, railways, ships. Their obligation is, they say, to shareholders and profits. Due to the pervasiveness of organizations and a refusal to assume responsibility for their members' family obligations and society's infrastructure, even though they need both to function, they often exacerbate rather than help resolve the social, cultural, economic, and environmental problems that beset the planet (although corporate social responsibility initiatives, which are expanding globally, may eventually produce positive effects).

Gender, work, and organizations

In the 1980s, sociologists and management scholars began addressing gender in relation to jobs, occupations, organizations, and management.[4] Some noted the uneven distributions of women and men across jobs, positions, and organizations (e.g. Baron and Bielby, 1985; Bielby and

Baron, 1986; Wharton and Baron, 1987) while others analysed how gendered ideology, stereotypes, and practices foster these results. Besides reporting statistics, e.g. nearly all managers are men and nearly all secretaries are women (cf. Kanter, 1977), they brought bodies and sexuality into the picture (e.g. Pringle, 1989; Hearn and Parkin, 1983), and they began focusing on gender dynamics (see below).

An early effort to make gender at work visible came from Joan Acker and Donald Van Houten (1974) critiquing the famous Westinghouse/Hawthorne wiring room experiments (Roethlisberger, Dickson, and Wright, 1939). Acker and Van Houten alleged that the pliability of workers in the experiments was due not only to the *Hawthorne effect* associated with heightened recognition and being the focus of the researchers' attention but also to (some) participants being women. For various reasons, they argued, women are assumed to be easier to control than men and more apt to work under poor conditions (e.g. in part because they have fewer options, rights, and opportunities; cf. Cockburn, 1988), thus suggesting that the researchers failed to consider women's greater compliance. Workers are not gender-free or dis-embodied, they said; workers have a gender and management often uses it for various ends (Acker and Van Houten, 1974). Even today, preferences for women and men in some jobs and positions are justified by reference to the superior 'fit' or qualifications of one gender over the other, even when research contradicts the claim. Some 16 years after that article, Acker (1990) published 'Hierarchies, Jobs, and Bodies: Toward a Theory of Gendered Organizations' in which she theorized gender in relation to 'embodied' workers and organizational jobs and hierarchies. Since that article appeared, thousands of scholars have built upon and been guided by its insights.[5]

Rosabeth Kanter's landmark book, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), reinforced Acker and Van Houten's claim

that women and men experience organizations differently. Kanter concluded that women in situations where they are ‘numerical tokens’ (one or a few in contexts with many men) receive closer scrutiny at work because there are so few of them; their rarity draws men’s attention and makes them vulnerable. Proportions, structures, and opportunities, more than gender, argued Kanter, are the explanations for women’s disadvantages, suggesting that men who work mostly among women (as tokens) suffer as well. While later research failed to support Kanter’s claim that ‘men tokens’ were disadvantaged (see Korvajärvi, this volume) or that women’s token status was the prime cause of their disadvantages at work, her book nevertheless legitimated the questioning of gender relations. In rapid succession, a deluge of publications on gender and work, gender and organizations, and gender and management appeared, showing gender’s conflation with work relations and dynamics.[6]

Jeff Hearn and Wendy Parkin (1983) produced another landmark contribution in the early 1980s on the neglect of sexuality in work and organization literature (see Hearn, this volume). Their analysis brought sexuality into discussions of gender and provided a foundation for later work on management as a specifically gendered and sexualized practice and structure. Many other seminal works, too numerous to enumerate, appeared throughout the 1980s, establishing baseline information about gendered dynamics and effects on both men and women. For example, R.W. Connell, in 1987, addressed the issue of gender in relation to cathexis (psychological/emotional energy including libidinous/sexual emotions) to argue that the body is both object and subject and that while gendered people are embodied; their behaviour cannot be ‘reduced’ to biology or to the body, a perspective that has been widely employed by scholars of gender, work, and organization (see Section

Two). Early on, many studies of a statistical nature were done of ‘sexual (later gender) inequality’ at work/in organizations and were followed by many sex and race discrimination studies, some of which were supported by equal opportunity commissions. Such studies continue to appear and, in recent years, have become international in scope (cf. Walby, 2005; Zippel, 2006). During the1980s, it became recognized that discrimination operates in an informal manner and workplace ethnographies began appearing to illuminate those dynamics (e.g. Pollert, 1981; West, 1982; Westwood, 1984; Cockburn, 1988; Collinson, Knights, and Collinson, 1990; plus many more). A literature on masculinity and work (see below), followed by more theoretical literatures that reflected three phases of feminism – traditional, modern, and postmodern – soon developed (see Beesley, 2005). While much of the latter work was broader than the spheres of work and organization, it nevertheless dramatically influenced work in this area (see J. Martin, 2001).

More recently, Calás and Smircich (2006) reviewed research and theory on gender and organizations in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s. Documenting the broad scope of work in the period, they noted that gender was studied in terms of identities, a cultural resource, ideology, practice and configurations of practice, frames and justificational accounts, symbols/symbolic systems, narratives, and a system of social relations. Similarly, they noted the varied theoretical and analytical methods scholars had used to study gender and organizations – including feminist theory, deconstruction, post-structural analysis, post-modern critique, social constructionism/tivism, critical theory, critical realism, actor-network theory, and ethnomethodology. Their findings confirm the wide-ranging intellectual perspectives employed by scholars in a number

of disciplines, suggesting a vitally exciting area of interest and research.

Gender as process or practice?

Among the most heuristic contribution of gender scholars in recent decades is their re-framing of gender from a static/fixed, unchanging (indeed unchangeable) demographic status to a dynamic accomplishment. The revolution began in the late 1980s with the landmark publication by Candace West and Don Zimmerman of "*doing gender*" (1987). Building on Erving Goffman's work, they reframed gender from an ascribed status to a dynamic process which everyone is, they say, constantly 'doing'. In addressing why people continuously 'do gender', they said members of a society are held accountable to the norms of the gender system. Their attention to bodily displays of clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms helped them differentiate sex as biology from gender as cultural accomplishment, and their insights about gender as an interactional achievement offered a way to explain the pervasive presence yet extensive variability of gender in families, workplaces, sports, the military, religion, and so on – in short, everywhere. Rejecting a 'sex roles' view of gender as what children are taught – and hold on to over the lifecourse – they noted that gender norms and practices vary with factors such as age, situations, and cultures. 'Doing gender' thus frames gender as malleable, variable, and changing rather than as natural, essential, and fixed.

Work on 'gender-as-process' has generally focused on one or both of two dynamics: discursive/narrative actions and material/physical/bodily actions.[7] Practising gender is generally defined as 'actions reflecting or constituting society's gender institution by invoking norms, stereotypes, empirical associations, meanings and/or interpretations (including masculinities and femininities) that are culturally

or socially associated with gender' (P. Martin, 2009). Scholars in diverse fields have tried to capture gender's processual qualities by creating new concepts, such as gender as strategic narrative assertions (Kondo, 1990), performing/performative (Butler, 1990), maneuvering (Schippers, 2002), displaying (Schrock and Padavic, 2007), mobilizing (P. Martin, 2001), and socio-spatial practices (Bird and Sokolofski, 2005). The dynamics of gender are at once pervasive, subtle, individual, collective, and relational. Furthermore, they are difficult to study because what one intends often differs from how others perceive one's comment or bodily action. Thus, perceptions and interpretations are key to understanding gendering dynamics.

Over time, work and organization scholars appropriated these and other concepts, and invented new ones, to study gender in jobs/occupations and work organizations. Among the early pioneers were, for example: Rosemary Pringle (1989) in a study of secretaries who flirt and use sexual tensions to get their way; Joanne Martin's (1990) documentation of a woman who had a child by Caesarian section over a weekend in order to avoid missing work; Barbara Reskin's (1988) description of powerful (white) men who make rules at work to assure their privileges; Cynthia Cockburn (1988) who found that gender, not rational/technical necessity, determined who held particular jobs (e.g. the most interesting, varied, and mobile were reserved for men, the most repetitive, stationary, and least attractive were assigned to women). Sam Cohn's (1986) comparison of British Railways with the UK Post Office asked why women were recruited into the postal service decades before they were at British Rail. The reason, he argued, is that the postal service is more labour intensive and management took advantage of women's cheap(er) labour. British Rail, which is more capital-intensive, preserved

men’s ‘good jobs’ and protected them from ‘cheaper’ women for a full 100 years. Similar patterns of recruitment can be seen in several occupations that have been feminized (e.g. banking, nursing, and teaching) over the years.

Critical studies of men and masculinities

As work on gender, work, and organizations accelerated, ‘why’ questions rose to the fore. Why is it that women are regularly denied positions, opportunities, awards, honours, and privileges, compared to men?[8] In due course, attention focused on men and masculinities. Reporting on empirical research, David Collinson and David Knights began writing about masculinity at work in the mid 1980s. One study (Collinson and Knights, 1986) focused on how women clerical workers often became emotional but largely because of the pressure of work and frequently accumulating backlogs. While these women’s response was a function of their subordination, male managers saw the emotional behaviour as simply confirming their prior masculine prejudices regarding female irrationality. Another study (Knights and Collinson, 1987) suggested that the masculinity of shopfloor manual workers served only to reproduce their subordination and under-privilege. Identification with masculine norms and values of solid, ‘down to earth’ and ‘hard’ facts led them to respect the certainty of mathematical numbers deployed by the accountants and this left them bereft of any basis to challenge their redundancy when the company sought to downsize.

In a highly entertaining analysis that took a pot shot at some famous male authors, Marta Calás and Linda Smircich (1991) deconstructed managerial ‘leadership’ to reveal its

masculine, seductive, and sexually aggressive character that implicitly frames women as unqualified for management positions. Other work theorized discourses of masculinity as reflecting and reproducing a preoccupation with conquest, competition, and control, and being driven endlessly to secure the sense of what it is to be a man (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; 1994).[9] David Collinson and Jeff Hearn (1994) claimed, that men 'act like men' when doing managerial work; that is, they enact masculinities when managing. They do not manage in gender-neutral ways. Their paper reflected the emergence of this new 'critical studies of men and masculinities at work', and was followed by an edited book (Collinson and Hearn, 1996) that consolidated the field, inspiring other scholars to follow suit. For example, Frank Barrett (1996) showed how Navy men doing largely clerical tasks (stereotypically women's work) frame their jobs as masculine to protect their masculine identities; Deborah Kerfoot and David Knights (1996) showed how male managers benefit from 'masculine discourses and subjectivities that are privileged in contemporary managerial and organizational work' (p. 79) yet have identities that are precarious and involve a compulsive, almost insatiable demand for social confirmation through the symbols of material and symbolic success (p. 91); Michael Roper (1994) exposed the dynamics of men's 'homosocial desire' in managerial relations and work. Such studies reflect only a small part of the literature on masculinities at work – a literature that is increasingly attracting more women authors (see Hope; Kenny and Bell; and Wolkowitz, this volume).

For reasons we do not fully understand, although the domination of masculine norms and values in most organizations may go some way to explain, less research has been done on femininities than masculinities with regard to work and organizations.[10] Even work that has been

done often focuses on extra-work social relations among women, implying that women focus on non-work phenomena such as friendships, baby showers,[11] and birthdays, while men focus more on official goals (but see Jackall, 1988). Little research addresses positive features of femininity in the workplace such as nurturing, supporting, or protecting and little asks if women benefit when they enact certain kinds of masculinity (but see Korvajärvi, this volume). Perhaps femininity and women are stigmatized because their cultural connotations are antithetical to capitalist/neoliberal discourse and practice, being stereotypically equated with weakness, submissiveness, emotionality, sexuality, and appearance while masculinity and men are stereotypically associated with strength, domination, winning, rationality, and control (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004).

While neither depiction is confirmed by research, the capacity of stereotypes to influence perceptions and actions should not be underestimated (Ridgeway, 2010). When women act 'like one of the boys' (e.g. in resisting sexual harassment or telling 'dirty' jokes), they are often severely sanctioned (e.g. Collinson and Collinson, 1996; Padavic, 1991) as they are if they litigate legal cases aggressively (Pierce, 1995). Jennifer Pierce's study of men and women litigators (and men and women paralegals) concludes that job/occupation and gender in law firms are so conflated that one cannot describe either accurately without reference to the other.[12] The job of litigator is not the same job for women as it is for men, since norms associated with the gender institution allow men to behave in ways that they deny to women (cf. Lorber, 1994). In any case, further work on femininities at work, particularly to identify how, when, and where (if at all) women and men perceive femininity as being practised as well as how, when, and where they fail to see it would be useful. As P. Martin (2001) found, women