

**symposium
comments**

On the Complexity of Feminist Intervention in Organizations

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Patriarchal Structures and Gendered Processes

We now know that organizations, that is, the dominant forms of main-stream organizations, are gendered in many clearly structural ways. They are typically and intensely gendered, by management, formal and informal hierarchies, divisions of labour, sexual structuring and the structuring of sexuality, use and control of violence and abuse, relation to the 'private' and 'domestic' worlds, and constructions of relations of centre and margins (by membership, employment, physical space and symbolic meanings). Feminist and other critical, feminist-influenced studies have spelt out the explicit and implicit genderings of organizations and management (for example, Hearn and Parkin, 1983, 1995; Ferguson, 1984; Powell, 1988; Acker, 1990; Mills and Tancred, 1992). Men continue to dominate organizations and management, especially top management. While management is often, indeed usually, presented as if it is a gender-neutral activity, in reality it remains strongly dominated by men in most organizations (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). Assumptions of gender-neutrality in and of management have been strongly challenged by feminist and feminist-influenced studies, showing how management often excludes women, and how black women, women of colour and ethnic minority women are particularly excluded. Men managers are more likely than women managers to be better paid, to be in secure employment, to be on higher grades, to be less stressed, and to have not experienced prejudice and sexual discrimination (Davidson and Cooper, 1984; Institute of Management, 1995). For these and other reasons, management and effective management have often been assumed to be consistent with characteristics traditionally valued in men (Alimo-Metcalf, 1993; Hearn, 1994).

In sum, many organizations and managements are now understood as institutions characterized by definite gendered patterns of hierarchy,



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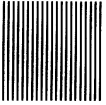
occupational segregation, dominant (hetero)sexuality and differential family responsibilities, themselves defined by and reproducing other social relations such as age, class, disability and ethnicity.

There are, however, many aspects of gendered organizations that we know much less about, and many of these are more processual in character. These include: first, the nature of *gendered processes* in organizations; second, the gendering of *organizational change processes*; and, third, the gendered form and impact of *intervention processes*, especially feminist interventions in organizations. The series of articles reporting and reflecting on a feminist collaborative research and intervention project focusing on ‘gender equity’ in ‘a well-known global retail and manufacturing company’ (Overview, this issue) provide us with an all too rare opportunity to explore these and many other questions.

Four contributions analysing this research and intervention have been presented here: a short introduction and three much longer articles—on the development of ‘a framework to bridge the gap between theory and practice’; collaboration and organizational change; and the importance of gender narrative in advancing gender equity. Throughout, there is a strong emphasis on the linking of theory and practice. Before going any further, I would like to say how much I enjoyed the articles, and how they spoke directly to some of my own current concerns about gendered theory and practice in and around gendered organizations. My comments should therefore be read within this positive context; they represent some trains of thought that have gratefully been prompted by reading these analyses. In this commentary, I discuss five main issues that seem to me important across the articles: the nature of the feminist action, ‘dual agendas’, collaborative intervention and organizational change, concepts of gender, and power and resistance in the research process, before adding some concluding remarks on forms of knowledge in globalizing organizations.

What Kind of Feminist Action?—Research, Intervention, Collaboration

In the early years of Second Wave Feminism, it appeared, first, that we could oppose patriarchy and that that might even be enough, and, second, that there were a number of identifiable feminist approaches to that task—liberal, socialist, marxist, radical, and so on. I still think that the concept of patriarchy is important and useful, but the notions both of patriarchy and of resisting ‘patriarchy’ have now become more complex. Resistance, like power, is riddled with complexity. In particular, there is now more recognition of the need to intervene ‘against patriarchy’ not as some abstract structural force but as practised in organizations around us, and of which we are part. This involves, amongst many other things, turning feminist and pro-feminist critique to patriarchy in the corporate world, in the state, in the professions, in management, and indeed in academia. There are thus major challenges within mainstream organiza-



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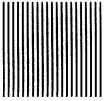
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tions, even where there is no explicit reference to men, women or gender. This imperative applies in all organizations—those that make products, organize finance, sell, market, provide state services and so on. Indeed, most state and capitalist organizations remain centres of men's power, albeit in a variety of ways.

The researchers describe their own general approach as feminist, critical, generative—'generative because this analysis would reveal possibilities for transformation' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). (See Cockburn, 1990, 1991.) But what kind of feminism is being talked about here? From my perspective (which I would describe as pro-feminist), I see that in many ways feminism has developed as a relatively fragmented politics; there has been no single world authority (like Marx within marxism); there has been a strong emphasis on local, group and network activity; there has been a developing orientation to open-ended ways forward rather than utopianism or fixed blueprints. On the other hand, feminism has by definition pursued women's interests, has consistently attempted to move 'beyond the fragments' (Rowbotham et al., 1980), to think the unthinkable, to move from the personal to the political, from the local towards the global. It has also become much more complex, and there is probably more uncertainty about what feminism itself is and what appropriate feminist strategy might be.

The idea of there being definite and separate 'types of feminism (and pro-feminism)' does now seem strangely historical specific, even though there are clear lines of difference and disagreement within feminism (Calás and Smircich, 1996) and pro-feminism (Messner, 1997). In this intervention, the researchers range widely in their points of reference, and interestingly in the final article suggest that their approach represents a combination of socialist feminism and poststructuralist feminism (Ely and Meyerson, this issue).

This, however, is only part of the story. For, furthermore, it seems that the research and intervention group had at least three specific orientations to their feminism: as researchers of the organization; as intervenors (or more elegantly change agents) in the organization; and as collaborators with (some members of) the organization. In my commentary here, I address these three, as well as some of the overlaps and tensions between them. These multiple orientations seem to be central to the kind of feminism that is being presented. While all of these particular orientations are important, I shall refer to the 'research and intervention group' as 'the researchers' throughout. This is partly for convenience; but it is also because this does seem to me to be the central orientation; moreover, the research orientation itself embraces a number of further specific orientations: as empirical observers and reporters of the organization; as analysts of the organization; as writers about the organization; and as theorists more generally. There may well have been other differences within the research group.



Collaborative Interventions and Organizational Change

So what kind of interventions are we talking about? What kind of organizational change? What kind of change process? And what relationship between intervention, change and collaboration? These are clearly complex questions and here I offer just a few remarks on these processes.

As already noted, a key feature, from the start, was the attempt to '*bridge the gap* between theory and practice' (Overview, this issue, my emphasis). This is often an issue in debates on theory and practice, so much so that it is usually necessary to rethink the very ideas of theory and practice beyond being two separate spheres. Theory and practice in fact mean a number of different things. Theory involves practice, just as practice involves theory and theorizing. Theory can refer to the practices of theorists, practice to the practices of practitioners. The reference to theory–practice can easily repeat the dualism of 'them–us', with 'them' being those who knew about their organization ('They would be the experts on the organization' [Overview, this issue]; 'they would provide the local knowledge, experience and context' [Meyerson and Kolb, this issue]) and 'us' ('we would supply the theoretical framework for critique and intervention' [Overview, this issue]; 'We would provide the theory and analytic approach' [Meyerson and Kolb, this issue]). While there are clearly different kinds of knowledge for different organizational actors, it might be as well to acknowledge that we all, including academics, work in organizations, rather than seeing 'people who work in organizations' as having 'more pragmatic concerns' and looking 'for concepts that they can readily apply'. This is something that almost all of us do, albeit in our different organizational contexts. But the issue is much more complicated than this. Theory can also refer to the theory of researchers/theorists, with practice referring to the practices of researchers/theorists. Theory can also refer to the earlier ('armchair') practices of researchers, with practice being the later ('non-armchair') practices of researchers. Above all, theory and practice (and the bridging of any would-be gap between them) are best understood in terms of changing and overlapping social and political arenas of action rather than as separate realms that need to be connected. In addition to 'one of our central goals' being 'to develop a forum in which to work with organization members to translate theory into practice' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue), it would seem equally important to develop 'translation' of practice to theory, so transforming the latter.

The central framework of intervention was one of critique, experimentation and narrative development. The devising of interventions clearly brought a number of enthusiastic responses; but the problem of the tendency for gender to be dropped (by the researched) persisted. In the factory example (Coleman and Rippin, this issue), the gender focus was displaced by another on team-building. The complex gendered



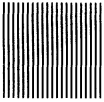
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culture(s) of the organization appear(s) to have been reproduced in the process of its would-be gendered transformation. Indeed, it is worth emphasizing that teams and team-building are by no means emancipatory in process or effects, even though (or perhaps because of the fact that) they carry great ideological weight and are difficult to disagree with. Self-managed teams can challenge gender inequalities (Coleman and Rippin, this issue) but not necessarily so; much depends on the power relations within and around the team. Indeed, the team can have something of a life of its own so that it can become as much a haven of inequality, control (and scapegoating) as one of equality. This is a theme that may be discerned from the early development of group dynamics to 'the tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman, 1970) to more recent managerial uses of 'team cultures' (Ezzamel and Wilmott, 1998). Moreover, for those in positions of relatively less power, their information is part of their power of resistance; they may know only too well the value of 'hidden transcripts' and the dangers of making that information more available to the relatively more powerful in the form of 'public transcripts' (see Scott, 1985, 1990; Barker, 1999).

These concerns are at the heart of so-called 'new paradigm' research (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1994). While working collaboratively may be a laudable aim, it is as well to bear in mind that this may not be possible in some research settings. In particular, the researchers' stated objective of developing collaborative research raised many further issues—not least what is meant by collaborative research, and how far-reaching such collaborations can be. As such, (a degree of) power-sharing is intended if not necessarily realised (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). As with team-working, noted above, 'working collaboratively' is not politically neutral—it opens up some political interests and closes down others. It may indeed open up avenues of expression that themselves favour gender inequities, indeed that are undemocratic. Such paradoxes are familiar to all concerned with the wider liberal democratic political project—increasing democracy can favour those who do not favour democracy.

These researches, interventions and collaborations indicate all too clearly that there are profound difficulties with any naive notion of 'managing organizational change' or 'the management of organizational change'. Management is sometimes constructed as a process in which anyone, or at least most organizational members, can be involved and can contribute to management. But this kind of thinking needs to be treated with caution; it can be a way of distributing responsibility (especially if things start to go wrong) without distributing power. It can also mean, paradoxically, that the control of 'the process' may remain unchanged. Furthermore, in considering the management of change or managing change, there is the frequent tendency to conceptualize change in gender-neutral terms. There are numerous such models of the management of change—in terms of formal roles, informal relations, organizational



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behaviour and attitudes, organizational climate and culture, technology, service delivery, customer service, quality control, systemic development and so on. All of these are in fact gendered, if only implicitly so. Indeed, the implicitness of their gendering is itself one form of gendering.

This research intervention also adds weight to the argument that all non-gendered models of organizational change are very likely to be flawed; they need to be seen as gendered, as well as embodying other forms of social division and domination, for example, racialization. Instead, it is necessary to ask: what is the change in question? What kind of management is operating? Who is doing the managing? Why? How? On what basis and assumptions? To what ends? With what means? Within what power relations? All of these questions are very likely to produce gendered answers (Hearn, 1992: 4–5). To look at some of these questions in more detail, I now turn to the central issue of what the researchers call the ‘dual agenda’ (of gender equity and business effectiveness as mutually beneficial) or, as I prefer to see it, a whole range of ‘dual agendas’ that were raised in the research intervention.

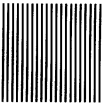
‘Dual Agendas’

One of the main ways that the researchers seem to have worked is by introducing a series of dualisms, which are proposed, reworked and then in some cases transcended or are attempted to be transcended. These dualisms include:

- researchers–researched;
- theory–practice;
- business–gender;
- organizational purposes–organizational effectiveness;
- for the researchers: relationship (working with people)–challenge (working on something they preferred to overlook);
- for the researched: participation/collaboration–resistance.

In some cases, the researchers themselves appeared to promote these distinctions, and especially so in the early parts of the project. At times, it appears that they were making these separations, and then trying to get the researched to agree that these separations should be transcended. It was not surprising that ambiguities around ‘balancing’ (Coleman and Ripplin, this issue) recurred throughout the project. This kind of approach has both strengths and weaknesses: it may make separations that are then difficult to transcend; yet it may also highlight the need for a dialogical approach to research and intervention.

Most research, or at least most good research, has more than one agenda. In this case, the researchers specifically and explicitly operated with what they called a ‘dual agenda’, combining yet separating ‘the gender part’ and ‘the business part’ (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). This meant that they positioned their ‘approach as capable of advancing



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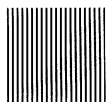
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gender equity and, *at the same time*, increasing organizational effectiveness' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue, original emphasis). As such, the researchers stand within a long tradition that argues for a convenient virtuous circle between both positive human change and positive technical change in capitalist organizations. This can be traced back to early organizational psychology, Human Relations, systems theory, Socio-technical theories, action research, change management, Organizational Development, and then more recently Total Quality Management, Quality Circles and Business Process Re-engineering. However, all of these are subject to critique, not least for their treatment and perhaps obscuring and reinforcement of dominant power relations. But the question remains: at what point does Human Relations (or action research or OD or TQM) research and intervention become Critical Research? (See Johnson, 1997, 1999.)

The difference here is of course that the emphasis is firmly on gender. But we must ask ourselves why should such changes be so harmonious? If there is to be a greater focus on gender equity, will that necessarily bring gender equality? Might there also be some winners and some losers in the process? And why should all this make organizations more effective? Or, to be more precise, the idea of organizational effectiveness cannot be separated from its social, economic, political, indeed gender, contexts. We are, it seems, not talking about organizational effectiveness in some abstract sense but in terms of capitalist organizational effectiveness, the *gendered* organization of *gendered* surplus value and the making of profit. To do this might even lead to some ('less effective') *gendered* workers (and managers) losing their jobs.

The researchers attempt to get around this by distinguishing certain organizational purposes (ends?) and organizational effectiveness (means?). They claim that the former can be served by gender inequalities while the latter can be undermined by gender inequalities (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). But, if that is the case, it does seem very likely that capitalist organizations will have, in their own terms, 'good reasons' for resisting movements towards gender equality. Indeed, one could reformulate the distinction between organizational purposes and organizational effectiveness in terms of that between the social and the technical relations of production in capitalism.

Accordingly, gender inequalities can be seen as reinforcing the social relations of production of (gendered) class relations whilst they undermine the effectiveness of existing technical relations of production (see, for example, Cardechi, 1977). What we are now engaged with is the long-established debate on whether or how capitalism and capitalist enterprises benefit (in terms of surplus value and profit) from gender inequalities, or, more precisely, the oppression and exploitation of women. On the one hand, gender inequalities maintain the supply of relatively cheap labour, both by the provision of unpaid domestic labour



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and by paying women less than men. On the other hand, gender inequalities maintain the undervaluing, under-rewarding and under-use of certain aspects of women's labour, expertise and knowledge, especially in supervisory, decision-making and managerial positions. These are some of the contradictions of capitalist patriarchy. In the light of this, to claim that 'patriarchy is held in place . . . often to the detriment of the organization's effectiveness' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) may represent something of an understatement of the structural determinants and context of organizational effectiveness.

Although this is clearly not intended, there are dangers in separating 'business' and 'gender'. That can make it easier (and wrong) to see 'business' as gender-neutral, and thus as perpetuating a gendered 'gender-neutral' view; this comes close to Feldberg and Glenn's (1973) observation of the tendency to equate women with gender and men with paid work. There are also dangers in this kind of view of reifying the organization—it is probably misleading to talk of something 'being useful to the organization' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) or 'the organization's needs' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue)—it all depends whom or what within the organization is being talked about. The conflation of 'organization' and 'management' needs to be avoided. Furthermore, the researchers claim that, in making explicit ('surfacing') the connections between gender inequities, organizing processes, organizational purposes and organizational effectiveness, 'we are able strategically to choose intervention points that will enhance both equity and business goals' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). This is a very large claim, not least because the idea that 'sources'—of both gender inequities and organizational problems—can be acted against in this way is surely rather optimistic. There are many 'sources' of gender inequities and some of them, such as historical traditions, early childrearing, the household division of labour, the extent of state provision of childcare, patriarchy, are not available for intervention against within such organizational contexts and arenas. Furthermore, there are clearly many aspects to gender inequities. For this reason, Fraser (1996: 45, cited in Himmelweit and Perrons, 1999) has outlined a concept of gender equity that encompasses a plurality of seven distinct normative principles: anti-poverty, anti-exploitation, income equality, leisure-time equality, equality of respect, anti-marginalization, and anti-androcentrism.

Diverse Concepts of Gender

This leads us onto another set of very significant questions that are raised by this research, namely those concerning the diverse conceptualizations of gender. What kind of view of gender is being presented here? What version(s) is there of gendering, doing gender, gendered organizations, gendering organizations? And what implications do they carry for understanding and intervening against gender inequities?



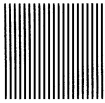
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As noted, the researchers conceptualized the intervention in terms of the perspective of gender, a gender lens and gender equity. The initial approach emphasized 'assumptions and values . . . structures and practices' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue), 'what forms of activity count as work' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue), 'the relation between the public sphere of work and the private sphere of home and family' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue), and 'the ideology of individualism and competition' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). Keeping the project focused on 'the goal of gender equity'—'turned out to be our biggest challenge' (Overview, this issue). In talking about the difficulty they had of 'holding onto gender' and the consequences of 'losing gender' (Overview, this issue), the researchers appear to index a process whereby the practice of the researched progressively reduced their references to gender. This appeared to refer to both the use of the word and the explicit consciousness of gender and gendered processes in the company. 'Losing gender' might also refer to reduction in awareness of 'woman/women' and 'man/men' as gendered subjects and actors. The practice did not match up to the theory—or perhaps at a deeper level it did, in confirming the importance of gender.

The researchers' conceptualization of gender is a very complex one—and this I see as one of the major contributions of the project. Four different definitions of gender are presented, each linked to a different feminist theoretical perspective—'equip the woman' or liberal individualism (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue); create equal opportunity or liberal structuralism (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue); value difference or women's standpoint/advantage (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue); and resisting and re-vising the dominant discourse or 'post equity' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). Each is progressively more complex, with the last questioning the whole basis by which organizations and organizing are taken for granted as if they were not gendered. Each of the four definitions of gender suggested different strategies of intervention. These were clearest with the first three perspectives, least clear with the fourth, even though or perhaps because it is 'more complex and comprehensive' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). This was partly tackled through the use of the idea of experimentation as a prelude to narrative generation.

These gendering processes include: formal practices and policies that may appear gender-neutral at face value but have quite different impacts on and implications for women and men (see Hearn, 1998; Hanmer and Hearn, 1999); informal work practices that appear gender-neutral but affect women and men differently; symbols and images; everyday interactions that enact patterns of dominance and submission between men and women; and the ways people internalize and act out gender identities (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue; Ely and Meyerson, this issue). This complex conceptualization of gender is developed to resist gender power and ultimately eliminate gender as an axis of power (Ely and Meyerson, this issue). (See Lorber, 1994; Peterson and Runyan, 1999.)



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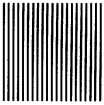
While this is a broad and powerful framework for the examination of gender, I still detect some reluctance to examine men and masculinities critically in this project. Thus, the researchers note how 'gender' implies 'women' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) but do not develop the full implications of their work for the analysis of men. For example, the analysis of 'masculinity' (for example, Ely and Meyerson, this issue) stops short with reference to 'masculinity' in the singular rather than the complexity of masculinities (Carrigan et al., 1985), their intersection with each other and with other social divisions, their differentiations and unities (Hearn and Collinson, 1993), let alone their conceptual and empirical critique (Donaldson, 1993; McMahon, 1993; Hearn, 1996b) and their contemporary globalization (Connell, 1995, 1998; Hearn, 1996a, 2000). Men and masculinities may be partly understood in terms of perceptions of 'traditional stereotypes' of 'men's traits' but a fuller understanding comes from placing them in the context of more general societal cultural arrangements.

Interestingly, the neutralizing of gendered organizations and gendered organizing into 'an abstract organizing principle' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) itself sounds similar to the notion of 'abstract masculinity' (see Hartsock, 1983: 256–61). One of the mechanisms of hegemony is the reduction of the socially constructed and socially divided to the neutral and the normal. As the researchers say, 'men's privilege and the organizing systems and practices that grow from and sustain it were simply taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the organization' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue). Capitalist business imperatives seem also to be an integral part of this hegemony.

Power and Resistance in the Research Process

In addition to the gendering of the gendered organization, there is also the gendering of research and the intervention themselves. This was a seven-woman research project intervening on a mixed organization, with an initial group of collaborators in the organization (all women) assigned by the Chief Executive and her liaison (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). I would have been very interested to have heard more about this interaction of (women's) theory and (mixed) practice, and also more about the gendered processes within the research group and how they changed over time.

There are numerous examples of power and resistance in the specific intervention processes. In the factory, 'the mostly female production-line workers were heavily overseen by the predominantly male supervisors' (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). Getting ahead was seen to be largely by being mouthy and by showing commitment by doing overtime (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). But, apparently, this factory did not work well from a management perspective (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). In parts of the research process, the researched consisted of a 'group . . . of



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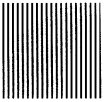
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people who seldom got an opportunity to be listened to by managers or to take any sort of initiative, within the rigidly hierarchical culture of the factory' (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). On the other hand, the '(r)esponsibility for acting as internal partners in support of the initiative ... was delegated twice ... during this period ... , each time to less senior people' (Coleman and Rippin, this issue).

The executive case study (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) focused on a different setting to the factory. In the underbounded system (Alderfer, 1980), '(e)mployees described a company culture in which priorities seemed constantly to change according to the whims of their superiors' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue). The flexible company may help to overcome bureaucracy but introduce new and oppressive gendered social divisions (Benschop and Dooreward, 1998); similarly, the flexibility of the 'new economy' may bring some hopes but also paradoxically many dangers, not least in terms of tighter management control, decreased job security, longer hours and less autonomy. 'Flexible organization' can in effect mean 'long and inflexible hours' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue) for those who work there. The dubious advantages of the clear-cut lines of authority of classical theory and scientific management may seem strangely alluring.

The specific features of underbounded systems, in which 'permanent success' is made unlikely (Ely and Meyerson, this issue), not only introduce some persistent difficulties for workers and managers but also may present a rather contradictory climate for researchers and organizational intervenors to work in. On the one hand, there is a degree of fluidity and change in the system that may be relatively taken-for-granted; on the other, there may be an equal challenge in gaining acceptance for the critical ideas of those researchers. '(B)eing a hero was typically a short-lived success' (Ely and Meyerson, this issue).

Resistance to gender and the language of gender is itself a gendered process, a process of gender. The researchers report: 'People prefer not to talk about it [gender and gender issues inside organizations], or to keep the discussion at the policy level, with gender equity as a distanced concept' (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). In saying so, they seem to be implicitly suggesting that the avoidance of gender is part of those very gender issues. Indeed, keeping gender as 'a distanced concept' sounds similar to some version of 'abstract masculinity' (see Hartsock, 1983). There is indeed a persistent gendering not only of the organization and its various parts but also of the interventions, the research, the process of organizational change (or non-change) and the gender politics. Paradoxically, this gendering became all the more complex as the focus became more on concrete micro-practices. 'It had been our intention to pass our "gender lens" to our partners, for them to apply to their own everyday experiences and work practices in their efforts to change the company. This proved difficult to do' (Coleman and Rippin, this issue).



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Resistance to explicit gendering was thus a complex mixture of 'resistance through distance' and 'resistance through persistence', to use Collinson's (1994) terminology.

More generally, the researchers comment that '(i)n retrospect, it is easy to see that we should have anticipated the types of resistance we would confront' (Meyerson and Kolb, this issue). The most underestimated were 'the range of barriers . . . that would conspire against our ability to sustain the gender focus of our work'. The researchers' conclusion is that more challenge, less agreement, together with trust, is most effective for achieving change (Coleman and Rippin, this issue). As the researchers conclude, they themselves were also involved in their own process of resistance to the organizational tendencies towards degendering and neutralizing. They also conclude on the need both for translation and for narratives of resistance, and these are insights that deserve much greater attention in the future. This is also fertile ground for cross-disciplinary research between political science, organization theory and discourse analysis.

What Kind of Knowledge?

So what kind of knowledge is being developed in this research and intervention? First, this collaborative research and intervention has provided much very useful and grounded information for the rethinking of gendered organizations. This rethinking is not just an abstract process; rather it involves both retheorizing and re practising of both organizing and gendering. This research intervention provides more evidence for the idea that gender and organization are inextricably linked, as are, for example, gender/sexuality and gender/violence. Or, to put this a little differently, it suggests that there is a strong case for examining the simultaneous and mutually reinforcing occurrence of gendering and organizing, as in the notion of gendering/organizing. It also adds to that growing body of analysis that emphasizes the ambiguous, contradictory and paradoxical nature of those gendered organizations (*Gender, Work and Organization*, 1998).

On the other hand, I was sorry that the identity of the company was not, and presumably could not be, revealed in the articles. This has meant that the reports of the organization(s) studied at times lack something in context. We are also not told within which particular commercial sector the company is located, apart from it being a company with both retail and manufacturing activities. Putting to one side the problems of confidentiality, it would have been very interesting to have explored this contextualization further, especially in view of the importance of functional activity and sector characteristics (Rutherford, 1999). Thus, while the research and intervention themselves were clearly overt 'in the field', the research remains covert in terms of its reporting and reflection 'beyond the field'. Partly for these reasons, it is difficult to



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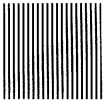
know how generalizable these findings might be, and how much they are to do with the specific context and features of this research.

As mentioned earlier, it would have been of interest to have learnt more about the researchers' own relations with each other. Other issues affecting the form of knowledge produced include: the use of the self in research and intervention; the image management of the researchers; and the place of agency and structure *in research intervention*. The variable research contexts of relations between women, of women working with women, of women working with men may all provide differential conditions for the generation of situated knowledges.

Finally, it would also be of great interest to explore further the national, transnational and globalizing contexts of this research and intervention. The specific context of both US and UK researchers and organizations, and their transnational interrelations, is an issue deserving much more explicit attention in future investigations of globalizing gendered organizations. These changing national, transnational and globalizing conditions themselves may produce new, different and complex forms of gender, gendering and gendering processes.

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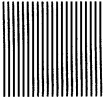


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