

Masculinities in Organizations

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RESEARCH ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES

Masculinities in Organizations

Edited by
Cliff Cheng

Published in cooperation with the Men's Studies Association,
A Task Group of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism

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Masculinities in Organizations

RESEARCH ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES SERIES

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Contemporary research on men and masculinity, informed by recent feminist thought and intellectual breakthroughs of women's studies and the women's movement, treats masculinity not as a normative referent but as a problematic gender construct. This series of interdisciplinary, edited volumes attempts to understand men and masculinity through this lens, providing a comprehensive understanding of gender and gender relationships in the contemporary world. Published in cooperation with the Men's Studies Association, a Task Group of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism.

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MASCULINITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Series Editor's Introduction

The publication of Rosabeth Kanter's pioneering study *Men and Women of the Corporation* in 1977, shook both the academic and business worlds, as social scientists and corporate managers came to understand the complex set of problems that women faced when entering formerly all-male institutions. Corporations were now perceived as sites of reproduction of a gendered order—that is, the homosocial reproduction of male dominance. Women entering such arenas were likely to face the twin dilemmas of tokenism: They were hypervisible as members of their group and invisible as individuals. This caused high levels of stress. Clearly, ending sex discrimination was not going to be easy.

It was more than a matter of numbers. Much of the research designed to integrate women into corporate culture was guided by what we might call the *Field of Dreams* assumptions, taken from an oft-repeated line in that weepy, favorite male film: "If you build it, they will come." If only we could build our corporations—that is, make it clear to women that they are welcome, without discrimination—then, naturally, they would flock to our corporate headquarters. So corporate reformers sought to build it right. Even Kanter had hoped that proportionality might alleviate the extraordinary burden on those intrepid women, so that future generations would find a welcome mat instead of a glass ceiling.

But recent research suggests that the increasing weight of numbers was more than counterbalanced by the gendered nature of the institutions

themselves. The “field of dreams” fallacy was based on the assumption that when “they” arrived, they would act just like those who were already there: That is, once women were admitted, they would act just like men.

Corporate culture itself, as it turned out, was gendered—and that gender was masculine. Thus, for example, although women compose just under 50% of all law students at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and most of them enter with grades comparable to, if not better than, their male counterparts, the institutional culture of legal education finds many of these women falling to the bottom of their class.

Surely, then, research needed to focus not only on the gender of the employees or managers but also on the gender of the institutions themselves. In this respect, however, the research from both management and business schools and the social scientific research on organizations suddenly fell mute. This volume is an effort to correct that silence, suggesting some of the complicated ways in which homosocial reproduction is constituted and how these gendered institutions remain “masculine.”

Such an examination goes beyond the simple numbers games that many organizations play, deeper than the analysis of the glass ceiling that so many women face. A study of gendered organizations must look at the architecture of the building in its entirety, not simply at the composition of the ceiling or the gender of its inhabitants. Only by examining the organization as a whole can the possible entry points be identified and the possibilities of institutional transformation be assessed.

Masculinities in Organizations is the first volume to address these issues, exploring the ways in which gender is part of the organizing principle of organizational culture and the ways in which gender assumptions saturate corporate discourse. It seeks to generate significant discussion and dialogue on the question of masculinities and organizations.

This is the ninth volume in the **Sage Series on Research on Men and Masculinities**. The purpose of the series is to gather together the finest empirical research in the social sciences that focuses on the experiences of men in contemporary society.

Following the pioneering research of feminist scholars over the past two decades, social scientists have come to recognize gender as one of the primary axes around which social life is organized. Gender is now seen as equally central as class and race, both at the macrostructural level of the allocation and distribution of rewards in a hierarchical society and at the micropsychological level of individual identity formation and interpersonal interaction.

Social scientists distinguish gender from sex. *Sex* refers to biology, the biological dimorphic division of male and female; *gender* refers to the cultural meanings that are attributed to those biological differences. Although biological sex varies little, the cultural meanings of gender vary enormously. Thus, we speak of gender as socially constructed; the definitions of masculinity and femininity as the products of the interplay between a variety of social forces. In particular, we understand gender to vary spatially (from one culture to another), temporally (within any one culture over historical time), and longitudinally (through any individual's life course). Finally, we understand that different groups within any culture may define masculinity and femininity differently, according to subcultural definitions; race, ethnicity, age, class, sexuality, and region of the country all affect our different gender definitions. Thus, it is more accurate to speak of "masculinities" and "femininities" than positing a monolithic gender construct.

It is the goal of this series to explore the varieties of men's experiences, remaining mindful of specific differences among men and aware of the mechanisms of power that inform both men's relations with women and men's relations with other men. This volume helps us to understand those dynamics within the structure of gendered organizations.

MICHAEL S. KIMMEL
Series Editor

Men and Masculinities Are Not Necessarily Synonymous: Thoughts on Organizational Behavior and Occupational Sociology

CLIFF CHENG

Nearly 20 years have passed since Rosabeth Kanter's (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation* studied women (and minorities) in a large American industrial corporation. Nearing the anniversary of this watershed effort, one that has yet to be surpassed despite numerous imitators, the current volume seeks to encourage the interdisciplinary, cross-cultural study of masculinities and men in organizations. As editor, my vision for this book is to create an interdisciplinary, international forum on masculinities and men in organizations in an effort to present as many viewpoints, theories, and methods as possible.

Having long admired Jay Lorsch's (1987) anthology, *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, for the way he recruited the top writers in their respective niches to contribute to what has become an unsurpassed single volume overlooking this field, I asked him for his thoughts on how to make this book as high quality as his. His wise advice was to simply get the best authors, and quality would fall into place after that.

To some, the book may seem curious, as they may wonder, "Why study men? Isn't most of the literature in organizational studies about men already?" It is plainly observable that most of the literature in organizational studies has tacitly featured men, but not men as gendered.

First, this study of masculinities in organizations and occupations is not necessarily about men. It is about masculinities, a kind of gender that is socially constructed. Sex is biological. Gender is socially performed. The two are *not necessarily synonymous*, especially when race, class, sexual identity, colonialism, religion, and so on are considered.

Writing about masculinities need not be about the male sex. Masculinity can be and is performed by women. Women who are successful managers perform *hegemonic masculinity* (Baril, Elbert, Mahar-Porter, & Reavy, 1989). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the *currently dominant* form of masculinity as constructed *in relation* to (and, therefore, dependent on) femininities and subordinated, marginalized, and colonized masculinities (Connell, 1987, pp. 183-188; Kimmel, 1994). In their chapters within this volume, Jennifer Pierce looks at the occupational, hegemonically masculine, emotional labor of trial lawyers; Judi Addelston and Michael Stirratt write about hegemonic masculinity in the organizational culture of a military college. Masculinities also include nonhegemonic masculinities that have been just as subordinated, marginalized, and colonized as hegemonic masculinity. In my chapter, I examine how Asian and Asian American male candidates were rejected in an assessment center as possible selections for the position of team managers, because assessors perceived them as being "too feminine." The concept of different types of masculinities is again illustrated in Tomoko Hamada's chapter that studies how Euro-American males work for a Japanese transplant organization. Outside the organization, in the dominant group culture, the gender performance of these Euro-American males is hegemonic, but inside, their performance is marginalized and subordinated, because the dominant group has defined and reinforced another form of hegemonic masculinity. Our focus here is to examine how gender, in particular masculinities, are socially constructed in organizations and occupations.

Statements that treat sex and gender as synonymous are part of bipolar sex role theory, a theory that is naively reductionistic and theoretically uninformed, although it is an empirical construct. Measuring gender phenomena beyond role is difficult, given the constraints of positivism. The concept of role may be of some use when a more sophisticated, multivariate model is situated in interaction and the multiple aspect of diversity is taken into account.

The theory behind the notion that sex is biological and gender is socially constructed is ethnomethodology, referring to the following:

The study of particular subject matter: the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the

ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on circumstances in which they find themselves. (Heritage, 1984, p. 4)

Ethnomethodology studies the sense-making process that constructs a seemingly ready-made and meaningful social world. It studies “practices of common-sense reasoning and cognitive style through which we experience the social world as a factual object” (Leiter, 1980, p. 4). Kessler and McKenna’s (1978) *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*, one of those books that are as widely quoted as they are misunderstood, is cited as saying that gender is socially constructed. Yet precious few writers appreciate the theoretical realignment an ethnomethodological approach to gender would entail. Those who misunderstand Kessler and McKenna continue to make universal and monolithic statements about *all* women or *all* men, as if only biological sex categories mattered. In this book, however, we continuously ask what *type* of masculinity and femininity is being performed.

The key study that Kessler and McKenna cite heavily in their 1978 book is that of Garfinkel (1967/1992). Garfinkel’s subject was Agnes, a biological man who wanted to have a sex change operation to become a female. Although psychologists wanted to know Agnes’s motivation for wanting this operation, Garfinkel wanted to know how Agnes was going to successfully present herself as a female. Her femininity was a social *accomplishment*. The case of Agnes illustrates how the seemingly stable and orderly structure of sex is changed through the performance of gender. Heretofore, most gender writers have been unclear and tend to confuse sex with gender. In short, masculinities can be performed by both women *and* men. And femininities can be and are performed by both men *and* women.

Second, another important misconception is that masculinity is homogeneous. As the title of this book indicates, masculinities are plural. This is a *very* deliberate choice of a word. Most gender writers, especially those studying organizations, tend to treat *masculinity* as if it were homogeneous. To some, this is intentionally motivated by gender politics (Cheng, 1995a; hooks, 1984, pp. 67-76, 114). Gender writers who intentionally disregard diverse types of masculinities, especially marginalized, subordinated, and colonized ones, are playing a zero-sum, hegemonically masculine game of “oppression Olympics” (Ely, 1996) that mistakenly assumes that acknowledging the oppression of other groups will detract from one’s own oppressed group. Such intergroup conflict colludes with and strengthens the existing hegemonically masculine system.

Third, if valuing differences is to occur in organizations, then the differences presented by masculinities and men need to be studied. A

similar situation has occurred with race. Euro-American males and those who bought into their dominant discourse have studied others but not themselves. Whiteness is a topic of inquiry (Alderfer, 1982, 1994; hooks, 1994). Masculinities and men in organizations cannot be privileged from inquiry, if valuing differences in organizations and occupations is to occur.

Fourth, it is evident that women's experiences have been excluded from what is considered to be knowledge in most of the academic literature because of a hegemonically masculine bias. Their exclusion has not precluded most of the academic literature treating masculinities and men as homogeneous. Instead, they overgeneralize men and do not deal with the experience of masculinity. New men's studies do not have traditional hegemonically male bias (Brod, 1987, pp. 39-41). In fact, they identify the change target as *the institution of hegemonic masculinity* (patriarchy) and look at the behaviors of masculinities, for example, hegemonic or otherwise, instead of making sweeping, empirically unsupportable statements about *all* men.

Finally, work organizations are places in modern times where hegemonic masculinity has been used as an organizing principle and where it is contested for, achieved, and conferred. Therefore, studying masculinities should enable us to look at important and often overlooked aspects of human behavior in organizations.

Work and Masculine Identity

"Masculinity is accomplished, it is not something done to men or something settled beforehand. And masculinity is never static, never a finished product. Rather, men construct masculinities in specific social situations (although not in circumstances of their own choosing) in so doing, men reproduce (and sometimes change) social structure. . . . Masculinity must be viewed as structured action—what men do under specific constraints and varying degrees of power" (Messerschmidt, 1993, pp. 80, 81).

Masculine identity is socially constructed through work which is embedded in an occupation and often within an organization. Men's primary identification is with work (Elder, 1974; Miller, 1965; Veroff & Feld, 1970; Weiss, 1990) and as more women strive to become "successful" in hegemonically defined organizations, they too adopt a primary identification with work and hegemonic masculinity.

For Seidler (1991, pp. 111-113) masculine identity requires self-denial at work based on the Protestant ethic (Hoch, 1979, p. 78; Gradman, 1994, pp. 105-106). Work is self-sacrifice for the family not the self. Gradman's

(1994, p. 105) view is less self-sacrificing. He argues that for the hegemonically masculine identified male (or female), work provides an extrinsic reward of money and social status. The intrinsic rewards of self-expression and fulfillment are also derived from work. Work enables a self-concept of being powerful, self-reliant, competent (Gradman, 1994, p. 105). Work for the heterosexual male, particularly if he is "successful" (in hegemonically masculine terms), is a means to impress and "win" a mate. Since hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity (Connell, 1987), men constructing this form of masculinity need women to validate their identity (Pleck, 1980, p. 416; Telford, in this volume).

Occupations and organizations traditionally have provided a homosocial context, an in-group devoid of women and femininity (Hantover, 1978; Spain, 1992, pp. 60-62, 70-72; Weber, 1922/1968, p. 371; 1978, pp. 144, 906-907). Men form a homosocial community with other men (Weiss, 1990). The in-group, despite idealizations, may not be filled with "male bonding," but instead with hegemonically masculine norms giving rise to man-to-man relationships in which "we [men] are automatically suspicious of other men, who are always potential competitors. We learn not to need anything from other men, because we fear this will give them power over us" (Seidler, 1991, p. 30).

Men's competition with one another results in men's friendships being "emotionally improvised" and overly dependent on women (Rubin, 1983, p. 135). "Men are raised in a culture with a mixed message: Strive for healthy, emotionally intimate friendships, but be careful—if you appear too intimate with another man you might be negatively labeled homosexual" (Nardi, 1992, p. 2).

While work is the primary source of hegemonically masculine identity, wage laborers are subject to firings and lay-offs which makes wage labor an unstable source of masculinity (Tolson, 1977). Retirement and unemployment make men deviate from the hegemonically masculine standard (Gradman, 1994, p. 105). "Work and career dominate a man's identity, leaving him unprepared for the realities of retirement" (p. 104). Retirement "is often perceived as a vague and distant goal and a reward for hard labor" (p. 104).

Useful Knowledge

Organizational behavior (OB) as an applied social and behavioral science has a special contribution to make to the study of gender. First, it

provides an empirical setting. Broadly, these are more than just business organizations. Other task groups are of interest, as well as studying the social and behavioral science implications of the integration of tasks and interactions in affect groups. Constructing gender has implications for getting power or becoming powerless. In organizational life, where most people spend their waking lives, gender constructions are part of the daily competition for personal and organizational power.

Second, OB-applied focus (at least at its inception) contributes to the gender studies literature by developing *useful knowledge*: "Knowledge which serves an actor's purpose, such as contributing to decision making, guiding behaviors, and solving problems. This implies that usability of information can only be determined relative to particular users and their purposes" (Mohrman, Cummings, & Lawler, 1983, p. 613). By calling for useful knowledge, I am most definitely *not* calling for functionalism that reinforces the hegemonically masculine gender system of modernistic organization or manipulative organizational humanism, although such knowledge is typically used to further that purpose. Rather, I am calling for the production of useful knowledge that benefits change agents, practicing managers and employees who are interested in changing the oppressive bipolar gender system of modernistic organizations that is built on rigid sex segregation and other forms of discrimination.

Two problems have made the knowledge that OB has produced unuseful. One is reductionism that, although increasing the methodological rigorousness of OB research, has the dysfunction of producing knowledge that only other academics can understand. A newer problem has resulted in their rebellion against positivism: Some OB professors have become too enamored with the critical theories of the humanities, to the point where they no longer consider it necessary to rigorously gather quantitative or qualitative empirical data and to base any analysis on empirical observations. Criticism for its own sake has replaced gathering and analyzing data based on the interaction of people, groups, and organizations and their multileveled interactions. There is a place, a small one, for criticism of the OB literature, but not to the point where organizational scientists turn into literary critics. These theories are perhaps best applied by analyzing rigorously collected empirical data.

Most academic research is not useful when it is based on four main criticisms (Mohrman, Cummings, & Lawler, 1983, p. 615):

1. The researcher's legitimacy, competency, and intent are questioned. Researchers are criticized by potential organizational users as being naive,

ignorant of the real world, biased by their own theories, and unaware of the trouble they cause.

2. Findings are discounted, because they are perceived as ambiguous, overly negative, or irrelevant to the particular organization.
3. The importance of the study is questioned, as researchers examine unimportant issues, ignore important variables, or merely discover the obvious.
4. The presentation of the findings is attacked as being boring, full of jargon, poorly written, or too technical.

Useful knowledge, on the other hand, has the following characteristics (Thomas & Tymon, 1982):

1. *Descriptive relevance* accurately captures practitioners in organizational settings and emphasizes external validity, the complexities of organizational settings, rather than internal validity.
2. *Goal relevancy* emphasizes applied rather than basic problems.
3. *Operational validity* emphasizes concrete variables that the practitioner can control and change.
4. *Nonobviousness* meets or exceeds *commonsense* theories of practitioners. Academic research often oversimplifies to prove certain hypotheses.
5. *Timeliness*—The theory must be available to practitioners so that they do not have to wait for all the facts to make decisions.

The call for the production of useful knowledge is not at the sacrifice of theoretical rigor. It is a call to extend rigorous theory, one that does not collude with the status quo, into practice (Argyris, 1968, 1970).

Overview

This volume represents an initial effort to stimulate thinking and, more important, empirical research on masculinities and men in organizations and organizations. Seeing that it requires a pioneering effort to create a single volume on the topic, this anthology attempts a broad overview of the field. It is too early to define, let alone anthologize, one specific point of view with a particular methodological commitment.

Part I deals with the performance of hegemonic masculinity. Jennifer Pierce explores how lawyers strategically use emotion to perform a "Rambo"-styled role (referring to the American action movie hero played by Sylvester Stallone) to win in litigation. James Messerschmidt exam-

ines how the fatal decision to launch the space shuttle *Challenger* was influenced by hegemonic masculinity. Judi Addelston and Michael Stirratt observe hegemonic masculinity at The Citadel, a state-supported military college that has recently been involved in high-profile litigation over its attempts to evade making its all-male student body coeducational.

Part II explores an underresearched aspect of the OB literature, the relationships between "Sex Segregation, Homosociality, and Hegemonic Masculinity." Sex segregation refers to the numerical dominance of men in a given occupation. When there is an absence of women altogether, male homosociality occurs. Rosemary Wright examines how hegemonically masculine occupational culture in the computing field creates sex segregation. Amy Wharton and Sharon Bird take us inside work teams to study the effects of gender demographics on homosociality. Martin Kilduff and Ajay Mehra explore hegemonically masculine identities and gendered interaction patterns among MBA students at an elite university.

Hegemonic masculinity, as Connell (1987) points out, has changed in history. In hierarchical relations, the upper strata are defined by and dependent on lower ones. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed relative to femininity and subordinated, marginalized, and colonized masculinities (Connell, 1987, pp. 183-188). In Part III, the marginalization of nonhegemonic forms of masculinities by hegemonic masculinity is addressed. Laurie Telford provides a unique application of the social verification literature, suggesting that nonhegemonic masculinities in organizations are not verified in the same way as the hegemonic type is. Tomoko Hamada explores how Euro-American men, whose form of masculinity dominates in American society, are no longer dominant when they work for a Japanese firm in the United States. Lastly, I extend the *good manager* line of research, whereby ideal managers perform hegemonic masculinity by adding race and culture (e.g., Asian and Asian American) into the picture.

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