



## REVIEW PIECE

# Gender in change: gendering change

Stephen Linstead, Joanna Brewis and Alison Linstead

*Department of Management Studies, University of York, Heslington, York, UK*

### Abstract

**Purpose** – To provide a critical review of existing contributions to gender and change management and in doing so highlight how organizational change needs to be read more readily from a gendered perspective.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper argues that gender has received little attention regarding the change management side of managerial practice and reviews recent contributions to gender and change to demonstrate this. The paper then questions how men and women both cope with and drive change and whether the identified differences are more than superficial. The concept of gender is then read into management theory in order to understand how gender affects the way managers think and act, and the gendering of management is discussed. The paper concludes by outlining future research areas – change agents, entrepreneurs, female innovators, psychoanalytic treatments of change and gender experiences.

**Findings** – The paper finds that traditional and dominant conceptions of masculine and feminine values that rely on static conceptions of gender to argue that more attention to be paid to the dynamic and the genderful approaches.

**Research limitations/implications** – The paper concludes by outlining future research areas – change agents, entrepreneurs, female innovators, psychoanalytic treatments of change and gender experiences.

**Practical implications** – Draws much needed attention to the neglect of gender in change theory and practice and suggests some ways forward.

**Originality/value** – Offers a unique introduction to an important but complex literature that needs to be integrated into change management practice.

**Keywords** Change management, Gender

**Paper type** General review

### Preamble

Does critical reflection on the gendered business of management itself hold the key to creating the conditions within which an alternative means of managing change can emerge – one that is grounded in non-instrumental modes of relating to others? (Kerfoot and Knights, 1999, p. 212).

In the late-1990s, one of us was invited to take part in a workshop on change management for a group of research students, all male full-time senior managers, at one of the world's leading business schools. The curious thing was the topic – gender identity and image, drawing on recent work on the film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Brewis *et al.*, 1997). The reason for the invitation? The managers, all involved in leading change initiatives in public and private sector institutions against considerable cultural and political resistance, had chosen the metaphor for their role as organizational transvestites. They felt that when they began to suggest



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styles of managing change and relating to others that moved away from the authoritative, patriarchal, competitive, confrontational and often bullying styles of management that permeated their organizations, other managers were beginning to impugn their masculinity – they were accused of “going soft”, becoming “touchy-feely”, losing their “grip” and generally attempting to feminise the rightfully masculine workplace, not facing the facts or harsh realities of the business and replacing action with talk and interaction, and as a result putting the whole enterprise at risk.

It remains fairly unusual for change agents openly to acknowledge this, but our private conversations have confirmed that this situation is far from unusual, and indeed may be typical of certain types of organizational change (see, for example, Stace and Dunphy’s, 1994 typology) and a good deal more about the gendered nature of change than we did even a decade ago, but we have barely scratched the surface. There is an urgent need for more research on internal and external change agents, consultants, entrepreneurs, and managers who are involved in initiating, leading and managing change to illuminate its gendered social and behavioural aspects.

### **Gender, management and change practice**

Gender is widely acknowledged as having an impact on management practice. Proposed managerial responses vary from minimizing gendered differences in terms and conditions; recognising gender difference to make the most of women’s “special contribution” to organizations, or simply treating it as just another kind of difference as part of “diversity”. But gender has received little attention as regards the change management side of managerial practice.

In 1990, Eagly and Johnson identified that, according to existing leadership studies, the democratic and participative styles which were increasingly being advocated amongst commentators such as Charles Handy and Rosabeth Moss Kanter were more commonly found among women rather than men (see Brewis and Linstead, 2004 for discussion). Nevertheless, studies of women’s approaches to change or women involved in the management of change remain few. Colgan and Ledwith (1996a) draw on Baddeley and James (1987) to classify the political skills which women need in acting as change agents in organizations. Reading is the ability to read an organization both formal and informal, to identify its decision processes, appropriate power bases inside and outside the organization, the extent of the change agent’s own power bases, the organization’s culture and management styles, its purpose and direction and the importance of politics in this, overt and hidden agendas (Colgan and Ledwith, 1996a, p. 31). The reading of the informal structure of male power is often problematic both for internal and external female change agents. Job segregation may prevent women internals from gaining access and developing the appropriate reading skills. Even training courses may assume informal tacit knowledge which women are prevented from possessing. Homosociability, with its social networks outside the organization such as freemasonry, golf or rugby clubs, again may mean that change issues may be negotiated and settled outside the workplace where women have no access. All of this exclusion from symbolic and tacit information networks poses problems for women when they need to take action to promote change.

The second dimension is carrying, as in the carrying of a role relative to one’s personal life. This may be done with integrity, or by operating with ego-defenses to

the fore. Key elements here are the woman's awareness of who she is, and her own identity, her organizational credibility and image, and her presentation of self. Additionally, she must be able to win the respect of colleagues (which may be given for a man who is capable of giving out simple signals) and to demonstrate a capacity for leadership, which often provokes resistance. One advantage, however, is that having experience of being marginalized, women often find it easier to innovate, and to cross traditional boundaries. At present the awareness that innovation comes from the margins is one of the hot topics in management (see Chapter 17) and the value of women for disrupting traditional structures which oppress creativity is increasingly being recognised (Colgan and Ledwith, 1996b, p. 298). Women may act politically in a "wise" way – a combination of reading the organization well and maintaining one's integrity, building and using networks of alliances; a "clever" way – which involves behaving opportunistically to further personal ends, behaving to display and draw attention to themselves, often with the sponsorship of a senior male. These women seem either unaware of the risky nature of political shifts, or are prepared to take the risk. Inept behaviour that arises from prioritising personal needs and misreading the politics, game-playing and unawareness of power issues can get both oneself and others into difficulties. Particularly, women run the risk of being stereotyped by males into one of the four deviant roles – "Queen Bee", "Token woman", "Seductress" or "man-hater" (Kanter, 1977; Morgan, 1986). Innocent behaviour is more of blindness than a perspective. It means following the rules and appealing only to formal behaviour, pretending that there is no informal organization or that it is irrelevant. Avoiding conflict, such people, which especially includes women, often drift into technical or administrative jobs where they can blend into the background and have no need to confront the existence of a shadow organization. Unfortunately, if the informal system is not acknowledged, then it cannot be changed, and political incompetence results. Buchanan and Badham (1999) and Buchanan and Boddy (1992) emphasise at length the importance of political behaviour for successful change agency.

Maddock (1999, p. 5), in a study of the UK public sector, found that radically innovative women, grounded in a strong "user" focus, adopted or displayed:

- a process approach to change and new relationships;
- a people approach not a systems approach;
- confidence in the social values of the organization;
- a local connectedness or social awareness;
- confidence that those who are on the margins or challengers were instrumental in social transformation; and
- a confidence in the community and the workforce that inspired trusting relationships.

Maddock also argues that many of the frustrations and experiences encountered in the public sector were shared by women in the private sector. Those women who were most insistent in the need for change in their sector, to improve delivery to the end-user, showed:

- confidence in alternatives based on social values;
- ability to handle diversity, ambiguity and change;

- experience in developing organizations where social objectives determined work – plans, programmes and indicators;
- an awareness of diversity and gender cultures;
- a capacity to be critically aware and capable of trusting others; and
- a desire to develop a collaborative culture.

This combines with the ability to listen, adapt to and communicate with others, personal readiness to collaborate, to think holistically, to promote social and egalitarian relations, to break boundaries and readjust, and to think strategically in achieving improvements, to embody the more “feminized” authority that some commentators have argued is necessary for transformational organizational change (Maddock, 1999, p. 43).

In recent studies of women in the US involved in the field of organizational development and acting as external consultants, Waclawski *et al.* (1995) identified two sets of values – those that were important at the present time, and those towards which the women felt the field should move. The picture was not as positive as Maddock’s. They found that:

It appears as though women today are relying less on the traditional social psychologically based methods of OD consulting (e.g. Gestalt methods, T-groups and sociotechnical interventions) and are focusing their efforts instead on helping organisations achieve their desired future states through a combination of approaches including management development programmes – once the exclusive realm of HR and T&D departments – systemic efforts to achieve long term change, and enhancing group goal-setting skills (Waclawski *et al.*, 1995, p. 16).

This, they suggested, supports the idea of a general move in the field towards more business oriented interventions than the traditional “touchy-feely” approaches, and an emphasis on process and problem solving. They also suggested that:

The primary values of women practitioners in the field today focus on achieving organizational effectiveness and efficiency... the important values for tomorrow focus on more humanistic concerns (i.e. creating openness in communication and empowering employees to act) as humanistic issues are given prominence in social and organizational development efforts (Waclawski *et al.*, 1995, p. 20).

Women change agents, then, appear to continue to harbour a different more relational vision of the future, and their methods contain elements of a more socially oriented nature, but the effects of the simple pragmatism of the client relationship and the persistence of patriarchal cultures in organizations mean that they still work in constrained ways. One consultant interviewed by Kaplan (1995, p. 65) whose study on the voices of women change agents is perhaps the most thorough review of the issues, did believe that there was a major change in orientation of OD under way and the women were making a difference, because traditional OD methods involved:

Kind of stripping people of their defenses and making them feel bad. I think I’ve managed to contribute something to that whole movement, I would call it the awareness development or training movement, which has now become a big business... we’re doing much better today in man organizations understanding what these issues really mean to people as a result of that early work.

Women with their greater mentoring skills, the fact that women's problems in organizations often stem from other women notwithstanding, are better placed to help organizations to grow, and men to attend to things that they have not been historically trained to attend to, rather than to plan and instruct or challenge them to do these things. Nevertheless, much more research needs to be done in this area before we understand how men and women both cope with and drive change and whether the differences are more than superficial (Covin and Harris, 1995).

### **Gender, management and change theory**

However, there is another way to conceive of the relationship between gender and change management – this involves introducing the concept of gender into management theory, and understanding how gender affects the way managers think and act. Theorizing traditionally has sought either to deny the significance of gender for an understanding of managers and managing, or has simply not taken it into account. It fails to recognize the relationship between management and gender: first, because it makes little or no room for any analysis of the actual individuals who occupy the management role, treating management as an abstract set of functions, principles or processes; and, second, because it fails to recognize gender as a significant variable in organizational life even in the face of overwhelming empirical evidence. Indeed, it has been widely suggested that mainstream management theory is actually more accurately labelled “malestream”. Management in this kind of theory is typically presented as genderless, either because it consists solely of a collection of functions (classical management theory) or because it can be explained as a more or less appropriate relationship to one's workforce (theories of human relations or management “style”). However, management is an inescapably embodied and, therefore, also a gendered experience, an experience which is different for men and women whether they are the managers or the managed. The omission of gender by mainstream/malestream theories of management means that such theories cannot account for the complexity of the management experience – indeed as Hearn and Parkin (1994) point out, the absence of gender and sexuality from the consideration of “human relations”, “interpersonal relations” and “emotional relations” calls into question what these terms can possibly mean. They cannot capture how it feels and what it means to manage (or indeed to be managed) in a modern organization.

Despite this absence of gender from mainstream/malestream management theory, some organizational analysts have sought to establish the interrelation between gender and management. That is to say, they consider the embodied nature of managerial work, management as performed by gendered subjects, by individuals who identify as male or female, masculine or feminine, and the consequences that this may have for organizational and managerial practice. In other words, how male and female managers actually manage becomes the focus. This work tends to retain the relational theorists' emphasis on management as process and on the differences between managerial styles, as well as often relying on the classical management theory notion of a “one best way” to manage as regards organizational effectiveness – if perhaps seeking to reverse it. However, the real contribution of this more contemporary theory is arguably its acknowledgement that it matters what kind of person is doing the managing.

This gender in management approach argues that, because men and women are socialized differently, they manage differently. Researchers in this area have, therefore,

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concentrated on identifying the key characteristics of “masculine” and “feminine” managerial styles. Rosener (1990, 1997), for example, argues for an emphasis on the feminine-in-management because feminine styles, she claims, are most effective in the current socioeconomic climate. Rosener’s (1990) research asked male and female managers to describe their own managerial style. She discovered that male managers, by their own account at least, adopted what she refers to as a transactional leadership style. This style uses the principle of exchange in managing – giving rewards or punishment for work done well or badly. Rosener’s male respondents also said that they relied a good deal on their positional authority – the status conferred upon them by the organization – in order to manage others. Women, on the other hand, reportedly used a style that Rosener calls transformational leadership. This places the emphasis on motivating staff through persuading them to commit to group/organizational goals, on encouraging them to participate in decision making, on managing through personal qualities rather than by using one’s position, and on trying to make staff feel good about themselves. Rosener attributes these differences between men and women to gender socialization in early childhood. She also has it that the feminine model of leadership is likely to be more apposite and more successful in economically turbulent times than the command-and-control style preferred by her male respondents. Rosener’s (1997) more recent work argues that the key to maintaining America’s corporate success and ability to compete in global markets is having women in senior positions in organizations, because their management style increases productivity, innovation and thereby profits. How? Through women’s aptitude for ambiguity and their willingness to empower others.

Helgesen (1995) echoes this; firstly in her suggestion that gendered management styles develop as a result of differential socialization, and that women are consequently better at developing creativity, cooperation and intuition in others than men. She goes on to emphasize their preference for managing via relationships as opposed to hierarchical position, to claim that they listen and empathize much more than their male counterparts and to assert that feminine leadership “principles” are becoming more influential because they simply suit today’s public realm better than the “warrior values” espoused by men. Helen Brown’s suggestion that women-only organizations tend to be characterized by flat structures with diffused leadership (as also claimed by Oerton (1996)) is relevant here too, especially given her argument that women have the right social skills to create and manage such non-hierarchical organizations (Brown, 1992; Gherardi, 1995, p. 91).

Indeed similar evidence emerges from at least two meta-reviews of the literature on management styles and gender. Eagly and Johnson (1990) reviewed a total of 370 studies using varying methods, concluding that the evidence does point overall to women adopting a more democratic and people-centred approach to managing others, and men tending to be more autocratic and task/production oriented – although these gender differences, apart from democracy versus autocracy, were found to be strongest in artificial environments such as laboratories or assessment centres. Studies undertaken in real workplaces did not indicate such pronounced differences. Fagenson (1993), cited in Alvesson and Billing (2000, pp. 147-8) also summarizes the available research and suggests that women err towards the transformational, towards a web-based, interdependent style of leadership, instead of using their status as men would tend to do.

Taking a rather different approach to the exploration of gender and management style, the British researcher Beverley Alimo-Metcalfe theorizes that the way in which decisions are made in organizations about managerial selection and promotion is at least part of the reason why there are relatively few women in senior management positions. Given that men make up the majority of those involved in formulating choices of this kind, she focuses on discovering whether men and women see leadership qualities differently, so as to be able to ascertain if, “by excluding a significant or matched proportion of women from this sample, one is likely to end up with male-biased criteria of leadership qualities” (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995, p. 4). In fact, from Alimo-Metcalfe’s research, it appears that male and female managers do define effective management differently. Her female managers perceived an effective manager to be someone who relates to others as equals and who is sensitive and aware of the effects that they have on others. Alimo-Metcalfe’s male managers, on the other hand, valued influence and self-confidence as being particularly important amongst managerial interpersonal skills. The women, furthermore, spoke positively of a working style which is supportive, and which empowers and builds teams – whereas the men placed the emphasis on drive, direction and the transmission of a clear purpose to staff. Alimo-Metcalfe borrows from Rosener in designating these differences of style as transformational and transactional. She then proposes that transformational qualities are undervalued when managerial assessment takes place because, as we already know, it is men who dominate in these situations – and it is also men who would tend to favour transactional characteristics, as displayed by other men, across the board. Moreover, this general preference for promoting men is evident despite the fact that much of the available research, as we have seen, emphasizes the importance and relevance of the transformational leadership approach in a complex and diverse world, and the fact that quality management and leadership is deemed to be central to our collective success and well-being in the future (Rosenbach and Taylor, cited in Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995, p. 8). In sum, then, Alimo-Metcalfe’s conclusions – that men and women managers value different kinds of managerial style, and that the style valued by women may be more apposite in today’s organizational world, whatever the stance taken by those who select for and promote to managerial positions – are very similar to those emerging from the research undertaken by Rosener, Helgesen *et al.*

The varying cases made by Rosener, Helgesen, Alimo-Metcalfe *et al.* then, seem to rest on the assumption that women are socialized to manage in certain ways and, therefore, to value a particular kind of managerial approach. However, although these studies represent an advance on traditional management theory in acknowledging the importance of gender, we suggest they do not take sufficient cognizance of important processes within the organization – that they place too much emphasis on life “outside the factory gates”. It is implied that male and female managers arrive at work fully socialized, that the workplace itself has little effect on the ways in which they behave. Thus the gender in management researchers perhaps fail to recognize the interplay of gender and management, the ways in which gender works to shape managerial work and vice versa. Rather, they seem to adhere to an “add gender and stir” approach.

In criticizing Judy Rosener in particular, Cynthia Fuchs Epstein (in *Harvard Business Review*, 1991, p. 151), for example, places more emphasis on work context than pre-work gender socialization in shaping individuals’ behaviour at work. Epstein also cites her research amongst lawyers and her own experience as demonstrating

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that women frequently engage in “combative”, “punitive” and “authoritarian” (i.e. “masculine”) behaviour. In-work variables, then, such as the size and culture of the organization, should not be underplayed as influencing and in turn being influenced by management style. Additionally, age, class and ethnic differences as non-work variables apart from gender may also shape/interact with managerial behaviour. Gender is perhaps perceived as being too “sexy” in contemporary management theorizing, attracting so much analytical attention that the exploration of other important factors which influence the way management is done are neglected (Mansbridge, in *Harvard Business Review*, 1991, pp. 154-6). This is what Alvesson and Billing (1997) refer to as gender over-sensitivity. Moreover, women managers’ preference for the transformational style of leadership, if it exists at all, may actually be a function of those that they manage. Allan Cohen argues that Rosener, for example, overlooks the fact that many of her female managers were responsible for professionals who may well not have taken kindly to a more directive managerial approach. Like Epstein, he also criticizes her for overestimating the influence of pre-work gender socialization (Cohen, in *Harvard Business Review*, 1991, p. 158).

Indeed it is important that we do not overlay the differences between men and women’s socialization *per se*. The socializing of women to work outside the home does not occur in a context separate to the one in which men are socialized. Neither does their socialization into the essentially private world of caring and nurturing. Women do not learn to be women in isolation from men and then bring these values into the workplace – they are socialized in interaction with men (Gherardi, 1995, p. 91). And if we overemphasize gender differences in management theorizing, asks Silvia Gherardi, how can we then account for those men who prefer to work within a more democratic organizational framework and to manage in more democratic ways – like the 52 per cent of male managers who said they preferred to use teamwork and a participative management style when surveyed by the British Institute of Management (Vine, 1997)? Gherardi suggests that some accounts of gender and managerial work over-valorize the “either/or” of the gender framework, and points instead to the concept of dual presence, as developed by Italian feminists in the 1970s. This represents the mindset of women at this time who self-identified in a “cross-wise” manner. These women saw themselves as subverting but not abandoning conventional feminine role models by operating in many arenas across the social spectrum. They did not allow the world to be symbolically divided up into “men’s business” and “women’s business” – they continually transgressed, did things they were not supposed to do and caused men’s and women’s activities to merge until the gender divide, at the level of action at least, became more fluid (Gherardi, 1995, pp. 94-5). White’s (1995) research into female executives concludes that these women were more different in their approach to leadership than they were similar. She suggests that these differences derived from their varying ages, experiences and expectations.

Boucher (1997, p. 154) notes that women managers face a double bind. She quotes one of her respondents as saying that “influencing” as a style of management is, she feels, “more condoned for women” than the direct (and masculine) approach of simply telling someone to do something. Boucher goes on to suggest that a woman who “tells” as opposed to “selling” may well attract derogatory nicknames like “bossyboots” – a term which, she also remarks, would never be used to describe a man (Sheppard, 1989). Teigen (1999, p. 97) echoes Boucher’s point in her analysis of the case of a woman who

failed to secure an administrative position at the Norwegian Directorate of the Coast, and was rejected because she was defined as “domineering and arrogant”. However, as Teigen also points out, “If we think about gender differences in terms of binary oppositions, identical behaviour from a decisive and self-confident man might appear as dominating and arrogant coming from a woman”. Alvesson and Billing (1997, p. 183) agree that any deviation on the part of women managers from the transformational style often leads to unfair evaluations of their performance, and Tomlinson *et al.* (1997) point to these sorts of judgments being made about women managers by their female colleagues, quoting, for example, a store manager who says that “there is a tendency among some women [managers] to over-react, try to be too hard and too severe to prove that they are not a weak-kneed woman” (1997, p. 222). Wajcman (1998) in a study of companies which had been recognised as having exemplary equal opportunities policies, found that despite this those policies could not reach to the heart of such prejudices, and that women wanting to achieve corporate success were forced to “manage like a man” or suffer the consequences.

A picture, therefore, emerges of female managers continually having to work to prove their “gender competence” (Gherardi, 1995, pp. 135-6), whereby they are permitted to achieve at work, so long as they also and simultaneously do all the things and have all the feelings that “proper” women do and have – wanting and having husbands and children, sustaining close and intimate relationships with others, seeking to placate and persuade as opposed to asserting themselves etcetera. Ironically, much of the literature on the feminine in management tends to claim that women’s “special” approach derives from the division of domestic labour and the consequent socialization of women to be nurturing, caring and comforting so that they are later able to care adequately for children and run welcoming and functional homes. But these expectations of women with regard to domestic labour already make it difficult for them to accede to and succeed in management, given the challenges of combining organizational demands with a full load of household duties. Women managers can, furthermore, end up being exploited as peacemakers or as troubleshooters, being called upon to resolve conflicts, make cuts and carry out dismissals, as a result of the assumed connection between their gendered socialization and their particular repertoire of management skills. However, it is also true to say that women can be caring and loving parents at home and demanding, transactional managers at work (Alvesson and Billing, 2000, pp. 149-50, 151, 153-4; Brewis, 1999, pp. 108, 133-n28).

In asserting women’s “preference” for a transformational approach, commentators like Rosener fail to question the gender divide and thus end up being complicit with it. Indeed, as long as they continue to label women’s managerial behaviour as typically different from men’s, they reinforce the assumed connection between women and femininity and thus continue to ensure that women who do not conform will always be subject to assessments which derogate them. As an alternative to this kind of argument, we would argue that any analysis of gender and managerial work must take into account not only the orientation to work that gender socialization outside of the organization might produce, but also how the experience of work in itself produces and maintains particular forms of gender identity. The process of becoming gendered continues and changes through life. How then does this process happen in the organization? How are our subjective experiences of gender informed and moulded

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by what happens in our workplaces? How does gender in change processes interact with the changing of gender over time?

Gender in  
change:  
gendering change

### **Gendering management**

As human subjects we come to know who we are through being exposed to particular interpretations of what it is to be human – in this case, either male or female, masculine or feminine. Because we are expected to be either/or, we create and reinforce these stereotypes in our everyday acts and interactions with others. Moreover, gender identity here is not the inevitable product of biological sex. Women may strive to project a masculine identity just as men tend to do. Masculinity, therefore, is not what men do and what they are without thinking much about it; men have problems being men, and they certainly do not have exclusive property rights on masculinity (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, p. 660; Kerfoot, 1999, p. 186). Neither is being male definitive or exhaustive of all that men are or can be (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996, p. 85).

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#### *Masculine values*

The prevailing form of contemporary Western masculinity revolves around being rational, objective, sure of oneself, logical, decisive, unemotional, tough and competitive. This masculinity centres on control. It means being explicit and assertive, saying what you think and speaking your mind plainly; being outer-focused, possibly aggressive; valuing work, sports and organized activities; being action oriented, liking to get things done, a doer; being analytical or calculating about situations, rather than intuitive, relying on hunches or gut-feel; being dualistic, or tending to see things as black or white, either/or; preferring quantitative solutions which involve numbers to qualitative ones which involve opinion; linear thinking (e.g. *X* causes *Y*, making predictive connections) rather than lateral thinking (making unusual connections, being creative); being rationalist, valuing reason more than emotion or playfulness; being reductionist, liking to reduce things to their simplest terms and principles, rather than relishing subtle differences; being materialist, with a constant eye on resources, costs and benefits; being constantly aware of one's position in a hierarchy, engaging in one-upmanship with colleagues, striving to maintain the upper hand and to protect oneself from challenges; and isolating oneself from others and rejecting dependence on them (Hines, 1992, p. 328; Tannen, 1993, pp. 24-5; Nicolson, 1996, p. 146). Not all men will exhibit all of these features of masculinity, because the whole taken together is a stereotype – but it is one which still resonates powerfully in Western society, even at the level of myth.

Masculine modern management accordingly requires its incumbents to remain in control – of themselves, others and the environment – by virtue of level-headed decision making, undertaken without anger, emotion or bias, *sine ira et studio*. Modern management is, therefore, as Lennie (2000, pp. 130-5) claims, predicated on a Cartesian separation of mind and body, on metaphorical disembodiment, within which the manager knows the world through detached, objective, cerebral observation and is, therefore, able to change it, by virtue of directing others' bodies in the execution of particular kinds of labour. As he argues, the management "order" understands "the sensual world as manageable, in the sense that it stands waiting to be shaped by the vision of a knowing subject" (Lennie, 2000, p. 134). Being able to exercise managerial prerogative – carrying out the "right to manage" others in contemporary

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organizations – also depends on instrumental control, on sustaining output through imposing targets that are quantifiable and often highly abstract, but which carry penalties if not achieved and are coercively policed, through the threat of discipline or dismissal, for example (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996, p. 90). Managers, therefore, need to demonstrate their ability to take command, to show that they are capable of “being ‘on top of’ things [.] . . . to appear always in control of situations, even where circumstances dictate that this could not possibly be the case” (Kerfoot, 2000, p. 232).

Unsurprisingly, those who identify as feminine (arguably mainly women, although this category can include those men who either choose not to or cannot perform masculinity) are uncomfortable with or marginalized by management’s masculinity. They find its competitiveness, its bureaucratic impersonality, its emotional coldness and its lack of intimacy alien. This may result in them distancing themselves from the content and the context of their work, appearing detached and uncommitted, valuing home, friends and family above their job; but at the very least it will translate into a constant sense of dissonance at work, a feeling of not fitting into the organizational environment (Kerfoot, 1999, p. 188). Indeed there is empirical evidence to the effect that even women who have reached the organizational peak may opt out. Marshall (1995), for example, talks of how her middle and senior management respondents paused to assess their careers, which for many then led to a period of unemployment as a result of their disassociation from the male organizational cultures in which they were employed. In a similar vein, Michelle Martinez (1998) quotes Rosener’s (1997) claim that “Most women [managers] don’t want to fit into a male-dominated company mold”, as well as citing research data from US consultancy Catalyst which suggest that “The women [managers, all of whom had quit their jobs,] . . . surveyed were either moving to companies who provided a more level playing field, or starting their own businesses”. In fact Catalyst (1998) have produced a manual which they suggest will enable organizations to retain their female human resource, based on “best practices from the corporate leaders”. Organizations cited include Motorola, Deloitte and Touche, IBM, Avon, American Airlines, McDonald’s and Texas Instruments. Another category of “female escapee” is the woman achiever who gives up work because she finds juggling work and domestic commitments impossible, and wants to put her family first.

The crucial point here is that modern work environments encourage and nurture masculine ways of relating to self and of behaving. However, organizations are not the only social site where this takes place – and masculinity is not uniform. Neither is masculinity static. Kerfoot (1999, 2000) (Kerfoot and Knights, 1999) asserts that demands on managers are changing as organizations become increasingly concerned with flexibility and quality in order to assure responsiveness to customers and, therefore, continued profitability in a highly charged business environment. Kerfoot argues that managers now find themselves responsible for getting the best out of their staff, for fully exploiting the creativity and potential of their organization’s human resource, for extracting the optimum levels of productivity and service, as opposed to simply seeing workers as a “necessary evil” (Kerfoot, 1999, p. 191). She suggests that managers now have to “communicate with, rather than dictate to, subordinates. This is in a manner that demands more sophisticated means of control and direction than through the traditional impersonal hierarchical chain of command” (2000, p. 232). That is to say, Kerfoot has it that a certain “feminization” of management is taking place within which managers must display both “social skills” and “emotional awareness”,

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and build at least a degree of intimacy with their staff. This, she also claims, creates difficulties for managers because intimacy of any kind equates to a certain vulnerability, a revealing of aspects of oneself that self-estranged forms of masculinity insists are hidden away.

Perhaps, then, as Kerfoot and Knights (1999) suggest, new forms of management are challenging dominant forms of organizational masculinity. Do those identifying with “old” masculinity – controlling, detached, impersonal, hierarchical – risk having their carefully honed traits and behaviours deemed unproductive in current organizational environments, even to the extent that these men and women lose their jobs? Can we speculate that an unintended consequence of such (new management) practices would lead to a fundamental questioning of masculinity in management, organization and subjectivity? Does such critical reflection on the business of management itself (hold) the key to creating the conditions within which an alternative means of managing can emerge – one that is grounded in non-instrumental modes of relating to others (Kerfoot and Knights, 1999, p. 212)?

In fact we would argue that such changes in management techniques and approaches can be seen very differently – that the required shift towards a more open and engaged form of communication on the part of managers could be understood as a colonization of the feminine with the result of reinforcing the edifice of masculinism. This may well make management/masculinity easier to perform in the sense that it becomes less anxious and less obsessed with control in its “trying on” of feminine intimacy. As Brittan (1989, p. 187) has it, “hegemonic masculinity is able to defuse crisis tendencies in the gender order by using counter and oppositional discourse for its own purposes.”

The above analysis supports the view that masculinity is historical in itself, existing in different forms in different times, in different cultures and in different locations within the same culture (Connell, 1995; Alvesson and Billing, 2000). However, while organizational masculinity itself might shift in emphasis, or exist in multiple forms in the same cultural site, or even in multiple forms in the same organization, this is unlikely to mean that men relinquish any of their privilege – although what is also clear is that the requirement to do masculine behaviour, of whatever sort, is a social challenge, not a natural expression of the essence of being male. In the workplace, behaving in this way in order to succeed as a “manager” is problematic – the demands of masculine management are potentially damaging, not just to male (and female) managers themselves, but also to their staff, their colleagues, their customers, their families and the community at large. In the quest to become a “real manager”, people may come to depersonalize others, to turn them into objects and resources rather than see them as fellow human beings. At the same time, sacrificing a whole range of one’s own experience causes managers to become desensitized, further diminishing their capacities to empathize with and care about others, even themselves, suppressing “a range of emotions, needs, and possibilities, such as nurturing, receptivity, empathy, and compassion . . . because they might restrict [the] ability and desire to control [them]selves or dominate [other] human beings” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 148). Macho managers who are hard on their employees are often even harder on themselves, and this self-sacrifice is another important element of masculine experience (Donaldson, 1991). At the end of this process of stifling emotion, thwarting impulses, suppressing spontaneity for the sake of control, concealing true feelings and intentions – the process

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of self-discipline – managers come to regard their selves as just another resource, just another commodity to be “downsized” if necessary (Jackall, 1988). Management is predicated on particular forms of masculine identity work which limit the range of possibilities for managerial subjects to interact with others, and thus make for alienation and self-estrangement, but which simultaneously devalue other, more engaged forms of interaction (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996; Kerfoot, 1999, 2000). Thus managers may do things, but they do not necessarily feel that it was themselves who acted – they often see themselves as playing a role. Similarly, they may endure a great deal of stress as a result of the alienating and disembodied effects of the management role, becoming unable to assess the effects that the labour of management is having on their physical and emotional well-being. It may be others who have to inform such an individual of the damage that he or she is sustaining as a result (Lennie, 2000, pp. 135-6).

#### *Feminine values*

In the light of the above, the question we must now ask is: would feminine values provide an alternative to the dominance of masculine identities in workplaces? Ruth Hines says yes – that feminine values should be reintroduced into organizations to balance out the values of controlling, competitive, aggressive masculinity. She claims that the existing imbalance is damaging to personal survival, growth and wholeness, psychologically, physically and spiritually. This argument says that what is at stake is not just the suppression of women, individually or as a group, but the suppression of ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are considered feminine. These possibilities for thinking, feeling and acting become unavailable to women or men (Hines, 1992, pp. 314-15, 317). The wide-ranging taboo on the feminine at work is seen to be problematic because organizational subjects come to relate to themselves and to others in highly restricted and restrictive ways. They can neither be fully themselves nor fully human. A better balance of organizational values would, therefore, ensure a healthier workplace. Frenier (1996) agrees. Writing from a perspective informed by the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, Frenier asserts that we all have masculine and feminine aspects to our characters, whether we are male or female. She goes on to claim that an injection of feminine values into modern organizations, to compliment the existing emphasis on the masculine, will make our progress towards genuinely sustainable lifestyles (a goal she sees as particularly important) more straightforward. Frenier claims that the feminine turns on dialogue, reflection and the development of community, the better to challenge some of the maxims we organize by – for example, “growth is the name of the game”. Her theme is one of encouraging not only our continued well-being but also our commercial success. In a similar vein, Boucher (1997) suggests that the women managers she spoke to about leadership sought to actively “reject the stereotypical (male) values of a leader (emotional distance, objectivity, unconditional confidence, etc.) and develop a clear sense of their own values”. This, as she argues, tempers “some of the more potentially self-destructive aspects of this social construction of leadership” (Boucher, 1997, p. 155) through its emphasis on connectedness and relatedness (with oneself and others), integrity and honesty.

The kind of argument presented by Hines, Frenier and Boucher does not necessarily privilege the feminine over the masculine but, rather, catalogues the problems which an imbalance of values can generate in the organization. It claims that organizations should be informed by a consideration of what they presently do not welcome – the values of the feminine – or at least by a critical examination of the masculine character

of modern organizational values/managerial practice and its consequences. As Alvesson and Billing (2000, p. 149) suggest, although there are undoubtedly problems with some of the available constructions of feminine values, as well as with certain suggestions about how they can benefit organizations, as we have already established in our discussion of the gender in management literature, feminine leadership could “be seen as a constructive counterfoil to prevailing or older ideas about leadership, a counterfoil making it easier for a number of females – and progressive men – to identify with leadership and get some guidelines and legitimation”. They continue by pointing out that men and women who manage using the range of gendered behaviours may well be more effective because of their ability to care and share as well as to direct and control (p. 152)

As a view of gender, this is, as we have implied above, too static. Gender emerges and changes in a dynamic between a variety of features and forms of masculinity and femininity, which grow alongside each other. In establishing such relations detail is everything. A changing and dynamic gender identity transcends its roles in constant becoming: it may become genderful – so expansive and inclusive in its myriad gender alignments that it cannot be aligned or consigned within gender limits, as everything is recognised as a form of gender; or it may become ungendered, where gender is dissipated, overlain by and completely absorbed into so many other alignments (i.e. as a dimension of them) that it ceases to function as a category. In staying in motion, in change, it resists those definitions that fix and name it and thus make it one thing or the other. Gender is not the outcome of a performance but is the process of the performance – it is not what you do, it is the way that you do it. From a research point of view, this means that ongoing studies of the organizational micro-practices by which gendered subjectivity is shaped, the actual relations of power, knowledge and gender in talk, myth, image and action, need to be produced as a matter of course if we are to understand better how gendered identity emerges, is changed by and itself affects management practice over time.

### **Gendering change: theory and practice**

Change theory has been with us for some time, but with specific relevance to organizations and action then Lewin’s (1947, 1951) “unfreezing-refreezing” model is perhaps the foundation or at least point of departure for most modern approaches. It is not hard to see that this approach and the “stepwise” approaches that follow have implicitly incorporated a masculinist model of change – where fixity is the norm, change has to be championed and involves action upon and object, and stability reasserted. Planned organizational change, with goal-setting and progress measuring through stages, with models like the Managerial grid to guide it, elaborates the same basic assumptions and has cast a long shadow through to the present day. Cyclical models have often done little more than to join the end of a straight line to its beginning and have established little sense of openness about the cycles that they describe. In fact, although much formal theorising about change has adopted characteristics of hegemonic masculinist reasoning in their thinking, they have largely ignored gender as an explicit factor in change whilst their concept of change is gendered.

From the 1980s onward, however, there was something of a shift of focus as culture change, symbolic management and the management of meaning moved to centre stage,

“feminizing” the old brutal managerial ways, getting people to go the extra mile because it feels good, not because you told them so. It seemed that the old style change practices of presenting the numbers, claiming no alternative and using power to drive change through had finally had their day; even the softer OD models had continued to cling to a data-driven, science based model where the evidence drove the change even when the evidence was soft in its origins. OD lent itself to a tools and techniques approach, and thus often, especially in the UK, became easily co-opted into managerialist agendas. Change often became co-optation and manipulation as it was repeatedly implemented by managers – even very senior ones – with no feel for the underlying values of the approach. Wajcman’s (1988) study of companies that won awards for their diversity programmes demonstrates that even best-practice companies fail to change gender discrimination patterns substantially and women, if they want to succeed, need to manage like a man. We should hardly be surprised that OD suffered from the same ailment, in general, despite some efforts in the community to stop these things happening, and the broader societal changes in lifestyle and work-life roles.

As far as theorising change and theorising from change practice goes, there are certain areas that are at best under-researched, and need further work if we are to advance our knowledge of gender and change in practice. First, some work needs to be done on the deep dynamics of change theory, looking at the psychodynamics and psychoanalytics of gender in particular. Second, the specifically gender experiences (including bodily experience) of men and women involved in actual change processes across sectors need to be explored. Specific varieties of this that need attention are the experiences of men involved on non-masculinist strategies in masculine organizational cultures (i.e. on varieties of masculinities and how these get discursively redefined in change processes); women involved in bringing change about either as internal change agents or external consultants; women’s roles in mergers and acquisitions (including international); women’s involvement in innovation; and women entrepreneurs, a much under-researched sector in itself.

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