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FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF RESEARCH ON GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT AND AUTHOR

This paper is a critical review of ten years of empirical research on gender in organizations published in four major academic journals. This review focuses primarily on studies of sex differences in the way people think, feel, and behave. Using several feminist perspectives, the paper explores how the assumptions about gender that underlie this work limit our understandings of gender, power, and organizational behavior. Finally, new constructs and new directions for research on gender in organizations that incorporate feminist perspectives are developed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Studies of sex difference and sex discrimination constitute a large portion of the research on the role of sex and gender in organizational behavior (Calas and Jacques, 1988). Much of this work has been motivated by feminist concerns about the asymmetric division of power and privilege that characterizes gender relations—a division that typically favors men. Yet few researchers interested in the causes and consequences of asymmetric gender relations in organizational settings have incorporated the work of feminist theorists from disciplines outside the field of organizational behavior into their conceptions of gender. Such feminist perspectives can enrich our understandings of these phenomena, first, by providing critical insight into the meaning of gender as an analytical category; second, by providing a critique of current research; and finally, by suggesting alternative ways of conceptualizing and analyzing gender in organizations.

I used the empirical research published in four major academic journals from January 1986 to December 1995 to represent the nature and direction of research on sex and gender in mainstream organizational behavior. The four journals I reviewed are *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. In a recent study of journal influence in organizational behavior, these four journals ranked among the top six empirical journals in the field (Johnson and Podsakoff, 1994).

Sixty-seven percent of the 118 studies I reviewed addressed research questions concerning differences between the way men and women think, feel, or behave. Forty-eight percent addressed questions regarding differential treatment of men and women in work settings. Altogether, 111 articles, or 94 percent of the sample, investigated sex differences and/or differential treatment on the basis of sex. This paper examines these 111 articles to determine what assumptions about gender and sex explicitly or implicitly underlie this research and to explore how these assumptions have shaped and limited both the scholarly and practical utility of this work.

In particular, I explore how research in organizational behavior might mine feminist theories to enrich and expand our understanding of the role of sex and gender in organizations. My analysis draws significantly from the writings of feminist scholars who are engaged in the debates and controversies within feminism about both gender and difference, including political scientists (e.g., Di Stefano, 1990; Flax, 1990; Hartsock, 1985) and philosophers (e.g., Fraser, 1989; Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Harding, 1986) with a postmodern perspective. Their analysis of the assumptions that undergird how we think and, equally important, do not think, about existing gender arrangements has generated the insights most germane to my critique.

A brief overview of two modern feminist perspectives on gender—one which emphasizes similarities between men and women and one which emphasizes differences—follows. This debate exposes the complexities of gender and introduces power as a central, constitutive element of gender. I then summarize some of the postmodern feminist critiques of these two positions within modern feminism. By contesting the assumptive foundations of modern feminist scholarship, postmodern scholars have articulated the inextricable link between power and gender in compelling and fruitful ways. Modern and postmodern schools of feminist thought chart a vast and fertile terrain for organizational scholars interested in sex and gender—a terrain virtually untouched in the research I reviewed. This critique led

to a set of recommendations for how to use these feminist insights to transform research on gender in organizations.

II. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON SEX, GENDER, AND DIFFERENCE

The relevant debates among and between modern and postmodern feminist theorists frame the issues and concerns I raise in the subsequent review of the organizational literature. These debates have centered on questions about the meaning of sex and gender as analytic categories and the implications of various positions on difference.

A. AN OVERVIEW OF MODERN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

In the 1970s feminist theorizing was largely motivated by the insight that sexism and androcentrism in the male-dominated academic disciplines had sold short the capabilities, values, and perspectives of women. Feminists argued that this misrepresentation of women's lives produced a partial and distorted understanding of culture and history; many argued further that this served to obfuscate relations of power and to reinforce the devaluation of women's roles and contributions (Hartsock, 1985). Throughout the 1980s feminists were busy documenting the variety of ways in which male-biased theories failed to capture the essence of women's lives. Most notable in this genre is Carol Gilligan's (1982) feminine model of moral development, based in the experiences of women and girls, which stands as direct testimony against the validity of Kohlberg's ostensibly universal model. Kohlberg's model was built exclusively on the experiences of men and boys and was used as a standard against which women were consistently to fall short.

This earlier feminist work made important conceptual and theoretical contributions to our understanding of gender. Perhaps first among these was the notion of gender as a concept distinct from sex: sex is a biological category associated with a person's chromosomes and expressed variously in a person's genitals, internal reproductive organs, and hormones, whereas gender is a social category associated with a complex set of social processes that create and sustain differences and, more importantly, inequality between the sexes (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). This idea represented a significant break from the earlier conventional discourse which assumed that sex roles were biologically based such that the male's capacity for instrumental work in the public sphere was naturally complemented by the female's ability to manage the expressive aspects of family life in the private sphere (Conway, Bourque, and Scott, 1987). The concept of gender as a societal construct made it possible for feminists simultaneously to explain and dispel the notion that biological and social sex differences are naturally aligned, and in so doing, to expose and undermine the cultural bases of sexism (Di Stefano, 1990).

Within modern feminism, analyses of gender have typically focused on differences: what constitutes masculine and feminine gender identities, whether and why sex differences exist, and with what consequences for men and women. At least two strategies of argument concerning gender difference have shaped this inquiry: feminist rationalism and feminist antirationalism (Di Stefano, 1990).[1]

According to the feminist rationalist argument, women have been unfairly denied the respect they are due as human beings on the basis of an insidious assumption that they are less rational and more natural than men. Proponents of this view argue that sex difference is a fiction used to legitimate the unequal treatment of women and men. Difference, therefore, must be repudiated in order for women to assume their rightful place in society as the nondifferentiated equals of men. Moreover, they argue, the

prejudices against women that underlie the sex-difference argument have been perpetuated by science badly done (Harding, 1986). They argue that these prejudices can be empirically undermined by producing counter-evidence through stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry. The women's movement makes a better science possible by alerting everyone to the distorted and clouded lenses through which we have been experiencing the world and by creating more research opportunities for women and feminists; because of their social circumstances and political interests, women and feminists are more likely than men or nonfeminists to notice and address androcentric biases (Harding, 1986).

Feminist antirationalism attacks rationalists' belief in the autonomy of reason, objective truth, and progress through scientific discovery as pretentious and naive. It protests rationalists' opposition to nature, the body, and intuition with charges that it is antifemale, and invokes instead a strong notion of sex difference. This strategy divides the world into male experience and female experience "in order to critique the power of the former and valorize the alternative residing in the latter" (Ferguson, 1991: 322). Proponents of this argument typically attribute such differences in experience to a sexual division of labor in which women, who have spent a good part of their lives bearing and rearing children, are more bound to the private sphere, whereas men, who have had both the time and mobility to engage in political activities outside the home, are more bound to the public sphere. These arguments take women's activities in, for example, sexuality (MacKinnon, 1979), reproduction (Hartsock, 1985), and mothering (Chodorow, 1979), and not women's genetic make-up per se, to be the origins of femininity. These scholars have generated numerous new theories of the feminine dimensions of public and private life. These theories highlight the masculine meaning and bias that imbued supposed gender-neutral understandings of reason, morality, cognitive development, autonomy, justice, history, theory, progress, and enlightenment (Di Stefano, 1990). The purpose of this strategy is to create a women's point of view, to give voice to a women's perspective in order to reject the male ordering of the world. It envisions a revised social order that would celebrate women in their feminized difference rather than devalue them as "imperfect copies of the Everyman" (Di Stefano, 1990: 67).

These concepts and strategies of argument represent a thumbnail sketch of some of the major themes in modern feminist theory. More recently, a number of feminist theorists have become critical of what they now see as the oversimplifications and generalizations of this period in feminism (Bordo, 1990). They characterize these modernist conceptions of gender as "false extrapolations from the experience of the white, middle-class, heterosexual women who dominated the second wave of feminism" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990: 33). A concomitant rise in expository writings by women of color, poor women, and lesbians lent credence to these criticisms. As a result, many feminists have begun to grapple with their own assumptions about sex, gender, and difference as embedded within a specific historical, social, and geographical context. These feminists found a natural, if at times uneasy, ally in postmodernism.

B. AN OVERVIEW OF POSTMODERN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

At its core, postmodernism criticizes Enlightenment ideals as illegitimately claiming universal status while, in fact, serving specific political interests. This critique gave feminists a basis for their increasing awareness of the potentially oppressive universalizing tendencies in their own work (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990): "Where once the prime objects of academic feminist critique were the phallocentric narratives of our male-dominated disciplines, now feminist criticism has turned to its own narratives, finding them reductionist, totalizing, inadequately nuanced, valorizing of gender difference, unconsciously racist, and elitist" (Bordo, 1990: 135).

The postmodern critique within feminism represents a significant political, conceptual, and theoretical shift from earlier feminist work. Although some have argued that the pragmatic political exigencies of feminism require retaining certain modernist notions, many feminists share a new skepticism about gender and the core assumptions associated with it (Bordo, 1990; Butler, 1992). Central to these concerns are "commonly held but unwarranted and essentialist assumptions about the nature of human beings and the conditions for social life" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990: 27). By "essentialist" assumptions, these critics are referring to the premise, implicit in modern theories of gender, that there is some true essence of femaleness, shared by all women, and likewise some true essence of maleness, shared by all men, presumably resulting from their respective reproductive functions. Although modern feminists' appeals to gender (as distinct from sex) promised to dismantle the presumed fixed and universal association of femininity with biological reproduction, postmodernists argue that these essentialist assumptions have persisted in modern feminists' continued use of male and female, masculine and feminine, as primary, ahistorical, and transcultural categories. This has had the insidious effect of concealing important aspects of gender, especially aspects related to power.

According to the postmodern critique, both rationalism and antirationalism mistakenly appeal to a series of putatively natural, hierarchically-ranked oppositions—reason-emotion, fact-value, mind-body, public-private—in which the first term in each pair is validated by its association with masculinity while the second is invalidated by its association with femininity. This appeal to an oppositional framework sustains a view of woman as problematic. She is the "question," the "other" in need of explanation; only she has a gender with which to reckon. Ironically, they argue, this perpetuates the dominance and apparent neutrality of man, and all that is associated with man; it legitimates a view of him as unproblematic or, at the very least, exempted from determination by gender relations.

From a postmodern perspective, the rationalists' attempts to deal with woman by denying and eliminating sex difference in the service of a universal humanism is dubious in part, because that universal humanism already presupposes a particular gendered, i.e., masculine, version of itself. Because the cultural ideal is defined in opposition to the feminine it cannot easily accommodate women (Di Stephano, 1990).

Yet, the antirationalists' attempts to preserve her "in the figure of the differentiated female subject" (Di Stephano, 1990: 77) is also problematic, because it does so at the expense of her transformation and liberation from the oppressive conventions of femininity. Indeed, from a postmodern perspective, antirationalism is fundamentally flawed by its failure to recognize that the feminine itself has been partly constituted by its existence within the male-dominated social structure it ostensibly seeks to oppose. Antirationalism takes the meanings that have been associated with women under certain oppressive

conditions of history to inhere in the real nature of women themselves. This refusal to criticize the feminine assumes that women are not impaired by their social experience. Ironically, for antirationalism to examine critically the oppressive structures that give rise to this highly exalted, woman's point of view would invite a question that subverts its central premise: What would happen to woman's point of view if these oppressive structures were destroyed? Hence, the antirationalist's wish to celebrate woman's goodness seems to require the perpetuation of her subordination (Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988).

A further consequence of the binary and oppositional logic that underlies both rationalist and antirationalist conceptions of gender identity is the notion that men and women are mutually exclusive categories: an individual has only one gender and is never the other or both (Flax, 1990). Hence, woman is defined by what her opposite, man, is not, and gender collapses into sex as if it were a natural fact. Yet this dichotomy seems a caricature of human experience. For example, to fail to see power in women's relationships with their children or caretaking in men's relationships with their protégés is to deny the complexities of both women's and men's experience, even within their traditional domains. In addition, maintaining the illusion of male autonomy and instrumentality at home and in the workplace ignores the work women often do that supports and sustains this illusion. Perhaps most problematic, representing gender as dichotomized traits imputes symmetry to an unequal relationship. Indeed, "it is only by marginalizing their similarities and obscuring their interdependencies that the meaning of male and female as opposites is stabilized and the value of one over the other is sustained" (Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988: 460). According to this view, the representation of gender as opposition is a myth that both originates in and preserves male dominance.

Modern feminism thus fails to consider the possibility that a given cultural identity might have interests and, more importantly, that interests and power relations might help to establish cultural identities in their reified and "oppositional" modes to begin with. Lacking a theory of gender as a process sustained by and potentially transformed through social relations, the modern perspective overlooks the everyday interactions that create and sustain different forms of gender, including its inversions and evasions and its many other manifestations shifting across time, place, and culture.

Finally, modern feminism rests on the problematic assumption that other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, are subsidiary to the more basic category of sex. This idea arises from the view that sexism is a more basic form of oppression than racism, classism, or homophobia. It presumes a universal separation of men and women into public and private spheres of activity, respectively, and that this separation produces two distinct kinds of selves, one relatively common across cultures to men, and the other relatively common across cultures to women (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990). According to postmodernists, the tendency to project onto all women and men qualities that develop under historically and culturally specific social conditions threatens to mask or obliterate the multiplicity of human perspectives and experiences, especially those of disempowered groups. Postmodernism thus implicates gender "in a disastrous and oppressive fiction, the fiction of 'woman,' which runs roughshod over multiple differences among and within women who are ill-served by a conception of gender as basic" (Di Stephano, 1990: 65). In addition, by giving sex a privileged identity status, modern feminism allows women, more easily than men, to escape examination of their own participation in relations of domination, such as those rooted in race, class, and sexual identity.

III. FEMINISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

These controversies and debates among feminist theorists raise important issues for organizational researchers interested in gender. Most importantly, they make clear that studying gender requires a researcher to make a number of assumptions that shape his or her research questions and outcomes in critical ways. In this section, I explore how the approach researchers have taken in the studies I reviewed frames and limits what we know about gender in organizations.

The Annex Table, Section VII, summarizes the 118 studies I identified for this review. The criteria for identifying a study were that the title or abstract mention "sex" or "gender," or that the introduction include a discussion of "sex" or "gender" as an area investigated in the research. Although I do not discuss each of the studies in the review specifically, I draw widely from them to illustrate my points.

It is important to note that researchers in this sample rarely discussed or defined the concept of gender. Instead, there were fleeting references to gender as a "personal characteristic" (Shore and Thornton, 1986: 126; Zaccaro, Craig, and Quinn, 1991: 24), a "demographic characteristic" (Raza and Carpenter, 1987: 596), or an "individual attribute" (Austin and Hanisch, 1990: 77), and to a sex/gender effect as an "individual difference" (Brockner and Adsit, 1986: 585; Shaffer, 1987: 115) or a "basic difference between men and women in personal orientation" (Konrad and Gutek, 1986: 422). These references reflect a limited conception of gender as a personal attribute embodied within individuals.

Virtually all of the sex-difference research I reviewed reinforced this view by operationally defining gender as anatomical sex. Study participants were assigned to one of two "gender" categories, male or female. Indeed, most used the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeably, as though synonyms. Although Witt and Nye (1992: 910) made some attempt to distinguish between the two, referring to "nonbiologically based differences between men and women in terms of gender rather than sex," they nevertheless went on to use biological sex as a proxy for gender in their analyses. Sex, therefore, was a black box, a marker without any clearly theorized content.

The concept of gender as a personal attribute, together with the use of sex to operationalize gender, may represent the vestigial remains of a prefeminist, biological model of gender. Yet virtually no one appealed to gender as a biological imperative. On the contrary, several explicitly rejected this notion (e.g., Duxbury and Higgins, 1991; Witt and Nye, 1992). At the same time, none attempted to explore biological sex as a culturally constructed category, nor did anyone take up the postmodernist notion of the biological (sex) and the social (gender) as interrelated, rather than separate or synonymous, constructs.

Situated squarely within the modernist, though not necessarily feminist, tradition, the body of work I reviewed communicates that what is fundamentally interesting about the categories male and female is whether, to what extent, and under what conditions people's membership in one or the other explains variability in two kinds of outcomes: 1) the way people think, feel, and behave, i.e., sex differences, and 2) the way people are treated, i.e., differential treatment. I have focused most of my critique on the sex-difference research, which comprised 67 percent of the studies in this sample, but have given some attention to the research on differential treatment as well, a topic investigated in 48 percent of the sample. For my critique, I looked primarily to the theoretical rationales these researchers provided, or

failed to provide, for their hypotheses; the hypotheses themselves; and the explanations they offered for their results. Informed by the work of feminist scholars, I have organized this critique according to six themes. Central to most themes are the problems associated with a lack of attention to power as a core element of gender.

A. THE MAJORITY OF SEX-DIFFERENCE RESEARCH IS ATHEORETICAL

Focused primarily on marshalling evidence to support or refute the notion that men and women think, feel, and behave differently, the studies of sex differences I reviewed were remarkably devoid of any but the most cursory discussions of how difference is established and what it means. Indeed, the majority of the sex-difference studies in the sample provided no theoretical rationale for the hypotheses tested. Instead, most researchers relied on sex-role stereotypes to motivate their hypotheses.

For example, hypothesizing that women have lower self-pay expectations than men and therefore will be satisfied with less pay than men receive, Jackson, Gardner, and Sullivan (1992) speculated that "women may have lower pay expectations than men because they value pay less than men do, perhaps because they value other job outcomes more (e.g., friendly co-workers or pleasant working conditions)." They offered no theory for why any of these differences might exist.

Others simply cited previous research that showed an empirical link between sex and certain outcomes as the rationale for their sex-difference hypotheses. For example, Hitt and Barr (1989) cited a number of studies that demonstrated a link between "stable individual differences in personal characteristics," such as sex, and people's ratings of job applicants. On the basis of these findings, they hypothesized that managers' sex will affect their favorability ratings of job applicants.

Post hoc interpretations of sex-difference findings were no more informative. A number of researchers "explained" their findings by speculating about other stereotypical sex differences that might covary with the ones they found, attributing sex-difference findings on one dimension to sex differences that might exist on other dimensions. Brockner and Adsit (1986) speculated that men's greater likelihood to rely on equity in reward allocations might be explained by sex differences in attribution processes or perceptions of relevant inputs. Jackson et al. (1992) speculated that sex differences in fair pay standards might be explained by sex differences in attitudes about money. Benedict and Levine (1988) surmised that women's tendency to delay and distort performance feedback relative to men might be explained by sex differences in confidence and/or concern for subordinates. As in these studies, many researchers simply forwarded sex-role stereotypes as hypotheses and, when supported, attributed the stereotypes they observed to stereotypes they did not observe.

The absence of theory was also evident in studies that reported no sex differences. In a similar strategy to that above, some explained null findings by speculating that sex differences on dimensions they did not observe may have suppressed sex differences on dimensions they did observe. For example, Duxbury and Higgins (1991) found no sex difference in the strength of the relationship between family conflict and quality of family life and suggested that women, whom they had expected to show a stronger relationship between these two variables, may be less willing than men to admit to interference between their parental responsibilities and work.

Most, however, interpreted null findings as evidence that the outcomes they examined were unrelated to gender (e.g., Shore and Thornton, 1986; Turban and Dougherty, 1994). For example, Witt and Nye (1992: 915), who failed to replicate an earlier sex-difference finding, concluded that "[p]erhaps gender differences in organizational behavior [are] now less significant than previously observed or thought." Some applauded these kinds of results as a basis for dispelling gender stereotypes (Lefkowitz, 1994) or used them to conclude that things are getting better for women (Dreher and Ash, 1990). These researchers took for granted that the similarities they observed were often the result of both women and men behaving in a manner that was consistent with their expectations for men. Their efforts to explain null findings, therefore, tended to focus on women and why they had not behaved as expected.

What these researchers overlooked is the possibility that similarities between men and women might result from societal or organizational pressures on *both* to conform to a particular image; hence, no one speculated as to why—or with what individual and organizational consequences—that image was more aligned with traditionally masculine than with traditionally feminine traits. To the extent that such assimilative pressures underlie null findings in this research, it is misleading to interpret them as evidence that gender is inoperative or that similarity is a sign of gender equity. In failing to explore the gendered nature of their null findings, these researchers miss an important opportunity to explore connections among gender, power, and organizations.

B. THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS THAT DO EXIST ARE TYPICALLY BASED ON A PALTRY NOTION OF SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

Although the majority of studies in the sample offered no theoretical rationale for the sex-difference hypotheses they tested, of those that did, many appealed to some aspect of sex-role socialization as their motivating theory. For example, in a comparative study of the survival and success of small businesses headed by women and men, Kalleberg and Leicht (1991) hypothesized that businesses owned by women are less likely to be successful because "women are generally thought to be less likely than men to engage in innovative behaviors" and "[i]nnovation is regarded as essential to small business growth and development." Why would women be less likely to engage in innovative behaviors? "One reason," they speculated, "is the social disapproval girls are likely to incur for straying from socially accepted, gender normative patterns of behavior and the encouragement and tolerance that boys typically receive for engaging in innovative play and nonconforming behavior" (Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991: 142).

Similarly, Stevens, Bavetta, and Gist (1993: 724) hypothesized that women would be less effective than men in salary negotiation because "women may possess less tactical knowledge about negotiations than do men" as a result of "differences in childhood friendship and play patterns [that] lead to gender differences in adult communication styles. Specifically, boys often play in large groups, in which the emphasis is on achieving status within an emergent hierarchy; conversely, girls often play in pairs, in which the emphasis is on achieving intimacy through equality." These childhood play patterns "sensitize men to status distinctions and women to fluctuations in relationship intimacy" which gives men greater tactical knowledge, and hence better negotiation skills.

None of these studies examined sex-role socialization processes directly, nor explicated in sufficient or compelling detail a theory of how or why sex-role socialization in childhood should influence adult men

and women in organizational settings. Therefore, the sex-difference hypotheses that were theoretically motivated in this sample of studies often amounted to little more than expectations that men and women will think, feel, and behave in accordance with sex-role stereotypes. Moreover, by limiting their conceptualization of sex-role socialization to childhood, most researchers failed to consider how organizations might participate in the socialization process—how sex-role socialization might continue through social arrangements and interactions in workplaces at least as powerfully as it occurs in families, schools, and other more conventionally recognized socializing institutions. Instead, they assumed the more limited view that adult workers are static, already fully socialized human beings, ignoring the role that organizations may play in sustaining and reinforcing traditional notions of gender.

C. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS, BASED ON FALSE DICHOTOMIES, PRECIPITATELY REPLACE EXPLANATIONS HAVING TO DO WITH GENDER

A number of researchers in the sample were preoccupied with the question of whether gender was the "actual factor" (Witt and Nye, 1992: 915) underlying observed differences between men and women or whether there was some other individual or situational factor masquerading as a sex/gender effect. Without an adequate theory of gender, its value as an explanatory factor is limited from the start: whether the "actual factor" or not, gender was, on the whole, a hollow construct. But pitting the sex/gender explanation against alternatives raises an additional problem. It forecloses the possibility of exploring how those alternatives might themselves be "gendered." This was apparent in researchers' attempts to explain away observed sex effects post hoc, as well as in their planned, empirical tests of competing hypotheses.

1. Post hoc explanations

The search for the actual factor responsible for observed sex differences generated a range of ostensibly gender-neutral alternative explanations, most offered post hoc. For example, when Heilman, Simon, and Repper (1987) showed that sex-based preferential selection had a negative impact on women's, but not on men's, self-perceptions and self-evaluations, they speculated that "*[w]hat is critical is not the sex of the individual* but the degree to which he or she is confident of his/her ability to perform a job well" (Heilman et al., 1987: 67-68, emphasis added). Similarly, when Mainiero (1986) found, after controlling for job dependency, that women were more likely than men to acquiesce in frustrating situations, she speculated that this may have been the result of "variables affecting the situations themselves," in particular, the expected outcome of the situation. Men may have more confidence in the success of their outcomes, increasing their use of the persuasion strategy, whereas women may have less confidence, increasing their acquiescence. "Considered this way," she argued, "it may be that the expectation of a particular outcome, *rather than gender*, influenced these results" (Mainiero, 1986: 649, emphasis added). And when Witt and Nye (1992) failed to replicate Brockner and Adsit's (1986) finding that perceptions of fairness were more highly correlated with satisfaction for men than for women, they concluded that "*the issue may not be gender* but rather some other situational or biographical variable, such as 'breadwinner' status" (Witt and Nye, 1986: 915, emphasis added).

By framing their explanations as mutually exclusive, these researchers ignored the possibility that the "alternative" explanation they offered is itself as "gendered" as the "sex" or "gender" explanation they intended it to replace. Why, for example, in the Heilman, et al. and Mainiero studies, were women less self-confident than men? With which sex is "breadwinner status" most often associated? The answers

to these questions, and no doubt others, inevitably cast these alternatives back to the lot of gender. But with no theoretical basis on which to explore the connections between gender and the alternatives proposed, the dichotomies constructed in these studies remained intact leaving both gender and the "alternatives" theoretically underdeveloped.

2. Critical tests

Efforts to identify the actual factor responsible for observed differences between men and women were not merely speculative. Several studies involved critical tests to determine whether sex, on the one hand, or some individual or situational difference, on the other, was the better predictor of how people think, feel, and behave. This kind of research involves identifying variables that are typically confounded with sex; unconfounding them, either by research design or statistically; and then looking to see whether sex still explains variance in outcomes.

For example, in a study designed to distinguish between the effects of sex and experimentally manipulated levels of self-confidence on the way people react to preferential selection, Heilman, Lukas, and Kaplow (1990) found that low-confident men and women had more negative self-views as a result of preferential selection whereas high-confident men and women showed no such effects. They interpreted these results as confirmation of Heilman et al.'s (1987) earlier speculation: "[reactions to] preferential selection are determined by confidence about ability and not by the sex of the selectee" (Heilman et al., 1990: 214). This interpretation, however, still begs the question as to why, among those in the preferential selection condition whose confidence levels were not manipulated, only women evidenced "negative effects" (Heilman et al., 1987, 1990). Rather than clarifying the relationship between gender and reactions to preferential selection, this experiment merely demonstrated that if men and women were similarly self-confident and processed information about their abilities similarly, they would react similarly to preferential selection. The argument is tautological: if men and women were the same there would be no differences between them. The study design, which uncorrelated sex and self-confidence in an attempt to disentangle them as competing explanations, obscured again the more pertinent question: Why were they correlated in the first place?

In their apparent haste to reject sex as an explanation in favor of confidence, Heilman and her colleagues offered the following rationale for their results:

> *Unlike merit-based selection, which implies that skill and ability were the pivotal deciding points in hiring, preferential selection implies that a work-irrelevant characteristic had special weight in the selection decision process. Thus, the external verification of competence, which is a natural consequence of merit-based selection, is absent in preferential selection situations. . . . It is only when an individual harbors self-doubt and negative performance expectations that the absence of competence verification inherent in preferential selection has deleterious consequences* (Heilman et al., 1990: 204.)

In the absence of information that would suggest otherwise, they argued, men feel competent at the start whereas women do not; hence, the method of leader selection affects women but not men.

This reasoning rests on three potentially erroneous assumptions: 1) competence verification is absent in preferential selection situations, 2) sex is a work-irrelevant characteristic, and 3) information about preferential selection would be a comparable event for both sexes, but for individual differences, such as self-confidence, that happen to covary with sex. To assert that competence verification is absent in the preferential selection condition is to act as if giving information about maleness or femaleness as a criterion for selection were a neutral event. On the contrary, in a culture in which sex connotes status (Ridgeway, 1988), people may well experience their sex as a work-relevant characteristic. Telling men that they were preferentially selected because of their sex may at least implicitly verify their competence since maleness carries with it the stereotype of competence, whereas telling women that they were preferentially selected because of their sex may do the opposite. Hence, men may experience both experimental conditions—preferential and merit-based selection—as, in one way or another, competence-verifying, whereas women do not.

This kind of interpretation, which relies on a more gendered understanding of organizational phenomena, strips the self-confidence explanation of its gender-neutral appeal, and emphasizes instead the socially constructed meaning of what is to be male or female in the settings in which these data were collected. Moreover, it brings to light the imbalance of power and status between men and women and between the characteristics associated with them.

Another set of critical-test studies used regression analysis to identify whether sex, controlling for situation, or situation, controlling for sex, explained more of the variability in the way people think, feel, or behave. Those conducting this sort of research interpreted a significant sex effect as support for the "gender hypothesis," an "individual" explanation which typically involved a story about the different sex-role socializations of men and women. A significant situation effect was grounds to reject the gender hypothesis in favor of a "social structural" explanation which typically involved a story about the relative power positions of men and women. Situational factors included amount of cross-sex contact (Konrad and Gutek, 1986), the degree to which the work environment was sexualized (Konrad and Gutek, 1986; Gutek, Cohen, and Konrad, 1990), sex composition of jobs (Gutek et al., 1990), hierarchical position (Fagenson, 1990; Lefkowitz, 1994), and the degree to which people's jobs allowed them to exercise power (Mainiero, 1986).

Although scholars have typically viewed individual and social structural perspectives as competing explanations (Riger and Galligan, 1980; Moore, 1990), upon closer reflection the dichotomy implied in this framing again appears to be a false one. For example, one could view sex-role socialization (i.e., the "gender" construct in these studies) as yet another cultural manifestation of a social structure that grows out of and reinforces an asymmetric distribution of power and privilege between men and women. Hence, the gender-*versus*-power construction might more appropriately become a gender-*as*-power construction. This latter construction blurs the distinction between the individual and the social structure within which the individual is embedded and holds new possibilities for conceptualizing both gender and power.

Those who viewed the social structural factors they studied as reflecting and sustaining power inequities (e.g., Gutek, et al., 1990; Mainiero, 1986) did not consider that sex-role socialization might similarly reflect and sustain such inequities. This problem is best illustrated by Gutek et al.'s (1990) discussion of their findings, in which they began to meld gender and power in their interpretation, but stopped short of fully integrating the two. Their finding that women reported more sexual harassment than men, independent of cross-sex contact, was to provide evidence for their "gender hypothesis," i.e., sex-role socialization. Nevertheless, in discussing this finding, they began to develop an explanation that also had to do with differences in power between the sexes, both in position at work and in society at large. They went on to note that "power is not particularly useful in explaining why men more frequently report sexualization of their work environment than women." To explain this sex effect, they returned to the dichotomous framing of their study, rejecting power in favor of their original gender/sex-role-socialization hypothesis. Men are socialized to take the role of sexual initiator in the private sphere, and this role is likely to spill over to the public sphere of work where men make more sexual comments, use more sexual language, make more direct sexual overtures, and hence, perceive more sexualization of their work environment. By posing sex-role socialization and spillover as an alternative to power, they failed to recognize the centrality of power differences in the roles men, as sexual initiators, and women, as sexual targets, have been socialized to take both in and out of work.

The juxtaposition of gender and power in this research not only impoverishes gender, it ignores the ways in which organizational power itself is imbued with gender. As Acker (1990) has argued, organizations' hierarchies are not gender-neutral. Although predicated on the logic of jobs as abstract categories that have no human occupants and no gender, hierarchies in fact are constructed on the assumption that the worker who is committed to the job and who exists only for the job is "naturally" more suited to responsibility and authority, whereas one who has multiple commitments is best suited to the lower ranks. Of course, the closest this "committed" worker comes to a real worker is the prototypical male worker whose life centers on his full-time job, which he will have throughout his life, while his wife or another woman takes care of his household and his children. The female worker, assumed to have legitimate obligations other than those required by the job, does not fit this image. She is, therefore, typically relegated to the lower ranks where a "lack of commitment" is more tenable. Hence, the ostensibly gender-neutral concepts of commitment and work marginalize women, who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a committed worker because to do so is to become like a man. So when, in organizational research, women and men are "equated" with respect to job level as a way of removing the impact of power and isolating the gender effect, we must ask: who is this woman who occupies the job whose ideal incumbent is a man? How is she perceived? What are the consequences for her and her behavior that her sex does not match her job's gender? And what of the man in this position—how does he sustain his masculine image and thereby the justification for his

"natural" fit with the job? Again, this kind of probing reveals the connections between gender and power that are lost in the critical-test framing.

Finally, it is interesting to note that those who conducted research in this genre often expressed a desire to reject the "gender" hypothesis in favor of the ostensibly gender-free, social-structural "alternative." Mainiero (1986: 648) described her finding that women were more likely than men to acquiesce in frustrating situations, even after controlling for one's relative power in the organization, as "somewhat disappointing," but noted that, "fortunately" both men and women in high power jobs used the alternative, persuasion strategy equally. This apparent aversion to the gender explanation may reflect the same concerns some feminists have voiced that sex-difference findings can be used to justify women's lower status in organizations. Ironically, however, pitting so-called individual variables, such as sex-role socialization, against social structural variables, such as power, misses an important opportunity to incorporate power more fully into theories of gender, and vice versa. With such theories, one would be hard pressed to justify status inequities.

D. MEN AND MASCULINITY ARE THE STANDARD AGAINST WHICH WOMEN ARE IMPLICITLY MEASURED

Researchers' unselfconscious focus on sex differences made their work especially vulnerable to the problem of upholding men and masculinity as the seemingly neutral standard against which to measure women. This stance legitimates men's behavior and experience as unproblematic or at the very least exempted from determination by gender relations, and targets women—to the extent that they behave or experience the world differently from men—as the group in need of explanation.

In its simplest form, this problem was apparent in the assumption that women alone are the bearers of gender. For example, in building the case for a study of gender and occupational stress, Parkes (1990) endorsed the view that in organizational research gender is absent unless women are present. "Much of the occupational-stress literature reports data only from male employees," he noted, using this as justification for why "gender issues are not addressed" in this literature. This kind of rationale clearly communicates that research about men *qua* men is inconceivable.

A series of studies published by Heilman and her colleagues further illustrate this problem (Heilman et al., 1987, 1990). They have shown consistently that sex-based preferential selection has negative effects on women but not on men. In these studies, women are the focus of much speculation as the authors work to understand why women do not evidence the same positive effects as men. Their general conclusion has been that, in the absence of information to the contrary, women harbor self-doubts about their task-related ability, whereas men do not. With its emphasis on clarifying why women show these problematic responses, however, this research is noticeably lacking in theory about what it means to be male. There was little attention, for example, to why men did not show this effect. Because the male subjects in these studies behaved in ways that appeared to be unproblematic, how they experienced and manifested their self-doubts was never the subject of inquiry. Yet more attention to men might reveal important insights about them. An alternative explanation for their results is that men and women experienced the same level of self-doubt when in the sex-based preferential treatment condition, but that men over-compensated for their feelings of self-doubt by inflating their self-ratings; hence, they failed to show the same negative effects as women. This explanation highlights the

importance of attending to people's subjective experience, which is often lost in the kinds of quantitative rating outcomes the research I reviewed typically employed.

Similarly, researchers often cast their comparisons between men and women by holding men as the standard against which women were the deviates. Heilman, Martell, and Simon (1988), for example, interpreted lower ratings of women's competence and career success, relative to men's, as the "undervaluation" of women, and higher ratings of women under different experimental conditions, as the "overvaluation" of women. Had women been used as the standard they might have interpreted their results as the overvaluation of men relative to women in the former case, and the undervaluation of men relative to women in the latter. This alternative formulation illustrates the nonempirically-based choices that researchers often make in their interpretations and how they may reflect an implicit bias against women.

E. Sex Is Accorded Privileged Identity Status

Research on sex and gender constitutes the vast majority of organizational research on identity group memberships (Nkomo, 1992). For example, of the 118 sex/gender studies in my sample, only 20 (17 percent) also included analyses of race or ethnicity, and of these, only six examined either statistically or conceptually how race and sex might interact to produce qualitatively different experiences as a function of both race and sex. Without information to the contrary, it is probably safe to assume that the remaining 98 studies in this review that did not address race were primarily concerned with differences between *white* men and women, and the differential treatment *white* men and women receive. This work therefore rests on the assumption that gender operates similarly across all racial and ethnic groups, that white women and different groups of women of color all have similar experiences, as do white men and men of color. Yet we know from the work of many feminists of color, as well as some white feminists, that white women and women of color experience very different forms of gender oppression. Additionally gender is a more complex social relation than many white feminists have understood, structured at least in part through the social relations of classism, racism, ethnocentrism, and homophobia (e.g., hooks, 1984; Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982; Hurtado, 1989; Pratt, 1984).

Failing to consider additional identity group memberships, this body of work creates and sustains a view of women as "a homogeneous mass" and leads us to "the incorrect perception of the situation of all women as the same" (Mednick, 1989). To the extent that gender research describes *a* voice for women, and "[does] not specify which women, under which specific historical circumstances, have spoken with the voice in question," it invites the same charge of false generalization leveled at theories constructed by and about men (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990: 32).

F. Explanations for the Differential Treatment of Men and Women Are Primarily at the Individual and Not the Structural Level

Of the 57 articles in this review that addressed questions concerning the differential treatment of men and women in organizations, nearly two-thirds appealed explicitly to sexist attitudes and practices on the parts of individual organizational actors as the hypothesized rationale or post hoc interpretation of results showing less favorable treatment of women. For example, Hitt and Barr (1989) hypothesized that the cognitive machinations of supervisors' decision-making is the mechanism underlying sex bias in employee evaluations.

Some also appealed to sex differences to understand differential treatment. For example, Dreher and Ash (1990) suggested that the income differentials they found between men and women (differential treatment) might be explained by differences in men's and women's sensitivity to market information about competitive pay levels (a sex difference). Similarly, Vancouver and Ilgen (1989: 933) noted that "maintaining equal access and treatment across gender [differential treatment] is complicated by differential preferences between men and women [sex differences]."

Not surprisingly, to the extent that researchers addressed the implications of their findings for organizational intervention, they tended overwhelmingly to focus on the individual as the locus for change. Consistent with the emphasis on sexist attitudes as the basis for differential treatment, some suggested changing organization members' attitudes toward women. For example, Heilman and Martell (1986) recommended providing evidence to organization members about successful women to interrupt the sex stereotyping-sex discrimination sequence; Maurer and Taylor (1994) suggested using attitude change strategies and theories of persuasion in rater training programs to attenuate bias against women; and others proposed modifying sex-role stereotypes through training (Bremmels, 1988; Dobbins, Cardy, and Truxillo, 1988) and changing perceptions about the gender appropriateness of particular occupations and tasks (Barnes-Farrell, L'Heureux-Barrett, and Conway, 1991).

Consistent with the view that women may be treated differently from men because they are different from men, others suggested changing women to help mitigate the problems they encounter at work. For example, researchers recommended that organizations: give women feedback to remedy the potentially negative effects of their low self-confidence (Heilman et al., 1987, 1991; Heilman, Kaplow, Amato, and Stathatos, 1993; McCarty, 1986); change socialization and educational experiences for women to enhance their self-pay expectations (Jackson et al., 1992); train women to behave in more effective ways (Benedict and Levine, 1988); train women to remedy skill deficiencies in salary negotiation (Stevens et al., 1993); and train women to enhance their presentation of "task" behaviors so that they may overcome inequalities they face in mixed-sex task groups (Driskell, Olmstead, and Salas, 1993: 59). Interestingly, of the few studies that showed less favorable treatment of men (e.g., Powell and Butterfield, 1994), none suggested ameliorative strategies designed to change them.

Neither researchers' explanations for differential treatment—sexist attitudes, sex differences—nor the interventions they proposed—change attitudes, change women—addresses the political or institutional forces that might also underlie their findings. Indeed, such discussions were conspicuously absent from most of this literature, and exceptions were generally in the more sociologically oriented research (e.g., Baron, Davis-Blake, and Bielby, 1986; Jacobs, 1992; Pfeffer and Davis-Blake, 1986; Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1992). Stroh et al. (1992: 258), for example, argued that women's behavior is no longer a credible explanation for their career patterns. "It is time," they concluded, "for corporations to take a closer look at their own behaviors." In the more psychologically oriented research, Mellor, Mathieu, and Swim (1994) were also an exception, suggesting that a remedy for women's low commitment to unions start with a structural analysis of power and decision-making at the local levels. Overall the research I reviewed upholds a notion of gender as primarily personal and psychological, leaving problems that exist at the organizational level essentially intact. It did not address the unequal distribution of power between men and women, nor the ways in which organizations, through their unexamined policies, procedures, and norms, uphold that unequal distribution. The ostensible neutrality of organizations made it easy to locate blame in individuals instead.[2]

IV. NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this critique, I have described how researchers' failure to incorporate power into their conceptions of gender has hidden the role that organizations play in sustaining gender differentiation and oppression. The majority of research on gender in organizations, published in the last 10 years in four of the most influential empirical journals in the field, is predicated on a notion of gender as a personal characteristic into which individuals, most notably women, are socialized in accordance with sex-role stereotypes. This research presumes gender to be more basic than other aspects of identity, such as race or ethnicity; it relies on a construction of men and women, masculine and feminine, as independent, hierarchically-ranked oppositions whereby men and masculinity are the seemingly neutral standard against which women inevitably fall short. Drawing on debates among and between modern and postmodern feminists, I have explored how these notions have limited our understandings of gender, power, and organizational behavior.

I propose a new research agenda. Whereas traditional research has focused on sex differences and differential treatment as largely individual level phenomena, I propose focusing instead on gender differentiation and gender oppression as inextricably linked relational processes sustained by and potentially transformed through social relations and the formal and informal policies and practices of organizations that shape them.

For this reconceptualization, I again draw from postmodern perspectives on gender. Whereas those interested in the potential contributions of postmodernism to organization studies have offered critiques from postmodern perspectives (see Alvesson and Deetz, 1996, for a review) and proposed ways of using postmodern insights to advance organizational research (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997), no one has attempted to define "postmodern" constructs for empirical investigation. Of course, there is not, nor by definition will there ever be, a single, unified postmodern theory of gender to inform this task. Nevertheless, I have developed two, potentially useful, interrelated constructs based on the gender theories some postmodernists espouse: gender as an aspect of social identity, called gender identity; and gender as an aspect of social relations, called gender relations. After explaining these constructs, I will propose an agenda for research on gender and leadership to illustrate how organizational scholars interested in gender might apply them.

A. GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER RELATIONS

Gender identity is the set of meanings associated with being male or female, masculine or feminine, in any particular time or place, which people internalize and act on to varying degrees. Whether and how one experiences oneself as a man or woman at any given time is part of one's gender identity. This idea replaces unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity, or man and masculine gender identity, with plural and more complexly structured conceptions of social identity in which gender is only one relevant strand among many, including class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, and sexual identity. According to this view, gender identity is "contingent and fluid and each person is likely to be internally contradictory rather than the same all the way through" (Kennedy, 1993: viii). Hence, gender identity for any person takes multiple forms and is fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity.

From this perspective, gender identity has no determinant content outside of gender relations. Gender relations are the social relations through which the categories male and female derive meaning and shape experience; they are influenced in part by all other social relations, including class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, and sexual identity. Gender relations are situated within and grow from specific social, cultural, and historical conditions. Nevertheless, it appears from what we currently know that gender relations have been more or less relations of domination: "Gender relations have been (more) defined and (imperfectly) controlled by one of their interrelated aspects—the man" (Flax, 1990: 45). Thus, the notion of gender identity as embedded within and dependent upon gender relations makes power a core element of gender at both the individual and structural levels of analysis, and emphasizes the inextricable link between the two.

Gender relations are manifest in the concrete social practices that act to preserve—or challenge—male domination. Hence, gender relations contain both oppressive and, through resistance, antioppressive possibilities. They include a wide range of social phenomena—interpersonal and group interactions; organizational structures, norms, rewards, and policies; standards, roles, rhetoric, stereotypes, symbols, and language—that explicitly or implicitly uphold or contest the value of men above women, masculine above feminine.

In their oppressive forms, these social practices reify gender by invoking a series of hierarchically-ranked, binary oppositions—mind-body, individual-community, public-private, reason-emotion, competition-cooperation—that code activity and assign meaning as either male (superior) or female (inferior), respectively. The conscious and unconscious, individual and collective processes of divvying up, differentially valuing, and maintaining these two domains as separate are all part of gender relations. Thus, it is not difference per se that is focal, but rather, the relational processes that lead to differentiation: "[D]ifference is not a thing to be recognized but a process always underway," shaped by the particularities of social, cultural, and historical circumstances (Crosby, 1992: 140).

In their antioppressive forms, gender relations engage active resistance to the status quo. They are manifest in social practices that raise people's consciousness of gender and power asymmetries and how these imbalances limit choice and possibility in their own and others' lives. Antioppressive gender relations are also manifest in practices that expand people's opportunities or reconfigure their constraints in ways that might ultimately dismantle these asymmetries. These antioppressive practices reject binary distinctions in favor of more complex ways of understanding and being in the world. They encourage a broader range of people to develop and express aspects of themselves that they might otherwise suppress so that both they and the institutions they build might benefit. The hope is that a vision of the world in which gender—or any other social relation—is no longer an axis of unnegotiated power will evolve from these practices. When this vision is achieved, gender as a construct may well be moot. Hence, the notion of antioppressive gender relations acknowledges that all is not right with the world and carries with it an explicitly feminist
political agenda.

Taken together, these two constructs—gender identity and gender relations—redefine gender as an aspect of social structure from which the nature of both individuals and their effects—organizations, institutions, practices, policies, etc.—arise. From this perspective, identities might best be seen as contextually constrained "positions" or "situations" within which people are capable of exercising choice (Kennedy, 1993: viii). Organizations then serve as historically-situated, contextual constraints

that can shape and reshape, create and recreate identity in potentially infinite ways. This represents a radical reframing of both identity and the role organizations play in shaping it.

This perspective suggests a host of new research questions for organizational researchers interested in gender. A description of how these constructs might be incorporated into a new research agenda on leadership follows. This research agenda, together with the constructs I have developed above, illustrate an attempt to redress many of the problems with mainstream research.

B. A New Research Agenda: Leadership as an Illustrative Example

Of the 118 studies in my sample, six were focused explicitly on "leadership." These studies examined the impact of a person's sex and gender role on the group's choice of leader (Goktepe and Schneier, 1989; Kent and Moss, 1995), the impact of a person's sex on his or her reactions to being selected for a leadership role either preferentially or based on merit (Heilman, et al., 1987, 1990), the impact of a person's sex on others' ratings of the quality of his or her interaction with a group leader (Duchon, Green, and Tabor, 1986), and the impact of leaders' and subordinates' sex on the presence or absence of the self-fulfilling prophecy in leadership situations (Dvir, Eden, and Banjo, 1995). The directions I am proposing for organizational research on gender suggest different questions and ways of conceptualizing research on leadership. I have organized these into three categories: definitions of leadership, leadership experiences, and the role of other identities and intergroup relations.

1. Definitions of leadership

The perspective I am advancing suggests a number of questions about how leadership is, or could be, defined: What are organizations' assumptions about what constitutes good leadership? How do oppressive gender relations support these assumptions? Are there systematic ways in which men benefit from, while women are penalized by, organizations' dominant conceptions of leadership? Are there other behaviors that could reasonably qualify as leadership, but currently do not? Would changes in traditional notions about what constitutes leadership influence the balance of power between men and women in organizations? How would gender relations in organizations need to change in order to support new conceptions of leadership? Would such changes influence organizations' effectiveness? These questions explore whether and how oppressive gender relations in organizations are manifest in assumptions and practices related to leadership and the differential consequences these might have for men and women. They also consider the possibility of antioppressive gender relations expressed in different assumptions and practices and the consequences these might have, including their implications for organizations' effectiveness.

In the literature I reviewed, researchers did not question organizations' assumptions about leadership. Instead, they posited a leader as one who has a dominant personality (Goktepe and Schneier, 1989), leads conversation in a group and influences group goals and directions (Kent and Moss, 1995), engages in people-oriented and task-oriented behaviors and transmits high expectations to subordinates (Dvir et al., 1995), and has the skill and ability to do the task and to conduct one-way communication (Heilman et al., 1987, 1990). Implicit in these definitions are traditional notions about leadership, which draw a binary distinction between task and process: e.g., "task-oriented" versus "people-oriented" behaviors (Dvir et al., 1995), "the ability to do the task" versus "the ability to communicate"

(Heilman et al., 1987, 1990). Although leaders are typically touted as people who attend to both task and process, this construction, nevertheless, assumes that the behaviors in each domain are mutually exclusive; each is defined in terms of what the other is not. Thus, the distinction seems inevitably to be both gendered and ranked. Task is cognitive, instrumental, necessary, and male; process is expressive, emotional, optional, and female.

The agenda I propose questions the distinction between task and process and explores its implications. Moreover, it explores the implications of a reconstruction that might, for example, emphasize the inseparability of these two domains. That is, one might consider that to "focus on task" is to engage a particular kind of social process and to "focus on process" is itself a kind of task. This reconstruction acknowledges how each side contains elements of the other and enriches both sides beyond their more limited, stereotypical representations (Fletcher, 1994). Finally, by exploring alternative ways of exercising leadership, researchers might discover a broader range of behaviors that "influence group goals and directions" (Kent and Moss, 1995) than organizations have typically recognized as instrumental to the accomplishment of their goals, including behaviors traditionally devalued and considered "female." In these ways, this research could unleash new possibilities for the productive exercise of leadership while at the same time fundamentally altering the politics of traditional research.

2. Leadership experiences

Next are questions about the experiences of those who exercise leadership: How do organizations' formal structures, policies, and practices, influence the meaning people ascribe to their identities as men and women, and how do these in turn influence their leadership behaviors and experiences? How do people's informal interactions—among men, among women, and between men and women—perpetuate traditional sex roles, and how do these influence people's leadership experiences and behaviors? How do men and women experience themselves in traditional leadership roles? How do organizations' prescriptions for appropriate masculine behavior, on the one hand, and leadership, on the other, constrain and limit men? How do they constrain and limit women? Is there symmetry or asymmetry in men's and women's subjective experiences of behaving in counterstereotypical ways? What kinds of structures, policies, and practices might organizations implement to encourage people to bring all relevant parts of themselves to bear in their work and leadership roles? These questions consider the role of gender identity in the exercise of leadership, and the ways in which gender relations shape gender identity in both traditional and nontraditional leadership roles.

Three of the six studies on leadership in the sample I reviewed considered a construct called "gender role" (Dvir et al., 1995; Goktepe and Schneier, 1989; Kent and Moss, 1995). To measure this construct, participants in all three studies rated themselves on masculinity and femininity scales and, based on these ratings, were classified as either masculine (high on masculinity, low on femininity), feminine (high on femininity, low on masculinity), androgynous (high on both), or undifferentiated (low on both). All three studies conceived of gender role identity as a static trait, uninfluenced by the context in which people were working. In addition, this research ignored people's subjective experiences in their gender roles, focusing instead on their classifications into one role or another. Moreover, although the concept of androgyny allows both masculine and feminine traits to coexist within a person, it assumes that these two sets of traits are equally valued and additive in their effects—an androgynous person merely combines the characteristics of the masculine person and the feminine person. There is no room for ambivalence or ambiguity in this or any of the gender roles in this

scheme. Finally, although two of the studies (Goktepe and Schneier, 1989; Kent and Moss, 1995) conceived of leadership as a dynamic process—the product of social interaction—neither examined group interactions directly.

By comparison, the set of questions I am proposing considers both identity and leadership to be much more fluid and contextually derived than did any of these studies. It is possible that people consciously or unconsciously enact different parts of themselves with gender in mind, depending on how they read the demands of the situations in which they find themselves and the comparative risks and benefits of responding or failing to respond to those demands. In addition, the questions I proposed legitimate the study of masculinity and men's experience *qua* men.

As I (Ely, 1995) and others (e.g., Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Martin, 1996) have argued, we have much to learn by investigating at multiple levels of analysis how being in at least one culturally dominant group position shapes the perspectives and experiences of men and members of other dominant groups. At the individual and group levels, we know little about the psychological and emotional processes that shape masculinities among men or about the ways in which men both as individuals and as a group perpetuate and maintain their gender-related privilege. Likewise, we tend to ignore how the masculine role, like any stereotyped role, can be constraining and limiting in ways that are burdensome to men and, perhaps, even counterproductive for organizations. Exposing the subjectivity of men (and other dominant groups) reveals at once their position as both less and more authoritative than we typically acknowledge: it deauthorizes men as a source of neutrality, and reauthorizes them as a subjective source of insight into, among other things, gender relations. This runs counter to the claim some feminists have made that the subjugated position of the oppressed is an epistemologically privileged position (Hartsock, 1985), and argues instead that dominants have the capacity, if not the inclination, to reflect on their privileged position.

3. The role of other identities and intergroup relations

Finally, I propose questions that consider the role of other aspects of identity: How do gender identity and gender relations interact with other group identities and intergroup relations, such as class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, and sexual identity, to influence people's behaviors and experiences in leadership roles? How do other kinds of social relations and social identities in organizations create and sustain power asymmetries *among* men and *among* women, and how do these influence people's behaviors and experiences in leadership roles? In addition, each of the questions I posed earlier can be further elaborated to examine how other aspects of identity and other kinds of intergroup relations influence the way gender plays out in people's experiences and vice versa. These questions are intended to contextualize further our understanding of the impact of identity and identity group relations on the exercise of leadership.

The research on leadership in this sample did not attend to, either theoretically or empirically, any cultural influences other than gender. In general, organizational scholars have not tended to focus on the experiences of marginalized men and women (Nkomo, 1992). Hence, it is important to begin by listening to their stories and becoming aware of our own biases, prejudices, and ignorance that come from being in a dominant group position (Bordo, 1990). It is out of these stories that a more local, historically-specific study of gender will arise, ultimately informing new theories for analyzing relations

along multiple axes of identity. Ultimately, the goal is to understand the interplay among gender and other aspects of identity, especially those that, like gender, are predicated on asymmetries of power.

While it is imperative that researchers struggle continually against racism and ethnocentrism of all forms in their research, it is also important to realize the impossibility of being "politically correct": "For the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion . . . are played out on multiple and shifting fronts, and all ideas (no matter how 'liberatory' in some contexts or for some purposes) are condemned to be haunted by a voice from the margins already speaking (or perhaps presently muted but awaiting the conditions for speech), awakening us to what has been excluded, effaced, damaged" (Bordo, 1990: 138). Our task is not to be stymied or halted by such voices but rather to be attentive to them when they speak—to provide opportunities and forums for them to speak—since they prod us always to think more critically about our work and its implications.

This is not to suggest that the only correct perspective on identity group diversity is affirmation of difference. Charges that "woman" or "man" as descriptive identity categories are invalid or oppressive should require concrete examples of how the particular description in question conceals actual differences in experience. Likewise, claims for the validity of such generalizations should require either concrete examples of similarities across salient same-sex subgroups, or else an argument that makes explicit the particular kinds of women or men for whom the claim is intended to hold.

V. CONCLUSION

I have argued that it is now incumbent upon organizational researchers interested in gender to develop richer theories and to push ourselves beyond simple reports of significant or null sex effects. Drawing from feminist theories in other disciplines, I have detailed the limitations of our current work and developed some possible alternatives. My hope, at the very least, is to motivate scholars to make decisions and choices with more awareness of the theoretical complexities and political implications inherent in their work on gender.

I suspect that the field has been slow to recognize and incorporate what feminist theories have to offer in part because our review and editorial processes seem inhospitable to such efforts. While much of feminist scholarship does run counter to the positivist research paradigm that dominates the social sciences' most influential empirical journals (Harding, 1986; Keller, 1985), I would suggest that even for scholars who wish to stay within the bounds of this paradigm, feminist theories, including postmodern ones, have much to offer. Feminist scholarship points to problems and inconsistencies that even the most traditional researchers should recognize and offers conceptual and theoretical gains for them, as well as their less traditional counterparts.

I concede that it would be unrealistic to expect these journals to embrace solutions that reject the dominant discourse altogether. These journals exist at least partially for the purpose of upholding and perpetuating this discourse. No doubt, by restricting my sample to high status journals, I have chosen four that may be especially reluctant to consider these alternatives. In addition, there may well be certain conventions in the field that are inimical to the directions in which I believe research on gender in organizations should go. The questions I am proposing, for example, may not always be amenable to traditional research methods. Yet, even here, traditional methods may take us further than we think. Kilduff and Mehra (1997), for example, have demonstrated how an epistemology that combines a postmodern skepticism of metatheory with a commitment to rigorous standards of inquiry is not only possible, but already evident in a number of classic organizational studies. However, to support the agenda I am proposing, journals must also become more tolerant of less traditional methods, and open to new definitions of rigor.

Finally, there is a common thread that runs throughout my critique and recommendations which is perhaps the central point of postmodern feminism: "We always see from points of view that are invested with our social, political, and personal interests, inescapably centric in one way or another" (Bordo, 1990: 140). This holds for the men and women we research, and it holds for us, the researchers, as well. What this means is that the constructs and theories I explore in the foregoing discussion are themselves rooted in social relations; the study of gender necessarily reflects the social practices it attempts to understand. Gender theorists must therefore be as self- and socially-critical as possible, remaining constantly open to discovering the ways in which their own understandings may be implicated in existing power relationships (Flax, 1990). This means acknowledging that the criteria, scientific or otherwise, that guide choices in theory, method, and interpretation are themselves political and grounded in a particular cultural context. The recognition that both theorists and their understandings are inevitably caught up in the gender relations of which they are a part serves as a constant reminder that gender has no fixed essence (Flax, 1990).

Therefore, while I am arguing for the inclusion of these perspectives within the dominant discourse, I am also suggesting that we be wary should we find ourselves situated too comfortably at the center of this discourse. The directions I am proposing should push us constantly back out to the margins where we are better positioned with a critical eye. It is only by maintaining a constantly critical stance that we can hope to uphold the scholarly and political integrity of our work.

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Summary of Studies on Sex/Gender, 1986-1995, in AMJ, ASQ, JAP, and OBHDP

Author(s)	Year	Journal	Topic
Adelmann	1987	JAP	SD
Adelmann	1992	JAP	SD
Arvey et al.	1992	JAP	SD/DT
Austin & Hanisch	1990	JAP	SD
Barnes-Farrell et al.	1991	OBHDP	DT
Barnum et al.	1995	AMJ	DT
Baron et al.	1986	ASQ	DT
Baron	1987	JAP	SD
Bemmels	1988	AMJ	DT
Benedict & Levine	1988	JAP	SD
Bernardin & Cooke	1993	AMJ	SD
Bilimoria & Piderit	1994	AMJ	DT
Binning et al.	1988	JAP	SD/DT
Blegen et al.	1988	JAP	SD
Brenner et al.	1989	AMJ	SD/DT
Brockner & Adsit	1986	JAP	SD
Dalton et al.	1987	JAP	DT
Dobbins et al.	1988	JAP	DT
Drasgow	1987	JAP	DT
Dreher & Ash	1990	JAP	SD/DT
Driskell et al.	1993	JAP	DT
Duchon et al.	1986	JAP	SD/DT
Dunbar & Novick	1988	JAP	SD/DT
Duxbury & Higgins	1991	JAP	SD
Dvir et al.	1995	JAP	SD
Ely	1994	ASQ	O
Ely	1995	AMJ	O
Fagenson	1990	JAP	SD
Frone et al.	1992	JAP	SD
Gerhart & Rynes	1991	JAP	SD/DT
Giambra & Quilter	1989	JAP	SD
Goktepe & Schneier	1989	JAP	SD/DT
Graves & Powell	1988	JAP	DT
Greenhaus & Parasuraman	1993	OBDP	DT
Grover	1991	JAP	SD
Gutek et al.	1990	AMJ	SD/DT
Gutek et al.	1991	JAP	SD
Haberfeld	1992	AMJ	DT
Hall et al.	1988	JAP	SD
Hattrup et al.	1992	JAP	DT
Heilman et al.	1989	JAP	DT
Heilman et al.	1993	JAP	SD
Heilman et al.	1990	OBHDP	SD
Heilman & Martell	1986	OBHDP	DT
Heilman et al.	1988	OBHDP	DT
Heilman et al.	1991	JAP	SD
Heilman et al.	1987	JAP	SD
Henry	1994	OBHDP	SD
Higgins et al.	1992	OBHDP	O
Hitt & Barr	1989	JAP	SD/DT
Huber	1991	JAP	SD
Ibarra	1992	ASQ	SD/DT
Jackson et al.	1992	JAP	SD
Jacobs	1992	ASQ	DT
Kalleberg & Leicht	1991	AMJ	SD/DT
Kent & Moss	1994	AMJ	SD/DT
Kesner	1988	AMJ	DT
Kirmeyer & Shirom	1986	AMJ	SD
Konrad & Gutek	1986	ASQ	SD
Kravitz & Platania	1993	JAP	SD
Larrick et al.	1993	OBHDP	SD
Latack et al.	1987	JAP	SD/DT
Lautenschlager & Shaffer	1987	JAP	DT
Lefkowitz	1994	AMJ	SD
Lobel & St. Clair	1992	AMJ	SD/DT
Lord et al.	1986	JAP	O
Mainiero	1986	ASQ	SD
Markham & McKee	1995	AMJ	SD
Martocchio & O'Leary	1989	JAP	SD
Mathieu & Kohler	1990	JAP	SD
Maurer & Taylor	1994	OBHDP	DT
McCarty	1986	AMJ	SD
Mehrabian & de Wetter		1987	JAP	SI
Melamed et al.	1995	JAP	SD
Mellor	1995	JAP	SD/DT
Mellor et al.	1994	JAP	SD
Motowidlo et al.	1992	JAP	DT
Ohlott et al.	1994	AMJ	DT
Olian et al.	1988	OBHDP	DT
Parkes	1990	JAP	SD
Pazy	1986	OBHDP	DT
Perlow & Latham	1993	JAP	SD
Peters et al.	1990	JAP	SD
Pfeffer & Davis-Blake	1987	ASQ	DT
Pingitore et al.	1994	JAP	DT
Powell & Butterfield	1994	AMJ	DT
Pulakos et al.	1989	JAP	SD/DT
Rafaeli	1989	JAP	SD/DT
Ragins & Cotton	1991	AMJ	SD/DT
Ragins & Scandura	1994	AMJ	SD

Author(s)	Year	Journal	Topic
Raza & Carpenter	1987	JAP	SD/DT
Roznowski	1987	JAP	SD
Russell et al.	1987	JAP	SD
Rynes et al.	1989	JAP	SD/DT
Saal & Moore	1993	JAP	SD
Sackett et al.	1991	JAP	DT
Schmitt & Cohen	1989	JAP	SD
Schneer & Reitman	1993	AMJ	DT
Schneer & Reitman	1990	AMJ	SD/DT
Shaffer	1987	JAP	SD
Shenhav	1992	AMJ	SD/DT
Shore & Thornton	1986	AMJ	SD/DT
Staines et al.	1986	JAP	O
Stevens et al.	1993	JAP	SD
Stroh et al.	1992	JAP	DT
Tait et al.	1989	JAP	SD
Talaga & Beehr	1995	JAP	SD
Tenbrunsel et al.	1995	OBHDP	SD
Terpstra & Baker	1992	AMJ	O
Tharenou et al.	1994	AMJ	SD/DT
Tsui et al.	1992	ASQ	SD
Tsui & O'Reilly	1989	AMJ	O
Turban & Dougherty	1994	AMJ	SD
Turban et al.	1989	JAP	DT
Vancouver & Ilgen	1989	JAP	SD
Williams et al.	1991	JAP	O
Witt & Nye	1992	JAP	SD
Zaccaro et al.	1991	OBHDP	SD

KEY

Journal

AMJ	Academy of Management Journal
ASQ	Administrative Science Quarterly
JAP	Journal of Applied Psychology
OBHDP	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes

Topic

SD	Sex Differences
DT	Differential Treatment
O	Other

1. Others have proposed different typologies to capture these strains of feminist thought; for example, Harding's (1986) empiricist and standpoint feminisms, and Hare-Mustin and Maracek's (1988) discussion of alpha and beta bias correspond to the feminist rationalist and feminist antirationalist perspectives, respectively.

2. This individual focus no doubt is evidenced, at least partly, because of the particular journals I chose to include in this review. Three of the four are primarily known for publishing "micro," or psychologically oriented research. Not surprisingly, the one exception, *ASQ*, which is sociological, was where the more structurally oriented research was likely to be published.